

Reaching Student Voice through the Arts: Insights from a Transition Year Classroom

by

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to work with a group of students to explore and evaluate their previous experiences and attitudes towards the arts. The research is premised on the understanding that young people are experts in their own lives and their voices not only deserve to be heard, but acted upon. Consequently, the foundations of the research are that students and young people have the potential to act as autonomous and responsible individuals concerning decisions that affect their learning and lives.

Set in an Irish, urban, DEIS, post-primary Transition Year (TY) classroom, the research took place over two years. The study is framed theoretically, methodologically and philosophically through participatory action research (PAR), arts-based educational research (ABER), and student voice. These three theoretical positionings are united in their transformative and emancipatory intent; challenging taken-for-granted assumptions. PAR was chosen as the methodological framework of the project due to its forefronting of individual and collective social action and agency.

This research is the first in-depth study to explore the arts in an Irish DEIS TY context. Uniquely, it also uses the arts as tools to investigate the arts, as well as employing the arts as an alternative means of data (re)presentation. The uniqueness of the work also lies in its theoretical, methodological, and philosophical marrying of PAR, ABER, and student voice, and is the first of its kind to explore student voice within the context of a mixed-sex Irish TY classroom in an innovative and sustained way.

Although the initial research questions were addressed, as is the nature of ABER, these questions evolved and many more emerged. These questions formed part of the hidden curriculum of the research and inform discussions throughout this thesis. Discussions in this thesis broadly centre around the establishment and maintenance of power struggles and variance in power relations between participants, school staff and I, and the relationship between participation and power within the research. Other discussions are concerned with; the role of the arts in supporting student voice, participants' feelings of voicelessness, silence within the research, and difficulties with voice, difficulties and successes in relation to co-construction of the research process, and the role of social media within this study. Participants' previous experiences and attitudes towards the arts are also discussed in detail, as well as their varying engagement with the arts in the study, their barriers towards the arts, and their attitudes towards the arts post-workshops. Communicative action and agency are discussed through the co-generation and presentation of a performance-exhibition to school staff and this formed the means through which participants and I employed our agency and engaged in collective social action. The findings of the research are concerned with the clarification of various attitudes and 'truths' relating to the arts in this DEIS setting, the evolving understandings and uses of the arts throughout the research, the potential of the arts to negotiate issues of power and voicelessness within the research, and the necessity for broader conceptions of what qualifies as action and agency within educational research. The findings also highlight the capacity and potential of the arts to liberate and 'give voice' to a multiplicity of voices.

Declaration

I, Richard Hayes, declare that this thesis is based on the original research work that I carried out between January 2010 and June 2013. I also declare that no part of this thesis has been replicated in any form prior to submission. Additionally and to the best of my knowledge, all sources have been dually acknowledged within the body of this thesis. Furthermore, the arts-based work that is presented within the body of the thesis and on the accompanying disc remains the copyright of the participants involved in the research and I. Permission for these pieces to be included in the text was sought and granted by the relevant parties.

Signature: _____

Richard Hayes

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Le Grá agus Cairdeas

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To the students and staff of St. Nessan's, particularly the participants involved in this project; I am privileged to have shared part of your lives. This thesis is the result of our joint efforts to listen with our eyes, see with our ears, and excavate meaning where we thought there was none.

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Table of Contents

Abstract i

Declaration ii

Acknowledgements iii

List of Tables x

List of Figures xi

List of Images xii

List of Maps xiv

List of Abbreviations & Acronyms xv

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

Research continuum 10

Research questions 12

Thesis structure 15

Chapter one 15

Chapter two 15

Chapter three 16

Chapter four 17

Chapter five 17

Chapter six 18

Chapter seven 19

Chapter eight 19

Chapter nine 20

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework 21

Foundational Ontologies & Epistemologies in the Arts: ABER 22

Introduction 22

What characterises ABER and who can be an arts-based educational researcher? 25

What underpins ABER? 27

ABER and emancipation 30

What are the tensions that exist in ABER? 31

The arts and Ireland 37

The arts and education 42

Foundational Ontologies & Epistemologies in Research: PAR 46

The origins & development of PAR 46

Participation in PAR 48
PAR, subjugated voices & Paulo Freire 49
PAR, emancipation, and communicative action 52
Foundational Onotologies & Epistemologies in Pedagogy: Student Voice 55
A personal, artistic understanding of voice 55
Student voice, a macro view 57
The student voice movement 59
The role of student voice in qualitative research 63
Giving a voice to the disempowered 67
Silence in student voice 70
Considerations when engaging student voice 74
Power in Education 81
Educational Disadvantage 87
What is educational disadvantage? 87
The impact of educational disadvantage 89
An approach to defining educational disadvantage 91
Out-puts led approach 91
The comparative approach 92
Ireland's contemporary responses to educational disadvantage 92
Chapter Conclusion 98
Chapter 3 Methodological Framework 101
Purpose of chapter three 102
Participatory Action Research 102
What has lead me to PAR 102
PAR 103
PAR: methodology or a framework? 104
The PAR cycle 106
Participatory action research in action 109
pARTicipatory Methods 110
What are PM? 110
The growing interest in PM 111
Further entangling the web of PM 112
PM as empowerment, expression/voice, and democracy 114
PM within this project 115
Photo-elicitation 116
Timelines 118

Social mapping 118
Written and image diaries/scrapbooking 119
Video diaries & peer interviews 120
Photography-diaries 122
Arts-based composition 124
Data Collection 126
Data Sources 128
Data Analysis 131
PAR & data analysis 134
Visual analysis 135
Validation Strategies 138
Prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field 138
Triangulation 139
Peer review or debriefing 139
Negative case analysis 140
Researcher bias 140
Member checking 140
Rich thick description 141
External audits 141
Validity within PAR 142
Outcome validity: 142
Process validity: 143
Dialogic validity: 143
Democratic validity: 143
Catalytic validity: 144
Concluding statement on validity 145
Ethical Considerations 146
Access, acceptance & site anonymity 146
Informed consent & individual anonymity 147
Confidentiality 148
Overt vs. covert research 148
Responsibility to the research community 149
Chapter 4 Grounded in Reality: Site, Participants, & Researcher 150
Purpose of chapter four 151
The development of TY 151
The TY Programme 152

The Site ... **156**
The surrounding community ... 156
Parent profiles ... 161
Educational profiles ... 161
Income sources ... 161
St. Nessan's Community College - tradition and development ... 163
DEIS and St. Nessan's ... 165
The arts culture in St. Nessan's ... 166
The Participants ... **171**
Participant intersections ... 171
Participants and TY ... 174
TY in St. Nessan's versus national statistics ... 175
Participants' reasons for choosing TY ... 176
The Arts in the community ... 177
Chapter 5 'Don't think I forget what you called us': Navigating Power Relations and Participation ... **179**
Introduction ... 180
Power Relations ... **181**
Power relations in youth research ... 181
Researcher stance ... 182
Asserting power relations: Tony et al. ... 183
Cadence's power struggles ... 194
Power struggles with other participants ... 198
Putting us in our place: Power relations with school staff ... 199
Deflation to elation: My research journey ... 206
Participation ... **209**
Preface to factors positively influencing participation ... 211
Factors positively influencing participation ... 212
Factors negatively influencing participation ... 214
Chapter Conclusion ... **218**
Chapter 6 Student Voice, (Co-)construction, and Social Media ... **221**
Introduction ... 222
Student Voice ... **223**
Revisiting understandings of student voice ... 223
Engaging student voice: The role of pARTicipatory methods ... 224
Participants' voices: 'No one listens' ... 228

Interpreting silent voices 239
Difficulties with voice 242
Co-Construction 245
What I expected 245
Problems with co-construction 246
Reconstructing co-construction: Towards collaboration 249
Social Media 251
Chapter Conclusion 258
Chapter 7 The Arts 260
Introduction 261
The arts in St. Nessan's 261
Previous engagement, experience and views on the arts 262
Community-based arts engagement 263
School-based arts experience 265
Teachers' perspectives on the arts 269
Engaging with the arts: Experiences from the workshops 271
Discipline-based arts education: 274
The integrated-applied arts 279
Barriers to arts engagement 285
Lack of availability and other people's attitudes 286
Finance 289
Presence of peers 290
Bullying 291
Participants' attitudes towards the arts 293
Chapter Conclusion 304
Chapter 8 Halting PAR: (Re)presenting our Experiences through the Arts. 306
Introduction 307
Validating the data 308
Why a performance-exhibition? 310
Generating the performance-exhibition 312
Our compositions 327
Presenting our work 356
Teachers' responses 359
Chapter Conclusion 367

Chapter 9 'But You Came Back': Concluding Comments 369
Generating Synergies across the Research 370
Process indicators 371
Dialogic indicators 372
Democratic indicators 373
Outcome indicators 373
Catalytic indicators 374
Limitations of the Research 375
Findings, Implications, & Recommendations 377
Findings 377
Clarification of various attitudes and 'truths' relating to the arts in this DEIS setting 378
Evolving understandings and uses of the arts throughout the research 379
The potential of the arts to negotiate issues of power and voicelessness within the research 381
The necessity for broader conceptions of what qualifies as action and agency within educational research 383
Giving voice 383
Implications 385
School communities 385
Community-based arts organisations 387
Policy 387
Recommendations 388
Conclusion 389

Appendices 424
Appendix A – Information Sheets 425
Appendix B – Consent Forms 428
Appendix C – Questionnaire 430
Appendix D – 'What We Saw' 432
Appendix E – Voice Scale 438
Appendix F – Audience Comment Card 443

List of Tables

Table 1 – Intended Data Sources p.128
Table 2 – Modified Data Sources p.129
Table 3 – The Goals of Action Research & Validity Criteria p.145, 372
Table 4 – Tony and Greg's Final Diary Entries p.194

List of Figures

Figure 1 – Research Continuum	p.12, 126
Figure 2 – The PAR Cycle	p.107
Figure 3 – The Recursive PAR Cycle	p.108
Figure 4 – The Stages of PAR	p.108
Figure 5 – The Stages of PAR in Action	p.109
Figure 6 – Relative Deprivation/Affluence Map	p.160
Figure 7 – Participants' Social Groups	p.173
Figure 8 – Group Hierarchy	p.188
Figure 9 – Voice Scale	p.230

List of Images

Image 1 – St. Nessan's, #1 p.166
Image 2 – St. Nessan's, #2 p.166
Image 3 – St. Nessan's, Outside Home-economics Room p.167
Image 4 – St. Nessan's, Outside Visual Art Room p.167
Image 5 – St. Nessan's, The Golden Apple #1 p.166
Image 6 – St. Nessan's, The Golden Apple #2 p.169
Image 7 – St. Nessan's, The Canteen p.170
Image 8 – St. Nessan's, Outside Recreation Area p.170
Image 9 – A Participant Generated Meme p.254
Image 10 – Research Generated Meme p.254
Image 11 – Sculpture, Anna p.294
Image 12 – Architectural Art, Anna p.294
Image 13 –Graffiti #1, Cadence p.295
Image 14 – Graffiti #2, Cadence p.295
Image 15 – Digital Composition, Bonquisha p.296
Image 16 – Visual Excerpt from Photography Diary, Bonquisha p.296
Image 17 – Suit of Armour and Samurai Sword, Conor & John p.297
Image 18 – Beats and Ipod, Alana p.298
Image 19 – Guitar, Alana p.298
Image 20 – Teenage Fiction, Alana p.298
Image 21 – Photography, Alana p.298
Image 22 – Jade Dancing, Alana p.299
Image 23 – Jade's Trophies, Alana p.299
Image 24 – Voice Scale (Performance-exhibition) p.328
Image 25 – Voice Scale, My Friends in School p.328
Image 26 – Teachers' Diaries p.329
Image 27 – Overview of School Vs Workshops, My Disguise, and Awake p.331
Image 28 – My Disguise p.332
Image 29 – School Vs Workshops, School #1 p.333
Image 30 – School Vs Workshops, School #2 p.333
Image 31 – School Vs Workshops, School #3 p.334
Image 32 – School Vs Workshops, School #4 p.334
Image 33 – School Vs Workshops, School #5 p.335
Image 34 – Awake p.335
Image 35 – School Vs Workshops, Workshops #1 p.336
Image 36 - School Vs Workshops, Workshops #2 p.336
Image 37 – School Vs Workshops, Workshops #3 p.337
Image 38 – School Vs Workshops, Workshops #4 p.337
Image 39 – School Vs Workshops, Workshops #5 p.338

Image 40 – Overview of This is Our Space p.338
Image 41 – This is Our Space #1 p.339
Image 42 – This is Our Space #2 p.339
Image 43 – This is Our Space #3 p.339
Image 44 – This is Our Space #4 p.340
Image 45 – Overview, Isolation p.341
Image 46 – Isolation, #1 p.341
Image 47 – Isolation, #2 p.342
Image 48 – Isolation, #3 p.342
Image 49 – Isolation, #4 p.343
Image 50 – Isolation, #5 p.343
Image 51 – Overview, Perspective p.344
Image 52 – Perspective, #1 What Some Teachers Think We Do p.344
Image 53 – Perspective, #2 What Other Teachers Think We Do p.345
Image 54 – Perspective, #3 What Our Classmates Think We Do p.345
Image 55 – Perspective, #4 What I Think We Do p.346
Image 56 – Perspective, #5 What We Really Do p.346
Image 57 – Overview, Our Thoughts p.347
Image 58 – Our Thoughts, #1 p.347
Image 59 – Our Thoughts, #2 p.348
Image 60 – Our Thoughts, #3 p.348
Image 61 – Our Thoughts, #4 p.349
Image 62 – Our Thoughts, #5 p.349
Image 63 – Our Thoughts, #6 p.350
Image 64 – Your Words p.351
Image 65 – Look, Listen, and ~~See~~ Feel p.353
Image 66 – Our Experience p.354
Image 67 – What I Know p.355

List of Maps

Map 1 – The Different Counties of Ireland
with Limerick Highlighted in Dark Green p.4
Map 2 – Map of Limerick City and Suburbs with Moyross
Surrounding Communities Outlined p.4
Map 3 – Communities Surrounding St. Nessan's p.156
Map 4 – The Parks of Moyross p.158

List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

ABR –Arts-based research

ABER – Arts-based educational research

ACA – Average Control Area

AR – Action research

CBAO – Community Based Arts Organisations

CSPE – Civic, Social, and Political Education

DBAE – Discipline Based Arts Education

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

DiE – Drama in Education

ESLP – Early School Leavers Programmes

EU – European Union

GT – Grounded Theory

HSCL – Home School Community Liaison Scheme

IAA – Integrated-Applied Arts

JC – Junior Certificate Examination

JCSP – Junior Certificate Schools Programme

LC – Leaving Certificate Examination

LCA – Leaving Certificate Applied

LCVP – Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

MIREC – Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee

MT – Musical Theatre

NRA – Northside Regeneration Area

PAR – Participatory action research

PE – Physical Education

PM – Participatory methods

PRA – Participatory Rural Appraisal

TA – Thematic Analysis

TiE – Theatre in Education

TY – Transition Year

UNCR – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Chapter 1

Introduction

The research reported in this thesis is a two year study of the arts in a DEIS[1] school. Educational disadvantage is defined as

> …the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools.
> (Government of Ireland, 1998, 32.9)

This research sought to explore the arts within a DEIS context; engaging students in arts-based workshops and evaluating the impact of these workshops in line with their previous experiences of the arts and their previous attitudes towards the arts.

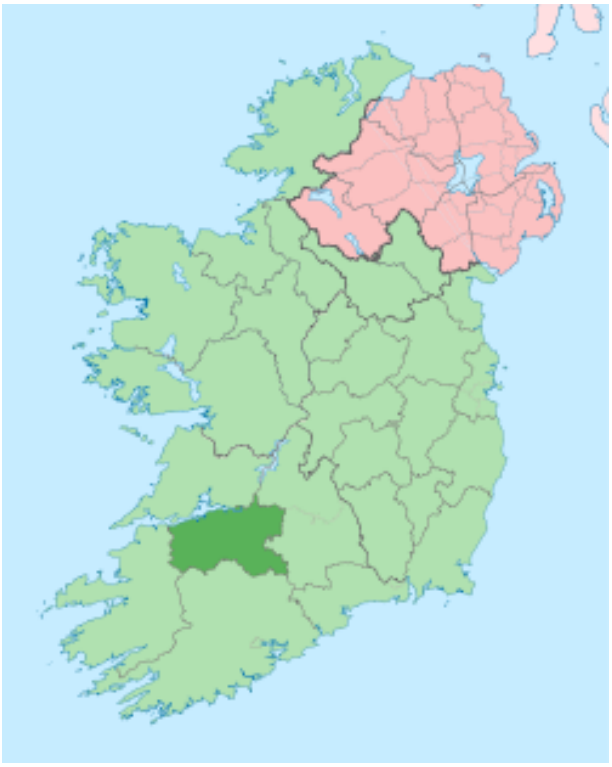
Before providing a substantive introduction to this thesis, in the spirit of hermeneutic 'subjectivity' it is necessary to provide an account of my own bias within the context of the research. Hermeneutic philosophers, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer and particularly in his landmark text *Truth and Method* (2002) contended that one never approaches a text objectively because our previous experiences, which have inevitably developed certain biases and prejudices (*Vorurteil*), impact on how we engage with, interpret and understand a text and various learning situations. Gadamer's philosophical work around the necessity to acknowledge *Vorurteil* has resonances with much reader-response theory in acknowledging the role of the reader's previous experience in informing the texts or learning situations that they engage with[2]. Furthermore, within the context of this work, participatory action research (PAR) as a personal philosophy and epistemological view, the collaborative and emancipatory intent of the research, and the quasi-narrative style assumed throughout this thesis require the forefronting and outlining of research bias (Creswell, 2007). Thus, in providing an insight into my *Vorurteil*, I track my own engagement with the arts and in doing so reveal my various biases, so that the reader

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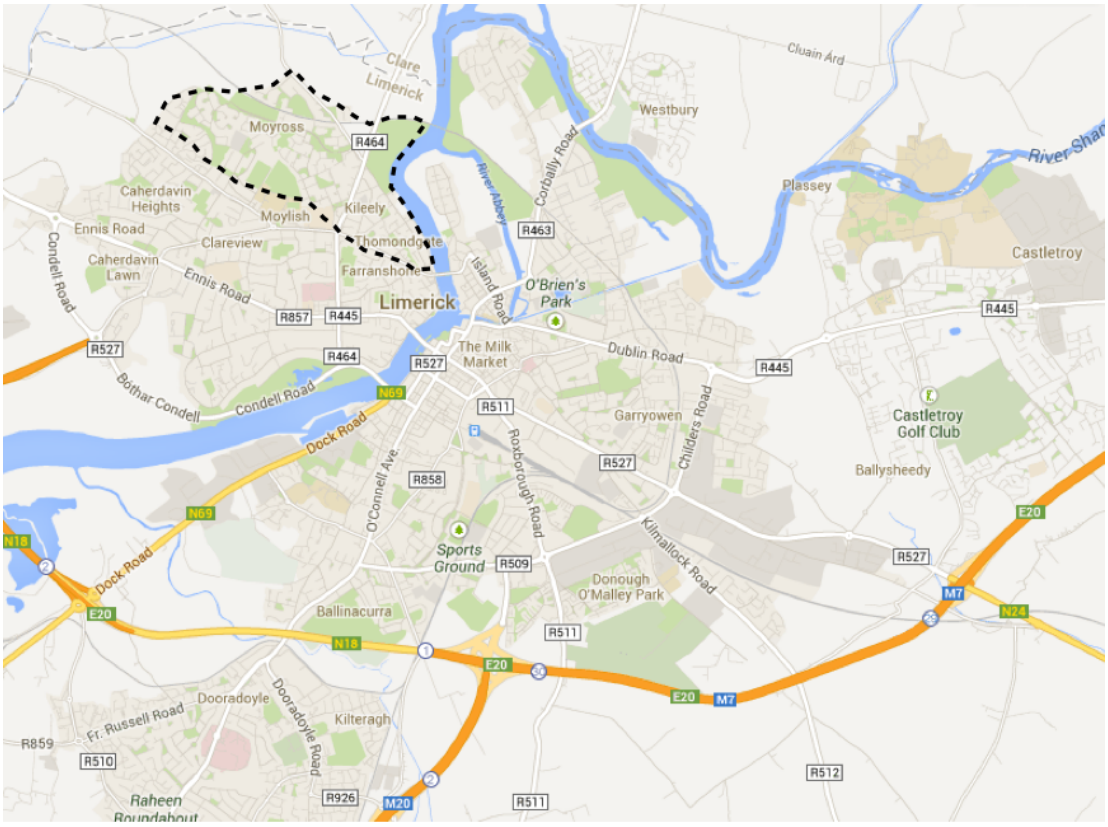
[1] DEIS refers to the *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* initiative that was established in 2005 to tackle issues of educational disadvantage in schools with a high proportion of students from socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Schools that avail of the DEIS initiative are colloquially known as DEIS schools.
[2] In particular see Stanley Fish's work (1982) on the 'informed reader'.

can understand the work, my approach to it and my motivations for engaging in it.

I am a 26-year-old male from a middle-class working family. My twin and I are the youngest in a family of six children. Most of my siblings and I were born in Moyross, a suburb of Limerick City, Ireland (see maps 1 & 2) and my family lived there for eleven years. Corpus Christi Primary School opened in Moyross in 1984 and my sister was a pupil in the first infant class. My mother was highly active within the community and was instrumental in establishing the first Parents Council in Corpus Christi Primary School. Before I was one, we moved to a nearby suburb three miles from Moyross, Meelick, just over the Clare border. I attended Meelick National School and throughout my time there my arts education was, in hindsight, limited. My main encounter with the arts was through music in the classroom and when I was in sixth class I played *Joseph* in the school nativity, where I had a solo and a duet. This was perhaps the first time that I sang in public and it is certainly one of my more positive and dominant memories of primary school. Later in the year, I was to sing a psalm at a school mass and during the rehearsal forgot the melody. Only the local priest and my classmates were in the church, and the priest publicly chastised me. Perplexed and in floods of tears I fled from the church back to the school. As a result of this experience I stopped singing. This event, in my mind, is juxtaposed with that of the positive experience of the nativity play and for many years the negative outweighed the positive. These experiences, along with occasional singing in class formed my arts engagement throughout my primary schooling.



Map 1 - The Different Counties of Ireland with Limerick Highlighted in Dark Green



Map 2 - Map of Limerick City and Suburbs with Moyross and Surrounding Communities Outlined

My four older siblings attended St. Nessan's Community College, the closest post-primary school, and so it was expected that my twin and I would also. Classes in St. Nessan's are streamed according to academic ability, which is determined through an entrance exam. In St. Nessan's, first year students are enrolled in various option subjects from September to Christmas and from January to May. Within these option subjects, because of my streaming, I was never enrolled in visual art and so throughout my first three years of post-primary school received no arts education, outside of engaging with poetry and literature in English class. Transition Year (TY) however, as is the nature of the programme, provided me with a variety of opportunities to engage in the arts, particularly music. At that time, and to this day, St. Nessan's did not have a music teacher but had a very gifted musician on staff, Ms. Dunne. Ms. Dunne took us for a double music class every week and so my love of music was reignited. The music class was very informal and we sat on our desks. Those who could play instruments did and everyone else sang. This experience was very positive and it was the class that I most looked forward to every week. Although we had a double visual art class in TY, we were very limited in the materials we were allowed use and our engagement was largely characterised by mimetics and replicating what the teacher had done or presented. After two or three classes my interest in visual art waned and music class became my primary focus.

During TY a woman named Ella came in to do a play with us, written by local Limerick playwright Mike Finn. Ella came in to work with us towards the start of the year and at this stage my predominant memory of engaging with the arts was that of my humiliation in the church. Making excuses as to why I couldn't be involved in the play, I assumed responsibility for sound and lights. Towards the end of TY the class presented the play at a competition for post-primary schools in Listowel and a second performance

for parents and school staff in the University of Limerick. The play formed the first half of the performance and the second half was a concert that the entire TY class performed in. In preparation for the concert Ms. Dunne asked me to sing a song and, not knowing which song to sing, I randomly picked *Danny Boy*. Rehearsing the song in the school, the entire class became quiet and as soon as I finished Ms. Dunne left the room to get Ms. O'Brien. Ms. Dunne returned with Ms. O'Brien and I sang the song again. This positive reaction was a pivotal moment in my arts engagement. The audience's positive reaction in the University of Limerick also spurred me on and my confidence began to grow. Arguably, TY served as the turning point in my arts engagement and is a milestone that I regularly return to.

Being interested in singing, I sought out a singing teacher in Limerick. I studied with this teacher for a year, after which point I began to realise that damage was being done to my voice. One day in St. Nessan's, a visitor to the school heard me sing and seemed to immediately recognise that I was having difficulty with my voice and recommended that I seek help from Olive Cowpar. Olive and I developed a very close relationship over the seven years that I studied with her and she began the slow process of rectifying the damage that had been done. Studying voice with Olive didn't just involve this however. Her husband, John, and she were regular theatregoers and arts lovers and attended every arts-based event that they could. They seemed to have adopted me as their son and I began to view them as my 'arts parents'. If you saw Olive and John at a play, an opera, or musical I was probably with them.

During this time I also began my undergraduate degree in Physical Education (PE) and English with concurrent teacher education at the University of Limerick. PE hadn't played a huge part in my life until university. PE in St. Nessan's was largely concerned with soccer and for nearly six years I made excuses as to why I had forgotten my gear. In sixth year, two student teachers led a Health Related Activity module with us for

six weeks. Seeing their passion and enthusiasm for PE ignited something within me and my passion began to grow. Having had a negative experience of PE at both primary and post-primary school I wanted to change the experience that others had with PE. During my undergraduate degree my passion for the arts and aesthetics was awakened as I engaged in modules in dance, gymnastics, literature and poetry, and English pedagogy. Arguably, the classes in English pedagogy had the greatest impact on me. Led by Carmel Hinchion and Deirdre Henchy, who were both arts advocates, we engaged in drama-in-education (DiE). Integrating the arts into the English and PE curricula was something that immediately intrigued me and so my love of the arts was deepened. Motivated by my English studies I began writing poetry and stories and after my undergraduate degree also took up photography.

Through studying voice with Olive my passion for the arts continued to grow and others influenced this also. In October 2006 I attended a musical theatre (MT) workshop run by Limerick actress and singer, Jean McGlynn. Jean's enthusiasm and fervour for theatre was readily communicated as she engaged the entire class. Singing with the rest of the group in this workshop gave me a sense of freedom and was an experience that I revered. As a result of my engagement in this workshop Jean asked me to be involved in *Bare Space Theatre Company*'s production of Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. During this production I was surrounded by a very talented and kind cast and crew, who unknowingly helped me take my first steps 'treading the boards'. Since that time, I have been in a number of MT and youth opera productions as well as a multitude of MT and classical concerts. Furthermore, in July 2012 I made my professional operatic debut with *Mid West Opera*, in Gustav Holst's *Savitri* as 'Death'.

Not being content with just having voice as an instrument, and encouraged by Olive, I began taking piano lessons at the age of nineteen. At the age of twenty-three I started formal ballet training (Cecchetti) and also qualified

as a gymnastics coach. At the age of twenty-four I began playing the clarinet and guitar, and earlier this year I began playing the harp. Furthermore, since starting my undergraduate degree, the arts have played a large part in my academic life. My undergraduate dissertation was an ethnographic study exploring the *Stolen Generation* in Aboriginal culture through the arts and the participants and I generated a performance of this through music and dance. This then led to continuing my studies under the supervision of Dr. Michael Finneran in Mary Immaculate College, where I also tutored undergraduate and postgraduate students in drama education, dance education, and gymnastics education.

Since TY my interest and engagement in the arts has deepened and the arts have opened up a wealth of social, cultural, and professional opportunities to me. Perhaps part of my motivation in engaging in this research is, as Hoffman Davis (2008, p.30) comments, to become an "agent of change". Having realised the wealth of opportunities that the arts have given me, I wish to pay this forward in providing others with a positive experience of arts education, in the hope that they too may realise its advantages and embrace the opportunities that it offers.

While the above narrative outlines my bias, I feel that it is further necessary to discuss how these have impacted upon my teaching. My teaching at primary, post-primary, and third level education has always had a social justice element, exposing and challenging inequities and taken-for-granted assumptions. Within this, I have always sought to create resonances with my students' lives and opportunities for critical evaluation. For example, generating resonances between their lived experience and the agonisingly evocative and self-deprecating poetry of Sylvia Plath, as captured in one of her final poems, *Child*, or identifying various vocal colours within a song and interrogating these in terms of our own lived experiences. Within the PE classroom this has manifested in, for example, infusing choreographic compositions with everyday movement and

experiences, and within the drama classroom through the wildly imaginative realities and experiences that we are enabled to create, explore, embellish and saturate ourselves in through the dramatic fictional lens. Each of these experiences attempts to encourage the development and acknowledgement of resonances with, as well as the integration of, lived experience. Deepening this, these experiences also seek to create opportunities to critically engage with and re-view our personal and social relationships, as well as the social structures within which we operate and perpetuate as agents of power (Foucault, 1977b). At times this has meant an interrogation of our own lived experience and at other times a questioning of the accepted hegemony both within the education system and society more generally. My teaching has always had a critical and social justice orientation. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) describe PAR as the pedagogical process through which ideals of critical pedagogy can be realised and enacted. Thus, in positioning PAR as one of the theoretical, philosophical, and methodological frames of the research, this critical and social justice orientation is extended into this study.

Darder *et al.* posit that "…all people have the capacity and ability to produce knowledge and to resist domination" (2009b, p.12). Many researchers and pedagogues would argue that the current education system offers "…less responsibility and autonomy than many young people are accustomed to in their lives outside school" (Rudduck and Flutter, 2010, p.86). Furthermore, some researchers have highlighted the means through which schools, as cultural institutions, disguise the power reproduction of the ruling classes through ideological hegemony (Lynch, 1989; Drudy and Lynch, 1993; Giroux, 2009a; Apple, 2013). In light of this, one could argue that the acknowledgement of a universal capacity for knowledge production within schools is often unrealised, unaccepted, or viewed as a threat (Kincheloe, 2007). Potentially, the questioning of this capacity stems from an orientation amongst educators to:

> …ignore or set aside the inequities, the indecencies, and the pressures of ideology [as well as ignoring the unequal

> transmission of knowledge] … all of which are functions of existing social structures and tendencies.
>
> (Greene, 1995, p.50-51)

By our very profession, educators are charged with not only engaging with the curricular demands of our subjects but to simultaneously create the opportunities for students to critically engage "…with classroom content, from their existing knowledge and the events and experiences that comprise their living history" (Darder *et al.*, 2009b, p.13). The purpose of educational critique is thus "…critical thinking in the interest of social change" (Giroux, 2009a, p.34). As Greene argues:

> [w]here oppression or exploitation or pollution or even pestilence is perceived as natural, as a given, there can be no freedom. Where people cannot name alternatives or imagine a better state of things, they are likely to remain anchored or submerged.
>
> (Greene, 1995, p.52)

The capacity to name, imagine, and act towards these alternatives are what Greene calls "imaginative futuring" (1995, p.50). It is this imaginative futuring that my teaching within my English, PE, and arts classrooms have sought to generate and instil. Furthermore, the theoretical underpinnings of this research– the arts, student voice, and PAR– are indomitably personal and espouse the personal embodiment of their philosophies. Thus, this imaginative futuring is an orientation that is also extended into this research.

In introducing the reader to this research, this chapter discusses the research continuum, provides an overview of the structure of the thesis, and outlines the primary research questions that motivated the project.

Research continuum

The research reported in this thesis forms part of a larger continuum of research, Phases 1 to 5 (Figure 1). Phase 1 was a comparative case study that sought to explore the comparison of how teaching development

education could be supported by the arts in two different post-primary contexts. One school was a post-primary secondary school and the other school was a post-primary community college that was involved in the DEIS initiative. The element of development education chosen for the project was the Rwandan Genocide. As well as the comparative element, other criteria for the two schools were; non-fee paying, co-educational, running a current TY programme in the academic year 2009/2010, a minimum of ten students enrolled in TY, and primarily English speaking. St. Nessan's fulfilled all of the criteria and was chosen as the DEIS school.

Phase 1 comprised of eighteen contact hours with students in each school, which were divided into twelve, one and a half hour workshops. The workshops were structured into three blocks, with four workshops in each block. As is the nature of arts-based educational research (ABER), the research posed many new questions as well as answering those that it initially sought to answer (Barone and Eisner, 2012). These emergent questions stemmed from observations made by both the students and me. In line with my own experience, one of the most striking observations from the research was the lack of arts experience that students in St. Nessan's had. Students attributed their negative attitude towards the arts to this lack of experience and their understanding that "the arts are for posh people."[3] Observing that their engagement with the arts throughout Phase 1 challenged their presumptions and biases in relation to the arts, the potential for attitudinal change became one of the central research questions for Phase 3. Phase 3 was engaged as an extra within the TY programme of St. Nessan's and was not offered in opposition to any other classes, but took place while scheduled classes were supposed to be on. Students who withdrew from Phase 3 simply attended their assigned classes. The research reported in this thesis forms Phases 3, 4, and 5 of the research continuum, as seen in Figure 1.

[3] Students perceived that they were unable to engage with the arts because they were of a lower social class. They associated the arts with the upper classes and initially expressed the view that the arts were for 'posh people'.

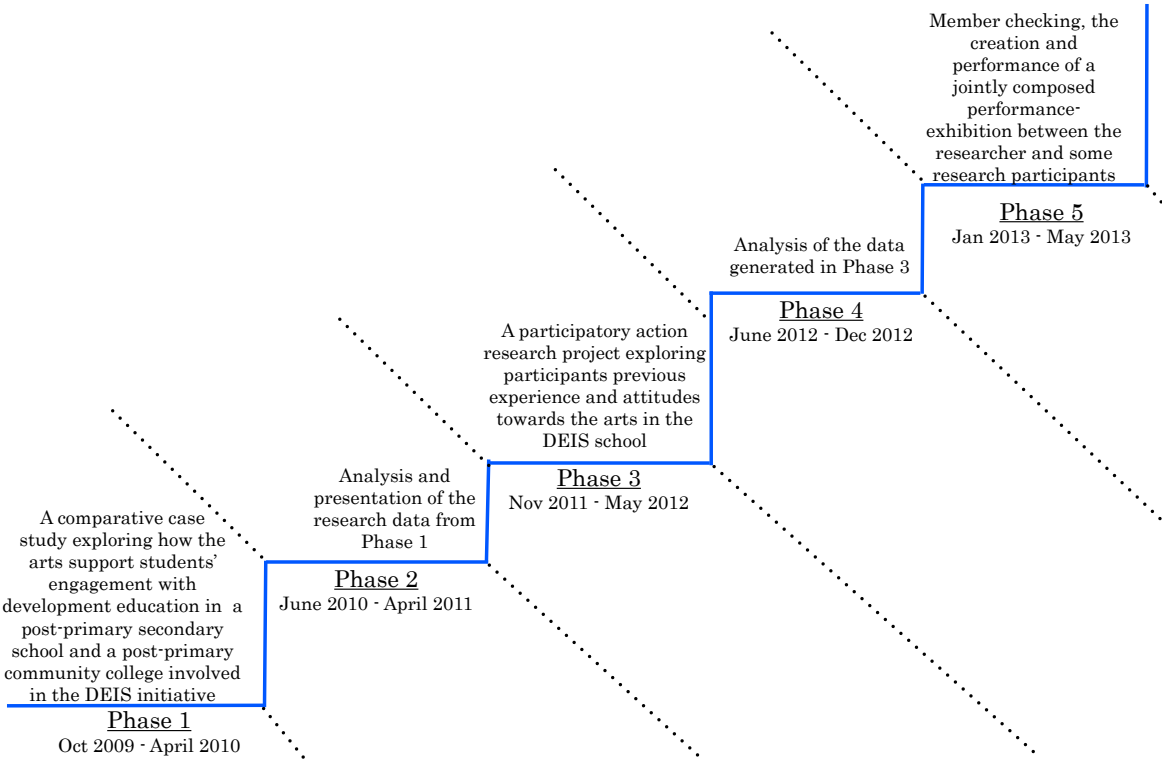


Figure 1 - Research Continuum

Research questions

The research questions that motivated this study were concerned with students' previous engagement and attitude towards the arts. Subsidiary questions were centred on the arts, the process, and the methods used.

- *What previous experiences do students have with the arts and what is their attitude towards the arts?*

  Findings from Phase 1 suggested that students had limited experience of the arts and this negatively impacted their attitudes towards the arts. A related finding was that students felt that their socio-economic status prevented them from engaging in the arts. As St. Nessan's was the DEIS school for Phase 1 and Phase 3, one of the aims of Phase 3 was to problematize and interrogate these findings, in order to ascertain and explore students' previous engagement with and their current attitudes towards the arts.

- *Why do students perceive a deficit of experience in the arts, in the context of DEIS funding?*

  St. Nessan's is in receipt of DEIS funding (Department of Education and Science, 2005a). One of the recommended guidelines for this funding is that part of it should be used to target the arts in the lives of students (Department of Education and Science, 2005a, p.45). Considering this, one of the subsidiary research questions was why students view themselves as having had limited exposure to and engagement with the arts. No formal reports exist on how schools have spent DEIS funding. Consequently, this research question seeks to ascertain whether DEIS funding has been used to provide opportunities for students to engage with the arts in St. Nessan's.

- *What is students' relationship with the arts in their school, community and wider socio-economic contexts?*

  There is currently a deficit of literature around students' engagement with the arts in DEIS schools and their wider community. This research question seeks to explore the students' relationship with the arts and ascertain the extent to which the students' school, community and wider socio-economic context impact this relationship.

- *Why is there a gap between the availability and uptake of arts-based programmes in the communities surrounding St. Nessan's?*

  Alongside the DEIS initiative many other programmes and organisations have been established with the aim of exposing this community to the arts. The deficit of experience from the students' perspective, poses questions regarding the impact of these programmes. Thus, there appears to be a gap between the availability and uptake of arts-based programmes.

- *To what extent can students be empowered, through the participatory action research process, to evaluate their previous engagement with the arts, levels of change agency, and recognise key learning opportunities?*

  Over the last number of years, researchers have explored co-construction

or co-planning in attempts to further involve participants in research (Burton, 2010; Morgan, 2011). This project challenged students to engage in the co-construction and participation of a series of workshops, which engaged, but were not confined to, the six areas of the arts (dance, drama, film, literature, music, and the visual arts) as defined by the Curriculum and Examinations Board (1985, p.6) The research combined the concept of co-construction with the inherently reflexive nature of PAR, in an effort to empower students to challenge their pre-existing assumptions and attitudes towards the arts. The intended outcome of the research was that there would be some change/action orientation.

- *What impact do social networking sites have on the research process?*
  "Social networking sites are amongst the most popular means of communication among young people today" (Ashworth, 2010, p.131). *Facebook* was chosen as the primary method of online communication with students due to their familiarity and day-to-day use of it. The *Facebook* page provided a platform where students could discuss different aspects of the workshops with each other, as well as communicate with the researcher (Waller, 2011).

In line with the original research questions, the original working title for the study was '*The Arts are for Posh People': A Participatory Action Research Project Exploring the Arts in a Transition Year Classroom*. As the research progressed, the research questions and title evolved, which can be seen in the title and content of the thesis. The research questions that emerged were:

What are students' previous experiences of the arts?

What are the students' attitudes towards the arts?

What role can the arts play in supporting, engaging and accessing student voice?

To what extent can students be empowered, through the PAR process, ABER and student voice, to evaluate their previous experience with the arts, levels of change agency, and recognise key learning opportunities?

To what extent can the arts be engaged as a tool in the articulation of voice and (re)presentation of experience?

Thesis structure

The thesis is structured into nine chapters. The following section seeks to unpack these chapters.

Chapter one

Chapter one seeks to provide an overview of the content and structure of the research.

Chapter two

Chapter two introduces the theoretical framework employed, by examining the theoretical foundations of ABER, PAR, and student voice, and details how transformative and emancipatory intent underpin each of these areas.

The section on ABER discusses the nature of it, as well as characterising what counts as ABER and who can engage with it. The arts are also positioned within an Irish and educational context. The section on PAR discusses: the origins and development of PAR; the concept of participation within it; PAR and Paulo Freire; and the emancipatory intent of PAR, drawing specifically on Habermas' theory of *communicative action*. The section on student voice opens with a personal, artistic understanding of voice before providing a macro view of student voice. It then historically retraces the student voice movement and how Ireland has responded to this, before discussing subjugated voices in voice research. The section then discusses the idea of silence and concludes with considerations when engaging voice in research, which includes alternative understandings of what voice might encompass as well as the necessity to value the sonority of voice.

PAR, student voice and ABER all attempt to disturb existing truths and taken for-granted-assumptions. Implicit within this disturbing is the re-negotiation of power relations. Thus, the next discussion in chapter two is around power. Specifically drawing on the work of Michael Apple (2012), Kathleen Lynch (1989), and Sheelagh Drudy and Kathleen Lynch (1993), power is discussed within the education system, and particularly within the Irish education system in relation to its perpetuation of inequality. The discussion then moves to educational disadvantage. This discussion unpacks definitions of educational disadvantage, discusses the potential impact of educational disadvantage, and discusses two approaches to defining educational disadvantage.

Chapter three

Chapter three opens with a discussion of my journey to PAR. It then continues with a discussion of the workings of PAR and how existing modes and phases have been adapted and engaged within this research (McIntyre, 2008; Enright and O'Sullivan, 2010). pARTicipatory methods[4] (PM) are then discussed; offering definitions of them, discussing the growing interest in them, the potential for PM to aid in voice articulation, and how they have the potential to generate a more democratic process that acts towards empowerment and transformation. The section on PM then discusses the relationship between them and the arts, and finally the PM that were engaged in this research. Implicit within the discussions on PAR and PM is a complexifying of the web of ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods.

The next section discusses data sources and how they were combined and merged during the research. Three types of data analysis are then discussed; grounded theory, thematic analysis, and visual analysis. In an effort to maximise transparency and trustworthiness and in response to

[4] Although referred to as participatory methods throughout the literature, I feel that pARTicipatory methods acknowledges the arts-based nature of the methods.

arts-based and qualitative researchers' calls for alternative validity criteria (Leavy, 2009), a section on validation strategies is also included with specific reference to Creswell's (2007) validation strategies. Deepening this, Herr and Anderson's (2005) criteria for validity within action research (AR) is also discussed. Chapter three then concludes with a brief discussion on the ethical considerations and measures taken to ensure that the participants[5], the research community, and researcher were exposed to minimal risk.

Chapter four

Chapter four can be best understood as the exposition of the thesis, introducing the reader to the characters, the setting, and foreshadowing some of the action. Prior to this exposition there is a brief discussion of Transition Year (TY). This discussion focuses on the development of TY and provides an overview of the programme, specifically relating to the *Transition Year Programmes: Guidelines for Schools* (Department of Education, 1993). The exposition, per se, then begins with an introduction to the communities surrounding St. Nessan's, particularly the community of Moyross where the majority of research participants live. A focus is then drawn to the school and a discussion of the history and development of St. Nessan's, its relationship with the DEIS initiative, and the culture of the arts within the school. The participants are then discussed, specifically the intersections at which they meet, their relationship with TY, and the arts within their community.

Chapter five

Chapter five is the first of three discussion chapters in relation to Phase 3. The style within the discussion chapters is more narrative in nature, in acknowledgement that "…the final result [of research] is a story" (Clandinin and Murphy, 2007, p.636). The chapters were also offered to participants to read.

[5] In line with the nature of PAR, the term participants will be used for those engaged in the research.

Chapter five begins the discussion of power within the research. It documents varying power struggles; how they were initiated and maintained, and included the participants, school staff, and I. Resistance as a form of power struggle is specifically discussed (Fine, 2007b). This section also discusses the necessity to "respectfully push back" (Smith *et al.*, 2010, p.422) against school staff who attempted to assert their own agenda and manipulate the PAR process.

The second section of chapter five discusses participation in the process, particularly the link between power and participation. Specifically, participants' determinants of participation are discussed; what contributed towards and militated against participation. Instances where participants chose to remove themselves from activities are then discussed.

Chapter six

Chapter six continues the research narrative through a discussion of student voice, co-construction, and social media. The section on student voice documents the ways in which participants expressed their voices and the role of PM within this. Varying sites of transformation for participants are also discussed (Leahy and Gilly, 2009); places where they expressed their voices. The discussion also notes various groups that participants' felt oppressed their voices, their individual and collective response to this, and the complex silent voice that was encountered. Difficulties with voice in the research are then outlined.

Co-construction is largely linked to the PAR framework, student voice, and the arts. Changes in thinking about the nature of co-construction are discussed, as well as the necessity to reconceptualise what counts as co-construction or collaboration. The discussion also includes the participants' perceived roles, and the varying contributants to co-construction. The section on social media discusses the role of *Facebook* within the research.

Chapter seven

Chapter seven, the final discussion chapter on Phase 3, is concerned with the arts. The chapter opens with a discussion of participants' previous experiences and attitudes towards the arts. Two specific approaches to the arts– discipline based arts education and integrated-applied arts– which were employed during the research are discussed. Inherent within this discussion is participants' response to the various arts-based workshops. Participants' barriers to the arts are then discussed, which sharply contrast many of their desires to be engaged in the arts. The different arts in participants' lives and their communities are then discussed through their photo-diaries. The chapter concludes with a discussion of participants' attitudes towards the arts at the close of Phase 3.

Chapter eight

Chapter eight seeks to continue the narritavisation from Phase 3 to Phase 5 and is underpinned by the assertions that "…knowledge gained through [PAR must] become part of people's lives" (Swantz, 2008, p.45) and that alternative modes of data representation are "…transformational in process and representation" (Knowles and Promislow, 2008a, p.2). Phase 5 of the research was concerned with member checking of the data and sought to work with participants to co-generate and present a performance-exhibition. The process and presentation of the performance-exhibition formed the final stage of PAR, action orientation/change agency (Enright and O'Sullivan, 2010). Phase 5 also facilitated the development and expression of the participants' and my voice through the arts. The chapter documents the pieces that were generated for the performance-exhibition and the teachers' responses to the exhibition. It concludes with a brief discussion of the different audiences for ABER and alternative modes of representation (Barone, 2008a).

Chapter nine

Chapter nine seeks to create synergies with the previous chapters, using Herr and Anderson's (2005) indicators for quality in PAR. Prior to the discussion of quality within the research, the limitations of the research are outlined. The findings of the research, the impact of the research on various communities, and recommendations for future research are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

"I never made a painting as a work of art, it's all research."
Pablo Picasso (cited in McNiff, 2008, p.29)

Foundational Ontologies & Epistemologies in the Arts: ABER

Introduction

Defining the arts or establishing what they are is, surprisingly, no easy task. Though many authors have inferred meanings and areas of significance within the arts, few define what is to be included within this remit. Within an Irish context, the Curriculum and Examinations Board (1985, p.6) defines the arts as the six areas of dance, drama, film, literature, music and the visual arts, "…each of which is itself a generic term for a range of significant human experiences created and understood symbolically." The primary school curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999) defines the arts as "…organised expression of ideas, feelings and experiences in images, in music, in language, in gesture and in movement" (p.2). Internationally, the arts have been defined in a myriad of ways; as "[c]reations that express their makers' views of the world, tell the stories of their lives, or describe and question their realities" (Hoffman Davis, 2008, p.118), as well as all forms of representation that generate emotion (Eisner, 2008a; Barone and Eisner, 2012). It should be noted that each of these definitions are from Western culture and that many cultures around the world have no single conceptual framework for the arts (Nettl, 1956; 2005). Viewing these definitions chronologically, it can be argued that the arts, in contemporary Western society, are viewed in a more holistic fashion. This holistic view acknowledges the potential for them to be present in areas outside of the traditionally viewed arts. These areas uniquely engage its participants in creative and meaningful experience and representation.

In line with other arts-based researchers (Eisner, 2002; 2006; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Leavy, 2009; Barone and Eisner, 2012), I share the view that

the arts have much to offer social science and educational researchers. As a form of educational and academic inquiry, however, the arts have traditionally been a bone of contention within research (Eisner, 2008b). Many of these contentions have been centred on debates of the purposes, uses, benefits, and appropriateness of the arts, particularly within the field of academic research, which will be explored further within this and subsequent chapters.

As concepts, arts-based educational research (ABER) and arts-based research (ABR)[6] seek to offer researchers a means of making our thinking "…clearer, fresher, and more public in rendering the richness and complexity of the observed world" (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p.13). In this way, they present researchers with opportunities for expanding their capacities for creativity and knowing, thus "…creating a healthy synthesis of approaches to collect, analyse and represent data in ways that paint a full picture of a heterogeneous movement to improve education" (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p.4).

As a field of research, ABER developed in the 1980s and 1990s through the influential and pioneering work of Elliot Eisner, Maxine Greene, and Tom Barone. Although the field is gaining increasing standing, which can be witnessed in the many international journals publishing ABR and ABER work, it is still considered one of the newer and emergent fields of qualitative and educational inquiry (Eisner, 1997). While one may expect discussions around ABER to position themselves in opposition to more established fields of inquiry, Cahnmann-Taylor cautions against this attempt to legitimise ABER when she argues that "…arts-based researchers do no service to themselves to define their methods in opposition to more traditional approaches to inquiry" (2008, p.4). She suggests that ABER be embraced alongside more traditional modes of inquiry in an effort to provide

[6] ABR is an umbrella term that encompasses ABER. As this work is set in an educational setting and the focus is on arts education, ABER will be used from hereon.

a fuller view of the field and ultimately combine to improve educational standards and research. ABER, thus, does not move against traditional modes of inquiry but seeks to "…offer researchers alternatives to traditional research methods that may fail to 'get at' the particular issues they are interested in" (Leavy, 2009, p.3-4). In doing so, it "…tak[es] researchers in directions that the sciences cannot go" (Rolling, 2010, p.110). In offering this, ABER seeks to generate "…knowledge based on resonance and understanding" (Leavy, 2009, p.2; see also Hoffman Davis, 2008). In this way, ABER is not established as an alternative to traditional paradigms but as a complimentary methodological genre within them. As Rolling argues, "[a]rts-based research practices manifest themselves … flowing over, through, around, and under scientific and social scientific, quantitative, and qualitative epistemologies" (2010, p.107).

While ABER has been employed within other fields of inquiry and shares many similarities with these fields, it is uniquely different. Rolling (2010, p.108) discusses how ABER is proliferative, as it:

> …interrogates in a way that generates turbulence, ambiguity, the miscegenation of categories, and an *expanding* discourse that proliferates possibility and seepages of alterity rather than reducing them.

ABER, consequently, disrupts traditional research paradigms (Leavy, 2009). This disruption, however, should not be viewed as a negative, as it can serve to provoke action, both individually and collectively, and instigate dialogue amongst communities (Greene, 1995). This disruption can also lead both researchers and participants to a re-viewing of their social worlds and accepted beliefs (Barone and Eisner, 2012).

Lincoln (1995) posits that new areas of research must adhere to certain standards of writing. In line with this, I have attempted to adhere to these criteria throughout this research. Lincoln's criteria state that the research should:

- Display the author's own contextual grounds for argumentation (positionality)
- Address the group of people in which the research was carried out (community)
- Engage and include persons who might otherwise be silenced or marginalized (voice)
- Explore the author's understanding of his or her psychological and emotional states before, during, and after the research experience (critical subjectivity and reflexivity), and
- Demonstrate openness and sharing among researchers and participants who are collaborators in research and in reflexive practice (reciprocity)

(Lincoln, 1995 cited in Finley, 2003)

What characterises ABER and who can be an arts-based educational researcher?

The question of what characterises ABER and who can engage in it has undoubtedly plagued many social science, educational, and arts researchers. The uncertainty around these questions stem from a caution towards the approach, which can be attributed to its *newness*. In short, ABER can be considered to have been engaged by any social science research, or more specifically educational research, if their research involves the arts as either a methodological tool or as the focus for their investigation (Eisner, 2008b; Leavy, 2009). This involvement can occur at any stage, as researchers engage their craft of composing, orchestrating, and weaving their research; which can include the traditional iterative stages of data collection, analysis, interpretation and representation (Leavy, 2009).

The arts are modes of representation and the broad spectrum of their applicability is one of their strengths. An additional strength of ABER is its unique ability to consecutively engage a number of educational parties.

These educational parties involve but are not limited to; teachers who engage the arts in their everyday teaching, social science researchers who engage their participants in the arts, and educational researchers who engage in painting, drawing, writing poetry, dancing, composing and creating music, and performing one-act plays etc. (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). In this way, and unlike other research methods that seek to create a privilege around participation, ABER strives to encompass *all* persons and parties engaging the arts in their educational teaching and research. Within this realm of participation, ABER reflects its democratic positioning in helping to "…rethink the social of social science research and offering openings for shifts in power and the reframing of the terms of engagement" (Gallagher, 2008a, p.69). The focus within this democratic frame is meaningful and voluntary participation as opposed to the coercion and manipulation of others to participate. ABER ideally functions within a democratic community where research participants are included in decision-making and the structuring of the research, as opposed to being researched.

Another characterisation of the arts and ABER are their centrality on emotion and imagination (Greene, 1995; Eisner, 2008a; 2008b; Hoffman Davis, 2008). In line with its artistic foundations and tools, ABER focuses on actively engaging its participants through their lived experience as well as their imagined experience. In doing so, it engages the emotion and imagination attached to both realms. The empathetic, emotional and imaginative characteristics of ABER are strongly linked to its emancipatory intent; "[e]mpathy is a means to understanding, and strong empathic feelings may provide deep insight into what others are experiencing" (Eisner, 2008a, p.6). In a similar fashion, Maxine Greene (1995) contends that through imagination one is enabled to gain sight of a world full of possibilities, a world of change, a new or re-envisioned world. Furthering this, Barone & Eisner (2012, p.16) also recognise the potential of the arts to:

> …persuade the readers or percipients of the work (including the artist herself) to revisit the world from a different direction, seeing it through fresh eyes, and thereby calling into question a singular, orthodox point of view.

What underpins ABER?

Dewey (1934, p.2) said "…mountain peaks do not float unsupported." Similarly, ABER as we have come to know it does not exist in the isolation of twenty first century thought, but is supported by the myriad of philosophers and educationalists who laid its foundations. As a field of inquiry, ABER has been strongly influenced by the theoretical positioning and works of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Howard Gardner, Elliot Eisner, Maxine Greene and many of their contemporaries. In the early twentieth century, Dewey argued that "…education in order to accomplish its ends … must be based upon experience" (1938, p.89). In extending this, he also argued that it is only through the generation of meaningful experience that students can truly become educated. On this, the arts provide students with a plethora of opportunities to generate distinctive and unique experience (Dewey, 1934), through which they can deepen their engagement with both the arts and their education more generally. These experiences can be further understood when viewed in light of the work of Howard Gardner. Gardner's (1983) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* has greatly influenced our understanding of the arts' capacity to provide unmatched and diverse experiences. The arts unique provision of opportunities for engagement are not confined within one of Gardner's defined intelligences but span a number of them, thus increasing the potential educational opportunities for students.

Building on and developing the work of both Dewey and Gardner, Eisner's work on arts education has been paramount to the development of the field. Furthering their work, Eisner argues that one of the aims of the arts is to foster the growth of intelligence and, like Dewey, conceives the role of education as providing meaningful experience so that pupils "…learn how to secure wide varieties of meaning and deepen them over time" (2002, p.45). Eisner (2002) explicates these 'varieties' as aiding students in recognising

what is personal, distinctive and unique about themselves and their work through generating an awareness of individuality and the creation of a personal vision. He also explains the importance of children acknowledging their role in the creation and interpretation of visual images, other visual forms, and culture (see also Hoffman Davis, 2008). In engaging in these experiences one can view experience with the arts as a consequential process "…through which the self is remade" (Eisner, 2002, p.12).

Many aspects of this thesis engage the work of educationalist and philosopher Paulo Freire. Freire's seminal text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), laid the foundations for a revolution in education that has directly shaped our current system. All facets of education were influenced by Freire's ground-breaking work and the field of ABER was no different. As a field of inquiry, ABER engages many Freirian ideals in an attempt to involve its participant in a radical and new age methodology and pedagogy that is responsive to the cultural context within which it occurs. Some of the most notable areas of Freire's writing that are engaged by ABER are: his move against the *banking model of education*; his ideals of *praxis* and *conçientization*; and his ideas of *cultural action*, *cultural invasion* and *cultural synthesis* (Freire, 1970). Through the adoption and integration of these ideals, ABER attempts to engage students in a process that attempts to generate recognition of their own oppression and challenges them to question readily accepted ideals and knowledge as a means of generating meaningful and authentic learning experiences. Through this it moves towards a sense of empowerment and action. Furthermore, the philosophical work of Maxine Greene (1995) asserts that it is only through engagement with the imagination that one can be enabled to act upon states of oppression in order to transform them.

As well as the adoption of Freirian ideals, Gardner, Dewey, and Eisner's work around intelligence, education, and the arts, ABER asserts a postmodern stance in terms of how it views the world, the research process

and its outcomes. Unlike other forms of research, ABER is unique in its; rejection of concrete and objective knowledge, celebration of ambiguity in the problems posed and answers derived, inherently flexible within the process to account for cognitive or cultural shifts, embellishes in the context specificity of the process and outcomes as well as the innate uniqueness of each research project, and the almost inevitable generation of more questions than answers (Barone, 1995; Greene, 1995; Eisner, 1997; 2006; Barone, 2008b; Eisner, 2008a; Finley, 2008; Barone and Eisner, 2012). ABER, thus, recognises the uniqueness of each research inquiry and perceives and celebrates this uniqueness as a strength and support rather than a limitation, holding that knowledge is contextually bound.

Similarly to the way that the arts provide us with new and alternative insights and perspectives, ABER recognises the importance of viewing situations through a variety of lenses so that through our employment of "…forms of thinking that are indigenous to the arts … [one can] see what we had not noticed, to feel what we had not felt" (Eisner, 2002, p.12). In this way, ABER distinctly promotes the inclusion and questioning of all perspectives as a means of deepening engagement with the research. Thus, through its multi-vantage perspective, rejection of absolute knowledge, and celebration of "…meanings that are partial, tentative, incomplete and sometimes even contradictory" (Barone, 2001, p.152-153), ABER further acknowledges its postmodern foundations. ABER's reflection of its postmodern principles and ideals can also be seen methodologically in its foundations and ethics of participative, action-oriented, and politically situated perspectives. ABER, as a methodology, is thus uniquely positioned for radical, ethical and revolutionary research that is futuristic, socially responsible, and useful in addressing social inequities (Finley, 2008).

ABER and emancipation

The foundation stones of ABER can be regarded as its participative, action-oriented and political nature. Deepening this and beginning with the former, through the variety of forms and the pragmatic approach that it offers, ABER seeks to engage participants within art forms and also in decision-making around areas of engagement that affect them. By engaging participants in active decision-making ABER seeks to subvert the current autocratic educational structures in an imagining of what could be (Greene, 1995). Through this it also strives for a more democratic[7] form of research, where participants' perspectives are valued and held in as high regard as that of the researcher. Within this process, ABER challenges participants to critically engage and take ownership of their own learning and engagement.

Participants are consequently challenged to re-view the world around them through a variety of lenses and unaccustomed angles which may lead to the realisation that "…the world perceived from one place is not *the* world" (Greene, 1995, p.19, emphasis in original). ABER combines these various lenses and stimulates participants into viewing the world differently, through questioning and rethinking societal norms and taken-for-granted assumptions (O'Neill, 2010). ABER thus engages students in viewing, analysing, questioning and re-viewing the world in which they live in an effort to orient them towards a sense of personal and social action (Greene, 1995; Barone, 2008b). Eisner (2006, p.17) describes this orientation as a "revolution in awareness", which ensures that ABER remains politically driven through its deliberate and unashamed action-orientation.

In terms of social inequities, ABER also has the potential to act as a subversive political force by exposing oppression, targeting sites of

[7] Democracy is not used in the political sense within this thesis but is understood, as Freire defines it, as the process of respecting and tolerating others. This democracy is not achieved through "…spiritual words but with reflection and practice. It is not what I say that says I am a democrat, that I am not a racist or machista, but what I do" (Freire, 2005, p.119)

resistance, and outlining possibilities for transformative *praxis* (Finley, 2008). As an emancipatory pedagogy ABER has to be relocated in the local, personal, and everyday lives and events of students. In doing so, it seeks to generate an action-oriented world view that grounds the emergent findings from its inquiry in the communities that they originate from (Finley, 2003). This requires that the arts and social research be translocated from the formalised academies and institutions and grounded in everyday, realistic experiences that are "…so closely bound with the lives of humans" (Dewey, 1934, p.5). It is only through this relocation that ABER, as an emancipatory and critically engaged pedagogy, can confront "…the oppressions of everyday life" (Finley, 2008, p.73).

What are the tensions that exist in ABER?

While the discussions in this section are exclusively around ABER, they do not suggest that ABER stands alone in its opposition to more objective models of research. It is, thus, recognised that many of the tensions that exist within ABER also exist within other approaches to qualitative inquiry, such as ethnography, autoethnography, and narrative inquiry. Consequently, many of the tensions and challenges explored in this section could be extrapolated to other approaches of qualitative inquiry. As with other qualitative approaches to inquiry, ABER literature identifies a number of tensions, which are both internal and external to the field. Both sets of tensions however mirror each other and those who advocate for ABER often share tensions found external to the field. Many of these tensions originate from the positivist and traditionally quantitative fields of inquiry, which place privilege in the arms of quantifiable, objective and *true* facts and statistics. In contrast, ABER is more situationally located and specific to each of the sites that it engages. Moreover, ABER reflects the ideals and attitudes of the researcher and this, consequently, impacts the work. In this way, ABER's upfront subjectivist, interpretivist standpoint can be contrasted with research traditions that exclusively seek objectivity

and empiricism. This view is noted as providing a unique and valuable perspective, which further adds to the holistic and personal nature of the research process (Creswell, 2007; Leavy, 2009; Barone and Eisner, 2012). In discussing the subjectivity of ABER, Dixon and Senior (2009, p.5) note the "…persistent belief that the lack of objectivity associated with 'creative' representations can be overcome with conventional devices of research". They continue, however, to state that such devices (tables, diagrams, and charts) "…may just be a mask and every bit as much an element of discourse as any sophisticated or creative piece of writing, image or any other media" (*ibid.*). In addition, Eisner (2008a) posits the *necessity* for subjectivity when working with the arts as, he argues, subjectivity is a requirement for empathy, which is itself a unique facet of artistic engagement and experience.

Furthermore, traditionally one of the strengths of quantitative research was its ability to claim 'truth' that was objectively held and rigorously tested. Kincheloe (2004, p.24), however, discusses how truth cannot be objectively held, as to be objective negates the innately personal and truthful relationship between nature and culture, which "…change continuously and interdependently". In relation to the arts, Irish playwright, Brian Friel, (1999, p.16) argues that:

> [t]he arts grow and wither and expand and contract erratically and sporadically … Flux is their only constant; the crossroads their only home; impermanence their only yardstick.

Likewise, ABER is continually in flux, as it reacts and responds to the action inherent within the social, political, and cultural spheres in which it occurs. By constantly shaping and re-shaping, the intention of ABER is to generate a more meaningful and personal experience for its participants and leaders, through which it idealistically deepens the democratic relationship between both.

Furthering this tension between more positivist and interpretivist orientations, positivist research has traditionally provided the gold standard

in terms of issues of reliability, validity and other scientific criteria. Crewsell (2007), however, outlines the necessity for modern methodological approaches to reinvent conceptions of validity and reliability[8]. ABER, as a relatively new and evolving methodological approach stands within this frame. Accepting this does not negate the necessity for traditional scientific criteria, it simply calls for a renegotiation and reworking of them (Kincheloe, 2004; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Eisner, 2008b; Leavy, 2009; Rolling, 2010).

Further exploring the tensions within ABER, Gallagher (2008a, p.67) identifies tensions that exist within research when one becomes a 'doer'. Being a 'doer', in Gallagher's eyes, stands in opposition to being an 'observer' within the research process, namely an active participant as opposed to a more isolated viewer. Considering the wholly participative nature of ABER, Gallagher's observation bears consideration. Gallagher cautions that as a 'doer' you have the potential to be in an area "…of not knowing how it is you know something" (2008a, p.67). She doesn't view this as a negative, however, and implies that one has the potential, in this case, to go about figuring out the 'something'. One has a choice to remain within this sphere of 'doer' or to mediate the duality between 'doer' and 'observer'. Gallagher's view is closely aligned to Eisner's (2008a) postulation that, "[t]hrough art we come to feel, very often, what we cannot see directly" (p.8). Thus, ABER presents a situation where one can become to know more about himself/herself or indeed the process that they are engaged in.

One tension internal and external to the field is concerned with researchers' qualifications, knowledgebase and expertise. ABER naturally crosses a multitude of disciplinary boundaries and within this the arts are no exception. ABER presents the potential for a researcher/teacher and participants/students to be engaged in a number of art forms within one class/workshop and this raises the question of qualification within each of

[8] This will be further expanded upon in chapter three.

the art forms. On this, Piirto questions, "[i]s it necessary to have studied or performed the art in order to attempt to do it, display or perform it, use it?" (2002, p.432). Responses to Piirto's question are varied and this variation is, in a sense, one of the tensions amongst arts-based researchers. Piirto argues that it is not acceptable, within academia, to simply have one's work peer reviewed, one must pose the question of whether you are "…qualified as artist-researcher" (2002, p.432). Piirto's conclusion, specific to artistic work generated for scholarship's sake, is that the researcher-artist must fulfil one of two requirements:

> …only those students who have at least an undergraduate minor (and preferably a major in a domain in which they want to work. … As for others who want … to make art for qualitative research high-stakes products, … I recommend that they first take at least 20 semester hours in the discipline in which they want to do the arts-based work, or demonstrate peer-review and a record of exhibits of their art. Then is it truly arts-*based*. Then the art itself and its way of knowing are respected.
>
> (Piirto, 2002, p.443-444)

Although quite rigid in her assertion of requiring one of these criteria to be met if one is to engage in art for scholarship's sake, Piirto does not negate those with extensive professional training who attempt to engage in arts-based work. According to her, however, it is not arts-based but is "art-like" (Piirto, 2002, p.433). Piirto's requirements for the generation of artistic work for scholarship's sake place privilege on formal qualification and do not consider the many informal arts practices that are recognised as masterful, professional, and requiring great skill. In doing so, Piirto's requirements negate the vast wealth of experience, informal qualification, and professional knowledgebase that is generated within informal arts practices.

Acknowledging that engaging in the planning and execution of arts-based work requires a professional knowledgebase–

> [a]rt for scholarship's sake is grounded in extensive artistic training and aims to imbue art with socially engaged meaning from research and imbue socially engaged research with art (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p.10-11)–

there is an openness to fully engaging researchers within a 'hybrid' form of ABR, scholARTistry (Knowles and Promislow, 2008b). Thus, there is an understanding that:

> …all researchers, regardless of prior artistic training, can develop artistic sensibilities in data analysis and draw on artistic craft to elicit data and share findings. Likewise, we believe all youth and adults should be encouraged to engage in the arts to the greatest extent possible regardless of whether or not they pursue years of specialized training to become 'artists' in the traditionally elitist sense of the term.
>
> (Siegesmund and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p.243)

Cahnmann-Taylor (2008) concludes that in sharing the process and products of ABER with a larger readership than that of a typical educational study one is creating a more immediate and lasting impact. She states that "…educational researchers cannot lose by acquiring and applying techniques employed by artists as well as scientists" (2008, p.13).

In addition to tensions around qualification of arts-based researchers, many arts-based researchers and others external to the field question the quality of the work generated as research. On this, Piirto (2002) focuses solely on the aesthetic dimensions of the work as a means of verification within the field. In contrast, Rolling states that:

> [t]here is no one set criteria for judging the artistic quality of a work of arts-based research just as there is no one paradigm for the beauty of a work of art– for some, the beauty of a work of art is in the aesthetics of its forms and the mastery of its techniques; for others, it is in the authenticity and expressiveness of voice; and still for others, in the incisiveness of its social critique.
>
> (2010, p.105)

Similarly, Lahman et al. (2010) recognise the complexity and tensions surrounding debates of quality within ABER. Their *working criteria* for those who wish to engage in ABR, and more specifically poetic works, is that one must engage as an audience member or participant– as a means of generating experience– in the art form through which they are generating scholARTistic work. They also add an ephemeral criteria, quoting Emily

Dickinson– who, by Piirto's standards would be unqualified to engage in arts-based work–

> [i]f I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?
> (Todd, 2003, p.265, cited in Lahman et al., 2010, p.47)

Looking towards the future of ABER, Cahnman-Taylor (2008) suggests that more explicit training for those willing to be engaged in arts-based research needs to occur so that researchers can more readily embrace the tools and techniques required for the development of ABER and scholARTistic work. As well as Cahnman-Taylor (2008), Eisner (2006) also calls for the establishment of a critical community for ABER so that the field can continue to gain strength within qualitative inquiry. Cahnmann-Taylor's caveat extends from her concerns that:

> [t]here are still more researchers writing *about* arts-based research criteria than those producing examples of what it looks like in each area of the literary, visual, and performing arts.
> (2008, p.12)

Acknowledging the inherent difficulties within the development of the field, she states that:

> [w]e may not all be poets, dancers, or painters, but we can all draw on the arts to craft poetic discourse analysis or artful case studies – renderings that realize the heights of artistic as well as scholarly potential, challenging the academic marginality of our work.
> (Cahnmann-Taylor 2008, p.13)

In terms of this holistic processional focus, Barone and Eisner note that a critical feature of ABER is that it "…employs aesthetic dimensions in both its inquiry and representational phases" (2012, p.13). That is, ABER must engage the arts in all parts of the research (Barone, 2008b; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Finley, 2008; Leavy, 2009) and in doing so holds the potential to provide a "public service" (Barone and Eisner, 2012, p.13) that might otherwise be unavailable.

The arts and Ireland

Both traditionally and within contemporary society, the arts have been a foundation stone of our national identity, from the harp music of O'Carolan, the historical vocal ballads of Moore, the various traditional movements of dance and music, the poetry of W.B. Yeats, the art works of various artists such as J.B. Yeats, and the literary works of authors such as Bram Stoker, James Joyce, and Brian Friel. As a nation, Ireland is renowned world wide for its artistic endeavours and achievements. However, this artistic focus and experience does not translate into the educational structures and experience of the Irish education system. This is acknowledged by Granville (2013, p.35) who states, "[t]he arts have never been central to the educational experience of Irish students." Tracing the historical constructs of the arts, particularly visual art (art, craft, and design as it is termed at post-primary) within the Irish education system, Granville continues to discuss how visual art, and I would argue the arts more generally, have been viewed as "…potentially significant but never placed at the centre of teaching and learning" (2013, p.35). One can see evidence of Granville's assertion in looking at various reports that emerged during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. *Deaf Ears* (Herron, 1985) highlighted the extent to which music education was not engaged in primary and post-primary schools and the lack of importance that was placed on it and other areas of the arts. Furthermore, the report documents how music education was engaged through the "…mediocrity of random assignment" (Herron, 1985, 1.5.5) and was "…not considered sufficiently important to merit … special attention" (Herron, 1985, 1.6.2). Furthermore, the Benson report (Benson, 1979) and the *Green Paper on Education* (Department of Education and Science, 1992) both identified "…the need for adequate provision of arts subjects in Irish education" (Benson, 1979, 8.2). Supporting Granville's assertion of the arts' lack of centrality within the education system, these reports are both examples of policy that remain unfulfilled.

Acknowledging the myriad of artistic forms that are synonymous with Irish culture and society, the revised primary school curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999) sought to reflect this. The revised curriculum saw visual art, drama, and music included as stand-alone subjects and offered opportunities for engagement with dance through the PE curriculum. Similarly, literary engagement through the study and composition of poetry and prose is offered through the English curriculum. The primary school curriculum seeks to not only engage the art forms in their stand-alone form but also to integrate them across the various curricula (*ibid.)*.

In contrast to primary school education, the subject specialist nature (in terms of teachers' qualifications and the isolation of subjects) of post-primary education militates against a wholly inclusive and integrated curriculum. In a high stakes examination system, accompanied by competing pressure within and amongst schools, there is less focus on the integration of curricula and more focus on student achievement in the Junior Certificate (JC) and Leaving Certificate (LC) examinations. While there are three stand-alone arts subjects outlined in the primary school curriculum, only two of these subjects are carried through to post-primary education; visual art and music. Dissimilarly to primary school, at post-primary level drama is subsumed within the remit of the already tightly packed English curriculum. At both JC and LC levels dramatic texts are included on the syllabus. However, they are studied for examination purposes as texts and not performances. Furthermore, the teacher guidelines for English at JC suggest the inclusion of drama-in-education (DiE) techniques. This, however, is generally not realised as time constraints, lack of space, and teachers' discomfort and lack of expertise with integrating drama into the various curricular dimensions militates against this. Similar to the way drama is integrated within the English curriculum, dance is integrated into the PE curriculum where, as one of the seven strands, it seeks to "…provide a context for aesthetic and artistic experience" (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2003, p.33).

From personal experience as a PE teacher, dance, as one of the seven curricular strands, is often not engaged at all throughout students' post-primary education.

With this in mind, there is a very real possibility that students may not experience dance or drama throughout their years in post-primary school. Considering the optional nature of visual art and music, it can thus be argued that some students may have no arts education throughout their post-primary education.

In terms of the structures present within the Irish context, the primary orientation of both visual art and music in post-primary schools is of a discipline based arts education (DBAE) approach. Eisner (2002, p.25) defines DBAE as one of the "aims of arts education". Students' engagement with the arts in post-primary school is primarily through DBAE, that is, a focus on visual art or music in isolation from other subjects. Consequently, many young people's only engagement with the arts is through this DBAE approach.

This DBAE approach within JC and LC may be attributed to the exam-focused nature of the subjects. In contrast to this approach, the goals of the TY[9] programme provide for a more integrated and aesthetic approach to the arts, one more closely aligned with Eisner's visions of 'visual culture' and 'integrated arts' (2002, p.28&39). In breaking away from DBAE, TY provides the experimental space required to test and try out new approaches to the arts. While in theory this is of great benefit to the students, the reality within schools is that the teachers responsible for this more integrated approach to the arts are the visual art/music/English teacher, who often perceive themselves to lack the training required to plan

[9] TY is conceived as a gap year between junior cycle and senior cycle. It attempts to provide an alternative educational experience to the JC and LC. There is no established curriculum for TY and schools are encourage to develop a curriculum in response to the needs of their students. TY will be outlined in more detail in chapter four.

and lead a comprehensive and meaningful integrated arts education programme. This is not a criticism of these teachers; it is a criticism of the education system that fails to provide alternatives to DBAE, even when the curriculum facilitates it.

Findings from Phase 1 found disparity in students' responses towards DBAE and more integrated approaches in the selected post-primary schools. All pupils had been exposed to DBAE previously. Students in the post-primary secondary school had experienced DBAE outside of school through private tuition as well as through the visual art and music curricula. In contrast, students in St. Nessan's (the post-primary community college involved in the DEIS initiative) had primarily experienced DBAE through arts practitioners coming into school to work with them and through the visual art curriculum. Students in the post-primary secondary school quite comfortably engaged in DBAE but expressed their discomfort in engaging in a more integrated approach, stating that they saw little value in it because it wasn't contributing towards learning for their LC exam. In contrast, pupils in St. Nessan's refused to engage in DBAE as they perceived themselves as being unable to engage when there was an explicit focus on form. This, they attributed to their social status and their negative experience of DBAE in school. Within this setting, students responded more positively to an integrated arts approach, as they initially perceived it as not really being arts-based. Students felt that in order to engage in DBAE one had to hold a certain skill level and be naturally proficient within that art form, which– as far as they were concerned– experience had taught them they did not have. In contrast, the integrated approach offered students a *new* view and avenue through which they could access and engage with the arts. This variety of approaches is one of the strengths of the arts (Hoffman Davis, 2008). Within the examinable years of post-primary education it is more difficult for this integrated approach to be realised, but is something that has the potential to be developed in TY.

Although I have highlighted the lack of centrality that the arts have played in the Irish education system, through a lack of response to the Benson report (Benson, 1979) and *Education for a Changing World: Green Paper on Education* (Department of Education and Science, 1992), I feel it pertinent to note the current direction of the arts within the Irish education system. In looking at policy documents that have emerged over the last number of years in relation to the arts and education, one of the most significant has been *Points of Alignment* (Arts Council Ireland, 2008). The report highlighted the potential for the arts as well as the issues and needs associated with them. One of the overarching recommendations from the report was that partnership, mutual understanding and joint action be enabled across all sectors of the arts in Ireland, specifically linking the cultural sector with the education sector (Arts Council Ireland, 2008, p.25). The report received little to no public attention and its recommendations have not been adopted into or enacted in educational policy. In contrast, the Department of Education and Skills strategy *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young people* (2011) prioritised literacy and numeracy in a manner that can be seen as being at the expense of other areas of curriculum. The direction within the strategy was that literacy and numeracy be "safeguarded" and time given to these areas over areas perceived as less important such as "…social and life skills, environmental issues, arts and music education, [and] scientific understanding" (Department of Education and Skills, 2011, p.44). This report received widespread media attention and has been implemented. While the future of the arts within educational contexts may be considered in relation to the response to these documents, a note of hope should be sounded with the publication of the *Arts in Education Charter* (Department of Education and Skills, 2012). The charter seeks to "…place new responsibilities on Government Departments, agencies, cultural institutions and arts organisations in terms of providing and promoting arts education to children and young people" (Government of Ireland, 2013). The positive

response to the *Arts in Education Charter* to date ignites a glimmer of hope in relation to the future of the arts within the Irish education system.

The arts and education

Many arguments have been made for the inclusion of the arts within education systems globally. These arguments traditionally stem from a defence of the arts; that they possess a myriad of benefits for other subject areas and often focus solely on the cognitive and intellectual benefits of engaging in the arts. Accepting these, I would argue, in line with Jessica Hoffman Davis (2008), that engagement with the arts should not require the justification of how they benefit other areas or contribute to non-arts learning. Moreover, and in line with Dewey's (1934) assertion, the arts should be engaged because they provide unique and unparalleled aesthetic experience. That is, we should engage the arts "…in order to take a ride on the wings that art forms provide" (Eisner, 2008a, p.3).

Furthering this, Maxine Greene's (1995) work highlights the inherent value that arts engagement provides in developing the imagination. Imagination does not suggest ephemeral or oneiric qualities but, as Greene contends, is grounded in its potential to transform the individual and the situations within which they act. For it is only through imagining the alternative that one can be empowered to act towards it. Similarly, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Ken Robinson's (2001; 2009) work on creativity highlights the necessity for creativity within the everyday lives of people. In keeping with Robinson and Csikszentmihalyi, I would also contend that the arts provide a unique vessel through which creativity can be developed and realised.

Furthermore, Gardner's (1983) seminal text, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, advocates for the arts through his criticism of traditional views of intelligence and his argument for recognition of all eight different intelligences; musical–rhythmic, visual–spatial, verbal–

linguistic, logical–mathematical, bodily–kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. In my view, the arts provide the means through which many of Gardner's intelligences can be accessed and provide experiences unparalleled in other curricular areas, which focus exclusively on verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences.

Eisner's work (2002; 2005; 2008a) in the arts also forefronts the capacity of the arts to provide unmatched experience. Although many of Eisner's arguments have been previously outlined in this section, his work also focuses on the capacity of the arts to generate and develop emotion, and particularly a sense of empathy with others. Eisner (2008a, p.3) purports that this unique generation and evocation of emotion and empathy means that the arts have "…a significant role to play in enlarging human understanding". As well as Eisner, Joe Winston's (2011) *Beauty and Education* further celebrates the capacity of the arts to evoke emotional responses and develop empathy.

Hoffman Davis (2008) argues that the results of arts learning can be categorised into five features. She also lists two learning outcomes within each of the five areas, further supporting previous discussions. The features and additional learning outcomes that Hoffman Davis (2008) details are:

- Tangible Product
    - Imagination
    - Agency
- Focus on Emotion
    - Expression
    - Empathy
- Ambiguity
    - Interpretation
    - Respect
- Process Orientation
    - Inquiry
    - Reflection
- Connection
    - Engagement
    - Responsibility

In keeping with Hoffman Davis (2008), I would argue that these features and learning outcomes are unique to the arts and are reasons why the arts should be included within education. Furthermore, this broad understanding of the educative power of the arts are embedded in my ontological, post-structural, and post-modern world-view. My engagement with the arts, since TY, has provided me with opportunities for personal, social, and cultural development. Since this time I have assumed the working belief, in my life and teaching, that the arts have the potential to provide personal, social, and cultural development for everyone. However, I state this with an air of caution, in acknowledgement that the arts may not be for everyone, and that their potential for personal, social, and cultural development can only be realised if opportunities for engagement are presented and availed of.

In an effort to create clarity throughout the remainder of this thesis, I wish to acknowledge the variation and contrast in terms relating to the arts nationally and internationally. For example, the contrasting definitions of the arts-in-education; as offered in *The Arts in Education Charter* (Department of Education and Skills, 2012), and a European Union supported arts website *ARTinED* (European Union, 2013). In an Irish context it is generally accepted that the arts-in-education refer to professional arts practitioners entering a school community to work with students, and arts education refers to the varying ways in which the arts are engaged within educational contexts, integrated with other curricula or studied on their own. In order to avoid confusion, 'the arts' will be the term used from here on within this thesis. The use of this term allows for a broader understanding of the experiential and educative functions of the arts and allows for discussion of the arts in every facet of young people's lives. Within this thesis, discussions of the arts centre around two approaches that engaged participants in the arts in this project; discipline based arts education (DBAE) and the integrated-applied arts (IAA). DBAE

and IAA were the tools and categories put in place to facilitate my discussion of the arts and will be discussed in detail in chapter seven.

Foundational Ontologies & Epistemologies in Research: PAR

The purpose of this section is to discuss the theoretical foundations of participatory action research (PAR). In doing so, the discussion includes the origins and development of PAR, participation within the process, PAR and the disenfranchised, and the emancipatory and transformative intent of PAR.

The origins & development of PAR

PAR is a derivative methodology of action research (AR). Consequently, the philosophical and methodological foundations of PAR espouse those of action research. The origins of AR, and therefore PAR, can be traced back to the social experiments of Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. Lewin sought to examine a specific social situation with a view to changing the action within it and subsequently bringing about overall change. For its time, AR was a revolutionary methodology, challenging the positivist, objective standpoint and firmly grounding itself within the more subjective social sciences. AR itself has been defined in many ways: from Lewin's (1946, p.38) description of a series of steps involving "…planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action"; Corey's (1953, p.6) definition of it as a "…process in which practitioners study problems scientifically so that they can evaluate, improve and steer decision-making and practice"; and Bryman (2008) who defines it more broadly as "…an approach in which the action researcher and members of a social setting collaborate in the diagnosis of a problem and in the development of a solution based on the diagnosis" (p.382). One of the constants among the varying definitions is the presence of an activist stance that seeks to engage knowledge generated through the research.

In developing his initial call for AR, being dissatisfied with the primarily positivist models of research of the time, Lewin in his 1946 paper called for an AR model for "social management" (p.35). That is, "…field experiments in social change … [that result in and are oriented towards] social action"

(Lewin, 1946, p.36&35 respectively). This is mirrored in PAR's three underlying tenets: (i) an emphasis on the lived experiences of human beings, (ii) the subjectivity and activist stance of the researcher and (iii) an emphasis on social change (McIntyre, 1997, p.21). In addition, these tenets permeate the many different variants of PAR that exist: participatory rural appraisal (Kane *et al.*, 1998); activist participatory research (Chambers, 1994; Lykes, 1997); participatory learning and action (Norton, 1998); participatory research (Fals-Borda, 2001; Park, 2001); participatory (action) research (Fals-Borda, 2001); and emancipatory and educational action research (Carr and Kemmis, 2009).

As a methodological approach, PAR was largely developed throughout the 1970s. Colombian sociologist, Orlando Fals-Borda (2001, p.27), describes 1970 as a "crucial year" for PAR. As scholars and academics became increasingly preoccupied with life conditions that seemed "unbearable" (*ibid.*), they began to research *with* participants as opposed to conducting research *on* them. The idea of working with persons in states of oppression is aligned to and extended from the work of Paulo Freire (1970; 1974), whose focus, similarly to Lewin, was that of social transformation. Motivated by the work of Freire, research became focused on a more practical struggle for social transformation through "…scientific deconstruction and emancipatory reconstruction" (Fals-Borda, 2001, p.28-29). Part of this social transformation requires the democratisation of relationships between parties. This orientation is influenced by the work of John Dewey (1916), who calls for the establishment of democratic communities both within education and the wider social system. PAR, through its focus on social transformation and action orientation, seeks to create a state of democracy where all voices are not only acknowledged but are respected, considered and valued. This sense of democracy pervades PAR in both its theoretical intentions and its methodological processes.

Participation in PAR

One of the primary differences between AR and PAR, as the name suggests, is PAR's focus on participation. Park (2001) defines participatory research in terms of "…ordinary people… [or] non-experts [addressing common needs] arising in their daily lives" (2001, p.81). Within this context, it is the participants of the project that are positioned as knowledge holders and it is only through their explicit inclusion and valuing of their knowledge that problems can be posed and solutions co-generated. This generation is as a result of participants' expert everyday knowledge of their surroundings and lives:

> …their intimate familiarity with their environment, their knowledge of one another as members of a community, and their critical consciousness that their lives can change for the better.
>
> (Park, 2001, p.82)

Maxine Greene comments on the power of participation between parties, which also applies to PAR, when she states that:

> …the classroom situation most provocative of thoughtfulness and critical consciousness is the one in which teachers and learners find themselves conducting a kind of collaborative search, each from her or his lived situation.
>
> (Greene, 1995, p.23)

As a concept, participation has been conceived in a number of different ways and there are a number of models, typologies and ladders of participation and student engagement (Cornwall, 2008). These typologies collectively range from states of non-participation to stages parallel to authentic participation; levels of participant democracy or participant autonomy (Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1997; Treseder *et al.*, 1997; Fielding, 2001; Shier, 2001). Each of these models view participation as a process. Furthering this, Simovska (2004, p.202) views participation as a process that presupposes an improvement in "…students' self-awareness, decision-making and collaboration skills" as well as a means of "connecting students among themselves and with the school", and as a form of empowerment for

both the students and the school community. It could, thus, be argued that authentic participation is itself a form of social action.

Within the context of PAR, authentic participation is described as:

> …sharing the way [in which the] research is conceptualized, practiced, and brought to bear on the life-world. It means ownership, that is, responsible agency in the production of knowledge and improvement of practice.
>
> (McTaggart, 1997, p.29)

McTaggart (1997) also cites Tandon's (1988, p.13) determinants of authentic participation in research as:

> – people's role in setting the agenda of inquiry;
> – people's participation in the data collection and analysis;
> – and people's control over the use of outcomes and the whole process.

Undoubtedly, participation is crucial to the success of a PAR project, for without participation participants are unable to reach the aspirational stages of democracy, autonomy and critical thinking, which in turn can lead to a newfound sense of self and empowerment towards social action. Participation, in some form, is thus a requirement if one is to move participants towards PAR's transformative intent.

PAR, subjugated voices & Paulo Freire

As previously discussed, the development of PAR in the 1970s is closely linked to the work of Brazilian philosopher and educationalist, Paulo Freire, who conducted research with Brazil's poorest and most destitute people. Freire's initiation of a critical pedagogy is something that PAR adopts and builds upon, both focusing on subjugated voices[10] and attempting to liberate them in some way. On this, Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2008) note that PAR provides a pedagogical and methododological framework through

[10] In this thesis, the phrase subjugated voices, and derivatives of it, refers to conscious and unconscious efforts to disempower people through silencing or devaluing their voice (McWilliam *et al.*, 2009).

which critical pedagogy can be enacted and engaged. Viewing PAR in light of Freire's work, two of his concepts are immediately present within the PAR structures; *conçientization* and *praxis* (Freire, 1970; 1974).

Freire's concept of *conçientization* forefronts the oppressed and seeks to create "…critical understanding [which] leads to critical action" (Freire, 1974, p.40). He thus attempts to transform the oppressed by not only including them within decision-making, but by empowering them to lead the transformation themselves.

> The educator's role is fundamentally to enter into dialogue with the illiterate about concrete situations and simply to offer him the instruments with which he can teach himself to read and write.
>
> (Freire, 1974, p.43)

Working *with* subjugated voices, Freire strove to lead them to an awakening and realization of their own state of oppression. He then empowered them to perceive their situation and acknowledge that while they were passive recipients, they had the power, potential and capacity to question and challenge the current oppressive regime and thus transform their situation. That is, through naming their lived worlds they were generating the ability to transform that world (Freire, 1970). Consequently, Freire attempted to inspire the realization that, through this process of education, the oppressed could be liberated, empowered and emancipated, for as Greene argues "…dialogue … cannot be carried on in a climate of hopelessness" (1995, p.24). Echoing the PAR framework, Freire states that:

> …those who recognize, or begin to recognize, themselves as oppressed must be among the developers of this pedagogy. No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption.
>
> (Freire, 1970, p.35-36)

In acknowledging the necessity for the oppressed to be involved in decision-making around their liberation, Freire argues for a more democratic model that recognises the valuable knowledge that the oppressed hold. PAR also

positions its participants as holders of valuable knowledge and attempts to include them in decision-making and thus PAR is envisioned as research of the people, by the people, and for the people (Park, 1997). Instrumental to this *conçientization* is the Freirian ideal of *praxis* where, through critical reflection, one is empowered and motivated towards action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 1970). The emancipation and transformation is thus solely dependant on the participants' willingness and openness to change, "…from the inside out" (Freire, 1974, p.43). For this to occur the participant must acknowledge and understand the situation that he or she is involved in and must actively seek to change this in some way. That is, through unveiling "…the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation" (Freire, 1970, p.36).

PAR's emancipatory intent seeks to free persons from the shackles that bind them. Very often these shackles are community or self-imposed shackles, whereby persons ascribe to the beliefs of an entire community. These beliefs may stem from "…habit, custom, illusion and coercion" (Kemmis, 2001, p.92) but nonetheless are difficult for participants to see through and break through. Freire notes that the oppressed must "...perceive critically the *way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves" (Freire, 1970, p.64, emphasis in the original). This critical perception is a prerequisite to liberation and emancipation. Embracing this critical perception, it is the researcher's responsibility within PAR to adopt a critical mindframe, questioning and not accepting the traditional beliefs of a community so that he/she can lead participants towards a critical perception (Absalom et al.1995).

PAR, like Freire's *conçientization*, aspires to bring about people's consciousness to the problem, "…with the collaboration of the educator" (Freire, 1974, p.43), and encourages them to imagine and consequently aspire towards a better alternative. In this way, transformative potential is heightened through the establishment of a critical conscience (Park, 2001).

It is only by working *with* the community and not conducting research *on* the community that participants can be lead to an awareness of the problem and thus be empowered to act against it, or alternatively acknowledge and accept the situation. As Habermas (1974, p.40) states, "…in a process of enlightenment there can only be participants."

An integral element of Freire's concept of *praxis* is its innately reflective stance. Freire posits that only true reflection leads to action, which in turn establishes an authentic form of thought and action (Freire, 1970). PAR structures and adapts this idea of *praxis* as it seeks to become a living dialectical process engaging in critical dialogue and critical reflection, that changes the researcher, the participants and the situations in which they act (McIntyre, 2008).

PAR, emancipation, and communicative action

Morrison (2001, p.217) states that "…the educational methodology suggested by critical theory is action research … [as it] is strongly empowering and emancipatory". The potentially empowering and emancipatory nature of PAR is greater due to its participative nature. Fals-Borda (2001, p.32) describes PAR as an "…altruistic process [that seeks to transform] … individual attitudes and values, personality and culture" in an effort to generate "…deep social/collective transformations and political movements" (p.30). Clearly PAR is premised on ideals of transformative intent and action orientation/change agency.

PAR positions its participants as "architects" (Oliver, 2010, p.31) rather than subjects, who become co-researchers, contributing to all aspects of the research. In positioning them as architects PAR attempts to empower its participants to become active researchers in problem-posing as well as problem-solving. With an unashamed focus and forefronting of social and

collective action, PAR's transformative intent has its foundations in Habermas' (1981), theory of *communicative action*.

Habermas' (1981) theory of *communicative action* is premised on two explicit outcomes; (i) mutual understanding and (ii) unforced consensus about what to do. Critiquing this work, Kemmis (2001, p.100) argues that "…before they can work together to achieve a mutual understanding and consensus … people must constitute a communicative space". In Kemmis' view *communicative action* cannot occur in isolation and the establishment of a communicative space within which the *communicative action* can occur is an essential requirement. PAR facilitates a communicative space between the researcher and participant by positioning participants as architects who have the potential to excavate facets of their own social world and by also placing privilege on their voice and unique knowledge. This communicative space is characterised by a more democratic and dialogic relationship between parties and is a prerequisite to engaging in the cyclical process of dialogue, reflection, and action. Albeit aspirational, mutual understanding and unforced consensus about action are more likely to be present within PAR due to the privileging of participants' voices and its more participatory and democratic nature.

The objective of *communicative action* is ultimately to transform individuals and society through social democracy (Morrison, 2001). This objective has clear resonances with the philosophical work of John Dewey (1916) in his call for a more democratic society and education system. Similarly, PAR seeks to create and nurture a democratic culture (Carr and Kemmis, 2009). Supporting this, Park (2001, p.81) conceptualises PAR as a "…social practice that helps marginalized people attain a degree of emancipation as autonomous and responsible members of society." In essence, it is oriented towards democratic ends and the creation of a "…true public sphere [that sees young people and the oppressed as] transformative intellectuals [capable of transforming] oppressive social realities" (Morrell, 2008, p.159).

This orientation towards PAR is comparable to Habermas' argument that all educational research, AR and evaluation should be (i) co-operative and collaborative in a consensual search for understanding; (ii) adopt a problem solving approach; (iii) non-bureaucratic, control being kept in the hands of all stakeholders; (iv) emancipatory, empowering all the stakeholders to participate in an egalitarian society, realising their own existential futures; and (v) avoiding exclusive reliance on positivist methodologies (Habermas, 1981). In a similar way, Kemmis states how, through engaging with the works of Habermas, he has come to view critical action research

> …as more open and fluid, as a 'self-constituting public sphere' [and to see its participants] as engaged citizens committed to local action but with a wider critical and emancipatory vision for their work.
>
> (2001, p.100)

What is clear is that the work of Habermas, Freire, and to a lesser extent Dewey, support the operation of PAR, through their notions of equality, democracy, transformative intent and empowerment. Ultimately, PAR places decision-making in the hands of the stakeholders (participants) in an effort to provide them with practical experience of its democratic principles and in an effort to orient them towards communicative action, both personal and social.

Foundational Onotologies & Epistemologies in Pedagogy: Student Voice

A personal, artistic understanding of voice

The concept of 'voice' is deeply complex. Most definitions of voice make reference to one of two understandings; a person's ability to produce sounds, formed in the larynx and uttered by the mouth (the sonic voice), and the right to express an opinion (the political voice). I believe that the latter understanding of voice is multifaceted and does not always simply attempt to express opinions, but at times is concerned with expression of experience and vision. Although each of these understandings of voice are uniquely different, they have areas of overlap and degrees of similarity. Voice in both of these understandings is deeply complex and at times imbues a metaphorical and symbolic stance. This can be most clearly seen when one looks at the concept of voice within the arts. Ultimately, voice within the arts can be understood as a metaphor for expression. This expression can be conveyed in a number of ways, across the arts, that include but are not limited to: motif; phrasing; style; colour both musical and visual; timbre; movement; dynamics, linguistic, musical and visual; among many others.

Deepening this, within a musical context, voice can be understood in numerous ways. For example, how a composer expresses his/her voice in; setting down a movement or composition, foregrounding various instrument combinations and sounds, changing dynamics, and the repetition of musical intervals and patterns. Similarly, in performing a piece, the conductor's voice is elicited in drawing out musical dynamics and colouring, and in shaping the overall piece and generating meaning through their interpretation of the sheet music in front of them. Furthering this, a vocalist's expression of their voice is just as deeply complex, if not more. Unarguably technique plays a large role in the development of the voice; in teaching the vocalist how to access certain ranges, providing them with choices of travelling through the *passagio* to head voice or remaining within

chest voice or middle voice[11], which in turn give them access to different vocal dynamics and colours. In this way, technique aids in the development and elicitation of the authentic sound of the vocalist, attempting to remove any physical barriers that may exist– causing the voice to be contrived– and consequently supporting the healthy production of sound, which can then be modified through variations in support and in the imposition of colour and emotion to convey the vocalists' interpretation of the piece. Another way to conceive this is to consider technique/education as releasing or generating the authentic voice. Although a musical example is used here, voice and understandings of voice in the arts are not unique to music, but present within visual art, film, poetry, dance, drama, literature etc. As can be appreciated, voice within the arts is a deeply complex phenomenon and one which many professional artists grapple with throughout their lives, primarily due to the ever-changing nature of voice, in line with the development of one's emotional and expressive potential. Within an educational or research context, one can conceive voice in a similar way. Through education people can be encouraged to access, use, express or release their voices.

Similarly, voice as one's right to expression (and particularly within this project, student voice which is the term used here on) can also take many forms and is never singular (Flutter, 2010; Thomson, 2011); it is, if you like, multivocal (Alexander, 2009) or polyvocal (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009), with many layers of complexities. Regardless of the means of expression, voice lies at the core of a person's being and, similar to the in flux state of the artist's voice, is impacted, created, and shaped by the understandings that you create today as well as the experiences that you will have tomorrow.

[11] Head voice and chest voice are two different vocal registers common amongst all singers and regardless of voice classification (soprano, tenor, mezzosoprano, baritone, contralto, bass and counter tenor). Access to the head voice, from middle voice or chest voice, is achieved by vocally travelling through a transitionary area of the voice known as the passagio.

In this way both voices are never fixed. They are constantly exposed to a person's lived experience and shaped accordingly. The similarities between the artistic voice and student voice are greater than this however. Both are concerned with expression, albeit the latter– at times– with a political right of expression. Both concepts are deeply complex, with people's expression, opinion, and interpretation inextricably bound in their experiences and perspectives of the world, which are personal and unique. That is, "…the ideas one ha[s] in the mind … [are] learned through interactions with the empirical world" (Baker, 1999, p.373). Furthermore, just as technique/education aids in the development of a more authentic artistic voice, awakening people's realisation to the unequal situations within which they are involved can empower them to express their voice and develop a sense of authenticity and agency.

A conceptualisation of student voice encapsulates each of these elements, as it concerns itself with "…how best to co-create, with adults and other young people, a good society, a democratic fellowship and a better world" (Fielding, 2011, p.11). In considering student voice, one must consider how that voice is culturally representative and generated; that is, the society that the voice has emerged from and the impact that this has had (Fielding, 2011). In an attempt to unpack each of these elements, the following sections are concerned with the origins, determinants, and the various means through which students express their voices.

Student voice, a macro view

This discussion of voice adopts a post-structural perspective. That is, I understand student voice to be a gateway through which we can understand the lived experiences of our students' world. This post-structural view of voice is in keeping with authors such as Patti Lather, Alicia Youngblood Jackson, Lisa A. Mazzei, Julia Flutter, Michael Fielding, and Pat Thomson. This post-structural approach promotes an understanding that moves

beyond viewing voice as a mere reflection of the real and promotes the exploration of "…multiple meanings, functions, and deployments of voice" (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009, p.6). In this way, student voice seeks to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions about children and young people and to offer directions for improving teaching and learning within education (Flutter, 2010).

Within educational research, Baker notes that "…[student] voice is a necessary conceptual, pragmatic democratic tool for getting things on the agenda that might otherwise be lost or marginalized" (1999, p.370). Flutter (2010, p.17) defines student voice as "…a nexus of ideas that focus on ways of giving children and young people a more active, participative role in their learning." Both of these definitions focus on the micro or personal impact of student voice. In contrast, at an institutional level, Czerniawski and Kidd (2011) conceive student voice as a radical and subversive, democratic and empowering means of institutional development, growth and evolution.

Each definition of voice focuses on different consequences and actions. Their degree of similarity, however, lies in their democratic structures and deliberateness in providing students with opportunities to articulate and share their voices, concerns, commentaries and desires in an effort to bring about change. Consequently, conceptions of student voice are bound in understandings of democracy and agency, attempting to create more democratic schooling and create spaces to develop students' sense of empowerment and action.

While the singular 'voice' is used within this text, it is done so with an acceptance of the innate plurality, multi/polyvocal nature of voices within educational and social science research. That is, a recognition that voice- whether expressed by youth or adults- is never homogenous and is always multifaceted (Alexander, 2009, cited in Flutter, 2010). In relation to the multiplicity of students' voices, Thomson (2011, p.22) notes this multiplicity

is affected by students' race, dis/ability and sexuality, location and participation in youth and other cultural pastimes. Arguing for consideration of these elements, Thomson states that in viewing student voice as homogenous, the very notion of voice becomes "deeply problematic" (*ibid.*). Thus, while 'student voice' is used throughout this text, it can also be understood as student voices or students' voices[12].

In order to understand and progress the concept of student voice, Fielding (2011) argues that one must move back to the future. That is, one must revisit the fundamental concepts and history of the student voice movement before progressing the area towards more contemporary understandings. In this vein, the departure for the discussion is the student voice movement itself, its origins and development.

The student voice movement

As a concept, student voice within qualitative research emerged primarily in the 1990s and the last two decades have seen enormous strides in terms of its development (Finney and Harrison, 2010; Fielding, 2011). As previously alluded to, the student voice movement is based on a foundation of participatory democracy within both education and wider society. Its motivations have been attributed to a number of differing factors that reflect its participatory and democratic foundations. Notably; international and national legislation, the response to concerns about raising educational standards, interests in developing more 'personalized' approaches to learning, and an emphasis on citizenship and democracy in education (Whitty and Wisby, 2007; Wisby, 2011).

The primary international legislation published in relation to children's rights and thus directly influencing the student voice movement was the 1989 publication of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the*

[12] At times, for grammatical reasons, these terms are used interchangeably

Child (UNCRC). Key articles, particularly article 12, within the UNCRC places a direct emphasis on the need to listen to children and to respect their views on matters that affect their lives (United Nations, 1989). Ireland signed and ratified the UNCRC on 21st September 1992 and, in addition established the office of Ombudsman for Children in 1998, which then ratified a national children's strategy in 2000. The three primary goals of the strategy were: (i) children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, (ii) children's lives will be better understood– their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services, and (iii) children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development (Government of Ireland, 2000). These strategic goals are a mirrored reflection of article 12 of UNCRC. Through this legislation, the primary goals of the strategy gave importance to young people's voices and increasing fervour to the student voice movement.

With the publication of school league tables, both nationally and internationally, a natural focus for schools was on the raising of educational standards and achievement. Raising educational standards indirectly impacted the student voice movement. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) observe that policy makers and educationalists have been quick to recognise the inherent potential for the inclusion of student voice as a means of increasing students' engagement, motivation and self-esteem, which in turn can help to raise standards of achievement. Practically, this can be done through the establishment of a 'student council' in a school. The inclusion of student councils within schools has been taken up within the Irish education system since 1998 when the *Education Act* (Government of Ireland, 1998, p.26) recommended the establishment of student councils in post-primary schools. This was, however, a recommendation and not all schools have established student councils despite the development of a specific guide for schools (Department of Education and Science, 2002b) and

a designated website (Department of Education and Science, 2002a) to aid and facilitate their establishment. The presence of a student council would ideally provide students with a more democratic structure through which they can influence various aspects of school life that affect them.

An additional way in which student voice can be included is through the students-as-researchers approach (Fielding, 2001; 2004; Burnard and Björk, 2010; Wisby, 2011). Students-as-researchers includes students taking on research positions within the school, identifying an aspect of their schooling "…that in their view would benefit from investigation" (Wisby, 2011, p.32). The school's critical role in supporting students in researching and feeding their findings back into the school provides a more democratic model of schooling. Student consultation in the form of class discussions, focus groups and interviews with student councils have formed a part of whole school evaluations within the Irish education system (Department of Education and Science, 2010). This inclusion, thus, recognises the importance of incorporating students' perspectives and recommendations for the betterment of teaching and learning.

The Irish education system has seen an on going review of curricula over the last number of years. The various post-primary curricula have been systematically re-hauled in an attempt to make them more student-friendly and provide a more holistic and personalised learning experience. Student consultation was engaged throughout the review of some curricula, specifically in relation to assessment and teaching methods (National Council For Curriculum and Assessment, 2011). Teaching methods employed in response to student voice include: assessment for learning, an assessment approach based on formative dialogue to support students' learning (Black and William, 1998, cited in Flutter, 2010, p.18); reciprocal teaching (Mawer, 1995), where students actively engage each other in the teaching and learning process; peer mentoring, in which students are trained to support younger students on an individual basis (Anderson,

2010); pupil self-appraisal strategies, where students are engaged in self-check performance criteria and are thus given more responsibility for their learning (Mosston and Ashworth, 1986); and personalised learning approaches which recognise the "…unique gifts, skills, passions, and attributes of each child, as well as each child's challenges and obstacles to learning" (The Personalised Learning Foundation, 2012).

Moving from individualised personal learning, Flutter (2010) and Wisby (2011) cite active citizenship and democracy as integral facets of the student voice movement. Remaining within the Irish context, with the mainstreaming of the Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) curriculum in 1997 (Department of Education, 1996), there was a clear and conscious movement towards developing students' sense of citizenship and democracy. First examinable in 1999, the CSPE curriculum seeks to "…make pupils aware of the civic, social and political dimensions of their lives" (Department of Education, 1996, p.1). The curriculum has focused on empowering students to enact their rights and responsibilities, that is students who are active citizens and strive for a more democratic society, both within school and beyond. This action orientation can be seen in both the project element and thematic structure of the CSPE curriculum. Rudduck criticizes traditional models of citizenship education as focusing too much on the place of students' voices within wider society after school, "…where as what matters to students is their lives in school *now*" (2007, p.590 emphasis in original). The Irish CSPE curriculum seeks to enact students' rights and responsibilities *in* schools through its inclusion of a project element. Phelan (2007) outlines the development of an action project around student councils that is incorporated into the theme of *Rights and Responsibilities* and thus mobilises students towards articulating their voice and acting upon this within their lives *now*.

The primary objectives of the CSPE curriculum mirror that of the European Commission's (2001) *White Paper*, which proposes that students' sense of

citizenship and democracy should be extended beyond the school and incorporated into their lives and the wider community. By attempting to empower students to become active citizens we potentially give merit and recognise the unique knowledge that their voices contain. Undoubtedly, the focus on students' roles as active citizens has had a profound impact on the development of the student voice movement.

The role of student voice in qualitative research

Couldry (2010, p.7) describes 'voice as process', which is concerned with "…the process of giving an account of one's life and its conditions." Within this, he deconstructs voice into what he regards as its composite parts; voice is socially grounded, voice is a form of reflexive agency, voice is an embodied process, voice requires a material form which may be individual, collective or distributed, and the undermining and exclusion of voice (2010). Couldry positions voice as an imperative component of research that aids in acquiring an account, both implicitly and explicitly, of the world within which research participants act. In doing so, he describes the inclusion of voice within research, and our understanding of voice as value, as requiring discrimination:

> …in *favour* of ways of organizing human life and resources that, through their choices, put the value of voice into practice, by respecting the multiple interlinked processes of voice and sustaining them, not undermining or denying them.
> (Couldry, 2010, p.2, emphasis in original)

Couldry thus outlines the necessity of voice to be viewed as both a social process, that requires both speaking one's own narrative and listening to others' narratives, as well as the inherently political orientation of voice, particularly "…where long-entrenched inequalities of representation need to be addressed" (2010, p.1). The political orientation of voice in relation to this emancipatory and transformative intent will be discussed later in this chapter.

The role of student voice within qualitative, and more specifically educational research, is linked to a number of features that generate institutional reform. Specifically; it provides a unique perspective on events within the research process, it actively shapes the research process, it encourages participation and a culture of collaboration, and it lends itself to more authentic, reliable, valid and trustworthy research.

Engaging voice within research is frequently done in order to gain insight into the lived experiences of participants through their narrativisation. Similarly, student voice is engaged within qualitative research as a means of forefronting students' voices and acknowledges the privilege afforded to experience over theory or training, as the basis of the understanding of an individual, of an issue or activity, and the meaning they give to it (Haw, 2008). Thus, similarly to PAR, participants are positioned as experts in their own lives and provide expert testimony within their narratives (Thomson, 2008; Enright and O'Sullivan, 2010; Bland, 2011). In terms of understanding educational experiences, Smyth and McInerney argue that "…young people are the most salient witnesses of what occurs in schools and classrooms" (2012, p.3). Consequently, the inclusion of student voice within educational research provides a unique insight, otherwise unconsidered, into students' lived experiences of their schooling and education (Rudduck and Flutter, 2010). They are thus positioned as consumers of the education system and should be afforded, at the very least, the chance to "…comment on their schooling" (Rudduck, 2007, p.589). Thomson (2008; 2011) argues that generational and other differences between the students and the researcher means that the researcher is not in a position to assume the students' perspective. Complimenting Thomson's assertion and reinforcing Smyth and McInerney's stance on the insight young people possess in terms of the education system, Alyson Cook-Sather comments that:

> …because of who they are, what they know, and how they are positioned, students must be recognized as having knowledge essential to the development of sound educational policies and practices.
>
> (2002, p.12)

Furthermore, accepting Leitch's (2008, p.38) assertion that children's narrativisations are "…deeply private, … often ambiguous and always socially embedded", it is further argued that only students can provide an accurate and truthful account of their lived educational experiences.

Another motivating factor for participants engaged in student voice is its personalisation of learning (Bishton and Lindsay, 2011). Student voice research ultimately seeks to be responsive towards the feedback received, thus attempting to create resonances with students– through generating more personalised educational programmes– and motivating them to participate. Involving students in the elicitation and articulation of their voices is a unique means of understanding the diverse factors that make a difference to their learning (Flutter, 2010). Consequently, by eliciting student voice, one is not only impacting students' individual educational experiences, but is also generating institutional reform (Czerniawski and Kidd, 2011). The institutional reform itself is responsive to the students' desires and is thus being partly directed by the students. Generating student voice research provides students with experience of collaborating with adult researchers or school staff and has the potential to create a culture of collaboration within schools (Bragg, 2007; Rudduck, 2007; Mitra, 2008; Vessey, 2010; Wisby, 2011). Furthermore, in enacting its democratic principles and placing privilege and importance on students' voices, engaging student voice has the potential to increase students' sense of independence and ownership over decisions that affect their learning and consequently positively impact participation. Wisby conceives this in terms of a "…dialogic reflective model of professionalism [for teachers], forged in alliance with students" (2011, p.41).

Implied within this personalisation of learning is students' active role in shaping the research process. Through the inclusion of student voice and the fulfilment of its democratic and participatory principles, students may be more motivated towards shaping and reshaping the on-going research

process. In acknowledging this impact, one is also acknowledging the underlying tenets and principles entwined in student voice; 'respect, reciprocity, engagement, autonomy, empowerment, community, democracy and dialogue' (Flutter, 2010, p.17).

The PAR process attempts to embody the full breadth of student voice, by creating opportunities for student voice to be present in all aspects; planning, data collection, data analysis, and (re)presentation. This arguably furthers the sense of authenticity and reliability (Fals-Borda, 2001; Smyth and McInerney, 2012). That is, student voice lends itself to more reflexive, reliable, valid, authentic, and trustworthy research. Although crucial within each stage of the research process, Finley (2008) purports that one of the purposes of (re)presentation is to maximise this sense of authenticity. While it may be desirable to paraphrase participants' voices in order to replace them with more academically acceptable language, doing so potentially dries and taints their voices (Mitra, 2008). Thus, student voice recognises the complex relationship of *what* is said and *how* it is expressed. *How* students choose to express their voice is as unique and pertinent as what that voice attempts to communicate. Accepting this, student voice must be fully appreciated and exposed within the (re)presentation of the work, so that students are acknowledged as:

> …curious, thoughtful, social agents who have the desire and capacity to imagine more engaging and meaningful [educational experiences], and to create the changes they wish to see in their worlds.
>
> (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2010, p.164)

Grover (2004) also comments on the necessity for children's voices to be communicated in their own language as well as through the voice of the researcher. Thus, in presenting students' voices through their own words, one is attempting to maximise the authenticity of that voice and create authenticity through communication (Freire, 1970).

Giving a voice to the disempowered

At the outset of this section I feel it pertinent to note that the title, 'giving a voice to the disempowered' does not claim or attempt to assert any sense of power or privilege over those who are disempowered, but acknowledges the role of the educator as a facilitator in the development of a "…critical perception of the world" (Freire, 1970, p.92).

Although providing the disenfranchised with a voice is a topic that has been the concern of qualitative research for some time, I first encountered this theme through the poetic works of Eavan Boland, particularly the haunting *Famine Road* and emotionally evocative *Child of Our Time*. It is fitting that I first encountered disenfranchised voices through poetic works, as Maxine Greene advocates:

> [p]oets are exceptional, of course; they are not considered educators in the ordinary sense. But they remind us of absence, ambiguity, embodiments of existential possibility. More often than not they do so with passion; and passion has been called the power of possibility … Passion signifies mood, emotion, desire: modes of grasping the appearances of things… Poets move us to give play to our imaginations, to enlarge the scope of lived experience and reach beyond from our own grounds.
>
> (Greene, 2009, p.84)

As a post-primary student studying Boland for my LC, I was enthralled in the *power of possibility* that her poetry presents. Her ability to instil a sense of lived experience is a feature that recurringly draws me to her work. Boland's poetry, much like the aims of research around student voice, attempts to provide those who are inhabited to speak with a voice. She seeks to do this through her own poetic imagination and the scope of her lived experience; she engages subjugated voices– in place of her own voice– in an attempt to facilitate the expression of the injustices that they have or are experiencing. As well as accurately capturing the horror, frustration, and disgust of actively and consciously removing someone's voice, Boland's evocative painterly language moves the reader towards experiencing this situational disempowerment, as well as attempting to "…awaken us to

reflectiveness, to a recovery of lost landscapes and lost spontaneities" (Greene, 2009, p.84). Through her lived and imagined poetic voice Boland does not seek to speak in place of the disempowered but to provide a space where their injustices can be unveiled, expressed, documented, challenged and communicated.

Qualitative research concerned with voice and the disempowered similarly seeks to aid participants in the realisation of their oppression in an attempt to orient them towards developing and expressing their own voice. Frequently the power of participants' voices is contained in their very words. And so, as researchers, we are charged with accurately presenting and at times (re)presenting their voices, often to communities that they feel unable to communicate with. (Re)presenting voices, particularly subjugated voices requires a questioning of voice, the methods through which voice is being elicited, the students' response to these methods, the politics of interpretation and translation, and the meanings that participants' silences and utterances connotate within the expression of their voice (McWilliam *et al.*, 2009).

McWilliam *et al.* (2009) in their research on disenfranchised voices note that the participants were performing 'speech acts'– providing what they thought were the right answers– and that there was little authenticity to the voice. They attribute this lack of authenticity to a distance between the participants and the researchers, as well as language barriers. The inference is that in order to facilitate the generation of disenfranchised voices there must be an established relationship. That is, the researcher must be accepted into the social world of the participants and seen in some way as an insider or to be at the very least mediating the insider/outsider dichotomy.

Many researchers have explored reasons for the disenfranchisement of voice. These reasons traditionally centre on adults' perception of students'

and children's voices as being inadequate due to their perceived immaturity, viewing children and their voices as socially developing but "…not yet fully actualized" (Grover, 2004, p.91). This asserts the view that children are "…immature and incapable of participating effectively in decisions about their lives" (Devine, 2004, p.113). Kincheloe argues that one of the reasons students' voices are disenfranchised is because knowledge generated through student voice research "…has been repositioned as oppositional action" (2007, p.754). That it is an "…open-ended form of curriculum and knowledge production" (2007, p.754) and has the potential to disturb the top down curricula of "…authoritarian education in a way that brings … subjugated knowledges to the curriculum" (2007, p.771). In this way, the power structures at play within the autocratic education system, at times, defensively militate against the inclusion of student voice.

In a different vein to Kincheloe (2007), McWilliam et al. (2009) document the self-disenfranchisement of voice amongst immigrant students and their families. On this, they expose the opposite side of the coin, where researchers and teachers attempt to access and elicit students' voices but are met with a self-imposed disenfranchisement. They explain this in terms of an established sense of respect for the education system. That is, students and their families refuse to express their voices as a mark of respect for the education system.

> To be silent was to show ultimate respect of the authority of school and support for its aims and its work. 'Speaking out' was not sanctioned regardless of whether that speaking was giving explicit approval or 'voicing objections'.
>
> (McWilliam *et al.*, 2009, p.68)

Consequently, the current force perpetuating vocal disenfranchisement is in fact the community themselves. That is, "…people become accomplices to their own subjugation" (Benjamin, 1977, cited in Giroux, 2009, p.42). Adversely, traditions of voicelessness may have initially been established within communities as a result of miscommunication between parties, which in turn lead to an affirmation that their voices are of no value

(Marker, 2009). The endurance of this understanding in a community has the potential to lead to a tradition of disenfranchisement or intergenerational disenfranchisement. This cycle becomes increasingly difficult to break, as there is an accepted resignation and the lack of expectation of having a voice.

Researching with disenfranchised voices is undoubtedly a challenging experience and warrants considerable methodological, ethical, and philosophical considerations. In addition Smyth (2007) and McWilliam *et al.* (2009) note one of the necessities in engaging disenfranchised voices is the cultivation of an atmosphere of trust and care, which is built around positive relationships between participants and researchers. Marker (2009, p.35) notes the tendency of researchers, who do not form positive relationships with participants, to "…apply their selective listening" and refuse to allow participants to say "…what is important to study and learn about".

Disenfranchised voices are frequently associated with silent voices. However, disenfranchised voices may be sonically present but their miscommunication results in them not being *heard*. Thus, silence and disenfranchisement are uniquely different. The following section, 'silence in student voice' seeks to explore the reasons and motivations behind silence within research and also attends to how "…the speaker might be communicating more in the pauses and silences than in the speech" (Mazzei, 2004, p.29).

Silence in student voice

Paraphrasing Spivak (1976), Lisa A. Mazzei notes that to consider the possibility of silence within research is to "…give preference to what has been subjugated" (2004, p.27) and releases the "…specters of silence to be heard in the stories yet untold" (2007, p.xiii). Many of the arguments

surrounding silence within voice research are, in my opinion, eloquently articulated by Adrienne Rich in her poem *Cartographies of Silence*.

Excerpt from *Cartographies of Silence*

> The technology of silence
> The rituals, etiquette
>
> the blurring of terms
> silence not absence
>
> of words or music or even
> raw sounds
>
> Silence can be a plan
> rigorously executed
>
> the blueprint of a life
>
> It is a presence
> it has a history a form
>
> Do not confuse it
> with any kind of absence

It is pertinent that we consider the poetic form so early in the discussion of silence. Drawing on the work of Richardson (2002), Mazzei (2004) encourages us to interact with and view research interviews as poems rather than prose; recognising the silences, pauses, and layered meanings (at times also contained in voice modulations, tone, and sighs) imbued within them. Poetic texts, Mazzei posits, have the capacity to represent these silences through form; variation in sentence length, line breaks, enjambment, stanza breaks etc.

Considering the presence of silence within research is no easy task, however, and continues to challenge researchers working with voice. The attentiveness required to recognise the silences can at times be cultural and often recognising what is *not* said, or indeed recognising the significance of *how* something is said, demands that the researcher possess a certain level of cultural knowledge. In this way, an analysis of the ebbs and flows of

conversation, at times through colloquialism and metaphor, becomes more possible. Similarly, Zembylas and Michaelides (2004) necessitate the awareness of silence within education and its imperative for the development of meaningful engagement and conversation between student and teacher.

Mazzei states that in engaging with silence one is attempting to hear "…the multiple layers of meaning present in the conversations" (2004, p.31). These multiple layers mandate an understanding that acknowledges, in Rich's words, "silence is a presence/ it has a history and form/ Do not confuse it/ with any kind of absence". Another way to conceive absence and silence, borrowing a phrase from Maxine Greene (1995, p.51), is to consider "…the emptiness of the sky"; emptiness or absence is merely an illusion. In considering the potential 'presence' in silence, it transcends what Jaworski and Sachdev (1998, p.273) call the "…non-communicative absence of speech". Similarly, Mazzei (2004) discusses how silence is never an absence but is rigorous and representative. Mazzei names three types of silence: purposeful silence, intentional silence, and silences that are meaningful (2004, p.30). Purposeful silence can be choosing not to speak, but is not easily identifiable as students/participants deflect questions that they have been asked through focusing on questions that they wish to discuss. With intentional silence, participants' efforts "…to avoid exposing what [is] beneath their veil" (2004, p.30) is highlighted, especially if this places them in a vulnerable position. With this in mind, intentional silence can also be accepted as a protective barrier. Meaningful silences bear similarities to the other two categories but are uniquely different, Mazzei (2004) posits them as participants' refusal to recognise their role within the events. This equates to participants' refusal to acknowledge, for example, their own 'Whiteness' within racial contexts, which is communicated through this 'meaningful silence'.

Mazzei's classifications of silence, while being specific to the contexts of her research, are none the less applicable across research contexts. In contrast to Mazzei's three classifications, Bilmes (1994) positions silence into two broad and general categories: 'absolute silence' where there is no sonic presence, and 'notable silence' or 'conversational silence', where there is an absence of a specific type of sound. Looking more closely at this notable/conversational silence, it can be understood as the absence of 'relevant talk'. This latter category, notable/conversational silence, resonates with Mazzei's three classifications, in that there is an intention or meaning-fullness behind the silence that one can potentially excavate or uncover meaning and understanding from.

When working with voice in qualitative research one must interrogate and consider it so as to prevent against "…settling for a relevant translation" (Mazzei, 2009, p.50). In considering voice in this way, there is a search for a voice that is "…unconventional and subtle … [a voice that refutes] normative and understandable voice in pursuit of a troubled and difficult to pin down voice" (*ibid.*). In contrast to being viewed as an absence, silence is therefore viewed as a "rich communicative resource" (Jaworski and Sachdev, 1998, p.273). This resource, however, requires careful consideration, as Mazzei higlights:

> …such a move, rendering these silently articulate voices as part of the soundscape of voice, requires an acute awareness that not only permits a listening that has been impossible, but further demands an attentiveness and openness that has been absent.
> (2009, p.51)

Mazzei (2004, p.31) also suggests one must be mindful that the *process* of listening– of living with the data in an effort to come to know the silences– is more important than the *product* or act of listening, for it is in the processes of living with data that the "soundscape" changes as the researcher becomes attuned to "…what is voiced in the silent breath".

In attending to the potential silences in our research Mazzei (2009, p.51) argues that we must allow and forge spaces for silences to be present.

Spaces where the silences are given the scope to breathe and inform our understandings of the data. This however, is not to suggest that all silences can and will be understood as meaning-full, but an acknowledgement of an orientation and openness towards accepting and valuing the silences that are ever present in voice research (Mazzei, 2007). This also challenges researchers working with voice to be open to what they are hearing and not to *listen for* what they wish to hear but *listen to* the audible and inaudible voices. In this way, we are striving to attend to "…what voices we hear" as well as "…how we hear them" in an effort to avoid the romanticisation of participant and researcher voice (Jackson, 2003, p.697). In refraining from romanticising voice and particularly silence, we are challenged to appreciate the "technology of silence" and acknowledge that it "can be a plan/ rigorously executed."

It should be noted that there is a dearth of literature on silence within qualitative research and student voice. With the exception of Mazzei (2003; 2004; 2007; 2009), most authors do not directly address the inherent silences, but there are many useful suggestions that can be applied when attempting to understand, uncover and explicate silences within voice research. These alternatives will form part of the general discussion for considerations when engaging student voice.

Considerations when engaging student voice

Within a post-structural critique of voice, one of the most dominant criticisms is its word-centric nature. Cook-Sather (2007) expresses her criticisms in terms of the limits that word-centricism places on voice research and details how it confines adults' understanding of what young people say and restricts what is considered within voice research. Furthermore, this word-centric nature negates all other avenues of communication and pays no homage to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Similarly, but focusing on the exclusion of groups, Marker

(2009), McLure (2009) and McWilliam (2009) highlight the inaccessibility of voice research to disadvantaged groups and subjugated voices. There is, thus, a call for voice research to incorporate, include and value different modes of expression. This means that students' unconventional expression of voice must now be considered, instead of being written off by those who are 'listening' as has traditionally been the case (Thomson, 2011).

Thomson (2011) also contends that the arts hold the potential to provide this inimitable vessel of expression; a multi modal means of unique and personal expression and communication. By offering a plethora of opportunities in terms of form and occasion, the arts inherently acknowledge the non-vocal nature of voice and militate against its traditionally word-centric nature. Thus, there is a fundamental acknowledgement that voice can be expressed visually, musically, kinaesthetically, and dramatically as well as through more word-centric orientations. This expanded understanding, however, places a requirement on the participant to actively contribute to the researcher's understanding of their expression. That is, the researcher's interpretation be directly informed by the participant's intention in an effort to avoid miscommunication and further subjugation of voice (Marker, 2009). This also places demands on the researcher, to listen with 'soft ears' that are malleable and open to more nuanced understandings and interpretations, ears that innately listen *for* and tend *to* non-traditional notions of voice (Mitchell, 2009).

McWilliam et al. (2009) further support this in their assertion that voice research with traditionally disenfranchised student voices requires an acknowledgement that reliance on word-centricism is more likely to exclude young voices, because their traditional modes of expression are not naturally word-centric. They argue that, instead, we should acknowledge student voice which is engaged through cultural products such as "…images, sounds, text messaging, network configurations, novel designs

and aesthetic forms" (McWilliam *et al.*, 2009, p.73). Expounding this, they demand the requirement of:

> …broader definitions of what it means to communicate … [which] includes but is not limited to artistic ways of knowing, involving the integration of significant modes of communication, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the multimodal, the behavioural, and so on.
>
> (McWilliam *et al.*, 2009, p.73-74)

Extending this, MacLure also calls on researchers working with voice to consider alternative expressions of voice, which she imagines would attend to features such as:

> …laughter, mimicry, mockery, silence, stuttering, tears, slyness, shyness, shouts, jokes, lies, irrelevance, partiality, inconsistency, self-doubt, masks, false starts, false 'fronts' and faulty memories …[in the pursuit of] 'authentic' voice.
>
> (2009, p.97-98)

MacLure, however, doesn't view these features as insufficiencies but as means of helping:

> …to reimagine voice to be something other than a mere reflection of the real and theorize the multiple meanings, functions, and deployments of voice.
>
> (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009, p.6)

In acknowledging the necessity to move beyond word-centricism within voice research and consider alternatives, we are more authentically engaging the limits of voice, which Mazzei (2009, p.50) describes as an effort "…to hear the voices that have been silenced, not to fill the silences with yet another voice of our desire."

Much of the discussion of voice so far in this thesis is primarily concerned with the narrative nature of voice and how voice captures and communicates this. In line with the alternative considerations of how voice may be expressed, as well as my own somatic experiences as a singer, it is imperative that one consider and attend to the possibilities of the sonic elements of voice and how valuing the sonority of voice can deepen understanding. Michael Bull (2007, p.20) argues that the magical qualities of hearing voice has been removed through a routinised listening. Perhaps

in attending to the sonic elements of voice we can revisit that "…magical quality of the experience of hearing" and listening. Furthermore, Bull (2007, p.12) points out that ears in modern culture are no longer passive (we cannot close our ears to the world) but instead are "discriminating and distinctive". If one does not consider or value these sonic elements and focuses solely on *what* the voice expresses then it could be argued that the voice is being discriminated *against*. However, if the sonority of voice is valued and consideration given to *how* that voice is expressed, you could say that one is discriminating *for* that voice in attempting to further excavate meaning. In valuing the sonority of voice one is considering the timbre, resonance, pitch, and rhythmic elements of voice, and consequently changes in each of these. Bull (2001) notes that experiences that engage sound are more personal because sound inevitably inhabits the subject or person listening. Similarly, Bull (2001) also notes that sounds can actively influence a person's mood. Extending this, it can be argued that valuing the sonic voice can reveal a person's mood and inflections and changes to voice can unveil meaning, that may be consciously of subconsciously expressed. Another way to conceive these changes is to view them as, borrowing a phrase from Les Back (2007, p.119), "unintended sonic signposts" that can guide the listener towards an unveiling of meaning and deeper state of understanding. Bull (2001) notes that sound acts through dissipation, modulation, infiltrating other sounds, becomes absorbed and deflected by objects in the space and also fills the space surrounding objects. In applying this to student voice, one could argue that the sonic elements of voice generate a soundtrack to the narrative. That is, for example, *how* the cacophonic or euphonic sounds, or inflections and modulation of tone, pitch, resonance, and rhythms– whether conscious or subconscious expressed– help to excavate a deeper meaning around the intention and meaning of *what* is said. Back (2007, p.20-21) challenges us to listen more closely to the "… profusion of talk and text, image and sound" so that one can further engage, explicate and come to understand voice. Moreover, in considering Back's challenge to researchers and valuing the sonority of voice and

consideration of the unintended sonic signposts, one is attempting to generate a "…democracy of the senses" (2007, p.96). This, however, is not to suggest that interrogating and considering the sonority of voice is an easy task. Erlmann (2004) notes the necessity for cultural knowledge of the setting if one is attempting to hear and understand the 'meaning' of different sounds and changes in sound. In attending to these different meanings and unintended sonic signposts, and consequently the acquisition of cultural knowledge, a crucial element is the building of positive relationships, particularly if one is attending to sound and the sonority of voice within dialogic and participatory research (Back, 2007).

Extending this directly into student voice research, many researchers have highlighted the necessity for positive relationships in student voice research (Cook-Sather, 2002; Bragg, 2007; Rudduck, 2007; Smyth, 2007; McWilliam *et al.*, 2009). Eliciting this, they note the inevitable failure of student voice research when there is no previous or positive relationship established. For researchers who are entering a school setting within which they aspire to engage in voice research they must first establish a relationship of trust and care before meaningful dialogue and the elicitation of student voice can occur (Cook-Sather, 2002).

An additional consideration for engaging in student voice research is the recognition of transformative potential. Cook-Sather (2007) notes the importance of this recognition for both the student/participant and the researcher/teacher, as transformation affects both parties. By actively seeking the elicitation of student voice, researchers must be prepared to listen with soft ears for a non-normative voice in the transformational perspectives, priorities and discourses of young people (Cook-Sather, 2007). Positioning themselves in this way means that researchers are opening themselves to transformation, towards an "…awakening of the cultural self" (Marker, 2009, p.35), through the voices and perspectives that are elicited. Marker purports that:

> …those researchers/learners who adopt a respectful position as concerned human beings might gain unique insights into themselves as they come to understand the reality of [their research participants].
>
> (2009, p.41)

The popularity of student voice is also something that requires consideration. Commenting on its popularity, Rudduck (2007, p.607) notes the dangers of "surface compliance" within the popularisation; that we feel obliged to be seen "doing it". Rudduck and Fielding (2006) in their article, *Student Voice and the Perils of Popularity*, document the populism of 'how to do' student voice manuals, aimed at facilitating quick access to student voice as opposed to meaningfully considering *why we might want to do it*. With the manufacturing of how to do materials and surface compliance, Rudduck and Fielding (2006) argue that the rooted consultative and cooperative, participative and democratic traditions of student voice are being sacrificed in the process of popularism. Similarly, in discussing the popularisation of student voice within physical education settings Gard *et al.* comment on how:

> …efforts to listen and respond to student voice have been tokenistic, knee-jerk reactions to student disengagement and alientation and resulted in only a surface level engagement with students and youth culture.
>
> (2013, p.107)

Tokenism has also been documented by authors who recognise the inherent problems of popularisation of student voice (Fielding, 2004; Cook-Sather, 2006; Rudduck and Fielding, 2006; Robinson and Taylor, 2007; Rudduck, 2007; Smyth, 2007; Gard *et al.*, 2013).

Further highlighting the difficulties inherent in the popularisation of student voice, Fielding (2004, p.306-307) comments on the understandable frustrations and inevitable tiring of students towards the

> …increasing number of invitations (a) to express a view on matters they do not think are important; (b) framed in language they find restrictive, alienating or patronising; and (c) that seldom result in actions or dialogue and affects the quality of their lives.

Within this, Fielding adds to the very real considerations that need to be contemplated and reflected upon when engaging student voice within research.

While this section has attempted to problematize student voice further and also offer considerations when engaging voice, a note of caution should also be sounded in terms of the mediation of voice. In doing voice research and research that engages voice it is understandable that voices may not always be represented verbatim but that they necessitate contextualisation. On this, Back (2007) notes the necessity, within research texts, for the researcher's voice to act as a mediating voice for the collective and individual voices of the research participants. Back (2007) necessitates this mediating voice so that readers can come to more fully understand the expression various voices within the research. The researcher's voice, as a mediating voice, further adds to the subjective nature of the work, which has the potential to yield valuable insights due to their cultural knowledge of the setting as well as their consideration of the means through which voice can be expressed and the unveiling of intention and meaning through valuing both the narrative elements and sonority of voice.

Power in Education

Maxine Greene (1995, p.50) asserts that "…any mode of discourse is bound to raise resistances (even though they may be small ones)." From the previous sections it can be seen that PAR, student voice, and the arts attempt to disturb current modes of discourse and generate new aspects. They attempt to do this through an unsettling of power relations, primarily between researcher and participants in a move towards a more democratic relationship. Maguire argues that:

> [u]nsettling power relations is multifaceted, ranging from redefining power to rethinking the very purpose of knowledge creation to reworking the relations of the research process itself.
> (2001, p.65)

Accepting this, it is necessary to establish an understanding of power relations within schools and within this work. To do this, I draw on the work of Michael Apple, specifically his book *Education and Power*, 2nd Edition (2012) before moving to an Irish context through the work of Kathleen Lynch, specifically her book (1989) *The Hidden Curriculum: Reproduction in Education, a Reappraisal* and a co-authored book with Sheelagh Drudy (1993) *Schools and Society in Ireland.*

Michael Apple's concept of power in education challenges not only what is taught, or what kind of knowledge is valued, but also how students are positioned and their response to this. Apple argues that schools are productive and reproductive institutions in creating an active consensus towards the dominant hegemony. He argues that:

> …the notion of hegemony is not free floating. It is in fact tied to the state in the first place. That is, hegemony isn't an already accomplished social fact, but a process in which dominant groups and classes manage to win the active consensus over whom they rule.
> (Apple, 2012, p.26)

In perpetuating this dominant hegemony Apple contends that schools assist in the production of "technical/administrative knowledge" (2012, p.19), which he posits is "…embodied in the state and the school … [and] is

produced over the long term in and through the organization of education" (2012, p.31-32). Lynch defines this technical/administrative knowledge as "…commercial and applied scientific or technological knowledge" (1989, p.51). An example of this technical/administrative knowledge could be learning off the periodic table of elements in chemistry.

In addition to the teaching and valuing of technical/administrative knowledge, Apple asserts that one means through which schools control students is through the establishment of deviance. He states that "...the school *naturally generates* certain kinds of deviance" (Apple, 2012, p.38, emphasis in original) and through this produces an understanding that those labelled as deviant are "…different *and* inferior" (2012, p.37, emphasis in original). As an act of control, Apple espouses that this labelling serves to limit the social mobility of those who "earn" the label (*ibid*). In the Irish context, this deviance is frequently established within a streamed system of schooling. In this system students are grouped and placed in classes according to their level of technical/administrative knowledge (Drudy and Lynch, 1993). Consequences of this system are primarily negative for those who are placed in lower stream classes, or understood to have less academic ability (Lynch, 1989). In response to this, Lynch (1989) and Drudy and Lynch (1993) report that those students in the lower streamed classes– mainly populated by students of lower socio-economic class– engage an *anti-school culture* that seeks to invert the school's values and oppose the values to which teachers give importance. Consequentially, they also argue that a polarisation occurs through the establishment and consolidation of pro-school and anti-school attitudes, which serve to divide the students and limit friendships amongst the streams. As well as negatively impacting motivation amongst the lower streams, this polarisation serves to create tensions amongst the students and staff and consequently lower streamed groups are characterised by "…negative self image, … the increase in distribution and anti-school behaviour, … and the weak friendship patterns across groups or streams" (Drudy and Lynch, 1993, p.256).

This streaming is one feature of what Apple terms "…the curricular and guidance programmes" of schools (2012, p.46). Further explicating the lack of mobility, Apple comments on the capacity of these curricular and guidance programmes to divide students between "…mental and manual labour", based on their acquisition of technical/administrative knowledge, as schools "…sort out students according to their prospective places in a hierarchical market" (2012, p.46-47). This has a direct relationship with streaming as those who are labelled deviant, and generally occupy the lower streams are automatically assigned to the manual labour category. These curricular and guidance programmes– of which streaming is a part– Apple (2012), Lynch (1989), and Drudy and Lynch (1993) argue are part of the hidden curriculum. That is, "…one that is often differentiated by class, race, and sex and one that helps make legitimate the structural arrangements of which schools are part" (Apple, 2012, p.54).

Apple argues that "[s]chools allocate people and legitimate knowledge. They legitimate people and allocate knowledge" (2012, p.39). Streaming is one example of this. Drudy and Lynch also discuss this legitimation and allocation in terms of the "[b]ias [of] the curriculum in favour of middle-class values and the middle-class child" (1993, p.158). It is through this bias and the hidden curriculum that schools produce and reproduce inequality and power. The curriculum, for example favours academic learning, or technical/administrative knowledge. Lynch argues that this focus on academic learning can be seen as a rejection of Gardner's (1983) *theory of multiple intelligences*, instead favouring linguistic intelligence and mathematical intelligence. This bias can also be seen in terms of the more practical subjects in the Irish curriculum. Practical subjects in the post-primary curriculum such as materials technology wood, art craft and design, design and construction studies, and music all have large components that bias the subject towards more academic learning. While changes have occurred in recent subject-specific curricular reforms to account for

increasing intelligences, such as the potential for performance to account for 50% of the music examination at LC, the remaining fifty 50% is biased towards more academic learning in terms of composition and aural examinations. Similarly, in languages (mainly Irish, German, French, Spanish, and Italian) there are oral, aural and terminal examinations, of which terminal written examinations form the majority of the grade. In this way, as Drudy and Lynch argue, "…there is a strong bias within practical subjects … towards academic learning" (1993, p.119).

The focus on technical/administrative knowledge is also largely biased against the arts. Robinson (2001, p.64) discusses two types of knowledge that "…underpin success in schools"; propositional knowledge and logico-deductive reasoning. Propositional knowledge refers to "…the capacity for remembering and recalling information" (Robinson, 2001, p.61) and logico-deductive reasoning the logical analysis engaged in "…working out the principles underlying a sequence of ideas and how the sequence progresses" (*ibid.*). Further explicating the valuing of these two types of knowledge, Robinson states that within schools "[m]aking music, painting pictures, involvement with drama, and writing poetry are not associated with academic ability" (2001, p.83). This bias in favour of propositional knowledge and logico-deductive reasoning, Robinson (2001) argues, serves to bias against the arts, enslave us and perpetuate power struggles and states of inequality.

In terms of various modes of control and power production, Lynch argues that the hidden curriculum– which involves (i) school's restrictions of students' subject choices and their grouping of students, (ii) the lack of autonomy offered to students in relation to extracurricular activities, (iii) their discipline structures, and (iv) their mode of dress– means that "[p]upils have little control over either what they do in school, when they do it or how they do it" (1989, p.98). In distributing this hidden curriculum, schools are acting as both producers and reproducers of unequal power

relations, and are consequently teaching "…norms, values, dispositions, and culture that contribute to the ideological hegemony of the dominant groups" (Apple, 2012, p.38). The arts also serve as a *threat* to the hidden curriculum, as within each of the artistic disciplines there is a focus on creativity and imagination. Structures are challenged and subverted in an imagining of what could be and a movement towards wide-awakeness (Greene, 1995). Furthermore, arts classes are not held in silence or with just the teacher speaking. They, more often than not, promote dialogue and collaboration amongst students, acknowledging that "…creativity is not a purely personal process" (Robinson, 2001, p.181) but is drawn from the stimulation of others. Thus, the culture generated in arts classes can be at odds with the behaviour inscribed in the hidden curriculum of schools, with the arts being seen as a form of resistance.

Within educational settings, Taylor and Robinson identify power as exerting itself through five primary modes; "…coercion, domination, manipulation, authority and persuasion" (2009, p.166). Increasingly within education, and in line with a Foucauldian understanding of power, these power modes are embedded and enacted within and between relationships with people, as well as relationships between people and institutions.

Maguire (2001) understands that the emancipatory intention of PAR inevitably unsettles power relations and challenges established truths. On this, McLaren argues that in challenging 'regimes of truth' one must engage a "…*praxis* (informed actions) [which] must be guided by *phronesis* (the disposition to act truly and rightly)" (2009, p.74, emphasis in original). Conceptually, PAR seeks to deepen the relationship between *praxis* and *phronesis* by attempting to destruct the "assymetric binomial" (Fals Borda, 1991, p.5) of the researcher-researched relationship. PAR thus attempts to generate more democratic power relations between researchers and participants or joint-researchers in an understanding that:

> [t]he dawning of awareness emerges from a critical study of social institutions and processes influencing one's life course,

> and his/her capacity to see differently, to act anew, to provoke change.
>
> (Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p.3)

This does not, however, negate the power relations at play within the wider educational sphere or indeed between the researcher and participants but attempts to understand the "…very real ties between conception and action" (Apple, 2013, p.146). In addition to the power relations inherent in PAR, Taylor and Robinson (2009) assert that voice research brings uncomfortable truths to the fore through an inversion of power relations, in positioning students as knowledge bearers. Similarly Robinson and Taylor (2007) note that student voice research, like PAR, attempts to generate a more democratic relationship in recognition that "…shifts in power relations can change *voices*" (Arnot and Reay, 2007, p.317).

Educational Disadvantage

What is educational disadvantage?

Within both the Irish and international educational spheres, Archer and Weir (2004, p.33) note the "…weakness of the knowledge base" in terms of definitions, understanding, and current research into educational disadvantage. One definition offered, in the Irish context, is in terms of the *Education Act* (Government of Ireland, 1998, 32[9]), which defines educational disadvantage as "…the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools." Many publications, particularly recent publications, criticise the traditional view of educational disadvantage as a one-dimensional problem and suggest an emphasis on multi-faceted approaches to tackling it (O'Sullivan, 1999; Cullen, 2000; Combat Poverty Agency, 2003; Archer and Weir, 2004; Downes and Gilligan, 2007; GHK Consulting Ltd *et al.*, 2011; European Commission, 2013).

Acknowledging that educational disadvantage is a contested concept (Boldt and Devine, 1998; Tormey, 1999; 2010) and also multi-dimensional– that it is not simply an education-related issue– it is pertinent to interrogate the contributing factors to educational disadvantage. Combat Poverty Agency (2003, p.3) considers the additional contributing factors as a "…wide range of issues affecting the lives of children and adults, their families and their communities." Specifically, these are defined as; the welfare needs of children not being met, the high participation costs of education, barriers facing adults seeking to return to education, and the lack of family/community tradition in education (Combat Poverty Agency, 2001; 2003). In terms of the contribution of the education system to educational disadvantage, they state the failure of the education system to address the needs of minority groups, and the failure of the school curricula to reflect and validate the cultural backgrounds and learning styles of all learners as

the primary factors (Combat Poverty Agency, 2003). Similarly, O'Sullivan (1999) identifies a number of ways of viewing/uses of the term educational disadvantage. These focus on: (i) the constitutional limitations of the person, possessing a low intellectual capacity; (ii) a presumed personal deficit, in terms of children's lack of socialisation, rendering them unable to benefit fully from the education offered by schools; (iii) a presumed cultural deficit in children's environment, creating anti-school and anti-social attitudes and values; (iv) culturally irrelevant schooling practices, requiring children to act or speak in ways that are not culturally respectful, generating cultural discontinuity which negatively impacts their learning; (v) materialism, wealth or poverty, the material condition of the pupil's community and the impact that this has on their housing, healthcare and school conditions; and (vi) the broader political economy, the focus of those parents able to give their children an advantage in life through education and the consequence that this has in disadvantaging others (O'Sullivan, 1999). These elicitations of educational disadvantage not only highlight its deeply complex nature but also the contested nature of the term itself. In line with Combat Poverty Agency (2003) and O'Sullivan (1999), Kellaghan *et al.*, (1995)– who conducted one of the most comprehensive studies of educational disadvantage within the Irish context to date– outline a number of characteristics for educational disadvantage. These are; poverty, family structure and size, socioeconomic status, unemployment, geographical location, and school performance. In line with Kellaghan *et al.* (1995), many others have commented on the close link between educational disadvantage and poverty (Combat Poverty Agency, 2003; 2005; Department of Education and Science, 2005a; Combat Poverty Agency, 2008; Minister for Health and Children, 2009; Tormey, 2010).

In terms of educational disadvantage amongst the school community, research suggests that educational disadvantage has a 'multiplier effect' where educational problems are exacerbated if the majority enrolment of a school is from a low socio-economic background (Department of Education

and Science, 2005a). This is especially alarming when one considers the characteristics of educational disadvantage amongst students; low levels of school attendance, low levels of educational achievement, and higher levels of anti-social behaviour. This focuses our attention towards the long-term consequences of educational disadvantage for students and society.

The impact of educational disadvantage

In terms of students' life chances, those with less education are less advantaged in terms of their career prospects and the potential to progress to higher education (Lynch and Crean, 2008; Smyth and McCoy, 2009; Government of Ireland, 2010). Consequently, their personal and social development is curtailed and they are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion (Byrne *et al.*, 2008; Citizens Information Board, 2013). This has the potential to perpetuate intergenerational poverty and thus worsen the cycle of poverty and educational disadvantage (Department of Education and Science, 2005a; Nolan *et al.*, 2006). Moving from the familial and community to a wider social and economic perspective, one consequence of educational disadvantage is that there will be a smaller pool of highly qualified and skilled workers. This in turn hampers the State's ability to economically compete internationally as well as potentially causing economic drain on the country as a result of high levels of unemployment and a necessity to outsource highly skilled professionals (GHK Consulting Ltd *et al.*, 2011). Other long-term negative outcomes associated with educational disadvantage to the individual are "…crime, drug-taking, and poorer quality of life…" (Government of Ireland, 2010, p.19, see also Archer and Weir, 2004).

Transitioning from the more general long-term socio-economic impacts to specific educational experiences, *Growing Up in Ireland* (Minister for Health and Children, 2009), documents the educational and life experiences of 9

year old children in Ireland[13]. In relation to educational disadvantage and social class, the research found a direct link between "…school attendance, homework completion and performance in Reading and Maths tests, [which] show clearer differences across social groups" (Minister for Health and Children, 2009, p.102; see also Power and Tormey, 2000; Smyth and McCoy, 2009). In terms of student absenteeism, the research notes that children from low income families, single parent families, or families where the mother's education is lower secondary or less are more likely to experience absenteeism from school. This absenteeism has direct consequences for the academic success of the student, with "…children who are frequently absent receiv[ing] lower marks and decreased gains in learning" (Minister for Health and Children, 2009, p.92).

The findings of *Growing up in Ireland*, in relation to the experiences of children from lower socio-economic groups– those typically linked with educational disadvantage– are in keeping with other national and international research in relation to educational disadvantage and its impact on children and society (Combat Poverty Agency, 2002; 2003; Archer and Weir, 2004; Department of Education and Science, 2005b; Centre for Social & Educational Research Dublin Institute of Technology, 2006; Byrne *et al.*, 2008; Smyth and McCoy, 2009; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2010; GHK Consulting Ltd *et al.*, 2011; Humphreys *et al.*, 2012; European Commission, 2013; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2013a).

[13] The 2009 research in relation to the lives of 9-year-old children is the most current. Information in relation to 13-year-old children will not be released until September 2013.

An approach to defining educational disadvantage

As previously identified, defining educational disadvantage is difficult due to its multi-faceted nature. Acknowledging the difficulties around definitions and approaches to educational disadvantage, Power and Tormey (2000) present two frameworks for outlining and measuring educational disadvantage; 'out-puts led approach' and 'comparative approach'.

Out-puts led approach

The out-puts led approach focuses on setting minimal standards of literacy and numeracy or academic performance in State examinations which persons must reach. Those who do not reach these standards are consequently designated as educationally disadvantaged. Furthering this model, Tormey (2010, p.193) posits that more complex variants of this model exist, whereby only those persons who achieve less than the minimum requirements and are considered impoverished qualify as being educationally disadvantaged (see Kellaghan *et al.*, 1995 as an example). Two advantages of this model are that resources to combat educational disadvantage can be targeted towards individuals. Consequently, this approach is quantifiably easier in terms of counting the number of people who are educationally disadvantaged, and accordingly, identifying whether policies are having an impact or not. Traditionally however, this model has been largely flawed in that it used limiting variables to determine the level of disadvantage. For example, Kellaghan *et al.*'s (1995) criteria for disadvantage consisted of only two criteria; the possession of a medical card (which is already largely an established association with disadvantage) and students' level of reading failure, as measured on a reading attainment test. Using these limiting criteria raises questions about the model, as by solely focusing on students' levels of literacy it doesn't take account of the breadth of the curriculum.

The comparative approach

In contrast to the out-puts led model, the comparative approach, is uniquely different in that it seeks to identify systematic differences in participation or attainment within and between social groups. In this way it seeks to identify the "…existence of processes of disadvantage" (Tormey, 2010, p.193). The comparative model asserts the view that if someone from a lower socio-economic group achieves less academic success then this can be accepted as showing the existence of some processes of disadvantaging. Within this model Power and Tormey (2000, p.7) use "…multiple models of measuring educational outcomes, thus allowing the building of a more comprehensive understanding of educational disadvantage". The criteria used for measuring educational outcomes by Power and Tormey (2000) were; early school leaving, examination level chosen in the LC, and LC attainment. Although this model can be used to assert the success or failure of certain programmes, it does not account for individualisation of classification, in that it is concerned with wider social groupings. However, an advantage of the model is that it provides a "…rounder view of educational disadvantage" (Power and Tormey, 2000, p.12) and thus has more potential to inform the causes of educational disadvantage than the previous out-puts led model.

Ireland's contemporary responses to educational disadvantage

Although Ireland has historically responded to educational disadvantage in a number of different ways, perhaps its most recent responses have been the most pivotal and focused. The concept of educational disadvantage itself is so central to the Irish education system and Irish educational policy that it has been written into law through the *Education Act* (Government of Ireland, 1998, 32-9). Since the *Education Act* (1998), perhaps the most notable responses to educational disadvantage have come through initiatives established to combat, target, and minimise educational disadvantage. At post-primary level, these programmes are DEIS, various

programmes to tackle early school leavers, Home School Community Liason scheme (HSCL), Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), and Leaving Cert Applied (LCA)

DEIS was established in 2005 with the publication of *DEIS: An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion* (Department of Education and Science, 2005a). The initiative focuses on "…addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3-18 years)" (Department of Education and Science, 2005a, p.7). The DEIS programme is grounded in three beliefs; (i) every child and young person deserves an equal chance to access, participate and benefit from education, (ii) each person should have the opportunity to reach her/his full educational potential for personal, social and economic reasons, and (iii) education is a critical factor in promoting social inclusion and economic development (*ibid*). While the DEIS initiative is focused on equality within schools, it acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of educational disadvantage and its operation within "…broader social and economic circumstances" (Department of Education and Science, 2005a, p.65). The recommendations of the report include the arts and PE but include these under "non academic supports" that serve to enrich the lives of children through:

> [b]uilding self-esteem, confidence, social skills and enthusiasm for learning … as well as promoting awareness of communal support and a sense of belonging, ownership and pride in their school. [These supports form a] vital part in the overall strategy to promote a multi-faceted response to educational disadvantage.
>
> (Department of Education and Science, 2005a, p.45)

Perhaps their being labelled as non academic supports is more significant in terms of how the arts and PE are viewed within the education system.

The multi-faceted response of the DEIS initiative is also seen in its desire to include the home life of students, recognising the vital role that parents and family members play in developing children's literacy and numeracy, and ultimately impacting their educational success. In this vein, the initiative

also advocates for "…support learning within the home" (Department of Education and Science, 2005a, p.36) for parents, acknowledging the potential gains for a 'joining up' of the professional skills in schools and the adult literacy services. Recognising the importance of the after school arena, the newly released OSCAILT report (2013), *Report of Dormant Accounts Funded Scheme to Enable DEIS Schools in Limerick City to Maximise Community Use of Premises and Facilities*, detail that €1.694 million was made available to the twenty two DEIS primary and post-primary schools in Limerick City to "…cover capital expenditure and operating costs of after-school programmes and activities for children and adults in their local communities…" (2013, p.6). In addition to providing support within the home and after school arena, the DEIS initiative seeks to ensure students' wellbeing through the extension and expansion of the 'School Meals Programme' and the 'EU School Milk Scheme' within all DEIS schools. As well as the nutritional benefits, the DEIS action plan notes that meal provision has a "…positive effect on both attendance and educational attainment" (Department of Education and Science, 2005a, p.65).

When it was rolled out in 2005, the DEIS initiative was explicit in terms of its subsuming of various other initiatives that were already in place. In relation to post-primary education, there was particular reference to three initiatives, 'Early School Leavers Programmes' (ESLP), JCSP, and HSCL. *The School Leaver's Survey Report* (Byrne *et al.*, 2008) revealed that while only 2% of young people leave mainstream education before completing their JC, this figure rose dramatically to 14% of young people who left mainstream education without completing their LC[14]. ESLP have been established to tackle this problem of early school leaving. The ESLP encompasses a number of sub-initiatives and programmes designed to combat early school leaving, specifically in relation to disadvantaged students. These sub-initiatives and programmes are the 'School

[14] Statistics only reflect the students who transferred from primary to post-primary education and do not account for those who withdrew within the transition from primary to post-primary.

Completion Programme', 'Back to Education Initiative', 'Youthreach Programme', 'Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme', and the 'Department of Justice Workshop Programme' (Citizens Information Board, 2013). The goal of the ESLP is to keep students in formal education for as long as possible. Failing this, however, the secondary goal of the various programmes is to provide alternative training and educational opportunities for these students. While many of the ESLP now come within the remit of DEIS, many are also run through and with various educational and Government agencies such as Youthreach centres, National Educational Welfare Board, FÁS Community Training Centres, Vocational Education Committees (VEC), the Department of Justice, and post-Leaving Certificate colleges or colleges of further education. Although early school leaving is not exclusively a problem within DEIS schools, research has noted its alarming prevalence within these communities (Boldt *et al.*, 1998; Combat Poverty Agency, 2001; Department of Education and Science, 2005b; 2005a; Government of Ireland, 2010; Lally, 2012).

In addition to early school leaving, pupil absenteeism and low levels of educational attainment/academic achievement are characteristics of educational disadvantage. Another programme subsumed by the DEIS initiative was the JSCP. Recognising the importance of JCSP within disadvantaged communities, the DEIS initiative stipulated that the JCSP would be extended to all schools classified as being educationally disadvantaged (Department of Education and Science, 2005a). The JCSP was first mainstreamed in schools in 1996 and, in line with the DEIS initiative, is now run in all schools participating under its remit. As well as being run in mainstream post-primary schools, the JCSP is also run in Special Schools, Children Detention Schools, Traveller Training Centres, and Youth Encounter Projects (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2010). Recognising the difficulties students may experience as a result of their disadvantage as well as difficulties with the culture of

schooling, school organisation and learning experienced (*ibid*) the JCSP seeks to address these complex issues in a variety of ways.

The JCSP specifically targets young people who are at risk of leaving school prior to sitting their JC exam. In offering schools and teachers a more flexible approach to the JC curriculum, the programme seeks to create a flexible learning environment and approach towards learning, and in doing so attempts to meet the "…diverse needs of students and achieves this within the context of the Junior Certificate qualification" (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2010, p.8). As well as attempting to ensure students enjoy an 'experience of success' within education, the programme also seeks to engage students more holistically and meaningfully as a means of combating absenteeism. In addition to its attempts to combat absenteeism, the JCSP also serves as a transition for students from primary to post-primary education, facilitating students learning through cross-curricular thematic work (*ibid*), and, in this way, minimises the disruption to students' learning that is often associated with the change from primary to post-primary education. Although structured in a more flexible and alternative manner, the JCSP ultimately seeks to engage students in the broad, balanced and coherent programme of study across a number of curricular areas within the remit of the JC syllabus (*ibid*). Furthermore, the JCSP seeks to prepare its students, like their peers in mainstream junior cycle education, to sit the JC state examinations. In this way, the programme is orientated towards providing students with an educational qualification, and in turn motivating them to maintain their educational engagement, either in the form of the established LC or availing of the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), which is now offered in all DEIS schools.

The third programme subsumed by DEIS was the HSCL. The HSCL seeks to promote partnership between parents and teachers as a means of enhancing students' learning opportunities and promoting their retention within the education system (HSCL Coordinators, 2006). The HSCL scheme

is targeted towards marginalised students and students who are experiencing educational disadvantage. Mulkerrins (2007, p.141) notes the potential for HSCL to empower parents to extend their reach into the school, documenting parents' attitudes that "…we'd be left at the school gate without HSCL." Specifically, Mulkerrins (2007) notes the advantages of HSCL from parents' perspective as; a more welcoming and open school environment, a reduction in fear of entering the school and talking to teachers, a positive impact on their own self-confidence, a reduction in their sense of disempowerment when talking to teachers, and the sense of community that is developed with the school and with other parents. Mulkerrins does however note the limits of HSCL when she comments that often those parents who are classed as 'uninvolved' (2007, p.135) and whose children are most in need of extra supports are the parents who HSCL is unable to reach due to their unwillingness to engage.

While much of the discussion within this section has been on what educational disadvantage is and how policy has attempted to tackle educational disadvantage, specific statistics in relation to the socio-economic status of the communities around St. Nessan's will be discussed in chapter four.

Chapter Conclusion

The four conceptual strands of this research (ABER, PAR, student voice, and power and educational disadvantage) provide a theoretical framework through which the ontological and epistemological foundations of the work can be understood. These strands, while being uniquely different, share many tenets. One of these tenets, and one of the uniting factors within the framework is the critical lens through which they view the world. Consequently, they seek to question taken-for-granted assumptions in the lives of students and participants in an effort to identify and forefront situations of inequality and oppression. Deepening this, each of the strands also forefronts their inherent participatory and emancipatory intent. That is, the intent to engage participants in the processes of problem-posing and problem-solving in an effort to alleviate or lessen situations of oppression. The theoretical framework draws on the work of theorists, researchers, and pedagogues such as Eliot Eisner, Tom Barone, Melissa Cahnmann-Taylor, Julia Flutter, Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart, Michael Fielding, Michelle Fine, Michael Apple, Kathleen Lynch and Maxine Greene, who themselves have engaged and adapted the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Howard Gardner, and Jürgen Habermas.

ABER seeks to spread its net as widely as possible in terms of who can engage in and who can be an arts-based educational researcher. Thus, it seeks to engage all educational parties who involve the arts in their teaching and learning. This inclusivity speaks to the participatory nature of ABER. Similarly, PAR not only seeks to engage researchers in the research process but positions participants as 'architects' (Oliver, 2003; 2010) within the process, recognising their potential to be actively involved and maximising the sense of authentic participation. Furthermore, student voice research seeks to engage students in a more authentically participative form of research where they can be viewed as active agents or indeed co-researchers in the research process. The consideration of power and educational disadvantage within the research highlights the necessity

to consider the varying unequal relationships that may exist within the research setting and how these might be disguised and actively work against equality, perpetuating cycles of inequality, and militating against participation. Within this, one must also consider how inequality impacts the research process and the inevitable power struggles that result in attempting to change and subvert the status quo through generating more participatory, democratic, and emancipatory research.

Each of the strands are further conjoined in their emancipatory intent. In attempting to democratise relationships each of the strands actively subverts traditional notions of the researcher-researched relationship, instead positioning participants as active and valuable knowledge holders in terms of the knowledge they hold in relation to their personal and social worlds. Deepening this, each of the strands attempts to act upon their emancipatory intent through empowering participants towards a sense of action and agency. Notably, this action or agency can manifest in many ways; through re-viewing the world within which one lives and acts, through acknowledging and accepting the inequalities in society and one's life, or acknowledging the inequalities and– questioning them– act in some way to generate a sense of change, either personal, social, or both. Power and educational disadvantage also share this emancipatory intent in that they seek to uncover situations of inequality with the intention of empowering people towards questioning and not simply accepting the dominant hegemony and situation.

The strands also share commonalities in looking at research data. During the PAR process the research agenda is ideally set and maintained by participants before, during, and after the PAR process and cycle. The participants thus decide what constitutes data and knowledge and how valuable different types of data and knowledge are to the research. In a similar vein, ABER presents participants with the potential of inquiring into and representing their lived and imagined experience through a variety

of different forms and entry points. Participants are thus empowered to take more ownership over their learning experiences and can be encouraged to question traditional forms of knowledge. Student voice, as has been extensively documented in this chapter, not only seeks to deepen this in terms of students-as-researchers setting the research agenda, but also through considering varying constituents of voice; the potential of moving beyond word-centricity, the acknowledgement and interrogation of silences, considering and valuing the sonority of voice, tending to non-traditional notions of voice, and the necessity to build and maintain positive democratic relationships with students.

Within the conceptual framework, ABER, PAR, student voice, and power and educational disadvantage foreground the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research, which they each uniquely contribute towards. Support for the conceptual strands lies not only in their distinctiveness and what they contribute individually towards the theoretical structures but also what they contribute as a collective to the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3

Methodological Framework

Purpose of chapter three

This chapter provides an account of the methodological framework used for this research, PAR, as well as more specific detail on the PM used to generate data. Although PAR and PM have been documented in chapter two, their discussion in this chapter is from a methodological point of view, in detailing how they were engaged. Leading on from the PM section, the data generation section seeks to further elicit the means through which data was generated throughout the process. The data analysis section then documents the various forms of analysis that were applied in an effort to generate discussion around the data. In order to demonstrate the extent to which rigour was engaged, the section on validation strategies details the various attempts to ensure trustworthiness of the data, as well as documenting validity outcomes specific to AR. The final section in this chapter is on ethics. This section documents the various protocols that were followed throughout the research to ensure that it was as ethically sound as possible and exposed those involved to minimal risk.

Participatory Action Research

What has lead me to PAR

Although this research project is the first time that I have used PAR, my research has always shared tenets of PAR. My undergraduate dissertation was an ethnographic study. This study employed a fictional artistic lens to enable participants and me to explore our own ideas and understandings of tolerance and prejudice through an arts-based exploration of the *Stolen Generation* in Aboriginal culture. The study had a strong social justice orientation, encouraging a reassessment of students' prejudices and views. The work was also largely participative in nature, with much of decision-making shared between the participants and me. Furthermore, a sense of action orientation was exerted through a co-generated performance piece involving original dance choreography and music composition.

While many of the elements of PAR were engaged in my previous research, albeit to a lesser degree, becoming aware of PAR gave me a voice and form through which my ontological and epistemological beliefs could be embodied and operationalized. Recognising this, PAR has been chosen over other methodologies due to its cyclically reflective model, it's engaging of all related parties- researchers and participants- and its focus and forefronting of collective action (Cahill, 2004; McIntyre, 2008; Enright and O'Sullivan, 2010).

PAR

As a tangent methodology of AR, PAR espouses to deepen the study a "…social situation with a view to improving the quality of the action within it" (Elliot, 1991, p.69). It, thus, seeks to become a living dialectical process, engaging in critical dialogue and critical reflection that, changes the researcher, the participants, and the situations in which they act (McIntyre, 2008). PAR is differentiated from AR in it's focus on combined problem-posing and problem-solving through collective reflection, joint decision making and the building of alliances between the participants and the researchers in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process (McIntyre, 2008).

In this way, PAR seeks to generate "…learning experiences that are purposeful, supportive, practical, and analytically rich and that promote justice and liberation" (Rodríguez and Brown, 2009, p.25), through which it views participants' "…knowledge as a legitimate form of truth" (*ibid.*). Foundationally, PAR is unashamedly emancipatory and premised on the participants' unified exploration of a particular inequity as a means of moving towards a more informed and liberated community. In achieving this, PAR recognises the power of collaborative, informed and meaningful research where the traditional roles of researcher and researched do not exist (Fals Borda, 1991; McTaggart, 1997; Fine, 2007a; Rodríguez and Brown, 2009). Instead, PAR welcomes both researchers and participants as

potential and imperative knowledge bearers. Thus, engaging a PAR framework means an understanding that one espouses towards fewer divisions between the researcher and participants and that, from the outset, it is made clear that both parties are working towards a mutual and understood goal.

Unlike traditional research models, PAR places the participants in an innately powerful and privileged position, acknowledging that they "…harbor critical social knowledge" (Fine, 2007a, p.613). PAR, thus, does not seek to work in isolation of the participants but to work with them as a means of providing alternative perspectives; combining the insider knowledge within the community and encouraging critical self-reflection on this, leading to knowledge generation and "transformative learning"[15] (Nelson, 2009, p.207).

PAR: methodology or a framework?

From the early stages of working with PAR, one question that has intrigued me is whether PAR is a methodology or a methodological framework. In engaging with the literature this question is not directly engaged, but is more inferred. Having engaged PAR and been part of a PAR project, I have come to the understanding that PAR is not a methodology in the traditional sense of the term[16] but is instead best conceived as a methodological framework, an epistemology, a way of thinking about and conceptualizing research, or a methodological tool kit (Enright and O'Sullivan, 2010). Fals Borda describes PAR as "…a philosophy of life as much as a method, a sentiment as much as a conviction" (1997, p.111). As a philosophy of life, engagement in the process requires the respect, consideration, and embodiment of its principles and ideals. This does not require that one

[15] The aim of transformational learning is defined as "…helping human beings become wise by removing the clutter in the mind that interferes with clear perception and actions" (Nelson, 2009, p.207), while transformational learning itself is defined as "…learning that allows a human to perceive in a wise manner for the benefit of self and others" (Nelson, 2009, p.207, drawing on the work of Mezirow, 2003)

[16] Kumar (2008, p.5) defines a research methodology as "a way to systematically solve the research problems."

rigidly stick to the principles set out. Instead, a PAR framework should be viewed in a more holistic manner; as a set of guidelines, aiding the researcher in thinking about the research process and encouraging him/her to democratize the researcher-participant relationships– viewing them as active researchers– while recognizing their potential within the research process (McTaggart, 1997; McIntyre, 2008; Rodríguez and Brown, 2009).

The PAR framework is inevitably flexible and malleable, acknowledging the need for individuality within the research process; recognizing that the project must be responsive not only to the participants, the researcher and the action that they engage in, but it must also be responsive to the social context within which the research takes place (Fine, 2007a). In this way, the PAR framework acknowledges that no two social situations are identical, which must be considered in thinking, planning, and conducting the research. Furthering this, PAR is arguably a personal framework, within which one must individually embody its philosophies of collaboration, co-construction and mutual action.

As an agent of change, PAR impacts a number of parties, including the participants and this consequently changes their social situation. It is naïve, however, to think that this is the extent of the change. In embodying the PAR philosophies the researcher becomes personally engaged in the process and is changed by the "…living process … [and] situations in which he or she acts" (McTaggart, 1997, p.40). Furthermore, the researcher is bound in his/her relationship with the participants and, through the process of inquiry, is as much a part of the knowledge generation as the participants themselves. Bearing this in mind and drawing on the work of Maxine Greene (1995), through the creation of alternative realities and perspectives– an imagining of what could be– the researcher becomes changed in the way he thinks and acts. Fals Borda comments on how his "…continuous field experience naturally conditioned my subsequent intellectual production and marked my style and personality to the present day" (1997, p.110). Acknowledging the uniqueness of a situation and the

change that potentially occurs, it is fair to argue that no two PAR projects are ever the same. The tools used, attitudes of the participants, philosophical embodiment of the researcher, and action that occurs are all elements that make each PAR project unique not only to that situation but to the researcher and the participants also.

Although PAR is an inherently flexible framework it is in no way less rigorous or less valid than other forms of research. Its knowledge is generated from the ground up and its data is derived from the lived experiences of its participants. In addition, the "…genuinely collaborative methodological and pedagogical processes that validate, incorporate and build on the knowledge and skills of youth researchers" (Rodríguez and Brown, 2009, p.27) forefronts the participatory core of the framework. PAR does not encourage the researcher to speak for the participants; instead, it places them in the position of 'architects' (Oliver, 2010) and spokespeople, designing the process and revealing their truth through the local, critical knowledge that they hold (Morrell, 2008). The researcher is, thus, not focused on reconstructing the words of the participants but is charged with providing opportunities for participants to be positioned as "…truth tellers, theorists, and experts" (Rodríguez and Brown, 2009, p.31) so that they can share their ideas and concerns within and outside their communities.

The PAR cycle

The relationship between PAR and AR, as previously identified, is mirrored in their cyclical processes. While they share many similarities, the two are uniquely different. While both share a cyclical nature, the AR cycle has a start, a number of predefined stages, and a concrete end. In contrast, the PAR cycle is a recursive cyclical process that does not have a pre-defined stage process. Instead, its tenets are flexible and do not always happen in congruent sequence. The cycle moves with, responds and reacts to the research in the most appropriate way and thus is constantly in flux.

McIntyre (2008, p.6) identifies the PAR cycle as involving '*questioning*, *reflecting*, *investigating*, *developing a plan*, *implementing*, and *refining*' (Figure 2). This cycle does not just occur once within the PAR process but does so recursively (Figure 3). This recursive cycle is constantly in flux and while the stages in Figures 2&3 are in a particular order, it must be recognized that PAR rarely follows this sequence. The cycle occurs within the four main stages of PAR, as defined by Enright & O'Sullivan (2010, p.169-172); *naming the inequity*, *broadening horizons*, *reassessment*, and *change agency* (Figure 4).

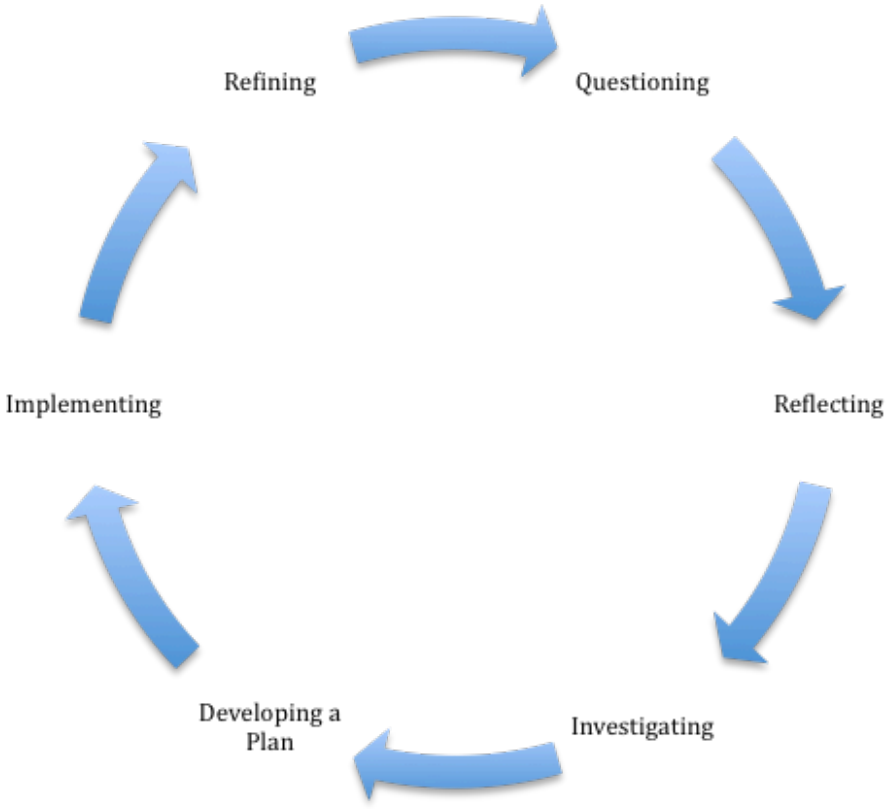


Figure 2 - The PAR Cycle, #1

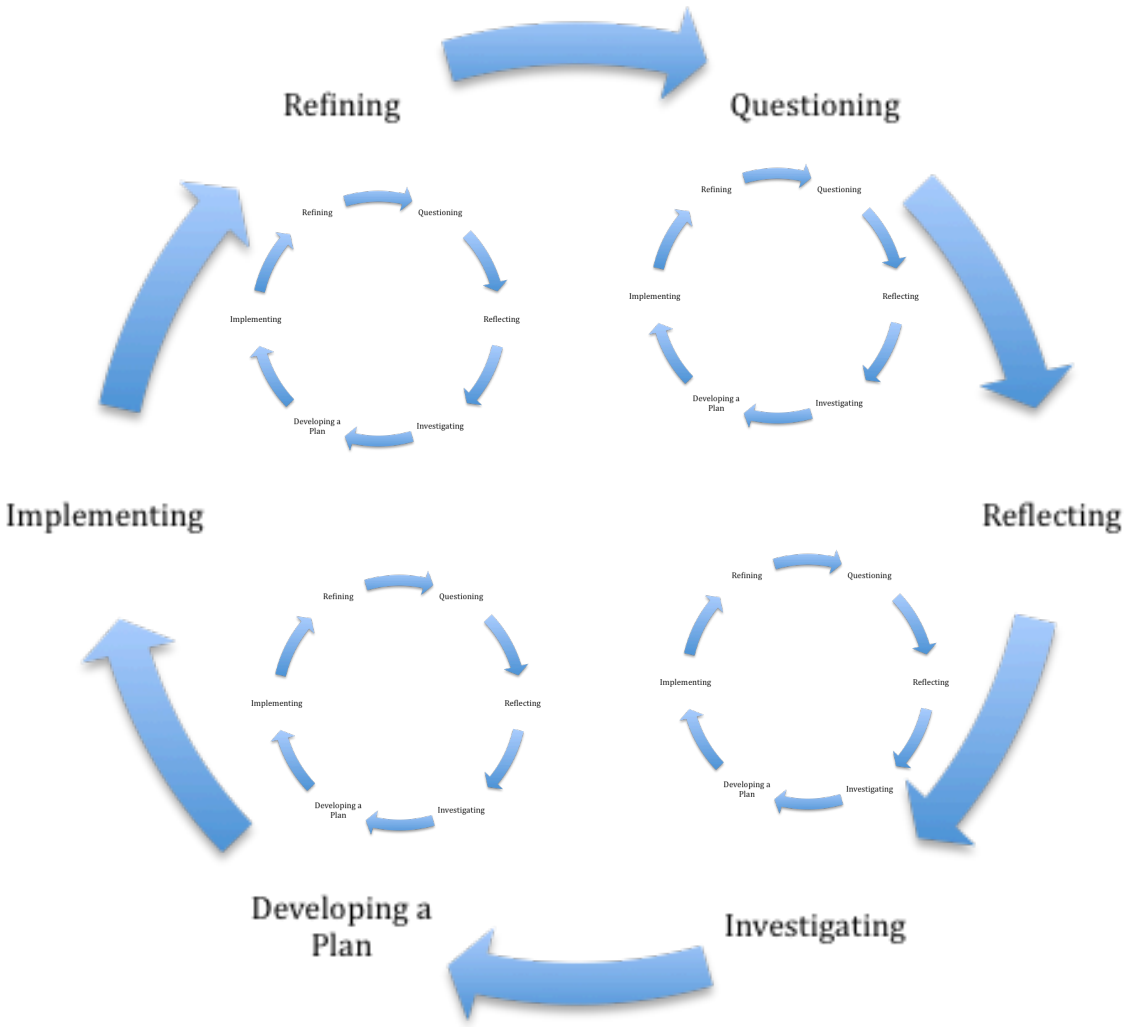


Figure 3 - The Recursive PAR Cycle

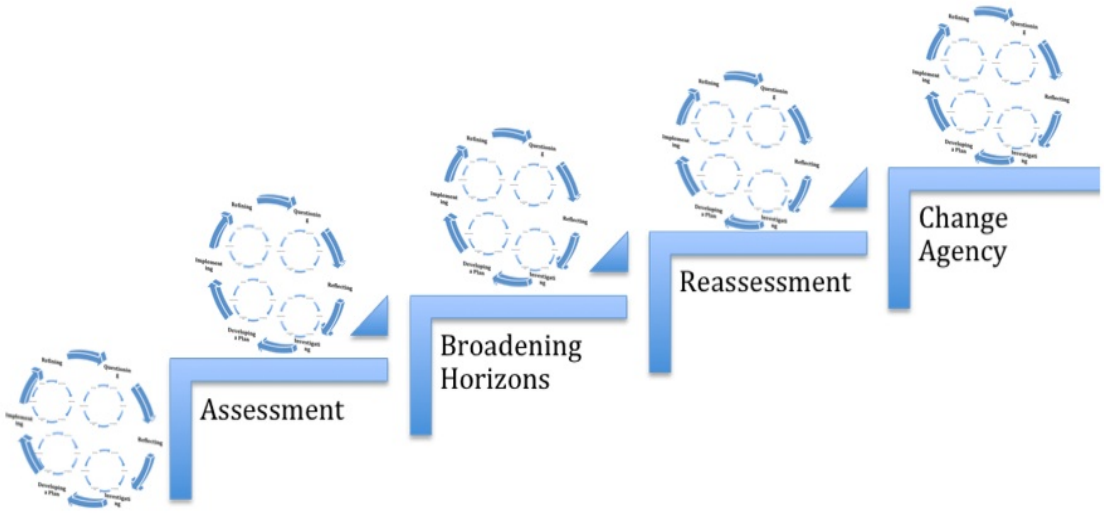


Figure 4 - The Stages of PAR

Participatory action research in action

Within this research, the four main stages of PAR can be understood as follows:

(i) **Naming Inequities**: Ascertaining students' previous experience with the arts and their attitude towards the arts.

(ii) **Broadening Horizons**: A series of co-constructed/co-planned arts-based workshops.

(iii) **Reassessment**: Reassessment of students' attitudes towards the arts as well as their levels of engagement.

(iv) **Action Orientation/Change Agency**: Did any change occur? What was the extent of change agency or action orientation? Where did this change/transformation occur? What was the nature of this transformation?

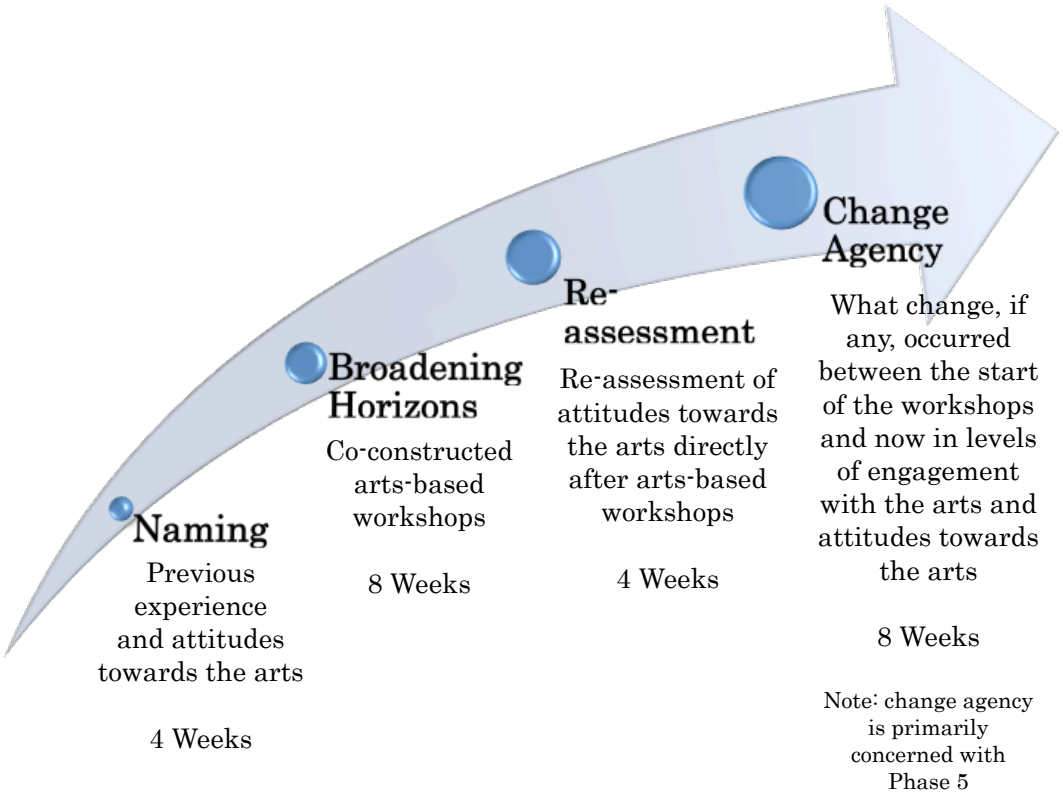


Figure 5 - The Stages of PAR in Action

pARTicipatory Methods

In addition to providing discussion and more detail around PM, as well as examples of those which were engaged, this section seeks to further the web of ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. The previous section on PAR creates very clear links between the participatory and emancipatory ontologies and epistemologies of the work as mirrored in the conceptual framework of the research and how PAR is engaged as a methodological framework. Throughout this section the web of ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods is deepened and complexified in an effort to explicate the synthesis between the theoretical and methodological dispositions of the research.

What are PM?

Although coined in many different ways depending on the mediums being used– *visual methods* (Banks, 2001; Pink, 2007; Pope, 2010; Spencer, 2011), *participatory methodologies* (Brown *et al.*, 2002), *participatory data collection methods* (Veale, 2005), *visual methodologies* (Rose, 2001; de Lange *et al.*, 2007; Rose, 2007; 2012), *creative methods* (Leitch, 2008), *child-oriented and participatory research methods* (White *et al.*, 2010), *the mosaic approach* (Clark and Moss, 2011), and *visual research methods* (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011)– PM are ultimately a "…diverse set of techniques bound together by a common concern for actively involving research subjects in the construction of data" (Gallagher, 2008b, p.138). By their very nature, PM advocate a participatory/communal approach to research, which incorporates "…actively involving 'the public' in decision-making processes, whereby the relevant 'public' depends upon the topic being addressed" (Steyaert *et al.*, 2005, p.9). PM can thus be conceived as an umbrella term for a variety of artistic and creative approaches towards practically engaging participants in the research process.

The growing interest in PM

One of the primary reasons that PM are now more commonly found amongst diverse research projects is their forefronting and valuing of participants' knowledge. That is, their mandate that participants be directly related to or engaged in problem-posing and problem-solving (Steyaert *et al.*, 2005). Consideration of PM is not exclusively a concern of methodology or methods however, but must also be aligned with and compliment the ontological and epistemological foundations of both the researcher and the project in which they are employed (Waring, 2012).

In line with my ontological perspective, PM are underpinned by critical and participatory traditions. In addition, they are also buttressed on emancipatory and participatory epistemologies such as those explicated in chapter two around the arts, student voice, and PAR. This emancipatory ideal is dually reflected in the epistemological foundations of PAR as well as my choice in engaging it as a research framework. Similarly, there is an established link between the choice of methodology (PAR) and the PM. Acknowledging this, previous research across disciplines has frequently aligned PM with methodologies that uniquely reflect their common emancipatory intent; educational policy (Kane *et al.*, 1998), health (Kesby, 2000; Baker and Wang, 2006), rural development (Brown *et al.*, 2002), natural resources management (Castellanet and Jordan, 2002), critical examinations of communities (Cahill, 2004), school improvement (Woolner *et al.*, 2007), identity construction with marginalised populations (Packard, 2008), physical education participation (Enright and O'Sullivan, 2010; Oliver, 2010), and more broadly educational research (Leitch and Mitchell, 2007; Gallagher, 2008b; Leitch, 2008; Prosser and Burke, 2008). In particular, PM have been uniquely combined with PAR, acknowledging the similarities between both in terms of their mutual privileging of participant/local knowledge and experience. By engaging both elements within a research project there is a clear participatory intent, motivation and goal. This participatory focus permeates the research, with PAR aspiring to create a democratically engaging and participatory framework

and PM seeking to maximise participation through providing the practical tools/means of engagement and data generation necessary.

Through the utilisation of a PAR framework with PM, the participants and researcher are guided, in all aspects of the research; in their assessment of the inequities, as well as in the co-construction of an intervention to explore these inequities. Furthering the theoretical and methodological relationships within the research, PM are closely aligned, and frequently combined with projects associated with the elicitation of student voice and voice research (Driessnack, 2006; Bragg and Buckingham, 2008; Haw, 2008; Buchwald *et al.*, 2009; Galman, 2009; Enright and O'Sullivan, 2010; Luttrell and Chalfen, 2010; Pope, 2010; Ten Have, 2010; Clark and Moss, 2011). In combining PM within research that seeks to elicit students' voices, one is recognising the potential for PM to "…help all voices to be heard and thereby give life to democracy" (Steyaert *et al.*, 2005, p.11). In addition, from the participants' perspective, Luttrell and Chalfen argue that "…people will welcome the opportunity to use modern camera technology, [one of many PM,] as a means to express themselves, what they know and how they wish to be seen" (2010, p.197).

Further entangling the web of PM

Acknowledging that PM provide the practical tools to engage participants and elicit their voices, it is necessary to further complexify the web of ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods by acknowledging the inherent creative and arts-based nature of PM. PM, in whatever medium they are presented (visual, written, musical, physical etc.) and within the various disciplines- social work, health, geography, education, therapy etc.- are unarguably arts-based and consequently come within the suite of ABER. The various techniques employed within the umbrella of PM combine a variety of art forms to actively empower participants towards the realisation that they are 'experts in their own lives' (Kane *et al.*, 1998; Kesby, 2000; Brown *et al.*, 2002; Steyaert *et al.*, 2005; Bragg and Buckingham, 2008;

Gallagher, 2008b; Leitch, 2008; Enright and O'Sullivan, 2010; Oliver, 2010). Thus the creative arts and PM are inextricably bound.

PM, by their very definition, are arts-based and engage artistic forms in order to provide alternative representation to the written word; and as a means of offering a "…positive challenge to the taken-for-granted idea that you can [only] explore the social world … by asking people questions, in language" (Gauntlett and Holzwarth, 2006, p.83-84). Offering this new approach also facilitates adult researchers' understanding of the social world of children through their varied and multi-media expression (Buchwald *et al.*, 2009).

The PM used in this research can be described as belonging to the applied arts, particularly the integrated-applied arts, something that will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven. The PM selected for inclusion in this research– and on occasion devised by the participants or I– were not only means of eliciting information and forming a tool through which we could jointly find expression, but they offered– by their very form– artistic engagement to participants. For example, by creating timelines of their artistic engagement participants were engaging with visual art.

Attesting to the arts-based nature of PM, Clarke and Moss describe their approach to PM (the mosaic approach) as an "…integrated approach which combines the visual with the verbal" (2011, p.1). Similarly, Veal also comments on the artistic nature of PM in drawing on "…inventive and imaginative processes such as in storytelling, drama and drawing" (Veale, 2005, p.254). Further supporting the arts-based nature of PM, Leitch comments on the relationship and artistic synergy between the visual and the verbal and also the necessity for those leading PM to have been "…exposed themselves to the use of the arts" (Leitch, 2008, p.39-55). This does not, however, necessitate that one must be considered an expert within any of the artistic disciplines, moreover that one must have a working understanding of the creative arts with which they are engaging due to the artistic nature of PM.

The inclusion of PM within this research not only engaged participants in arts making, arts viewing, and provided a means to teach in and through the arts, but within the framework of ABER and PAR lend a further potency in forefronting the critical lens through which they view the world.

PM as empowerment, expression/voice, and democracy

PM are means of both inquiry and representation. While, the common purpose of PM is to sustain engagement with young people in order to ascertain in-depth understandings of their experiences, Leitch (2008) notes that some studies exemplify the way in which PM can also be used as methodology. As means of both representation and inquiry, PM use the arts to engage participants in exploring particular aspects of their lived and or imagined experience. As well as being engaged individually, PM have the potential to combine traditional research tools with their more creative, imaginative, participative and inquiry based means (Gallagher, 2008b; Leitch, 2008; White *et al.*, 2010; Spencer, 2011; Rose, 2012). Due to the inherently participative and self-directed nature of PM, they are a grounded means of inquiry, in that they seek to explore participants' lived or imagined experience and, within this research, utilise this as a means of intervention within the PAR framework.

PM are valuable within participatory projects for a number of reasons. By privileging the local knowledge of the participants, PM provide an innate sense of empowerment as well as actively and critically engaging them in the research process (White *et al.*, 2010). Using PM with young people also acknowledges that they, and only they, have the capacity to provide expert testimony about their experiences, associations and lifestyles (Punch, 2002; Thomson, 2008). In this way PM are argued to produce more authentic knowledge about children's subjective realities (Grover, 2004). Engaging PM, thus, facilitates participants' articulation of their own voice. Undoubtedly, and as stated by Kilkelly *et al.* (2005, cited in Leitch 2008) lack of voice in terms of decisions that affect them is the single most

important issue to young people. Also acknowledging this, in terms of power dynamics, Kesby (2000) and Gallagher (2008b) elicit the fact that engagement in PM is an attempt to equalise or democratize this power imbalance. Grover (2004, p.85) states that democratization can occur through "…giving power to the children by allowing them the chance to be heard". PM uniquely provide the impetus for children, young people, and research participants to share their narratives and give focus and articulation to their own voice. Consequently, engagement with PM is seen as more ethical practice (Cahill, 2004; Pink, 2007; Gallagher, 2008b; Leitch, 2008; Packard, 2008), as research participants are generating data about themselves and expressing it (i) with their own voice and (ii) from their unique, insightful, and privileged perspective.

PM within this project

The openness to integrating art forms, and indeed the arts-inclusive nature of the research is reflected in the PM used. The majority of PM used engage a number of art forms at one time and rarely did they employ individual art forms. In addition to the more established PM, a number of PM were designed by the participants and me, individually and collectively, as a means of further eliciting and articulating their voice as well as moving towards a greater sense of participation, empowerment, and democracy. The choice the use PM within this project also has resonances with the fourth theoretical strand, power and educational disadvantage. Recognising the various power struggles that may be at play, PM seek to generate more democratic relationships with participants through offering them the opportunity to recognise the power of their insider knowledge. Furthermore, acknowledging that students who are regarded as educationally disadvantaged traditionally reject formalised approaches to knowledge generation, the inclusion of PM facilitates the provision of alternative choices and means of generating knowledge.

Considering all of this, the PM chosen for inclusion in this project include; timelines, social mapping, video diaries, peer interviews, photography-

diaries, arts-based compositions, image diaries, and written diaries. In order to fully understand the nature of each of these methods within the process, it is necessary to briefly explain how each one was engaged. It may, however, be useful to preface this with a discussion of photo-elicitation (an interview technique that utilizes visual artefacts created by participants as a means of instigating and inspiring discussion) as it was engaged with almost all PM.

Photo-elicitation

Banks (2001) and Rose (2007; 2012) highlight the importance of bringing knowledge to bear upon images in order to interpret, or indeed, see what is actually there. In this way, it is recommended that researchers working with PM do not rely exclusively on interpretation of the artefacts, but instead profess a more authentic understanding by providing participants with the opportunity to elicit meaning from the artefacts. This acknowledgement, that "…young people are *capable* of providing expert testimony about their experiences, associations and lifestyles" (Thomson, 2008, p.1, emphasis in original), is an integral element to the inclusion of PM within social science and educational research. By acknowledging this, one is also recognising the innate characteristic that only young people can offer unique and specific insights into their lives and experiences, and, furthermore, omitting their view undoubtedly leads to misinterpretation, misrepresentation and short sightedness on the researcher's perspective (Banks, 2001; Gallagher, 2008b; Leitch, 2008; Spencer, 2011).

The researcher is, thus, held responsible for providing participants with opportunities to discuss and talk about the data or artefacts that they have generated. One means of engaging in this is through 'photo-elicitation' (Harper, 2002; Rose, 2012). Harper discusses how photo-elicitation, as a form of interviewing, yields much more authentic results, as images "…mine deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews" (2002, p.23; see also Shohel and Howes, 2007). Harper (2002) attributes this depth to the fact that images evoke a different kind of information, and he groups images used within photo-elicitation around

three sources of information: visual inventories of objects, people and artefacts; images that depict events that were part of collective or institutional pasts; and intimate dimensions of the social-family or other intimate social group, or one's own body. As a facet of research methodology, Harper comments that photographs appear to illuminate what is otherwise tacit– "…a person gone; an event past" (2002, p.23)– and it is only through studying the visual that these elements emerge.

Engagement with photo-elicitation holds many advantages for the researcher and participants, allowing the world of the research to be expanded beyond the boundaries of the workshop space (Shohel and Howes, 2007; Clark and Moss, 2011). In this way, participants, as autonomous and knowledgeable researchers and architects, excavate their experiences and surrounds to illuminate their research exploration. Engagement with photo-elicitation also has the potential to involve persons who have difficulties with reading, writing, and articulation through the written word. By moving away from words-alone interviews and including a picture, participants are facilitated in revealing that they:

> …know more than their verbal reports suggest, and the brevity of their response might actually relate more to their inability to retrieve information than to their understanding of the event or concept under question.
>
> (Driessnack, 2006, p.1415)

Through this participants begin 'storying' (Driessnack, 2006) and creating narratives, inspired by the images presented to them, and begin revealing and eliciting information.

It is notable that although the term used is 'photo-elicitation', there is an inherent acknowledgement that the method is not confined simply to photographs, but can include any and all arts-based materials that serve as impetus for the interview (Harper, 2002; Prosser, 2007; Prosser and Burke, 2008; Rose, 2012). Furthermore, while recognizing the value of photo-elicitation, Radley (2010) argues that more than simply eliciting information within the photograph, the interview should also be concerned with photo-production. That is, the methods through which the photo or visual piece

was created, and its role in becoming part of the analysis. In combining photo-elicitation and photo-production within the interview process, participants are facilitated in articulating their decisions for taking or not taking certain photographs, which incorporates practical and physical considerations as well as cognitive and emotional reasons. This process has the potential to yield far greater insight into participants motivations as well as providing an innate perspective on the research by participants' discussion of photographs that they could not take, or visual pieces that they were unable to generate (Hodgetts *et al.*, 2007).

Within the context of the following discussions, all of the PM discussed were engaged as means of photo-production and photo-elicitation.

Timelines

A *timeline* is a form of mapping that focuses on the visual representation of chronologically significant events in a participant's biography (Rose, 2012). These events can be connected through a variety of relationships or alternatively may simply be various chronological stages of personal and social development in the participant's life. Similar to other types of maps, which can be conceived as "…metaphors for our relationship to the world" (Spencer, 2011, p.72), *timelines* have the potential to elicit participants' relationship with events in their lives and group them according to set criteria, for example, their impact, whether positive or negative. *Timelines* can also be useful in exploring the extent to which participants engaged in a particular area, topic or event. For example, exploring participants' experiences and engagement with the arts, as they were used within this research.

Social mapping

Another type of mapping engaged within this project is *social mappin*g. Although *social mapping* is traditionally used within participatory rural appraisal– as a means of "…identifying economic and other resources in communities" (Chambers, 1997, p.256)– within this project it was adapted as a means of exploring participants' lived experiences outside of their

school community. *Social mapping* was engaged to explore its potential in bringing memories back into consciousness through the elicitation of data from participants about their "…personal memories and experiences of a specific place" (Spencer, 2011, p.75). Participants were presented with maps and asked to identify their movement patterns within the maps. By doing this, participants were creating patterns of their movement on a weekly basis, which provided invaluable insight in relation to their attitudes towards their community and its surrounds, the various resources within the community, and provided more insight into their lives. Consequently, through the process participants began revealing personal memories attached to various spaces on the maps, which served to deepen my knowledge and bring participants' consciousness to their experience. Engagement with this process consequently facilitated participants' explorations of their relationship, or lack there of, and experiences with their community (Clark and Moss, 2011).

Written and image diaries/scrapbooking

Findings from Phase 1 noted that relying exclusively on written diaries within a DEIS school is inefficient due to their perceived school-like/adult associations (Prosser and Burke, 2008) and the difficulties that some participants have with reading and writing. The findings did, however, note the value of written diaries to some participants who were comfortable articulating their thoughts, feelings, and experiences through the written word. In contrast to written diaries, image diaries were seen as being more accessible for participants (Leitch, 2008; Prosser and Burke, 2008). For these reasons, a combination of written and image diaries were chosen as means of structuring participants' individual diaries and thus providing them with a space within which they could express their thoughts, feelings, frustrations and experiences of the workshops. Participants were also encouraged to treat their individual diaries as scrapbooks (Buckingham and Bragg, 2003). In treating their diaries as scrapbooks participants were combining their own written and visual work with collages of cuttings, drawings and writings from a variety of media sources (Bragg and Buckingham, 2008).

By facilitating participants' use of scrapbooks there was a move away from the written or spoken word and exploration of the broader dimensions of participants' engagement, which focused on centralising the participants' voices (Bragg and Buckingham, 2008). In this way, scrapbooking also provides a range of voices that are responsive to the experiences of the research participants. Although participants were encouraged to engage in scrapbooking, the fundamental significance of their own words and drawings was always the primary focus (Prosser and Burke, 2008). That being said, the inclusion of scrapbooks further democratizes the researcher participant relationship, as participants exert control over their own diaries by challenging and facilitating their own level of response as well as having more control over what information they share (Bragg and Buckingham, 2008).

Some institutions have realized the potential of scrapbooking as a means of enabling "…children to have their voices heard" as well as recognising the potential for online scrapbooks to generate educational and institutional change (University Campus Suffolk, 2013).

Video diaries & peer interviews

Undoubtedly influenced by social media– *Youtube*, and reality TV shows such as *Big Brother* and *I'm a Celebrity Get me Out of Here*– video diaries within social science research are becoming more common (Banks, 2001; Noyes, 2004; 2008; David, 2010). Often these reality TV shows provide a structure that can be adapted to the research context, through which participants can access video diaries. For example, Noyes (2004) adopted a *Big Brother* structure (bean bag in front of a video camera) in an effort to generate familiarity with the concept for participants.

Video diaries were used because of their potential "…to achieve a certain sense of honesty and candour in each pupils' self-preservation" (Noyes, 2008, p.132). In this way, engagement with video diaries removes the researcher from the setting, unless they are invited, and so participants

express themselves in and on their own terms, creating a record of their own physical and emotional space (Prosser and Burke, 2008). Video diaries are contrasted with semi-structured interviews where there is a power differential between the participants and the researcher. Haw comments that:

> [v]ideo is seen as a useful medium for helping 'ordinary people' participate in research because it can help them articulate a voice through a visual rather than a written text, and one which can attract a wider audience.
>
> (Haw, 2008, p.193)

Video diaries– where pupils are themselves alone with a camera– in this project became combined with peer interviews, where participants interviewed each other. The transition from individual video diaries to peer interviews occurred naturally during the research process as participants enlisted help from others to hold the camera instead of using the tripod. The presence of the peer then led to that person's interjection in the video diary; questioning and provoking things that were said. Quickly, an individual diary became a dialogue and this appeared to 'catch on', as the preference of the group became peer interviews as opposed to video diaries.

Observing this change, participants' preference for peer interviews over individual video diaries appeared to be as a result of the catalytic nature of the dialogue between peers. When participants created individual video diaries they appeared stuck for things to say, or they were unsure what to talk about and so simply ended the video. In contrast, when in dialogue with a peer, the conversations were more rich and included both insider and outsider perspectives (the interviewee and interviewer respectively). At times, the interviewer held critical insider knowledge which proved provocative and insightful in instigating and deepening conversations. Thus, engaging in the process meant that participants were continually engaged in photo-elicitation as both participant/expert and privileged insider/witness.

The use of video diaries also aided in the democratization of the researcher-participant relationship (Prosser and Burke, 2008). There were many occasions when participants or peer observers didn't know what to talk about. In this instance, and as the research process continued, I was called upon to provide questions or potential things to talk about. The participants were not only choosing to allow me in to their interviews, but were actively seeking and valuing my opinion.

Throughout the research, participants had the opportunity to replace their written/image diary with a video diary. Most chose the written/image diary but if they had a lot to say, would then supplement their written/image diary with a video diary, often talking about what they had written or drawn in their written/image diary and eliciting the reasons why. Thus, the inclusion of a video diary complimented participants' written/image diary.

As well as being used within the research space, video diaries also have the potential to provide unique perspectives on participants' school environment. Clark and Moss document their use of video cameras to provide 'tours' of participants' institution (Clark and Moss, 2011). On several occasions throughout the research process participants facilitated a greater understanding of the research space and context by providing commentary as they 'toured' the research and wider school space. Video cameras were also combined with photography-diaries when participants toured their biographies. This 'touring' provided unique insights into participants' views on their community, their relationships with their community, and other facets of their lived experience.

Photography-diaries

The inclusion of photography-diaries within research acknowledges the fact that young people and 'ordinary' people are capable of being significant image-makers (Veale, 2005; Packard, 2008; Prosser and Burke, 2008; Radley, 2010; Clark and Moss, 2011; Rose, 2012). Photography-diaries within participatory research holds many benefits for researchers and participants. Providing participants with still image cameras creates a

sense of empowerment and control (Clark and Moss, 2011). Not only are participants entrusted with cameras but they are given responsibility and freedom to capture elements of their setting and experience that they regard as being value laden. This freedom is granted– as Prosser and Burke (2008) discuss– in two ways, the photos serve as narrative and a vehicle for personal expression for participants, and if photo-elicitation is to be engaged at a latter stage, it is the participants' priorities that form the focus of that discussion. Relatedly, the taking and analysis of a photograph by participants provides a perspective that they do not always see, and consequently invites them "…to reflect upon their situation afresh" (Radley, 2010, p.268). This re-viewing of what participants see around them on a daily basis has the potential to instigate change in perspective and lead them towards a realization or view that they previously did not hold.

The use of photography-diaries also has a practical implication, facilitating participants in merging the worlds of research and their lived experience in their communities. Participants' photography-diaries are not simply centred on events and experiences within school, but extend to their lives at home and within their wider community. Consequently, participants may be engaged in a re-viewing of their surrounds through their photography-diaries. In considering the use of photography-diaries, it is imperative that nowadays one takes account of the presence of camera phones, which have the potential to deepen this experience. Unlike cameras, camera phones are readily accessible to participants and accompany them through the various experiences that they have on a daily basis (David, 2010). As well as providing contextual information, photography-diaries have the potential to hold invaluable knowledge in relation to participants' attitudes and engagement with their community as well as the various activities that occur within it. Photography-diaries do not just lend themselves to the process of photo-elicitation (Harper, 2002; Rose, 2012), but also to the process of photo-production (Radley, 2010). That is, the physical, mental, and emotional processes and limitations that participants engage in when taking photographs.

Advances in modern technology are modifying the way that we engage technology in research settings and wider society. Camera phones, for example, are greatly impacting the ways in which researchers and participants engage with technology. David (2010) discusses the prevalence of camera phones and modern technology within research settings and how this provides a unique insight into participants' lives as a result of everyone wanting to represent their take on an event. Potentially, with participants providing many perspectives on one event, the researcher is being made privy to a plethora of voices and lenses through which he/she can view the events and context presented.

Arts-based composition

Due to the mutli-artistic or arts-integrated nature of the project, a number of arts-based compositions were engaged during the workshops. Paralleling the participatory nature and process orientation of the arts (Bloomfield and Childs, 2000; Kempe and Nicholson, 2001; Murphy and O'Keefe, 2006), the philosophy underpinning composition within the arts was that of participation, seeking to provide participants with a positive artistic experience as a form of education. Moreover, aligned with my own views on education and the arts, there was an explicit emphasis and focus on the *process* that participants engaged in while generating these compositions, with lesser consideration on the material *product* or form that was generated.

The arts were also included– more broadly– as methodological devices (Veale, 2005). That is, they were used as a reflective tool, as tools of data generation and consequently may be analysed as forms of data, or arts-based composition and may simply be engaged as a process of engagement in the arts.

Complementing the multi-arts nature of the research, the different forms of arts-based compositions engaged were; musical composition, visual art composition, dance composition, drama composition, literature & poetry

composition, and film composition[17]. In accordance to the integrated nature of the workshops, arts-based compositions within the project rarely assumed individual artistic forms but combined a number of different art forms. For example, a drama composition could include movement, dance, visual art, poetry, and music.

[17] The artistic forms spoken of here are related to arts-compositions during the workshops and are not in relation to arts-based compositions generated for public dissemination, as discussed in chapter eight.

Data Collection

Throughout the research a number of different data generating methodologies were engaged. The data generated reflected the participatory and critical nature of the research and both traditional and more visually oriented/arts-based data were generated. Various phases of the research are commented on throughout this section and so Figure 1 is repeated for clarity.

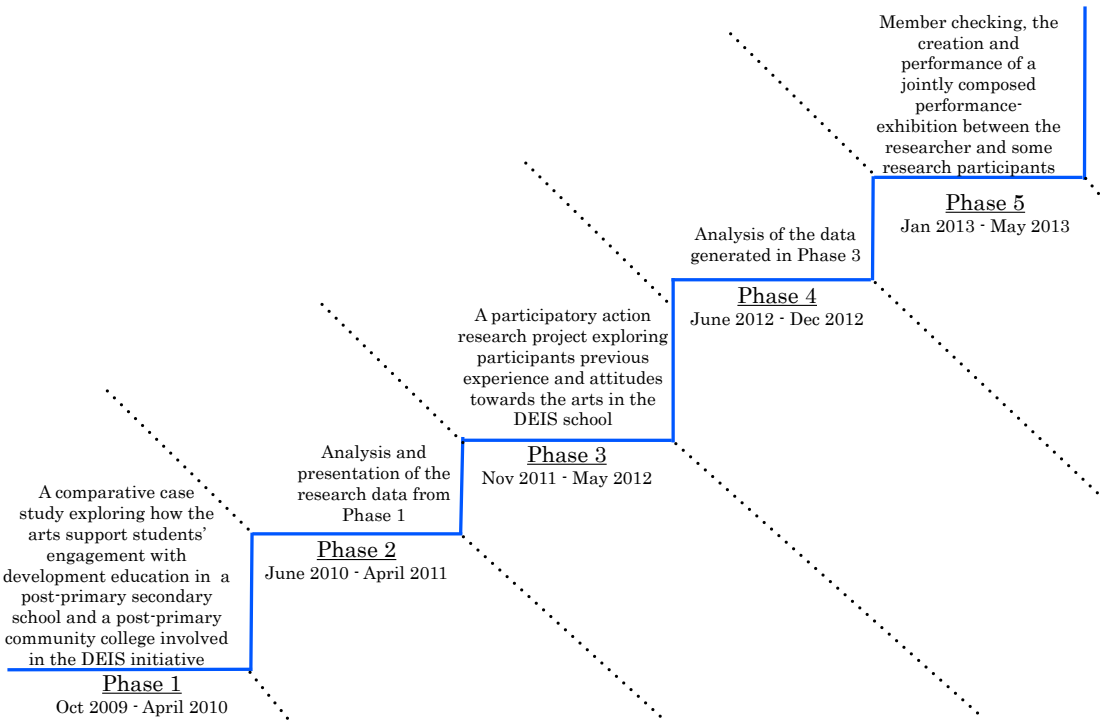


Figure 1 – Research Continuum

Prior to Phase 3 of the research, a questionnaire (Appendix C) was distributed to every student in St. Nessan's over a two-day period. There were 201 respondents out of a possible 317 students who were registered in the school during the academic year 2011/2012[18]. The questionnaire focused on students' previous engagement with the arts, their previous attitudes towards the arts, their current engagement with the arts, and their current

[18] There were 332 students enrolled in the school for the academic year 2011/2012. However, 15 of these were initially enrolled in TY. Students involved in Phase 3 were not given questionnaires.

attitudes towards the arts. The questionnaire also sought to ascertain financials associated with students' participation in the arts, their motivations in engaging with the arts, and persons who were responsible for their involvement in the arts, as well as reasons for lack of participation and potentially highlighting any one who contributed towards a lack of engagement.

The questionnaire was distributed to each class group when they were in their base/streamed classes, so as to avoid repetition[19]. Although I acknowledge the potential for bias when researchers devise and distribute questionnaires, I felt it was necessary for me to distribute and be present when the questionnaires were being completed because it allowed respondents to have their questions addressed. In addition, and in hindsight, some of the questions that respondents asked while filling out the questionnaires required a response from the researcher directly involved in the research and so it was important that I was present to answer these. In order to maximise anonymity the questionnaires were kept anonymous and respondents were informed of this. The questionnaire data served as baseline/contextual data to inform the study and background of the participants.

Within the Phase 3 workshops, my primary contribution to the generation of qualitative data was my researcher reflective diary. My research diary spanned not only the workshops, but entries were also made in planning the workshops and prior to meeting the participants. Entries to my researcher diary were made after each workshop and on occasions where I had contact with the participants or school staff, for example via *Facebook* or email. Data generated by participants was through a variety of means and was primarily generated within the workshops. Some data was, however, generated outside of the workshops, via *Facebook* and completing various tasks at home.

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[19] Pupils who were present in school the second day but not present the first day were called out of class and completed the questionnaire individually.

The participants or I audio-visually recorded all non-written data that was generated. It was my responsibility to then catalogue and store this data as soon as I left the school/workshop space. The data was logged on my external hard-drive, which was encrypted and password protected, and was then kept in a locked drawer in my office in Mary Immaculate College, which only I had access to.

Data Sources

Initially it was expected that there would be 11 data sources (Table 1).

	Data Source	Type of Data Source
1.	Researcher reflective diary and field notes	Written
2.	Participants' reflective diary	Written & Visual
3.	Participants' video diary	Audio-Visual
4.	Participant-peer interviews	Audio-Visual
5.	Researcher-participant interviews	Audio-Visual
6.	Focus groups with participants	Audio-Visual
7.	Participants' visual work	Audio-Visual & Photograph
8.	Participants talking about their visual work	Audio-Visual
9.	Interviews with various members of school staff	Audio
10.	*Facebook* page	Online / Electronic
11.	Recordings of workshops	Audio-Visual

Table 1. Intended Data Sources

As the research progressed, segregating and isolating these data sources was not possible due to time constraints in relation to the amount of time that the school had afforded me for the workshops. Segregating data sources also disrupted the natural flow of data generation during the workshops and so many data sources were combined in a very natural process (Table 2). During the workshops, data sources 2, 3, 4, and 8 became merged into each other. On occasion these data sources were engaged individually but, more often than not, all three data sources became merged

into one recording with various contributors. Data source 5 was, on occasion, added into this mix, with participants requesting my comment or help in talking about elements, which lead to informal discussions between the participants and me being recorded. At times, in audio-visually recording their compositions participants gave a running commentary on their inspiration and reasoning behind the piece as well as their meaning and intention, which further added to this data set. When pieces were photographed this was not the case. Participants' arts-based compositions (notably music, drama, and dance) were also audio-visually recorded. It, thus, emerged that the eleven data sources initially identified were naturally fashioned into eight data sources (Table 2).

	Data Source	Type of Data Source
1.	Researcher reflective diary and field notes	Written
2.	Participants' reflective diary, video diary, peer interviews, talking about their generated work.	Written & Visual
3.	Researcher-participant interviews	Audio-Visual
4.	Focus groups with participants	Audio-Visual
5.	Participants' visual work	Audio-Visual & Photograph
6.	Interviews with school staff: Principal and TY Coordinator	Audio
7.	*Facebook* page	Online / Electronic
8.	Recordings of workshops	Audio-Visual

Table 2. Modified Data Sources

Within these data sources, more traditional semi-structured interviews and focus groups (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Bryman, 2008) were combined with a variety of more progressive PM (Veale, 2005; Banks, 2007; Bragg and Buckingham, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Kaplan, 2008; Leitch, 2008; Noyes, 2008; Spencer, 2011; Rose, 2012) in an effort to move away from simple knowledge gathering and facilitate knowledge production (Veal, 2005). Notably, semi-structured interviews with members of school staff also took place. In total, five staff members were interviewed. Other informal conversations with

staff were recorded in my field notes and researcher reflective diary. All interviews, focus groups, and participant video-diaries/peer interviews were transcribed for data analysis.

Data Analysis

In respecting the diversity of data sources, different modes of data analysis were employed; grounded theory (GT), thematic analysis (TA), and visual analysis. GT and TA were combined as a means of interpreting the written and spoken word. In contrast, visual analysis was brought to bear on the visual texts that participants generated throughout the research process. It is noteworthy that while GT is discussed within this section, it was employed within the research in a purely methodological capacity, as a data analysis tool, and does not form a critical aspect of the theoretical structures of the research.

GT as a means of data analysis originated in the work of Glaser and Strauss and is defined as:

> …theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process … [where] data collection, analysis and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another.
>
> (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.12)

In contrast to this definition, which is premised on the development of theory, Charmaz (2006) and Bryman (2008) argue GT does not just generate theory but the approach also has the potential to develop concepts. The generation of concepts, similar to the generation of theory, stems from the data being systematically analysed. GT employs the use of coding, which is described as "…giving labels (names) to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance and/or appear to be particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied" (Bryman, 2008, p.542). Unlike GT within a quantitative model, GT within qualitative research occurs both during and post intervention and comprises of three primary stages; initial coding, focused coding, and axial coding. The first state of coding that took place during this research was that of *initial coding* (Charmaz, 2006; Bryant and Charmaz, 2008).

Initial coding began during the workshops in Phase 3. In planning each of the workshops I actively analysed the data and events of the previous

workshops. Charmaz (2006) describes this state as *initial coding*, in that the researcher is engaged in collecting and analysing data in parallel. This parallel collection and analysis of data reflects the iterative nature of GT, particularly within this context. In collecting and analysing data during the workshops, it began actively informing and shaping the work that we were engaging in. Saldaña (2013) describes how codes can be generated during research, through field notes and observation, as well as during the data analysis post intervention. Codes can also be thought of as potential indicators of concepts (Charmaz, 2006) that cause the researcher to shape the research by changing the research agenda in order to investigate them. In this way, *initial coding* becomes a determinant of decisions made within the process.

The second phase of *initial coding* occurred once data collection had ceased. In the second stage of data coding, all data is coded and thoroughly analysed in order to establish all of the indicators and concepts. Once these have been identified, *selective* or *focused coding* (Charmaz, 2006) occurs. Focused coding entails a witling down of the initial codes and a deliberate and conscious selection of what the researcher deems the most important or pertinent codes (Charmaz, 2006). Similarly, *focused coding* can also involve the merging of certain indicators to generate new categories (Saldaña, 2013). The final stage of analysis, within GT, then involves *axial coding*, which can be conceived of as the search for relationships and connections between emergent categories. By incorporating *axial coding* into the data analysis process, it seeks to maintain coherence between the more focused or emergent codes. *Axial coding*, or the constant comparison of codes in order to establish relationships between them, resonates with the methodological notion of triangulation (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Saldaña, 2013).

Undoubtedly, GT is one of the most frequently used data analysis tools within both quantitative and qualitative research due to its grounding of the findings within the data. While GT does provide the tools for data analysis, I feel that its inclusion, within this project, as a form of data

analysis requires a more rigorous framework. On this I employed TA in conjunction with GT. TA is a derivative of GT and what it lacks in terms of rigorous analytic tools, in my eyes, it makes up for in providing a cohesive framework for analysis.

TA seeks to develop themes within research. These themes are comparative to the categories or codes developed within GT. The *National Centre for Social Research* in the United Kingdom developed a framework for TA. This framework is a "…matrix based method for ordering and synthesising data" (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003, p.219). The focus of the framework is the indexing of central themes and subthemes, which are then presented in a matrix format. This matrix is the framework through which the data becomes analysed. Themes are identified through a thorough and close reading of the text. Once these have been identified they are then applied to the data and these consequently make up the core themes and the data are then displayed in terms of subthemes within a matrix for each (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003; Bryman, 2008).

The subthemes in TA are comparable to the *initial* and *focused coding* that occurs in GT. The data sets were analysed as per initial and focused coding and then arranged in a matrix form as per the framework for TA. In doing so, I also adhered to Ryan and Bernard's (2003) recommended considerations for engaging TA; repetitions, indigenous typologies or categories, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and using social science concepts as a springboard for themes.

The combination of GT and TA provides a further strength and validity to the data analysis. Engaging Ryan and Bernard's (2003) considerations within TA, as well as thorough coding, ensures that the emergent themes and subthemes are firmly grounded within the data. The TA framework provided by the *National Centre for Social Research* in the UK ensures that the data is organised in a clear and logical manner and that all extrapolations from the data can be fully supported.

PAR & data analysis

Participants were heavily involved in the generation/collection and initial analysis (*initial/open coding*). This joint participation in generation, collection and analysis of data is in keeping with the participative, inclusive and informed nature of PAR (Herr and Anderson, 2005). However, as Herr and Anderson (2005) also discuss, within a PAR project it may not be appropriate for participants to be involved in every stage of data analysis. In analysing the data participants were consciously absented from the analysis through phase two of the initial coding, as well as the focused and axial coding processes.

In phase one of *initial coding* (which occurred during the intervention) the only access to data that participants had was data that they themselves generated or data that their classmates shared with them. Thus, they were analysing data that they had either generated or data that they had been given permission to see. On several occasions throughout the workshops some participants removed themselves from the larger group when engaging in some of the visual or written work. They explicitly did this because they did not want others to see what they were writing or creating. I felt that by allowing participants to be involved in the second phase of *initial coding* I would be breaking this confidentiality with them and although some may have shared their data, others had chosen not to and this needed to be respected. In addition to maximising confidentiality, one of the more practical elements was the time required. One of the drawbacks of engaging in GT and TA is their labour intensive nature in both coding and analysing the data. Participants had given of their time in being involved in the research and I felt it would be unfair to expect them to give up the many months, weeks, days, and hours necessary to actively code and analyse the data.

With just one person coding and analysing the data I felt it would offer the time necessary to interrogate some of the emergent themes and subthemes in a more rigorous fashion. Similarly, I felt that if the participants had been involved in data analysis at this stage there would be too many eyes, too

many opinions, and too little time to move beyond superficial analysis and argument. Moreover, I felt that because participants were so actively involved within the process that they might impose or solely be concerned with their own views or agenda and that despite what the data might say, their extrapolation and analysis might be solely focused on their experience of the events.

This, however, does not compromise the PAR cycle or participants' involvement as they were actively involved in various stages of data analysis and they directly interpreted much of the visual analysis. Furthermore, when I had completed my analysis of the data I reengaged the participants not only to verify the emergent themes but also to critique, add to, and engage with them. The TA framework facilitated the presentation of the data in a quote book (Kelly *et al.*, 2001), which was directly extrapolated from the thematic framework/matrix. The quote book provided examples of quotes from various data sources that represented the appropriate codes and themes. This was a means of ensuring relevance and meaning of the codes to the participants. In addition to the quote book, and in keeping with the visual nature of the research, the data sets and findings were visually represented to the participants through a number of means (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Presenting the data visually not only facilitated further data analysis, by the participants, but it also generated discussion amongst the participants in relation to the data itself.

Visual analysis

The primary forms of visual analysis, photo-elicitation and photo-production have previously been noted. The purpose of including them within this section is to discuss how they were engaged from a data analysis perspective.

Analysing the visual was not restricted to a physical or tangible visual art pieces. A number of times throughout the research, having created a dance, drama, or music composition (which had been video recorded) the

participants used this experience as the basis for elicitation. They were thus actively reflecting, analysing and constructing meaning around the activities in a way that they usually did not. Not only did photo-elicitation aid in participants' construction of meaning, it also aided in my own meaning generation, as the intention behind the different artistic and visual pieces was unveiled. In this way the participants were provided with a safe distance through which they could articulate and make explicit their thoughts and feelings, which Rose (2001) argues usually remain implicit. This photo-elicitation not only provided data in terms of the video diaries and interviews but also actively aided in shaping the on-going research.

In terms of photo-elicitation with participants' photography-diaries, the process proved helpful in exploring everyday, taken-for-granted assumptions in the participants lives (Rose, 2012). An innate strength of engaging in photo-elicitation within a PAR project is that participants become empowered by taking photographs, as they are making a tangible contribution to the research, as well as becoming empowered through discussing their photographs, where they become the expert and knowledge bearer. Further aligning photo-elicitation with PAR, Rose states that "…photo-elicitation demands collaboration between the researcher and the research participants in ways other methods do not" (Rose, 2012, p.306). The collaborative relationship developed between the researcher and participants is mirrored in the close participative relationship within PAR.

As well as photo-elicitation, the artistic and visual pieces are also forms of photo-documentation: "…a method that assumes photographs are accurate records of what was in front of the camera when its shutter snapped – a precise record of material reality-" (Rose, 2012, p.301). As with photo-elicitation, it was not just photographs that were treated as photo-documentation but all participant-generated visual and artistic compositions. Within this research context, photo-documentation has been applied in order to supplement findings and also to aid in *axial coding*. Visuals provide unique insights and aid in documenting social phenomena (Rose, 2012).

As well as photographing the generated artistic pieces, a number of workshops were concerned with the participants' views of their life both inside and outside of school. In addition to the photo-elicitation that occurred around these pieces, the photographs are also elements of photo-documentation and serve to present a particular view of the participants' lives.

In analysing photographs and visual works Keats (2009) recommends analysing the visual and textual data independent of each other and only then exploring the relationship between them. In this vein, the visual data was first analysed during the workshops by participants themselves, which was recorded. These recordings then formed part of a textual analysis by the researcher during phase two of initial coding and more focused coding. Finally, the relationship between the visual and textual data was explored by means of actively engaging in axial coding.

Validation Strategies

Traditional validation criteria do not consider many of the factors present within AR and PAR projects. In keeping with recommendations made by Kane and O'Reilly-DeBrun (2001), Porter (2007), Cohen et al. (2007), Bryman (2008), Leavy (2009), and Rolling (2010) I went in search of validation criteria that honoured the participative and critical foundations of the research. From my examination of the literature, John Creswell's (2007) eight validation strategies gave the most flexibility and I felt honoured the research the most. Creswell's eight validation strategies are:

(i) prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field
(ii) triangulation
(iii) peer review or debriefing
(iv) negative case analysis
(v) researcher bias
(vi) member checking
(vii) rich thick description
(viii) and external audit

Although Creswell only recommends that "…qualitative researchers engage in at least two of [the criteria] in any given study" (2007, p.209), this study has engaged seven of the eight criteria.

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field

Over the course of Phase 1 and Phase 3 of the research I have spent two years in the field. Although these two years were not concurrent, during the time that I was not in the field I maintained contact with several staff members in the school. This prolonged engagement with the site aided in the development and maintenance of crucial relationships, helped to build trust, aided my learning around the culture of the school and also facilitated my "…checking for misinformation" (Creswell, 2007, p.207) on behalf of the participants, others within the school, and myself. In addition, my prolonged engagement and persistent observation both within the workshops and wider school community facilitated my learning of the

culture of the school, which undoubtedly influenced decisions made in relation to what was salient, relevant to the purpose, and of interest for focus of the study (Creswell, 2007).

Triangulation

A variety of data sources were employed during this research. This variety facilitated ease of data triangulation (Creswell, 1998; Kane and O'Reilly-DeBrun, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Bryman, 2008) during data analysis of both the visual and written texts. Data triangulation is also reflected in the axial coding that occurred during data analysis.

Peer review or debriefing

Throughout the research I had two peer debriefers or critical friends, who acted as devil's advocate (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These were, Leanne Coll, a fellow PhD researcher in the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences in the University of Limerick and Fiona McDonagh, a fellow PhD researcher in the Faculty of Education in Mary Immaculate College.

Over the course of the last two years Leanne and I served as peer reviewers, critics and debriefers for each other's PAR projects. We met regularly to discuss progress within our respective research and events that had taken place. Undoubtedly we probed each other asking hard questions about methods being used and evolving meanings and interpretations within the research. Arguably, one of the most important functions that we fulfilled for each other within this role was that of catharsis, empathetically listening and attempting to provide insight and 'light' for each other. Fiona also fulfilled this function on occasion, and although her research has a very different focus, both are heavily situated within the arts. Fiona, similar to Leanne, provided unique insights into my research and, on several occasions, her advice in terms of artistic engagement and how the participants or I were approaching and engaging with the arts was invaluable.

Negative case analysis

To my knowledge, this is the first study of its kind in Ireland. Although many PAR projects have been initiated worldwide with youth participants, no documented PAR projects have been solely concerned with participants' engagement and attitudes towards the arts in a DEIS setting.

Researcher bias

As Merriam (1988) contends, it is important that the researcher outline his or her own biases at the start of a study so that the reader understands the impact that these may potentially have on shaping the study. This bias was alluded to in chapter one of this thesis.

As well as my positive disposition towards the arts, I think it is valuable that every young person has a positive experience of education and I hold great weight in education, which is reflected in my career choice. It is my belief that it is only through education that one can learn, grow, and appreciate and experience alternative ways of being (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; 1974; Greene, 1995). The arts, in my view, make this process more easily realised and accessible (Dewey, 1934; Boal, 1995; Greene, 1995; Sherwood-Roskam, 2003; Leavy, 2009; Barone and Eisner, 2012). Furthermore, I think it is important for people to have various and alternative perspectives so that, not only can they avail of opportunities provided to them, but that they are also empowered to create their own opportunities in life.

Member checking

Referencing Lincoln and Guba (1985), Creswell (2007) suggests that member checking should solicit participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations. In this he strives towards a more authentic participation within the research process. This research also attempts to engage participants in a more authentic way by actively involving them in decision making throughout the research process, and actively engaging them in data generation, analysis and interpretation of the data. This

moves beyond mere member checking as it seeks to fully engage participants within the process and provide them with more authority than traditional qualitative studies.

Rich thick description

Emanating from the work of Clifford Geertz (1973) I seek, throughout this thesis, to provide a rich thick description of the participants, the site, the process, the findings, and myself so that the reader can not only extrapolate from the writing but come to understand the research, those involved and decisions made before, during and after the process.

External audits

The submission of this thesis as part requirement for a PhD programme means that it will undergo external audit by both an internal and external examiner.

Validity within PAR

Within the field of AR, Herr and Anderson comment that traditional models of trustworthiness and validity are not appropriate due to the fact that they do not acknowledge the inherent action orientated outcomes of AR; "…outcomes that go beyond knowledge generation" (2005, p.49). This section on validity within PAR seeks to ground the previous discussions of validity in a concrete manner.

Connelly and Clandinin state that within research each "…inquirer must search for and defend the criteria that best apply to his or her work" (1990, p.7). In choosing validity criteria for this research I wanted to ensure I was respecting the underlying tenets of PAR; (i) an emphasis on the lived experiences of human beings, (ii) the subjectivity and activist stance of the researcher and (iii) an emphasis on social change (McIntyre, 1997; 2008). In terms of validity criteria within this project I have chosen Herr and Anderson's (2005) criteria for validity due to their consciousness of the underlying tenets of PAR and AR. Herr and Anderson's criteria for validity within action research are: (i) dialogic validity, (ii) outcome validity, (iii) catalytic validity, (iv) democratic validity, and (v) process validity.

Outcome validity:

Outcome validity refers to the extent to which "…actions occur, which leads to a resolution of the problem that led to the study" (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Within PAR projects, it is important to recognise that *action* can be conceived in many different ways. It may occur through participants' engagement in a particular task or a marked difference in participants' actions, behaviours or attitudes. As well as this, however, it may also be participants' reiteration or reassertion of not acting in a particular way. Herr and Anderson (2005) recognise this not through their discussion of outcome validity, but through their discussion of democratic validity, in terms of considering *who* the action is successful for. Within this project, action is assessed in terms of the participants' reiteration, challenging, and articulation of their own attitudes, their behaviours towards and

engagement with the arts and also the researcher's observations throughout the PAR process.

Process validity:

Process validity is concerned with the appropriateness of the methodology and how well the project frames and seeks to solve problems posed. Process validity and outcome validity are mutually dependant, in that if the process is superficial or flawed, appropriate outcomes or meaningful action cannot occur. Process validity questions how the outcomes of the study were achieved within the methodology and the appropriateness of this. For example, within PAR, were the outcomes achieved through a series of reflective cycles that constantly engaged the problematisation of the process and practices? In an effort to ensure process validity Herr and Anderson (2005) recommend triangulation in terms of data collection and data sources. Within process validity, one must also represent the findings truthfully to avoid faking the data and writing a fiction as well as using the data to deceive (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

Dialogic validity:

In assessing dialogic and process validity, one is assessing the *goodness* of the research. This goodness is monitored through a form of peer review. Peer review occurs naturally within this research through a variety of means; through the inclusion of a peer reviewer as described previously, through a process of external audits and also through presentation of the information at various national and international conferences (Hayes and Finneran, 2010, ; 2012; Hayes, 2012b; 2012a).

Democratic validity:

Democratic validity is one of the most integral validity criteria within a PAR process. Democratic validity seeks to ensure that there is authentic collaboration within the process; that participants become co-researchers and that heir voices are held as authoritative and authentic voices within the research. Although it has been coined in various texts- local validity (Cunningham, 1983), relevancy criteria for validity (Watkins, 1991), and

ecological validity (Kelly *et al.*, 2001)– what remains constant is the juxtaposition of researcher and participant voices in a move towards a more democratic form of research. In addition, democratic validity, as previously related to outcome validity, questions whether the methods used and findings are appropriate to the associated communities.

Catalytic validity:

Catalytic validity is concerned with the emancipatory element of PAR. That is, "…the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (Lather, 1986, p.272, cited in Herr and Anderson, 2005). This transformation is also concerned with the researcher and the impact on him/her. As recognised within democratic validity, the research must be conducted in collaboration with participants and researchers and will undoubtedly will impact both. Recognising the complexity of action within both the researcher and participants, Herr and Anderson comment that both parties should "…deepen their understanding of the social reality under study and should be moved to some action to change it (or to reaffirm their support of it)" (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.57). Although there is significant overlap between each type of validity discussed, catalytic validity is uniquely different in that it forefronts the emancipatory and transformative intent inherent within PAR and all forms of AR.

In a move towards clarity, Herr and Anderson (2005, p.55) align each of these validity criteria with the goals of action research (Table 3).

Goals of Action Research	Validity Criteria
1) The generation of new knowledge	Dialogic and process validity
2) The achievement of action-oriented outcomes	Outcome validity
3) The education of both researcher and participants	Catalytic validity
4) Results that are relevant to the local setting	Democratic validity
5) A sound and appropriate research methodology	Process validity

Table 3. The Goals of Action Research & Validity Criteria

Concluding statement on validity

The consideration and presence of all of the forms of validity and trustworthiness are evidence of the rigorous nature of the research and its attempt to represent the data *truthfully*.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations within this project were heightened by the fact that the participants are 'vulnerable' (according to Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee, MIREC, all children under the age of 18 are considered vulnerable children) in addition to the largely participative nature of the methodological framework.

In thinking about ethics within this project I was acutely aware of the emancipatory intent of PAR, ABER, and my own teaching. Nowhere is ethics more prominent than within participatory and emancipatory research. In looking at the underlying tenets of PAR one can see the importance of ethics: emphasis on lived experiences of human beings, subjectivity and activist stance of the researcher, and an emphasis on social change (McIntyre, 1997; 2008). In addition to all of these facets, Allnut *et al.* also acknowledge that "[v]isual projects appear to be more ethically problematic … particularly when dealing with stigmatised issues such as HIV & Aids, poverty or gender inequality" (2007, p.98). Before any action took place within the project it became clear that there were paramount ethical considerations to be taken into account.

Access, acceptance & site anonymity

Considering this, I approached one of the 'gate keepers' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Bryman, 2008) of St. Nessan's, Principal Eugene O'Brien. Having previously built up a relationship with Mr. O'Brien through the years I was in the school, as a student and also throughout Phase 1, he was immediately interested in the project. I presented a document to Mr. O'Brien outlining the research and he then took it to the other gatekeepers of the school, the Board of Management. One of the primary reasons for seeking permission of the gatekeepers so early was my request that anonymity be waived within the project. Considering the visual and participatory nature of the project, I felt it would be difficult to guarantee anonymity in all aspects of

reporting and presenting the research. The area surrounding the school is one of the major regeneration areas in Limerick and so describing the area in detail would make it easy for readers to identify both the area and the school. In addition, this area has also been the subject of much media scrutiny on a national level and so it would be well known nationally as well as locally. Considering this, attempting anonymity seemed futile.

Considering the DEIS status of the school and the regenerational status of the surrounding community, I feel that understanding these contexts is imperative for the reader. Finally, considering the means through which part of the research will be presented, performance-exhibition, I felt it important that the participants and area gain the recognition that they deserve from engagement in and presentation of the research.

As well as seeking permission from the gatekeepers of the school, I also gained ethical approval from Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee. This ethical approval covered all aspects of the research, including the use of *Facebook* as part of the project. In line with ethical clearance, all privacy settings on the *Facebook* page were enacted and no person external to the page could view it or anything posted by participants.

Informed consent & individual anonymity

Due to the fact that all participants were under the age of 18, two informed consent forms were distributed; participant consent forms and parental consent forms (Appendix B), and information sheets for participants and parents/guardians/responsible others (Appendix A). The information sheets covered consent for participants to be involved in the research process and highlighted some of the visual methodologies being used as well as the fact that *Facebook* would also be used within the research. Although the gatekeepers had waived anonymity of the school, the information sheets specified that if any pupil did not wish to be named within the collection of data or reporting of the research then that would be respected.

Confidentiality

With anonymity waived by both the gatekeepers and potentially by participants, it seems almost out of place to discuss confidentiality. In moving through the project, however, it became apparent that confidentiality was not only desirable but also necessary. The project relied on collaboration and participation, and confidentiality was important to participants so that they remained protected within the group. I assured all the participants that I would be the only person who would see the data that they generated, in terms of their written and visual diaries, unless they chose to share them with others in the group. At several stages participants required a reiteration of this and some physically removed themselves from the rest of the group on a number of occasions to gain a sense of privacy and security in the work that they were doing. In addition to the participants, the staff interviewed within the school requested anonymity in order to partake in interviews, and this too was respected.

Overt vs. covert research

As is mandated within a PAR framework, all participants must be clear about the objectives of the project from the outset of their engagement. Unlike Phase 1 of the research, which was 'covert' due to the comparative nature of the study, this project was exclusively 'overt' (Bryman, 2008, p.123). Throughout the participative research process, the research remained overt, with the participants sharing their selected experiences, engagement and behaviours. Keeping the research overt was also an effort to minimise the invasion of privacy. As well as participants being aware of what was happening within the research– the overall aims and objectives of it– the wider school community, gatekeepers and staff, were also made aware of the work that was taking place and why it was happening.

Although overtness was maintained throughout every stage of the research, there were moments of covertness. At a number of stages I felt it pertinent to limit the participants' knowledge of certain activities so that they might

come afresh and with minimal bias or preconceptions to certain activities. These activities were arts-based and my delay in revealing of them was in an effort to minimise participants' biases towards the particular art forms. This was something that was discussed with the participants before and after the workshops however, and they were fully aware of why it was happening.

Responsibility to the research community

My primary responsibility within this research is to ensure that the participants were exposed to minimal risk throughout the project. Although the gatekeepers had waived anonymity it is also my responsibility to use my sense of fair judgement. This is also accepted in terms of future presentation of the research.

Throughout the research I was acutely aware that participants might need added support in terms of guidance or talking about "silenced stories … [that may emerge, creating] a new vulnerability" (Allnutt *et al.*, 2007, p.99). On this front, the school's Guidance Councillor, Chaplain, participants' Year Head, and the Transition Year Coordinator were all made widely available to the participants, should they wish to discuss anything outside of the workshops.

As a means of ensuring that the community of St. Nessan's are put at minimal risk, the project has been ethically passed, the research was supervised by Dr. Michael Finneran, the findings of the research have been approved by the research participants, and the school gate keepers were made aware of the general findings of the research in an effort to protect the reputation of St. Nessan's and also to maintain a positive relationship between the school and the research institute (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.75).

Chapter 4

Grounded in Reality:
Site, Participants, & Researcher

Purpose of chapter four

This chapter is divided into two, the site and the participants. The site specifically discusses the communities surrounding St. Nessan's, the tradition and development of St. Nessan's, St. Nessan's and the DEIS initiative, and the culture of the arts in the school. Leading on from the discussion of the site, the section on participants provides a more rounded view of the participants. Respectively this section discusses participants' histories, the intersections at which they meet, their reason for choosing TY, and the arts in the participants' lives. The main discussions in the chapter, around the site and the participants, are prefaced with a section on TY, specifically the tradition and development of TY and the TY programme. The reason that these discussions have been included in chapter four is because the research is set in TY and it is important that the reader understand the development, nature, and intentions of the TY programme if they are to understand how this research is aligned with and compliments the philosophy of TY.

The development of TY

TY was first run as a pilot programme in September 1974. In its inception, TY was established as a one-year interdisciplinary programme for students who had completed the approved Junior Cycle course. As well as this, the programme was also aimed at those potentially at risk of early school leaving, while:

> …also [being aimed at] those students who, while planning to complete their Senior Cycle education, were perhaps not ready to do so.
> (Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland, 1991, p.3)

The life chances of TY was greatly affected by the 1984 publication *Ages for Learning: Decisions of Government* (Department of Education, 1984) which promoted the extension of the then five year post-primary education system to a six year post-primary education system. The extra year, the publication remarked, was through the adoption of additional courses and were to

include the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, Post-Leaving Certificate Courses, and the Transition Year Option. This was then compounded by the 1985 circular, *M85/85 New Structure for Post-primary Courses* (Department of Education, 1985), which encouraged the wider provision of TY programmes in post-primary schools. Consequently, approximately eighty schools provided the TY programme in the 1986/87 academic year (Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland, 1991, p.3). The implementation of these documents was not fully realised as a result of the educational cutback of the 1980s and, in particular, *Circular 8/88 Revised Structure for Post-primary Courses* (Department of Education, 1988). This circular made it impossible for schools to further develop their senior cycle programme, by stipulating that those schools who had not already implemented a six-year cycle would have the duration of their programmes remain at five years. Those who had already implemented a six-year cycle could retain this structure.

In contrast to these limits, TY was mainstreamed into Irish education in September 1994. Its mainstreaming was as a direct result of the *Programme for Social and Economic Progress* (Government of Ireland, 1991). The educational aim of the programme was "…to provide the opportunity for all to develop their educational potential to the full" (Government of Ireland, 1991, p.30) and one of the ways that the programme sought to achieve this, in line with *Ages for Learning* and *Circular M85/85*, was through the introduction of a "…six-year cycle of post-primary education" (Government of Ireland, 1991, p.32)

The TY Programme

Although TY has been available to all schools since 1994, it is not offered in all schools. At present, TY is currently only being offered in 75% of post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2013b). Structurally, TY takes place in the fourth year of a student's post-primary education and is thus conceived as a bridge year

between Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. Both in its inception in 1994[20] and presently, the programme seeks to offer students a break from traditional models of education. Students who enrol in TY are typically fifteen to seventeen years of age, although older students are less likely to take part in the programme (Smyth *et al.*, 2004, p.49). While TY is "…recognised as the first year of a three-year senior cycle" (Department of Education, 1993, p.1), it is recommended against treating it as a further year in which to study the LC curriculum.

As an educational programme, TY seeks to provide a broad educational experience that enables pupils to make the transition from a highly structured environment– dominated by the effects of high-stakes public examination (Jeffers, 2011)– to one where they become autonomous individuals through a developmental process of critical thinking and problem solving skills as well as reflection on the nature and value of education in a bid to take increasing ownership of their own learning and decision making (Department of Education, 1993). Within this, the TY guidelines (Department of Education, 1993)– which are an updated version of the 1986 guidelines (Department of Education, 1986)– define the aim of TY as promoting the "…personal, social, educational and vocational development of pupils" while "…preparing them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society" (Department of Education, 1993, p.1). In this vein, TY seeks to offer students the opportunity to reflect upon their role as 'active citizens', through an orientation on students' personal and social development. Through this lens, TY's approach to education can be considered alternative, unique, personalised and holistic.

Further personalising the nature of the year, programme design is left to the autonomy of each school, as they are deemed to be in the best position to create meaningful and holistic experiences for their students. In an effort to

[20] The inception of the current TY Programme is accepted as 1994 due to its mainstreaming and the publication of *Transition Year Programmes: Guidelines for Schools* (Department of Education, 1993)

maximise the opportunities offered to pupils, the TY guidelines recommend the inclusion of other community and educational partners in all aspects of programme design, implementation, evaluation and review (Department of Education, 1993). The TY guidelines offer sixteen broad and interrelated areas of experience through which schools can be guided in developing their Transition Year curriculum. These areas are:

(i) Civic, Social and Political Education
(ii) Personal and Social Development
(iii) Health Education
(iv) Guidance
(v) Religion
(vi) Philosophy
(vii) Aesthetics Education
(viii) Physical Education
(ix) Language Studies
(x) Mathematics
(xi) Science Studies
(xii) Environmental and Social Studies
(xiii) Information Technology
(xiv) Practical Studies
(xv) Business and Enterprise Studies and
(xvi) Preparation for Adult and Working Life.
(Department of Education, 1993)

Within these sixteen areas of experience, the arts are included within three of them; aesthetics education, language studies, and practical studies[21]. As stipulated in the guidelines, the sixteen areas are not intended to be stand-alone areas to be engaged with in isolation but are expected to be integrated into a variety of self-designed module areas through which students can be actively engaged, through a variety of teaching/learning methodologies and situations. In addition to directly naming the arts within the three areas of experience, some of the methodologies suggested within the guidelines are innately arts-based or arts inclusive (Department of Education, 1993). As an approach, these active learning methodologies are suggested for inclusion as a means of enabling pupils to develop their autonomy and sense of self-directed learning.

[21] While Physical Education is one of the areas of experience, the arts are not mentioned within this area. There is scope for inclusion of dance however.

Included within the area of experience of Business and Enterprise Studies is the establishment of a 'mini-company', where students become solely responsible for setting up and running their own company with their peers. This element of the curriculum is directly related to the intention of the TY programme as preparation for the working world. Furthering this preparation, TY also seeks to provide students with opportunities for self-development, in the form of work experience. In addition to students' self-development, the inclusion of work experience in the TY programme also seeks to dispel traditional notions that "…learning is something that happens only, or even most effectively, within the classroom" (Department of Education, 1993, p.3). Students' self-development is furthered in TY through the diversification and acquisition of skills with many TY programmes focusing on learning an instrument, sign language, or getting certified in First Aid.

Similar to curricular design, entry procedures for TY are at the discretion of the school. Many schools have formal entry procedures such as interviews, through which they establish the 'suitability' of a candidate for TY. In contrast to this more formal approach, other schools make TY compulsory for their students, thus creating a six-year post-primary education for all students of the school. In terms of assessment, unlike other years in pupils' post-primary education, which is characterised by a focus on high-stakes examination, there are no formal/state examinations in TY. Instead, the focus on assessment is as a means of supporting students' on-going learning by making assessment continuous and 'learning led' as opposed to 'exam-driven' (Citizens Information, 2013). This approach to assessment is in sharp contrast to the high pressured, high-stakes public examination system of the LC and further emphasises TY's aim in developing an "...education through experience … as a basis for personal development" (Department of Education, 1993). While assessment procedures are, again, left to the autonomy of the school, the guidelines recommend the outcome of assessment through the development of a "Pupil Profile" that contains contributions from teachers, work experience tutors, the pupil themselves, and observations from parents (Department of Education, 1993, p.4).

The Site

The surrounding community

St. Nessan's Community College is at the epicentre of a number of different communities; Caherdavin, Ballynanty, Mayorstone, Kileely/Thomondgate, and Moyross (see map 3). Thus, the communities discussed within this chapter are in relation to their geographical proximity to the school. The communities most represented within St. Nessan's are Ballynanty, Kileely/Thomondgate and Moyross. These three communities form a large part of the "corridor of disadvantage" (McCafferty, 2005, p.78) on the north side of Limerick city.



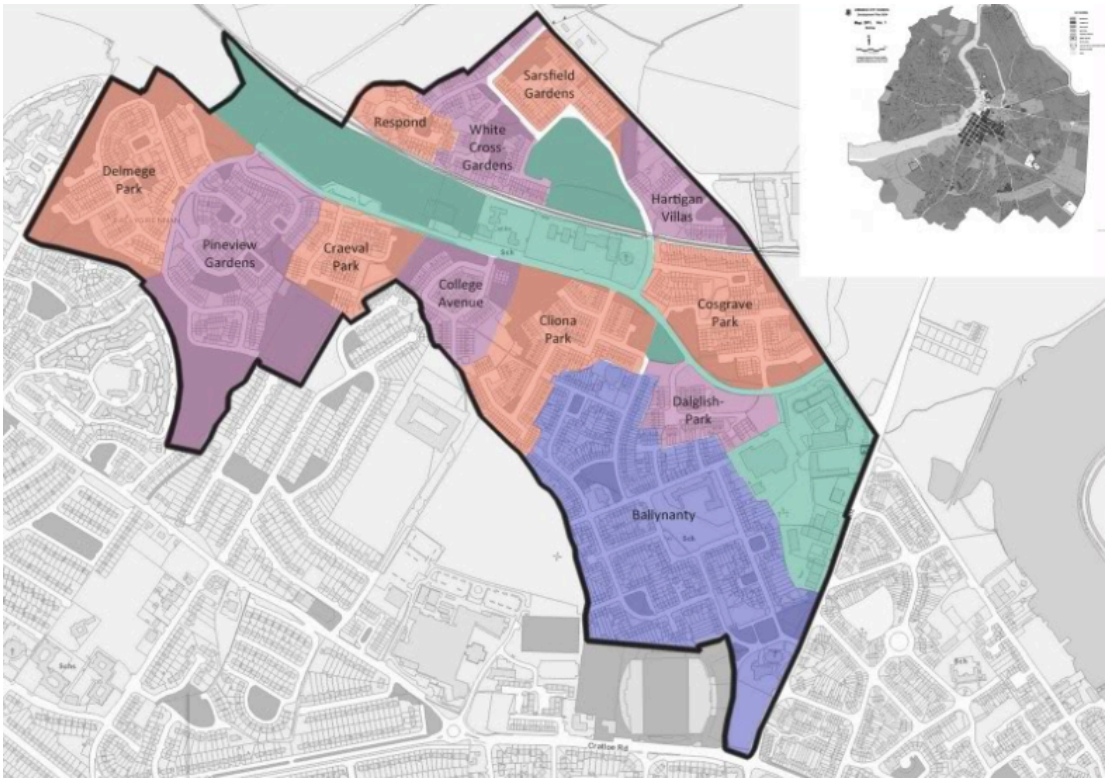
Map 3 - Communities Surrounding St. Nessan's

Under the RAPID programme (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development), the communities of Moyross, Ballynanty and Kileely/Thomondgate– which combined to form the Northside RAPID area–

were one of twenty-five[22] disadvantaged areas in Ireland and one of three disadvantaged areas of Limerick City. Within the Northside RAPID area, the Moyross estate was considered the most disadvantaged, traditionally occupying the highest rates of unemployment and the lowest rates of home ownership (RAPID, 2001, A2). More recent statistics also confirm that the Moyross estate still currently holds the highest rates of unemployment and the lowest rates of home ownership amongst these communities (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012).

The Moyross estate is of most interest within this research because the majority of participants live in the estate. The estate was developed between 1973 and 1987 and comprised entirely of local authority housing. The estate was built for social housing and formed the largest social housing estate in Limerick. The Moyross estate is divided into twelve parks (see Map 4) and until 2008 there were 1,160 houses within the twelve parks. The estate encompasses 19 acres, much of which is badly maintained and underused public space (RAPID, 2001, A2) and the levels of disadvantage vary throughout the estate (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012). The estate saw its highest population in the early 1990s with 4,448 people (CSO, 1991). From this point, the estate's population began to decrease; 4,110 in 2002 (CSO, 2002) and by 2006 the estate's population had fallen to 3,468 (CSO, 2006). The estate's population has seen further decline since 2006, with a population reduction of 34.5% to 2,138 people in 2011 (Rourke, 2012). This reduction and outmigration is as a direct result of the regeneration of Moyross. Since its development, the estate has also seen high levels of unemployment, with 84% unemployment during the 1980s (Limerick Regeneration, 2008a). More recent statistics from the 2011 census detail the unemployment level in Moyross at 35.6%, two and a half times the national unemployment rate reported in the census.

[22] Although only twenty-five areas were identified in 2001, this has been presently been expanded to encompass 52 areas within Ireland.



Map 4 - The Parks of Moyross

The estate of Moyross has received widespread negative media attention from the early 1990s to the present day. On September 10th 2006 the brutal attack on Gavin Murray– aged four– and his sister Millie Murray– aged six– sparked widespread media attention when they were petrol bombed while sitting in their mother's car in the estate. The barbarity of the event and the national outrage resulted in a Government request, in November 2006, for John Fitzgerald (former Dublin City Manager) to lead "…an initiative addressing social exclusion, crime, and disorder issues in Moyross" (Fitzgerald, 2007, p.3). Fitzgerald's report, *Addressing issues of Social Exclusion in Moyross and other disadvantaged areas of Limerick City,* was presented to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion and stated that:

> [t]he situation … must be dealt with as a matter of urgency both in the interests of the communities and areas concerned, and to prevent these problems spreading to other parts of the city, [and that] early intervention is required to deal with the problem of serious criminal activity.
>
> (Fitzgerald, 2007, p.8)

Fitzgerald concluded that there were three strands to dealing with the issues in the Limerick. These involved:

> - Dealing with the issue of criminality. This will be fundamental to creating the conditions for other interventions to be successful, and for restoring the confidence of local communities.
> - Economic and infrastructural regeneration, to create employment, unlock value, improve access, and create a better commercial and housing mix.
> - Developing co-ordinated responses to social and educational problems, in order to break the cycle of disadvantage.
>
> (Fitzgerald, 2007, p.3)

These three strands are clearly reflected in the recommendations of the report, which require:

- the implementation of intensive policing arrangements;
- the establishment of structures for regeneration;
- the establishment of dedicated teams under the auspices of the Development Agencies, to address Social and Family Problems in the designated areas, including issues of educational disadvantage;
- the improvement of access and infrastructure within the community; attracting inward investment;
- creating incentives for development and the prioritization of state interventions;
- development of the region;
- addressing the drugs problem;
- and efforts to regenerate the housing stock (Fitzgerald, 2007, p.8-14).

One of the intentions of the Government in requesting Fitzgerald's report was to establish steps to drive regeneration in Moyross over a five-year period (Fitzgerald, 2007). Consequently, on the 15th of June 2007 the Irish Government established Moyross and St. Mary's Park as the Limerick Northside Regeneration Area (NRA), and on October 23rd 2008 the 'Master' plans for the regeneration of Moyross and other parts of Limerick city were presented to and unanimously accepted by Limerick City Council. The NRA received €1,195.4 million investment; €727.7 million Public Sector investment and €467.7 million Private Sector investment (Limerick Regeneration, 2008b). The regeneration sought to transform the Moyross area into "…one of the most vibrant and most sustainable towns in the

country" (Limerick Northside Regeneration Agency, 2008, p.3). Its plan was to do this through a combined process of social, economic, and physical regeneration (Limerick Regeneration Agencies, 2008b).

Humphreys et al. (2012, p.52) provide a relative disadvantage/affluence map of Limerick City, adapted as Figure 6. In viewing this, one can see that the NRA is profiled in a deep red to indicate its classification as 'extremely disadvantaged' in comparison with other areas. This is in keeping with the 2011 census figures which provide a view of the socio-economic disadvantage of the area and "…the enormous gap … between the outcomes and life chances for the young people and families living on these estates" (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012, p.274).

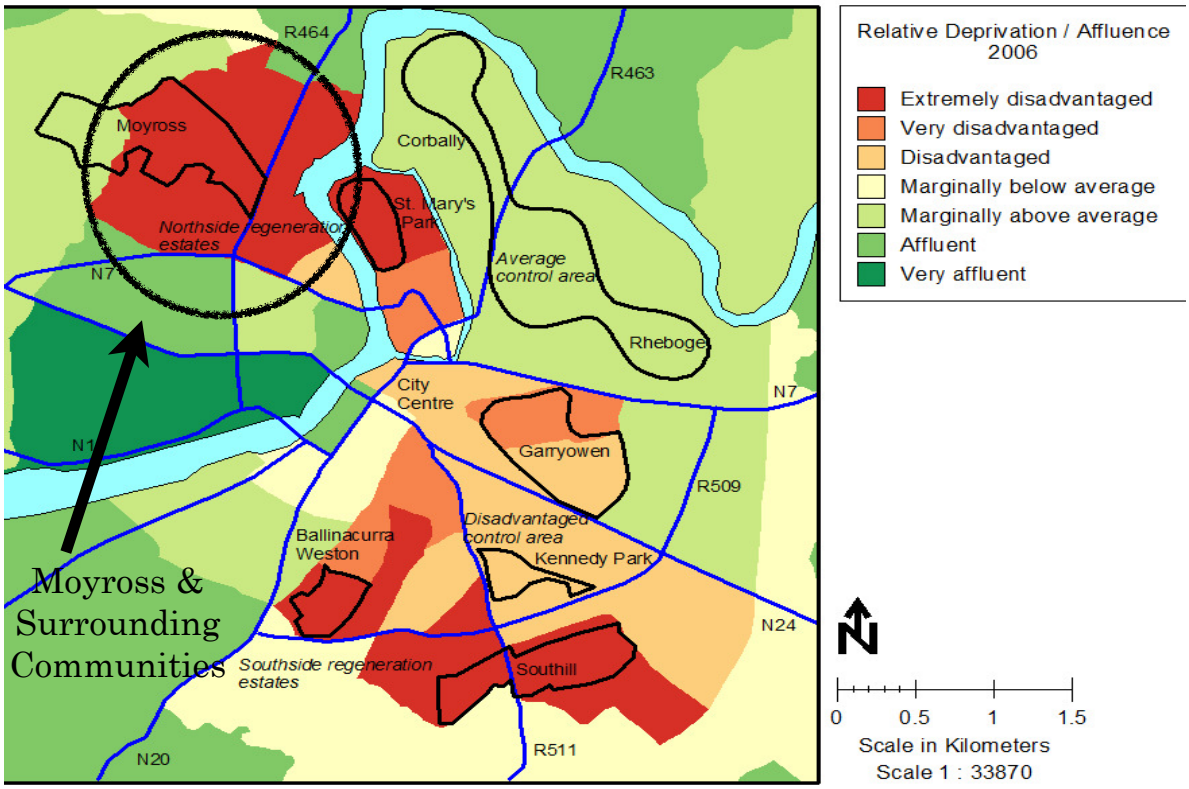


Figure 6 - Relative Deprivation/Affluence Map

The 2011 census and Humphreys *et al.*, (2012) reveal that the characteristics of socio-economic disadvantage and consequently educational disadvantage are extremely prevalent throughout the NRA.

Parent profiles

In terms of the parent profiles, 82% of parent/carers within the NRA are female. Furthermore the statistics reveal that parents in the NRA are younger than parents in the average control area (ACA). 50% of parents in the NRA were aged thirty four years or younger, in contrast to 27% of parents in the ACA (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012, p.59). Within the NRA 47% of families are lone parent families. This stands in contrast to the 6% of lone parent families within the ACA (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012, p.62). In terms of residency within the area, Humphreys et al (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012, p.61) detail that 61% of families in the regeneration area have been resident for eleven years or more in contrast to the ACA where only 37% of families have been resident for eleven years or more.

Educational profiles

The educational profile of the ACA reveals that 16% of parents have not moved beyond lower secondary education. This rises significantly to 70% of parents in the NRA (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012, p.63). In line with this, there is also disparity in terms of third level qualifications where 29% of parents had a third level qualification in the ACA. In contrast, less than 1% of parents in the NRA had a third level qualification.

Income sources

Within the NRA 77% of parent/carers are unemployed. Those who are employed are within the semiskilled and unskilled occupations, with none of those surveyed in the professional or managerial and technical social classes. This is contrasted with the ACA where 18% of parent/carers are unemployed. Of those who are employed, 56% are employed within the professional or managerial and technical social classes (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012, p.66). Furthermore, within the NRA social welfare payments provide the largest source of household income, consequently with 50% of households in the NRA stating that they have 'great difficulties' in making ends meet (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012, p.68).

The above statistics provide an alarming view of life within the NRA and highlights the ways in which the community is characteristic of socio-economic disadvantage.

In attempting to generate statistics around regeneration and its impact within the community of Moyross, I attempted to contact the Northside Regeneration Agency with regard to their work in this area. Unfortunately I met with limited success in progressing these enquiries, despite helpful expressions of interest in assisting. However, one member of the Northside Regeneration Committee was willing to speak with me anonymously (pseudonym Grace). During an interview[23] Grace detailed how Limerick City Council had spent €80 million of the regeneration budget on the demolition of 408 houses and the relocation of these families. The demolition of these houses and the relocation were not on the plans set out by the regeneration agencies but were implemented by Limerick City Council nonetheless.

Grace also reported that across the whole of the regeneration areas[24] only 21 apartments and 13 houses had been built. She also commented on how, at the time of interview, there were almost 3,500 people on the City Council housing waiting list and none of these were relocated to Moyross. Further explicating upon this, Grace spoke of how the level of disadvantage in the community has been intensified. Persons within the community had a choice whether to relocate or not and Grace stated that:

> …those who decided not to relocate were often the instigators of anti-social behaviour. What has resulted from this is that there are now pockets of anti-social behaviour that are geographically and socially isolated, which has further exacerbated the problem.
>
> (II9L14-17)

[23] Interview took place on 25/03/2013

[24] Northside Regeneration Areas – Moyross and St. Mary's Park and Southside Regeneration Areas – Southill and Ballinacurra/Weston.

Discussing how this has affected the social mix, Grace commented that "…the social mix of the community has been demolished and the concentration of dysfunction is off the wall" (II9L26-29). In her concluding comments, Grace noted that, having failed to deliver their aspirational goals, the Limerick regeneration agencies have now been subsumed back into Limerick City Council which, for Grace, denoted a sense of hopefulness that something would change and she commented on the 'new plans' to develop the area and create greater access points with other communities and amenities.

St. Nessan's Community College - tradition and development

St. Nessan's is a mixed sex, non-denominational post-primary school on the north side of Limerick City and is adjacent to the communities of Moyross, Caherdavin, Ballynanty and Kileely/Thomondgate. The school is a VEC run school and was first built in 1978 to fulfil the post-primary educational needs of a growing population on the north side of Limerick City.

The school was established as a vocational school, which is reflected in its comprehensive approach and educational philosophy: "…providing academic and technical subjects with a wide range of extra-curricular activities" (St. Nessan's Community College, 2013a). Traditionally and nowadays, the vocational nature of the school is also reflected in its subject choice, offering 'practical' subjects such as: visual art; graphics, design and communication; building construction; engineering; home economics; and information technology, as well as the standard languages, mathematics, social science and science based subjects. The school's vocational nature is further reflected in its motto, *Fás, Foghlaim, Forbairt* (growth, learning and development).

The original school building design was the result of a Department of Education competition to design a secondary school. The structure had a lifetime of twenty years maximum and twenty-nine years later, in 2007, the

structure was knocked and replaced by a state of the art school, which was designed to cater for between 750 and 850 pupils.

When the school opened in 1978 it took in a hundred students, who were taught by the eight members of teaching staff. Over the years, the student numbers continued to grow; during the 1990s student numbers grew to almost 950 and there were 61 teaching staff in the school. Since the 1990s, however, the school has seen declining student numbers– which is inline with the majority of schools in the area (Limerick Northside Regeneration Agency, 2008)– particularly since the mid 2000s. In 2012/2013 there were 360 students enrolled in the school and there were three special needs assistants and a teaching allocation of 38 teacher equivalents, including learning support teachers. The school also has a HSCL in operation, in line with its DEIS status, which seeks to promote partnership between parents and teachers in an effort to enhance students' learning opportunities and promote their retention in education.

DEIS and St. Nessan's

Since receiving its DEIS status in 2005, St. Nessan's has seen a large reduction in students attending the school from outside of the NRA. This has served to compound and concentrate the level of disadvantage in the school and has created an unbalanced social mix. Since this time, the DEIS supports that St. Nessan's has been receiving have been in terms of student teacher ratios, special grants and extra learning support for pupils. Pre 2004, St. Nessan's offered three academic programmes to its students, the established JC and LC and TY. In 2005, after receiving DEIS status, St. Nessan's introduced the LCA programme to "…recognise the talents of all students and provide opportunities for development in terms of responsibility, self-esteem and self-knowledge" (Second Level Support Service, 2009). The establishment of the LCA programme was in recognition of the growing need for an alternative to the established LC within the school and further reflects the vocational nature of St. Nessan's.

In parallel to the DEIS funding received by the school, the school also began a number of initiatives to provide its students with more options and try to combat many of the characteristics associated with DEIS, which were adversely affecting the school population. These programmes are; JCSP, ESLP– known locally as the 'SMILE School Completion Programme'–, and LCVP. Many of these programmes were subsumed by the DEIS initiative and are thus directly related to the status of the school and the surrounding areas.

The arts culture in St. Nessan's

While the arts in St. Nessan's will be discussed in detail in relation to the participants, it's pertinent to note the culture of arts in the school. As will be discussed later in the thesis, one of the teachers, Ms. Power, noted early in the field-work that she was of the opinion that there wasn't a culture of the arts in the school. This understanding is visually communicated as one travels around the physical spaces in the school, which are largely characterised by the lack of arts.



Image 1 - St. Nessan's, #1



Image 2 - St. Nessan's, #2

There were, however, two spaces in the school where the presence of the arts was noted; the home-economics room and the visual art room. Outside the home-economics room the costumes that students had made were on display (Image 3). The corridor where the visual art rooms were, leading to the staff room, displayed a number of art pieces through the windows of the art room (Image 4).



Image 3 - St. Nessan's, Outside Home-economics Room



Image 4 - St. Nessan's, Outside Visual Art Room

One of the most prominent pieces of art in the school is *Ull Orga* or *The Golden Apple*. *The Golden Apple* is "… a 2 metre high bronze apple polished to a golden lustre" (St. Nessan's Community College, 2013b). *The Golden Apple* was funded by money from the DEIS fund and the *Public Art: Per Cent for Art Scheme* (Govermnent of Ireland, 2004). The artist was Rachel Joynt, and some students from St. Nessan's were chosen to contribute to the calligraphy on the piece (Images 5&6). Where the stem of the apple would be, one is able to look inside the piece and see five glass seeds suspended in a bronze star shaped pod. The sculpture was placed in front of the school so that all visitors, staff, and students could see and interact with the piece. Throughout my time in St. Nessan's, however, I never saw anyone looking into the apple. Inquiring as to why this was, I was told by some third year students that there was a camera inside the apple and that they were trying to trick you into looking into it, so that they could record you and know what you're doing. This may suggest suspiciousness, on the part of students, to engage with the arts. It may also speak to culture of surveillance within the school however.

This culture of surveillance, which will be discussed in chapter five, was exercised in a number of ways. One of the most identifiable was areas that students were and were not allowed go during lunch and break times. Image 7 shows the student canteen, where students were allowed to congregate during break times and lunch times. Image 8 shows the outside recreation area. As can be seen from the image, this recreation area has numerous seating areas, presumably intended for student use. The overall student body were, however, not allowed to use this space during lunchtime and breaks and were only allowed in the space to pass through it on their way to class, when accompanied by a teacher.



Image 5 - St. Nessan's, The Golden Apple #1

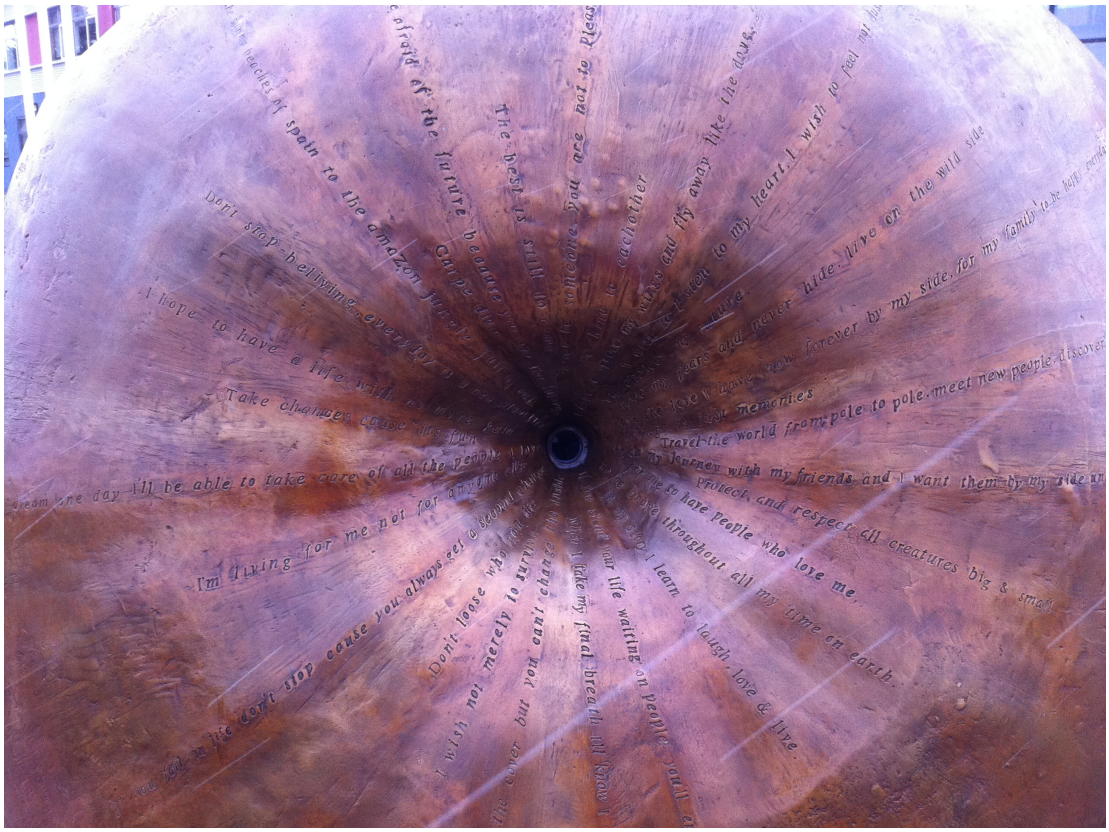


Image 6 – St. Nessan's, The Golden Apple #2



Image 7 – St. Nessan's, The Canteen



Image 8 – St. Nessan's, Outside Recreation Space

The Participants

In talking about the research participants, I feel it pertinent to note that at no time during the research did I ask participants directly about their living situations. Instead, the information presented here is as a result of participants' contribution to discussions around their lives and experience, which emerged during the workshops. Information on the participants and their lives was learned informally throughout the research process, and each workshop deepened my knowledge of the participants. Informal discussions during and after the workshops were crucial to my learning about the participants and their lives, as well as participants' engagement with the various participatory and arts-based methodologies, which provided them with a platform/impetus through which they could discuss themselves, their lived and imagined experience.

As detailed in chapter three, anonymity has been waived on behalf of the school. For protection, however, anonymity has been maintained in relation to the participants. In an effort to maximise this, participants will not be described individually but will be discussed as a collective in the following section. As well as this, any pupil names within this thesis are participant-assigned pseudonyms. Where participants were not available to provide a pseudonym I assigned one for them.

Participant intersections

Typically the age of students in TY is 14–17 years old. All participants were 15–17 years of age during Phase 3. Students' selection as participants for the research was through their enrolment in TY in St. Nessan's during the school year 2011/2012, and their returning of completed and signed consent forms. Although 15 students enrolled in TY during this year, only 14 of these students were involved in the research. The one student who didn't participate was Danieka. Throughout the months that I was in the school– pre, during and post workshops– I never met Danieka as she was

consistently absent from school. Staff members within the school had come to the conclusion that Danieka had left school but simply hadn't informed anyone.

The fourteen participants that I worked with comprised of six females (Dawn, Bonquisha, Alana, Lily, Cadence, and Anna) and eight males (Jason, Tony, Pa, John, Greg, Conor, George, and Dylan), which is a reflection of the gender balance within the school and the broader communities surrounding the school (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012). All of the participants live in the communities surrounding the school and are geographically close to the school, with the majority living in the Moyross estate. All participants are White and are from lower to middle class households, which is reflective of the general makeup of the communities surrounding the school. Reflecting the familial composition of these communities, most participants live in single parent households with their mother and siblings (if they have siblings). That being said, some participants live in two parent households. Further reflecting the surrounding areas in terms of employment, although some parents are employed, a number of participants live in households where there is no adult employed. In addition, all participants live in households where there is no third level degree or qualification.

While the participants share many similarities in terms of their socio-economic status and living arrangements, clear differences arise in relation to their academic achievement. Classes in the school are streamed in accordance with academic ability. Some of the participants, while in the same class in TY, had never been in the same class before due to differences in academic achievement. Within the group of fourteen, some students have mild to moderate learning difficulties and have grave difficulties with reading and writing. On the whole, a number of students have literacy difficulties and receive extra tuition in this. In contrast, two participants are considered to be academically gifted and, as a result, have attended various summer courses and schools for academically gifted youths.

For ease of understanding throughout the following chapters, I have divided students into social groups, that were noted by me, as participants physically and socially divided themselves into these groups in the initial workshops (Figure 7). Alana's social group were the stereotypical teenage group of girls who kept to themselves, participated when asked, but didn't overly engage. Tony's group can be characterised as the 'messers' constantly looking for reasons to go off-task and frequently bullying members of John's group. John's group were the most content out of the groups, content to participate in activities presented to them and appeared to be the most relaxed and easy going. Members of this group frequently came under scrutiny of those in Tony's group however and were repeatedly bullied by them.

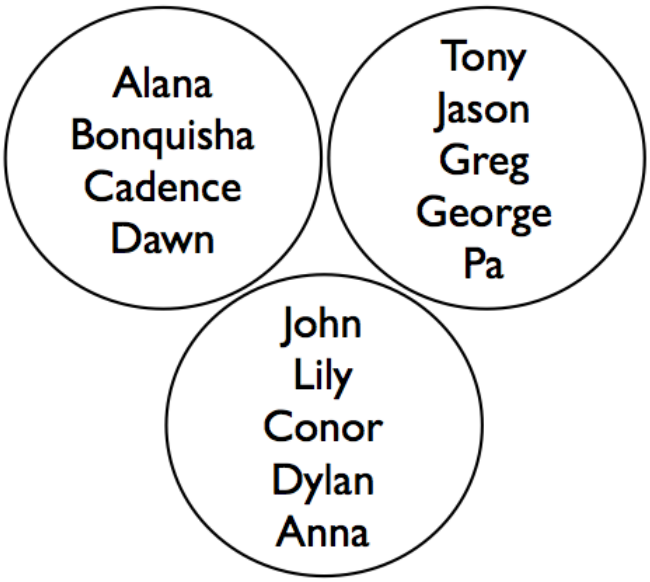


Figure 7 - Participants' Social Groups

Although fourteen participants enrolled in the research, this number was quickly reduced. Mid way through the first workshop, George expressed his disapproval of the activities that we were doing and resigned from the group. From this point on George refused to be involved in the workshops. After George's departure from the workshops the remaining thirteen participants stayed involved in the workshops until Block Two, Workshop Five, when Tony and Greg removed themselves from the workshop and

informed me that they would not be returning. Participants' reasons for exiting the workshops will be discussed later in the thesis. Of the eleven remaining participants three (Jason, Dylan and Pa) were frequently absent from the workshops as a result of their absence from school. When they were present in school, however, they always attended the workshops.

Participants and TY

While the research participants are representative of the school community and the surrounding communities, in terms of gender, familial circumstances and socioeconomic status, the fact that they have chosen to enrol in TY sets them apart from the broader school community. TY in St. Nessan's is a voluntary programme that students must apply to. The application procedure is an interview with school staff to determine the student's eligibility for TY[25]. Traditionally in St. Nessan's, as with other schools nationally, the interview was to determine students who were not suitable for TY, so that they could be discouraged from taking the programme (Smyth *et al.*, 2004, p.42) However, interviews with staff members in St. Nessan's revealed that the interview nowadays is merely a formality and that only in exceptional circumstances is anyone discouraged from applying to TY. Reasons for discouraging students to apply, according to school staff, would be as a result of extreme behavioural issues, which could potentially impact negatively on other students enrolling in TY. That being said, by engaging students who are in TY as research participants, they are a privileged selection and therefore are reflective of a small minority of students. TY is an additional year in school and for students to enrol in it voluntarily they must see some sense of merit or value in being in school for another year. Notably, no participants enrolled in TY due to parental pressure.

[25] Smyth *et al.* (2004, p.41) cite the primary considerations for schools in selecting students for TY as; student preference, parental support, student behavior, teacher recommendation, student age, and a student's performance in an entry interview.

TY in St. Nessan's versus national statistics

Interestingly, there are striking differences between the cohort of students that enrolled in TY in St. Nessan's in 2009/2010 (Phase 1) and 2011/2012 (Phase 3) and national statistics reported by Clerkin (2013). Clerkin (2013) details that the national statistics for students choosing TY in the late 2000s, in disadvantaged settings, was 40%. This figure, however, does not compare when one looks at the enrolment within St. Nessan's, where only 14% of students eligible to enrol in TY during 2009/2010 (Phase 1) did so. Although this figure did rise to 23% within the 2011/2012 cohort (Phase 3) it still falls significantly short of the 40% national average reported by Clerkin. The enrolment in TY within St. Nessan's in (2011/2012) is closer to the national average throughout the early 2000s, 21% (Clerkin, 2013). However, Clerkin (2013) and Smyth, Byrne and Hannan (2004) note that student participation in TY within VEC and community/comprehensive schools is lower than voluntary secondary schools. Smyth et al. (2004) suggest a possible reason for this is that:

> Transition Year participation is strongly differentiated in terms of parental social class. Over half of students from higher professional backgrounds take Transition Year compared with less than a quarter of those from unskilled manual backgrounds.
>
> (Smyth *et al.*, 2004, p.46)

Given that no families in the Moyross estate belong to the professional or managerial and technical social classes (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012), it can be suggested that the low uptake of TY by students in St. Nessan's is in line with factors identified in existing research.

Disparities in existing research arise again however, when one looks at the gender balance of the participant cohort in St. Nessan's. Clerkin (2013) notes that there is typically a gender divide in those who enrol in TY, 10% more females enrol than males. This, however, is not the case within this current cohort, which has six girls and eight boys enrolled[26]. In this case

[26] Due to the fact that Danieka never attended school, she has been left out of these numbers.

the gender divide is reversed and runs contrary to Clerkin (2013). However, it is acknowledged that the comparative research pool size is very small.

Participants' reasons for choosing TY

At several stages throughout the workshops, TY itself became the central topic of conversation, with participants discussing their reasons for choosing TY. For some, their reasons were very practical; if, after completing their JC they continued on to LC, then they would be 17 going into college, which they deemed to be too young. For others, their reasons were more oriented on personal development; perceiving TY as offering them the space to develop personally and socially, a space where they could mature and build confidence. Insightfully, Smyth et al.'s (2004) research into TY didn't find students' consciousness around their age entering college. However, their statistical data revealed that "…younger students were significantly more likely to take part in Transition Year than their older counterparts" (Smyth *et al.*, 2004, p.47). In addition, Smyth et al.'s data didn't reveal a consciousness in students in terms of their lack of maturity or confidence. Their findings, however, were in line with participants' third reason for enrolling in TY. The third reason, which was only present for a minority of the group, was because TY offered students an alternative educational experience, a space where they were free from exam pressures and were provided with new perspectives and different opportunities to learn. While the reasons previously detailed were present amongst the majority (age and personal development) and a minority (alternative educational experience), Dawn commented that her sole reason for engaging in TY was because her friends had enrolled in it and she didn't want to enter a new year of students that she didn't know.

The attitudes of staff in the school towards TY mirrored those of the participants. Formal interviews and informal discussions with school staff revealed an attitude towards TY that was equally as broad as the participants' attitudes, with practical, personal and social reasons being offered. On this, some staff felt quite strongly that TY's primary purpose was to keep students in school for an extra year so that they would be a year

older entering third level. Relatedly, they also felt that at the very least, if the extent of participants' schooling was post-primary education, then enrolment in TY would mean that they were in an educational atmosphere for one extra year. For these staff members, this was TYs only merit and they appeared to see little to no educational or personal value in the year.

In contrast to this stance, other members of the school staff were unconcerned with students' age and their view on TY was that it was a time for personal and social development, offering students the opportunity to mature and come into their own as well as building self-confidence and a network of friends and colleagues. Staff members who held this view also perceived TY as holding significant educational value for students. They noted that students who experienced less success in formal examinations such as the JC examination, often flourished within the TY environment where they were motivated to engage in alternative means of education. On this, they also noted that TY formed a bridge year not only from the traditional JC to the traditional Senior Cycle, but formed a clear transition from the traditional Junior Cycle or JCSP to LCA through its modular and less academically rigid structure.

The Arts in the community

Although participants' engagement with the arts will be discussed in detail later, I feel it is important to contextualise their experience with the arts within their community at this point. The Fitzgerald report called on the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism to align itself with teams in and around the community of Moyross to develop "…activities and amenities for young people, particularly in the evenings and during the summer holidays" (Fitzgerald, 2007, p.11). Consequently, *Our Community, Our Vision, Our Future: Regeneration of Moyross* (Limerick Northside Regeneration Agency, 2008), outlined the importance of artistic space within the community of Moyross. In addition, it also outlined the artistic facilities that would be built within the community to promote and engage children and adults in the arts as well as stating that the "…regeneration agency will ensure that

an Arts and Culture Strategy is developed for the regeneration area" (Limerick Northside Regeneration Agency, 2008, p.29). As well as these publications, *Health Impact Assessment: Key Recommendations to Maximise Positive and Minimise Negative Health Impacts of Youth Spaces* (Limerick Regeneration Agencies, 2008a) also documented the lack of arts within the community and stipulated the necessity of the arts within youth spaces as an "…opportunity to support social interaction [and] also for personal and emotional development" (p.18). The OSCAILT (2013) report documented the Government's further response in relation to the Fitzgerald report (2007) in terms of providing Dormant Account funds to enable DEIS schools in Limerick facilitate after schools programmes, some of which included the arts. The report, however, was not specific to the communities or schools that initiated arts-based programmes and activities. It did, however, report that seven out of the twenty-two DEIS primary schools and post-primary schools engaged some element of the arts. This means that fifteen schools did not engage arts-based programmes or activities. In terms of regeneration and their aspirations to provide a variety of arts spaces, none of these have been realised to date.

The lack of arts engagement within the community of Moyross is mirrored in participants' previous engagement with the arts. Only one participant, George, was consistently engaged with the arts and this was in the form of hip-hop and street dancing. Previously, other participants had been involved with the arts during their earlier years but soon left. One participant, Alana, attributed her leaving the arts as a result of her aunt leaving, while another, Cadence, attributed it to her dislike of the arts. Other participants stated that they had minimal to no arts engagement and any engagement that they had previously experienced was school-based, which they didn't consider *'proper arts'* as it was always curricularly focused. Participants' barriers to the arts and their previous engagement will be discussed in greater detail in chapter seven of this thesis.

Chapter 5

‘Don’t think I forget what you called us’: Navigating Power Relations and Participation

Introduction

Power is embedded within relationships between people as well as between people and organisations. This chapter unpacks the concept of power within the research by examining specific social relations. The relationships more pertinent to this discussion are those that existed between participants, teachers and myself. These parties are, respectively, Tony et al. (Tony and some other participants who appeared to act under his leadership), Cadence, School staff, and me.

The second section of the chapter engage a discussion on participation and has been juxtaposed with power in recognition of the fact that the two do not operate in isolation of each other but are frequently, and in the case of this research, related. That is, the democratic distribution of power in educational research and educational settings empowers and motivates students and participants to engage (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001; Shier, 2001; Simovska, 2004; Cornwall, 2008). Taylor and Robinson (2009) argue that an analysis of power relations and participation within the research process brings a number of uncomfortable issues to the surface. Within this chapter, it is precisely these uncomfortable issues that are discussed and unpacked as a means of gazing both theoretically and critically on the power relations and consequent participation inherent within the research. Therefore, the chapter seeks to document the:

> …on-going reconfiguration of oppressive classroom relationships tied to power and authority, knowledge construction, and democratic participation while simultaneously making central the lived histories of [the participants].
>
> (Darder *et al.*, 2009a, p.13)

Power Relations

Power relations in youth research

Power relations, contestation and struggles within educational research, participatory research, and ethnographic research with youths are well documented; self help community research (Isenberg *et al.*, 2006), theatre and drama education (Gallagher, 2007), youth participatory action research in schools (Torre *et al.*, 2008), and sport in schools (Hickey, 2010; Sandford *et al.*, 2010). This research shares many similarities with these studies, in terms of the resistance, maintenance, and democratisation of power relations between parties involved in the research. Throughout the majority of the workshops, as well as pre and post-workshops, power relations were not only present but were in a constant state of flux. In a foreword to Kathleen Gallagher's (2007) book, *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times*, Michelle Fine notes that "…saying No and opposing are increasingly the only open spaces for agency" (2007b, p.xii) within modern education systems. In this way, schools are becoming more frequently 'terrains of struggle' (Darder *et al.*, 2009a). Participants' oppositional behaviour, as a means of exerting their sense of agency, is indicative of this terrain of struggle and was something that was regularly experienced throughout the research. Within this terrain, as I learned throughout the workshops and interviews, refusing to engage and saying no, as Fine suggests, was at times participants' attempts to retain their sense of agency and control over the situation. The reactions of the participants and the process itself can be understood as being counter-hegemonic, documenting and making central the discussion of participants' choice to resist certain elements of the artistic and educational process in an effort to move against their dehumanization and perpetuation of their own oppression (Darder *et al.*, 2009b). Entering the setting, I understood that power relations and resistance would be active (Rabinow, 1984). However, I was unprepared for the level of resistance and culture of opposition that I encountered within the setting.

Researcher stance

In relation to this resistance, it is necessary to consider how I contributed towards this in terms of my position as researcher and my actions during the workshops. While my actions are discussed within the narrative of this chapter, it is necessary to outline and acknowledge my position within the research. Within the structures of Irish education teachers are placed in a position of power and authority (Lynch, 1989; Drudy and Lynch, 1993). Although an external researcher, I was entering St. Nessan's in a position– in the participants' eyes– similar to that of teacher. This in itself brings a range of questions and problems in relation to the power dynamics between the participants and me. Teachers are reproducers of power and inequality that consciously or unconsciously disempower and limit the amount of autonomy granted to students (Apple, 2012). Although my intentions were to generate more democratic relationships with participants, my position as 'teacher' militated against this. Furthermore, despite the level of co-construction within PAR, due to the workshop-based nature of the research and the educational setting, a true state of democracy between the participants and me could not ever be realised. Considering this, conscious efforts on my part were required to distance myself from the role of teacher, eliciting participants' voices, and consequently attempting to generate a more democratic relationship between them and me. In an attempt to minimise and militate against the reproduction of power, injustices and inequality within the setting, I acknowledge the important ties between "…perception and action" (Apple, 2012, p.63) and consequently the potential for the PAR process to generate a "…self-conscious organized action" (Apple, 2012, p.80) amongst both the participants and me.

With that said, as outlined at the beginning of this thesis, I come to it with a range of biases that no doubt impacted the power relations between the participants and me.

Asserting power relations: Tony et al.

As stipulated by MIREC, information sheets and consent forms for parents and students were distributed. It was in this context that I first met the participants and this is where the discussion of power relations and participation begins. In the administrative context that I was meeting the participants, I naïvely expected that power relations would be less active between us. However, upon meeting them, it became clear that power relations were not only readily active but were instantly engaged. The immediate resistance presented itself in some students saying no and their outright opposition to being included in the research (Fine, 2007b). It was, however, not a simple saying no and power relations began to come to the fore as participants immediately engaged in power struggles.

In providing the participants with consent forms and information sheets, my intention was to harness the opportunity to introduce myself to them and answer any questions that they had about the research. Having consulted with the school principal and Ms. Culhane, I went into St. Nessan's in October 2011 to do just that. It was agreed that I would talk to the participants during Ms. Culhane's class and I arrived at the school at 11:35, five minutes before the class began. Students in St. Nessan's are not allowed walk to and from classes unaccompanied. When a class finishes, their teacher accompanies them back to their 'base area', where they are then met by their next teacher and escorted to their next class, and so I waited outside Ms. Culhane's door for her and the participants' arrival. As I waited, the school bell rang and there was the usual hustle and bustle that is to be expected in schools between class periods. Before Ms. Culhane rounded the corner there was, what felt like, a stampede of boys galloping towards me. They abruptly stopped inches from my face and Tony (a fifteen year old male) shouted "Who the *fuck* are you?" This was my first encounter with Tony but in that moment he had instigated the power struggles that were to continue over the course of his involvement in the research.

After answering Tony's question with, "I'm Richie. I'm here to talk to you about a project I'm doing", he retorted "Fuck that. Fuck you." As Ms.

Culhane approached, Tony burst into the classroom, and ran to his seat, displacing a number of chairs and tables on his journey. Two of the other boys, Pa and Jason (both fifteen year old males) threateningly pushed past me but said nothing, as I waited by the door. All of the other students, who had arrived in the interim, ignored my presence and what had just happened, treating it as an everyday event, and calmly walked passed me into the room to take their seats. Turning to me before she entered the classroom, Ms. Culhane said "they're not having a good day today." What I had just experienced in terms of the participants' behaviour stood in sharp contrast to Ms. Culhane's description of them previously as "calm, lovely, a good group." As we walked into the classroom Ms. Culhane announced "This is Richard. I've told you about him and he's going to be coming in to work with you after the midterm." Ms. Culhane's announcement was greeted by Tony's retort of "who gives a shit?" After reprimanding Tony with "now, that's not on" Ms. Culhane continued to speak to the class and relay why I was there.

After briefly introducing myself to the participants I began distributing the information sheet and consent forms. Once that was completed I stood at the top of the room and began reading through the sheets with the class. While reading, Tony repeatedly interrupted me, shouting profanities and protestations, which, taking my lead from Ms. Culhane I selectively ignored. Perhaps this selective ignoring classified me in the same role as the teacher and served to provoke Tony. When I finished reading the sheets Tony demanded everyone's attention by kicking the chair beside him and shouting "I'm not being 'part of this shit 'tall." Pa, following Tony's lead, also announced "Fuck it, why bother" and then asked Tony "Are you doing this shit?" Tony's response was in no way unclear: "I'm not no! I'm not fucking posh. This is a load of shit. I'm not doin' this shit. I'm not fuckin' posh 'tall. [Who the] fuck are you like?" Tony's resistance to the research was clear. In reading the information sheet that he had been provided with, he had focused on the name of the research at the time, "The arts are for

posh people"[27]. Having explained that the name originated from a statement by another pupil in the school, Tony refused to accept this. The hierarchical structures amongst the participants then began to be unveiled as, once again seeking Tony's approval, Pa reiterated the fact that he wasn't going to be involved in the work. In an almost domino affect, Jason tentatively questioned Pa, "are you really not doing it?" to which Pa reiterated Tony's earlier response, "I'm not posh either." Jason then hesitantly stated his own objections to being involved.

Tony's power relations were not only verbal amongst his peers but were physical too. At one stage it appeared as though Pa was considering involvement in the workshops, to which Tony gestured a head-butt towards him. Pa's response was to then reiterate his refusal to engage. This physical intimidation was not reserved for his peers however, and as a final expression of resistance to the research Tony approached me. His approach appeared to be instigated by my announcing that I was leaving the space and if anyone had any questions to please ask now. At this point Tony got up from his seat walked towards me, to within about a half metre, slammed the consent form and information sheet on the table and said "I'm not doing this shit. I'm not posh." None of the other participants or Ms. Culhane treated Tony's behaviour as anything other than a normal every day event, to the point that no one actually acknowledged the aggression inherent in his actions or acknowledged his actions at all. Accepting this level of aggression and instigation of power struggles appeared to be the 'norm' in Tony's everyday dealings, which was further exemplified throughout the workshops. Tony's response to the research and me appeared to be oppositional acts that, as suggested by Fine (2007b), were his only form of agency and expression. Later conversations with staff revealed that this behaviour was characteristic of Tony's engagement with all staff members and could be considered as a resistance towards the "…values to which teachers [give] importance" (Drudy and Lynch, 1993, p.252). Engaging in

[27] The original name of the research stemmed from an observation made by students in Phase 1, that the arts are for posh people.

overt power struggles with staff appeared to be a space that Tony was most comfortable in and I began to recognise that his oppositional acts were his response against what he perceived to be the hegemony and structures of the education system that he was in. Consequently Tony's acts could be seen as being counter-hegemonic and formed his rejection of the "…overt and hidden curricula of the school" (Apple, 2012, p.88).

Although only our first encounter, Tony's level of aggression towards me and his attempts to dominate the power relations between us had only begun. Tony's attempts to control and be the dominant force were perhaps suggestive of his move against what he perceived as "…a culture of compliance" (Carnegie UK Trust, 2008, p.31). Throughout Block One of the research (which comprised of four workshops) Tony attempted to engage in a power play, where it appeared he was attempting to control and manipulate the power relations between us. Tony engaged these power struggles through; sporadically opting out of activities and repeatedly drawing attention to the fact, and his deliberate attempts to stop others in the workshop engaging. From my observations, as well as informal discussions with Tony, this selective participation appeared to be a show of control and resistance; a communication that I couldn't force him to participate. Furthermore, the more he was invited to engage the more adamant he was that he was not participating. During the early workshops Tony appeared to reject what he perceived as my attempts to control the setting and situation, seeing me as another teacher in the school. From my perspective these were attempts to democratise relationships between participants and between participants and me. Despite a reiteration of where the name of the research came from, Tony remained fixated on the word 'posh'. During the second workshop, when Tony and I were physically isolated from the group he calmly said, almost in a whisper but in what I perceived as a threatening tone, "Don't think I forget what you called us." From Tony's behaviour I understood that he saw me as attempting to assert my authority over him and our relationship. At this early point in the research it appeared that Tony's view of our relationship was one based upon suspicion and distrust.

Tony's playing out of power relations in this way was not unique to the school staff and myself however. When present in the workshops, Tony regularly oppressed and controlled his peers. These power relations practically played out in Tony's unquestioned domination of the entire group. The hierarchical structure amongst the group began to be unveiled (Figure 8). It appeared that Pa and Greg were directly under Tony's command and there appeared to be a mutual respect amongst them, in that they were exempt from Tony's physical and verbal attacks. Although Greg was in this position, at no time did he attempt to assert control over anyone else. In contrast, Pa appeared to exert control over Jason and they and Tony subjugated and asserted control over John, Anna, Conor, Lily, and Dylan. Notably, Jason was at times also subject to Tony's verbal and physical attacks. In contrast, Cadence, Alana, Dawn, Bonquisha, and George appeared to be exempt from any verbal or physical attacks because they passively adhered to Tony's regime. Tony's attacks were in the form of physical and verbal bullying, as well as challenging peers to become off-task, directly disrupting other's participation, and attempting to lead the way in off-task behaviour. Ironically, Tony appeared to have created a hierarchical structure of control and domination while at the same time continually opposing the autocratic nature and lack of autonomy afforded to him within the education system (Lynch, 1989; Rudduck and Flutter, 2010). In this way, it could be argued that "[*t*]*he seeds of reproduction [lay in his] rejection*" (Apple, 2012, p.90, emphasis in original).

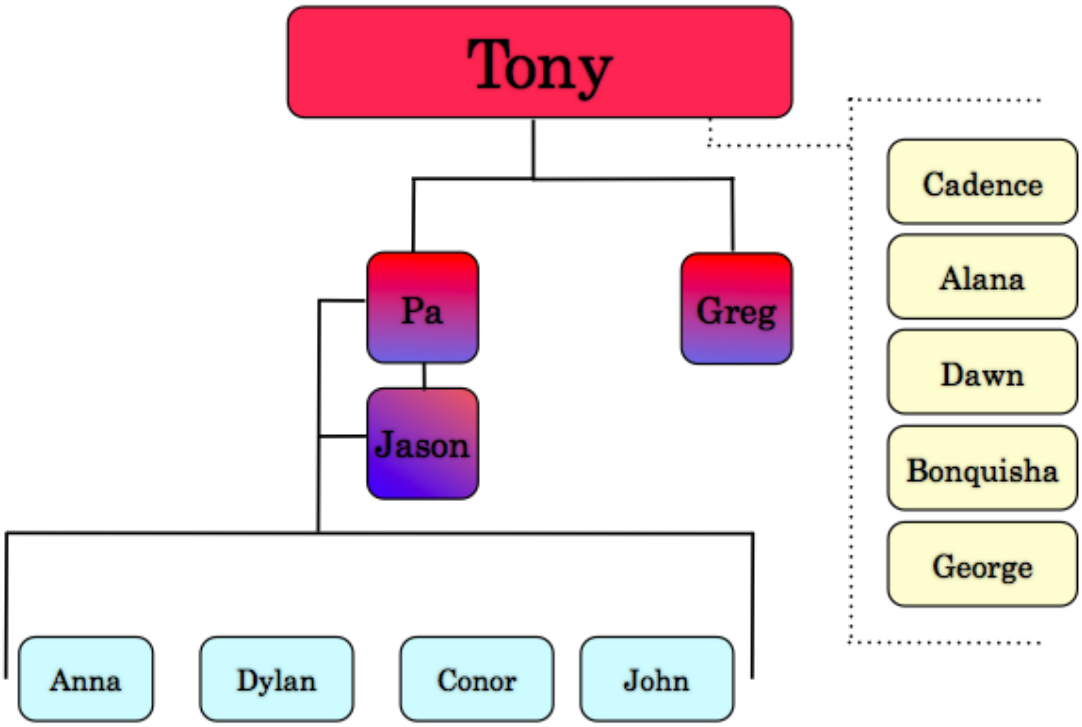


Figure 8 - Group Hierarchy

On a number of occasions I attempted to address Tony, Pa and Jason's bullying of others in the group– particularly Anna due to the severe verbal nature of the bullying– with the boys and also with school staff. The staff noted that the bullying was happening but seemed relatively powerless to do anything about it. In discussing the bullying with Pa and Jason, they agreed that as long as Anna stayed physically away from them in the workshops they would make attempts to stop bullying her. This discussion between the boys and me seemed to create a level of understanding between us and from this point on there was less tension between them and me, and them and Anna.

Not content with the level to which Tony was dominating the workshops through his power struggles with both his peers and me, I decided to speak to him one on one. Tony began the conversation, which took place in early January 2012, by exerting his power once again in refusing to directly answer any question he was asked:

Richie: So, what'd you get for Christmas?
Tony: Natin

Richie: Nothing?
Tony: Bag a coal.
Richie: What?
Tony: Bag a coal.
Richie: A bag of coal?
Tony: Ya.
(II3L6-22)[28]

Although the conversation started with a very tense atmosphere and Tony was reluctant to answer any questions, as it progressed the conversation served as a turning point in our relationship. The conversation revealed that Tony's power struggles were as a direct result of two factors; his attitude towards the arts and his dislike of some of the activities that we were doing, and his perception that I was trying to control him and make him do the activities. Tony articulated his power play resulting from his attitude towards the arts as:

> (in relation to the workshops) Some parts is good and some parts is stupid in 'em … The first week was stupid when you'd make shapes outta your body. I didn't like that one. I liked den da timeline yokes.
> (II3L127-132)

It appeared that Tony had an inherently negative attitude towards the arts, perceiving them as being boring and of no use. This attitude didn't appear to extend from any previous engagement that he had with the arts, as he stated that he had very little engagement with the arts. Instead, his attitude seemed to stem from a general dislike of anything that was outside the 'norm' and it appeared that Tony viewed the arts as moving outside that 'norm'. The discussion then led to what art forms Tony was willing to engage with and what forms he wasn't. Throughout the conversation Tony seemed surprised, and initially suspicious, that I was asking his opinion and seeking his advice in relation to the workshops and the directions that they could take. As the conversation continued his suspicion appeared to cease, as he began to talk with me as opposed to talking to or at me. In this way,

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[28] RRB__W___L__ denotes a location code for the data: Researcher Reflection Block _ Workshop _ Line ___
Quotes taken from data will be referred to through this system with II = individual interview, VD = video diary, PD = participant written diary, FG = focus group, SP = public speech, and FB = *Facebook*.

the conversation could be regarded as being reflective of a 'moment of communication'. This moment of communication can be understood as setting in motion the beginning of a new bond, that signified a move towards Tony's "disalientation"– as opposed to the reproduction of alienation– which enabled him to recognise himself as a producer of knowledge and culture and reclaim his place in the dialogue (Puiggrós, 2006, cited in Robinson and Taylor, 2007, p.13).

Although much of the communication on Tony's behalf was through verbal inferences and body language, there was an equalising of roles that occurred in the exchange. Entering into the discussion, I was aware that I would have to actively attempt to democratise the relationship and 'call Tony out' on the fact that he was negatively influencing others in the group. I did this very directly and Tony's immediate response was: "Mmm (recognition / agreement) … Ya, if I don't like it I'll just stand out" (II3L197-198). After this point in the conversation there appeared to be a neutralising of power relations, as Tony began to relax and discuss his actions to date. This appeared to signify an acknowledgement of a more democratic relationship between us and Tony began to discuss his influence over his peers. It emerged that Tony's resistance was a deliberate attempt to gain control of the situation, remove any control that I had and consequently to reject the social functions and values promoted by the school (Apple, 2012). Within the conversation we reached an agreement that Tony would try not to interfere with other people in the class, would be mindful of other people's participation and would try not to negatively impact others when he was temporarily opting out of activities. The discussion and Tony's acknowledgements of his resistance were an active move towards his conscious analysis of power and its impact on the practices and people around him (Taylor and Robinson, 2009) and served to further his disalienation. Apart from his relationship with me, Tony's choice not to participate was otherwise related to art forms that he perceived as being 'stupid'. Although this will be discussed later in the dissertation, these art forms were art forms that required more physical engagement, such as drama, dance, and singing.

In analysing Tony's resistance, it could be argued that it was a "transformational resistance" (Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal, 2001, cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008) in that it was only through the resistance that he was led to a deeper level of understanding of the educational process that we were attempting to engage in, which was oriented towards social justice. The conversation with Tony appeared to democratise our relationship, in part, and this was carried over into the workshops in terms of Tony's power relations with his peers and me. Within the ensuing workshops, the power dynamics were somewhat neutralised. Although, at times, he dominated some conversations and activities, it no longer appeared to be in a deliberately disruptive manner but in an effort to have his voice heard. That being said, Tony's dominating presence within the workshops still showed in some participants' reluctance to speak out in front of the whole group, which they later admitted.

With Tony's power struggles more relaxed during Block Two, this appeared to have a domino effect in terms of Pa and Jason's dominance over and bullying of other participants. Although their dominance was occasionally asserted, it was through less deliberate and vicious means than before and was, notably, more infrequent. In this way, power relations amongst the group and between the group and me relaxed and dialogue began to become a more natural process. It appeared that the reconfiguration of power relations facilitated participants' expression of their voice (Arnot and Reay, 2007). As this occurred, we began to reflect upon and critique the world around us, as well as our actions and behaviours within it, in an effort to open "…our own eyes and [see] the world through 'different eyes'" (Cahill *et al.*, 2008, p.90, emphasis in original).

This development of more democratic relationships and the participants' move towards being more active and dialogic was a noted throughout Block Two. The eight workshops in Block Two ranged from visual art, music, dance, poetry and drama. In Block Two, Workshop Five, we engaged with various contemporary song lyrics that we worked, individually and

collectively, to interpret. Using some of the themes presented in the lyrics, in combination with our own lived experiences, we began to create our own song lyrics and poetry. Although most participants engaged quite well with this, Tony and Greg seemed to engage the most positively, offering insightful interpretations drawn from their lived experience. Observing the workshop, it appeared that Tony was completely engrossed in interpreting the poetry. About half way through the workshop there was a dramatic change however. It seemed as if Tony had 'checked himself' and found that he was engaging and was potentially risking others recognising this. In response, Tony's attitude changed and he began to disengage and encourage Greg to do so too. Greg however didn't rise to Tony's challenge and physically distanced himself from him. It appeared that Greg was becoming more independent and was removing himself from Tony's control.

Minutes after this happened the workshop naturally changed direction as participants were asked to compose their own poetry. This appeared to be where Tony could instigate power struggles once more and regain any 'street cred' that he had lost earlier in the workshop. After a number of minutes Tony announced to the group that he was finished and he would like to read his poem to everyone. Tony's poem was as follows:

> Drink Drugs Rock and Role
> Fuck your Bird and go on the dole
> Richie is a sissie
> and he doesnt have a missie.
> hes a Dancing Queen
> and Ms. _____'s a 117 [29]

The poem seemed to get the reaction that Tony was looking for. Recognising the power struggle that was being initiated, however, I simply stated that it's unfair to write poems judging each other. Tony seemed discontented by this and for the remainder of the class continued to disengage. Although Tony's poem was explicit, inappropriate and insulting, unlike earlier interactions between Tony and me, there appeared to be no vindictiveness to what he wrote. Admittedly, Tony set out to embarrass me but in talking to

[29] Poem taken directly from Tony's work. Teacher's name has been omitted for confidentiality reasons. 117 = one hundred and seventeen.

him afterwards he laughed off the poem as a joke and said that he was 'messing'. Within this, however, there appeared to be an undertone of him reminding me that I was not in control and he could readily engage power struggles if he wished. Having caught himself engaging, it appeared that Tony needed to reassert his dominance so that his engagement in the early part of the workshop wasn't compromising the "…dignity and status maintained through psychosocial adaptions to life on the street" (McLaren, 2009, p.79). Interestingly, in this case Tony used poetry as a means of expressing this instead of his usual verbal or physical attacks, which perhaps suggested a change in how Tony viewed the need to express himself, or alternatively served to reconfigure the means through which he embodied power relations with me. Alternatively, in line with McLaren's (2009) assertion, perhaps Tony's involvement in the research compromised his 'street credit' and had already undesirably altered his social relations with the group[30].

Despite the power struggles within this class between Tony and me, considering his positive engagement, and particularly Greg's, I was surprised when they both approached me and asked to leave the workshops for good. Their request was not made with any aggression or any apparent or deliberate power play and adhering to the commitment I made to them at the start of the research process, I told them that they were free to leave and asked only that they fill in their diaries one last time. In this action, I wanted to try and establish their reasons for leaving and so I specifically asked them to engage with a number of questions.

[30] Staff reported that the hierarchy previously spoken of appeared to still be present in everyday school life outside of the workshops.

Question	Tony	Greg
Why did you decide to participate?	Was made + liked somethings. Not anymore vry boring	I have been here to test it and see do I like it.
Why are you leaving?	Very Boring waste of times!	I do not like the things that goes on like drama and musical.
What did you think of the workshops?	I liked doing the part when we took a song a see what the artist wrote it was it his own Experience or Just for money	I thought it was ok at first now I don't like it!
Why do you think others are staying?	To get out of class. Like this subject And into Music/Drama/ photography etc.	I think they are staying because they like these things not like me, they like them.

Table 4 – Tony and Greg's Final Diary Entries

I found it perplexing that Tony noted the previous workshop as one that he liked and yet was leaving directly after this. Questioning him on this in an attempt to understand his reasons for leaving in light of his diary entry, he simply reiterated that he didn't want to be a part of the workshops anymore. Again, I am drawn to McLaren's (2009) assertion in relation to the relationship between Tony and his peers both in the workshops and on the street and perhaps in Tony's eyes, he had already compromised his street credit too much.

Cadence's power struggles

With Tony and Greg's departure I expected there to be a surge in productivity and participation. This stemmed from previous discussions amongst some of the participants (particularly, John, Bonquisha, Cadence, Lily, Alana, Conor, Dylan and Anna) about how Tony and Greg had prevented them from participating when they were present[31]. As a result of Tony's departure from the process I also expected there to be less power play and fewer attempts to control and manipulate the situation. This, however, was not the case and in Block Two, Workshop Six, (the workshop directly

[31] Although participants agreed that Greg didn't actively stop them participating, the fact that he engaged in off-task behavior with Tony was cited as a reason that negatively impacted participants engagement.

after Tony and Greg's departure) Cadence instigated a power struggle with the other participants and me. Up to this point in the workshops Cadence had been outspoken within her own social grouping (Dawn, Bonquisha and Alana) but remained relatively silent amongst the larger group. When Tony was present Cadence refused to share her opinion with the larger group and calls for her to do so were met with statements denoting that she had nothing to say. As well as Cadence, all of those within Cadence's group remained silent when asked to voice their opinions to the larger group. With Tony's departure from the workshops, however, Cadence began not only voicing her opinion but constantly arguing with me about the various activities that we were doing in the workshops and negatively impacting on others' participation.

In a different way to Tony's power struggles, all of Cadence's arguments and power struggles were in relation to the art forms that we were engaging in and although she was an avid writer, she refused to engage in free writing or poetry composition, stating that she 'wasn't interested'. As my frustrations and other participants' frustrations with Cadence grew throughout the remainder of Block Two so did her protestations and resistance. Cadence actively argued with me about the pointlessness of what we were doing and was consistently off-task within the workshops. On a number of occasions I reminded Cadence that she had a choice to leave the workshops but if she were staying she would have to make an effort to engage. On each of these occasions Cadence reiterated that she was 'trying out the activities and was open-minded'. While Cadence stated that she was open to trying out art forms, the reality was quite different. When engagement with a variety of art forms was presented to Cadence she rejected it, stating that she had tried it and now didn't want to. Cadence's resistance can be considered, as Apple discusses, as being disguised in meeting the "…minimum requirements of production" (2012, p.98).

Although Cadence's power struggles negatively impacted those around her, this was short lived. The relationship between Cadence, Dawn, Bonquisha and Alana appeared to be very strong throughout the early workshops. In

instigating her power struggles Cadence appeared to expect others to join her in her disengagement and their refusal to do so appeared to split the group. Dawn appeared to side with Cadence and join her in her disengagement while Bonquisha and Alana physically distanced themselves from Cadence and at times aligned themselves with other groups so that they could engage. An example of this was during a drama workshop. What began as Cadence's verbal resistance eventually manifested itself in disengagement and eventually a point blank refusal to engage. The refusal to engage implicated everyone present as Cadence was extremely vocal in her refusal to engage, reiterating the pointlessness of drama and almost throwing a tantrum. After this outburst Alana and Bonquisha admitted that they wanted to be part of the drama and were going to change groups. Bonquisha and Alana's new found sense of independence seemed to send a rift through the group of four and it appeared that Cadence's influence could not be exerted over her group.

From this point on, Cadence's power relations were exclusively between she and I, and while she was joined by Dawn (who refused to speak to me or anyone else) no other group members were actively involved in the power relations between us. As before, Cadence's power struggles were exclusively in relation to the forms that we were engaging with, but were notably site specific. Unlike Tony, who engaged in power struggles with his classmates and me within and outside of the workshops, Cadence's power struggles exclusively occurred within the workshops. Cadence's interactions with and attitude towards me were completely different outside of the workshop space, which reinforced my understanding that her power relations were directly related to her engagement and attitude towards the arts. Furthermore, it appeared that Cadence's power play with me became more active when we were engaging in drama and dance. In contrast, arguments and power relations between us seemed more relaxed when Cadence was engaging in visual art. This was observed during Block Three, where the PM that participants were using were predominantly visually-based. Although participants were exploring their lives outside of school and reassessing their attitudes towards the arts, they were doing so through

PM. There were no confrontations between Cadence and me during these four workshops. However, much of Cadence's artistic engagement and dialogue was concerned with her annoyance and anger towards me for, as she perceived, having tried to make her engage in art forms that she said she didn't want to. In this way, Cadence commented that workshops had become like school:

> Richie: Was there any stage during the workshops that you wanted to pull out?
> Cadence: Ya! When we did drama after saying that we didn't want to do drama!
> Richie: Why?
> Cadence: Because we said we didn't want to do drama and then we did drama.
> Richie: And what about the fact that other people wanted to do it?
> Cadence: I don't know. Like, as far as I know … a lot of us said we didn't want to do it and then you were all like, 'ya we're going doing drama' and then that just made it like normal school because we had to do stuff that we didn't like.
> (FGB3WivL506-519)

As well as the reduction of power struggles in Block Three, I noted that Cadence's engagement with music outside of the workshops was also characterised by a lack of power struggle. The participants and I set up a music club in the school so that they could learn to play the guitar and piano. Cadence was one of the primary instigators in setting this club up as she was very interested in learning the guitar. While Cadence engaged in power struggles with me during the workshops, in music club– which was also led by me– there were no power struggles, arguments, or protestations. After questioning the group on this during a focus group Cadence explained the difference in her attitude and power relations as:

> [In music club] it's more specific so, you kinda, you won't be doing stuff one week that you don't want to do because it's always learning the thing that you want to learn.
> (FGB3WiL235-237)

In analysing Cadence's responses, it appeared that she viewed my motivating her to engage in various art forms as being representative of the dominant hegemony and consequently, it could be viewed that her actions were counter-hegemonic (McLaren, 2013). In contrast to Cadence's

apparent goal in engaging in power struggles with me, she was actively perpetuating a situation of oppression and thus her resistance was reproducing inequality (Lynch, 1989; Apple, 2012). Through her video diary Cadence acknowledged that her actions may have oppressed others in the group through refusing to respect other participants' decision to engage in the work. At various stages Cadence acknowledged that others had requested certain activities but reiterated the fact that she didn't want to engage in the activities. She was thus ignoring the decisions that we had made as a group, to engage certain art forms, and seemed to be attempting to instil her own lack of desire for the arts within other participants, despite their expressions of desire and enjoyment. This was something that Cadence again reiterated during the creation of the performance-exhibition. In contrast to her actions in the workshops, throughout our time in music club Cadence didn't engage in power struggles with anyone. She frequently sought other people's opinions in relation to the direction of the club and what chords and pieces we should learn. The only time there was a confrontation was when Cadence felt people weren't taking the music club seriously and attendance had fallen. Although annoyed over this, Cadence agreed that it was people's choice whether they wanted to attend or not. Cadence's lack of power struggles in this setting appeared to be because she was engaging in the arts on her terms, learning an instrument that she wanted to learn.

Power struggles with other participants

Although the main discussions around power to date have been in relation to Tony and Cadence, they were not the only ones involved. In the first workshop, during basic introductions of name, age and where you're from, the majority of participants refused to tell me their names– either refusing to say anything or else making up names. Similarly, they refused to tell me what age they were or where they were from. This level of resistance was something that I had not expected but was something that I was immediately presented with. Although this resistance quickly appeased amongst the majority of the group, it remained in others. Pa, Jason, and John remained hostile towards me for a number of workshops, but through

positive engagement with the arts in the workshops and a more informal, democratic and dialogic relationship these power relations were made more neutral.

Throughout the latter half of Block Two and much of Block Three discussions centred around how Tony had dominated the earlier workshops. In this way, Tony and Greg's departure from the workshops and Pa's absence throughout Block Three was seen by the remaining participants as a regaining of power. Participants explained this as a sense that they could now express their voices and be heard, further reiterating the necessity for more democratic power relations in order for voice to emerge (Arnot and Reay, 2007). Furthermore, on a number of occasions the remaining participants discussed how it was necessary, from their perspective, that Pa and Tony be removed from the workshops so that they could experience success more readily. Anna succinctly articulated this during the final focus group. To contextualise the comments, I had a list of things that I wanted to talk about within the focus group and when the group were asked how they felt about the fact that people had left the process the responses were:

> Anna: It's a lot quieter.
> Richie: Did it make it easier?
> Lily: Ya! Sometimes they'd be shouting their heads off and you wouldn't get anything done!
> Anna: My ears are now better! I can hear again!
> Richie: What about the guys?
> Conor: A lot better ya!
> Richie: Why?
> John: Because they're all disruptive!
> Conor: You can't hear yourself think!
> Richie: How do you think it would've worked if they had stayed?
> Conor: It wouldn't have worked.
> Anna: We wouldn't be at the bottom of that page right now.
> (FGB3WivL847-873)

Putting us in our place: Power relations with school staff

As a past-pupil of the school I was acutely aware of the power relations and tensions between some staff members, many of whom taught me during my time there. I graduated from St. Nessan's in 2005 and presumed that as I

was now a qualified teacher and university researcher a certain credibility and mutual respect would accompany this. This however was not the case. Apple (2012; 2013), Lynch (1989), and Drudy and Lynch (1993) assert that teachers produce and reproduce unequal power relations in schools, consciously or unconsciously, as a mechanism to maintain their social standing. In this regard, given the activist nature of the research, it is not surprising that teachers were also involved in power struggles. The above authors have highlighted the means through which, in perpetuating cycles of inequality in schools, through the overt and hidden curricula, teachers may also be engaged in transmitting the dominant ideology. Similarly, Kincheloe (2007) asserts that the generation of new knowledge within educational institutions is perceived as dangerous and threatening. Although I had gained approval of the gatekeepers, this did not mean that teachers' approval had been sought. In preparation for the research in the school however, the teachers had been briefed on the work that I was doing and perhaps some viewed it as threatening to them, militating against their vested interest (Drudy and Lynch, 1993). Other staff members in the school presented a very different response, welcoming the poststructural and postmodern nature of the research in terms of encouraging students to question taken for granted assumptions about themselves and their lived situations.

Entering the school, in preparation for the first workshop with participants, I was greeted by some of the teachers. In talking to the teachers I addressed each of them by their first name, as they did with me. I was, however, reprimanded by one staff member for doing so and requested to use his second name in addressing him. It appeared that this staff member was exerting his control in the situation as other staff addressed him by his first name[32]. Consequently, my presumption was that I too, as an adult within the school, could also use his first name, as all other school staff had

[32] In attempting to protect the anonymity of school staff a number of techniques have been employed, including the use of generalisations, composites, gender changes, and use of multiple pseudonyms for single individuals. Any quotes from interviews that are included have been done so with the approval of relevant staff members.

requested me to in relation to them. I was unsure if this assertion of authority stemmed from a view that I was still a student or whether it stemmed from suspicion and distrust. Moving on from this conversation and approaching the workshops space, one teacher asked if they could stay for the workshop. Fearing that her presence in the space might cause the participants to act in a certain way, I asked that I be allowed to introduce myself to the students and run the workshop alone. Having run workshops in the school previously, this was never a problem and other school staff seemed relieved that they did not have to be present. My request was, however, ignored and the it was implied in the discussion that followed that Ms. Moynihan would remain within the space for as long as she wished. For me, this confirmed my sense that some staff members were suspicious of the work that I was doing with the participants and Ms. Moynihan's presence in the workshop felt like an act of surveillance, or both the participants and me. This, however, is not to suggest that Ms. Moynihan was a 'fly on the wall' surveying us. A number of times throughout the workshop Ms. Moynihan verbally and physically interjected in activities that we were doing, albeit in an attempt to motivate participants to engage in the activities. At one stage Ms. Moynihan left the space for a number of minutes and there was a tangible difference in the atmosphere. Power relations between the participants and school staff became apparent as, with no 'teachers' in the space participants began to relax and become off-task. This off-task behaviour was refreshing to see however, as the participants seemed rigidly on task, in line with an understanding of surveillance, when teachers were present (Apple, 2012).

Throughout the research teachers frequently 'checked in' before and after workshops and questioned me about what I was doing in the workshops, and at times suggesting that I do different activities with participants. Teachers also regularly entered the workshop space, at which point there was a noticeable change in the atmosphere and in participants' behaviour, which they themselves acknowledged. I particularly noted this during the last workshop in Block Three. Half way through the two-hour workshop a teacher entered the space to "see what we were doing". Seeing her enter the

space, Alana– who I was working with at the time– said "Fuck sake, not [him]. Would he ever go away." Sensing an immediate tension in the room as the rest of the participants realised that the teacher had entered, I quickly approached him, explained what we were doing and kindly asked that the participants be left to their own creative devices in finishing their work. Ignoring my request, the teacher began to move around the space and quizzed the participants about what they were doing (at the time we were creating 'revised time-lines'), why they had included certain activities and what was wrong with other activities that they were placed apart from the rest. Assessing the situation, I decided that further attempts to remove the teacher from the space were likely to create tension not only between him and me but also potentially between the participants and me, if there was a verbal confrontation. Having left the space after about 10 minutes, the participants were verbally angry with the teacher as many of them felt that staff shouldn't be allowed to enter the space to 'check' on them.

The teacher's surveillance of the participants and me during the research process has clear resonances with Foucault's (1977a) *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*, specifically with his discussion on the numerous and more subtle means through which power can be exerted. Surveillance, Foucault suggests, is an adjustment to the mechanism of power that:

> …frame[s] the everyday lives of individuals; an adaption and refinement of the machinery that assumes responsibility for and places under surveillance the everyday behaviour, their identity, their activity, their apparently unimportant gestures … towards a closer penal mapping of the social body.
>
> (Foucault, 1977a, p.77-78)

Lynch (1989) recognises this surveillance as a form of hierarchical control, noting the various discipline systems in place within schools to ensure that students are surveyed. This surveillance, she argues, permeates schools to the point that students survey each other through prefect systems where "[t]heir autonomy is interpreting the rules … not defining them" (1989, p.95). Furthermore, Monahan (2009) acknowledges that as well as through physical presence, intention and actions, surveillance has become even more hidden within schools through the use of technological surveillance. This,

he contends, is done with the intention of "…mitigating risks and controlling the student population" (Monahan, 2009, p.132). Some of the teachers can be viewed as perpetuating the traditional hegemony and also monitoring the participants' social practices, what they say and do, in order to keep them inline with the dominant social structures and expectations of the school or dominant culture (McLaren, 2009). As discussed in chapter four, students were limited in the areas that they were allowed to go during lunchtimes and break times and this, as well as having to be escorted to and from classes, could also be perceived as a means through which the school surveyed and further exerted power over students. There were a number of teachers directly involved in power struggles during the research. Notably, those who engaged in acts of surveillance appeared to impact the greatest on participants and me, as our behaviour changed when they entered the workshop space.

One of my requests, in line with the ethical approval for the project, was that participants were free to leave the process at any time. In contrast to this request, I found out that some participants were forced to attend the workshops. Before Block Two, Workshop Two, I entered the space and began setting up fifteen minutes before class started. When the bell went the majority of participants flooded into the room and I advised them to take their seats. Peering outside the door to see if there was anyone else there, I saw Tony, Pa, and Greg outside the door arguing with Ms. Culhane and Ms. Rourke. Going outside the door to see if everything was alright, I quickly learned that the boys didn't want to attend the workshop today. I interjected in the argument and reiterated my request that if they did not want to attend this should be respected. Smith et al. discuss the necessity to "…respectfully push back when oppressive status quo narratives begin to establish themselves within the PAR process" (2010, p.422). In this instance, I felt it necessary to respectfully push back against the teachers' attempts to force participants to attend the workshops. Having listened to the teachers' arguments– they felt that participants' hadn't had enough exposure to the workshops to make a fully informed decision to leave– I then put my point across. Ms. Culhane accepted my argument and agreed

that the participants should be allowed to leave the workshop if they wished. Ms. Rourke, however, seemed discontent with my pushing back and reiterated that the participants should have to attend for another few weeks. After a minute or two of further discussion everyone agreed that the participants' decision to withdraw from the process, albeit potentially temporarily, should be respected. In this instance all voices were respected and the democratic relationship between the participants and me appeared to have been enacted in front of staff.

I returned to the workshop space and began the workshop. A number of minutes later, the door of the room slammed open with a loud bang and Pa, Jason, and Tony stormed into the space swearing and stamping their feet. Completely perplexed as to why they were now joining the workshop, especially considering that their body language and behaviour suggested unhappiness, I was quickly alerted to the reason when I looked out the door and saw Mr. Cremin outside. Despite having respectfully pushed back against the teachers, as a means of trying to ensure that participants' voices were respected, in requesting that the participants attend class Mr. Cremin was not only subjugating their voices but was actively disempowering me, and consequently Ms. Culhane and Ms. Rourke in overriding our mutual agreement. Within the school there appeared to be a hierarchy of control amongst staff and some staff shied away from confrontation while others actively engaged in it and power struggles. All power struggles between the latter group and me and the latter group and participants resulted in the subjugation of our voices and our disempowerment and the perpetuation of inequality.

Other occasions where I pushed back against teachers were concerned with attempts to manipulate the research process in an attempt to serve their own interests. In addition, attempts were also made to manipulate power relations between the participants and them and consequently the participants and me. Prior to the participants entering the space one day Mr. O'Dowd entered and briskly and assertively requested that I temporarily halt the work that I was doing with the participants and get

them to participate in a project that he had devised. Participants' engagement in the project appeared to be more for the benefit of Mr. O'Dowd than the participants themselves as he stated that he would be responsible for presenting the project to the school community and entering it for external competitions. Admittedly I was astonished that, knowing the nature of the research I was doing from previous discussions with Mr. O'Dowd, he fully expected me to adhere to his plan. I reiterated my reasons for being in the school and the aims of my research, referring to a document on the research that I had previously shared with the school staff, and told Mr. O'Dowd that within the given timeframe and the nature of the work that I was doing with the participants, our involvement in the project would not be feasible. That being said, I agreed to discuss the proposal with the participants and did so as soon as they entered the space.

My intention in discussing the proposal with the participants was not only to seek their opinion but also to keep them fully informed and once again give them autonomy over decisions that affected them (Arnot and Reay, 2007). During the discussion participants became quite vocal in their opposition to the project and stated that Mr. O'Dowd had already tried to involve them in it. With this, I realised that Mr. O'Dowd was attempting to manipulate my relationship with the participants and coerce them into being involved in the project. Mr. O'Dowd's effors here not only signified a power play with me but also his power struggles with the participants and his attempts to coerce them into being involved, despite their wishes. After the workshop, I met with Mr. O'Dowd and informed him that we had decided that, given the time frame, we would not be able to be involved in the project. Mr. O'Dowd didn't argue about our decision and instead responded with "ah well. It was worth a try. I thought you'd be able to get them to do it" (RRB2WiiiL56-57). This response furthered my understanding that Mr. O'Dowd was attempting to use the relationship between the participants' and me to his own advantage. Mr. O'Dowd's attempts to manipulate my relationship with participants and to coerce them into being involved in the play were significant as they represent yet

another means through which power was exerted, not only over the participants but also over me.

Deflation to elation: My research journey

The necessity to respectfully push back and the power struggles between some staff members and me left me feeling isolated and alone. This wasn't exclusively between the staff and me however. This sense of isolation was present throughout quite an amount of the research journey and much of it stemmed from my relationship with the participants, which was fraught with frustrations, shock, disbelief, deflation, as well as moments of elation, hopefulness and encouragement. In ways, Brydie-Leigh Bartleet's words ring true: "I don't quite know what to do with all that I'm discovering about myself and my profession" (2009, p.718). Throughout Block One, my primary feelings were of deflation, frustration, shock and disbelief as I learned of the power struggles that accompanied our learning and relationships.

Having engaged with much of the literature around the positioning of the researcher as insider or outsider both within PAR and wider educational research (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; McIntyre, 2008), I instinctively, naïvely and aspirationally positioned myself as an insider, someone who had much in common with the participants, someone who would attempt to see from their perspective and someone who would readily be accepted to the site. My instinct in doing this was as a result of the similarities between my history and the participants' histories. I, however, negated to consider the participants' viewpoint and perspective; that although I am less than ten years older than they are, I was entering the setting as an adult. As well as this, I have attended university and, in their eyes, was entering the setting in the capacity of a teacher, and consequently a representative of the education system within which they are enrolled. These views, coupled with the participants' lack of knowledge around my own personal history, led them to assigning me into the role of outsider– someone who didn't

necessarily belong in the setting and someone with whom they had little in common– which was reflected in their attitudes and behaviours towards me at the start of the research and which they later acknowledged.

Amongst the teaching staff, I also regarded myself as an insider. Not only had I attended university and attained a teaching qualification but I was furthering my professional development by engaging in postgraduate study. In addition to this, I knew many of the teachers in the setting because I had attended school there and had met them in many social settings since. While all of this carried weight with some teachers, others– even those who fully understood my reasoning for being in the school and respected me personally– found it difficult to view me as an insider. Ms. Hegarty expressed this most concisely when she said, "[y]ou may have gone to school here and taught in other schools, but you don't know what it's like to teach here. You don't know how hard it is to come in here day after day and get shit thrown at you" (RRB1WivL156-158). Although Ms. Hegarty was one of the most approachable, helpful and cooperative members of staff that I encountered during my time in the school, it appeared that even she found it difficult to view me as an insider because I was not exposed to the daily power struggles with students throughout the school.

Ms. Hegarty's comment did, in a way prove prophetic and my feelings of being an outsider and being entirely isolated within the school and within the process were ever present during the early stages. I was regularly overwhelmed with feelings of deflation, frustration and doubt after the earlier workshops, as I grappled with what was happening within the process. Through the entirety of Block One and much of Block Two I wondered when the litany of verbal abuse and power struggles from the participants would appease. I doubted, on a weekly basis, whether participants would engage in the workshops, despite the fact that they were the very ones who had influenced the art forms that were to be engaged with. Their engagement and participation was wholly unpredictable and was, at times, down to how they were feeling and, in Jason's words, "…how teachers have pissed us off and who we've fought with durin' the day"

(RRB2WviiL86-89). All of this did not allow me to be a part of the PAR process as described in the literature, but required the process to be changed, personalised and individualised to this study.

Adding to my sense of deflation and frustration was the inherently messy nature of PAR (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). Although a recursive and cyclical process, PAR does not have any sequential structures. This inherent flexibility is a means of providing a "…deliberate overlapping of action and reflection … to allow changes in plans as people [learn] from their own experience" (McTaggart, 1997, p.27). In this way, as a responsive and at times unpredictable methodological framework and philosophy of research (Fals Borda, 1991; Ginwright, 2008), PAR paradoxically finds its successes within this unpredictability and responsiveness to the research participants, researcher, research setting and the situations that emerge. This however was of little consolation during Block One. In contrast, during Block Two there was a notable shift in participants' attitude towards me, which was expressed verbally and through their behaviour, and this–for me– signified a move from outsider to insider. Consequently, I am unsure whether staff members ever viewed me as an insider, primarily due to the change in my relationship with the students. A number of staff members commented on how the participants would not talk about the workshops with them and became irate when they tried to organise events, speakers to come in or activities during the timetabled workshops. Laughing about this during an interview one day, Ms. Culhane commented:

> [t]he girls'd be fit to eat me if you weren't coming in like. You know, it's like, 'how dare you organise something else like.' I'll have to say you're sick any day we're going somewhere.
>
> (II6L353-355).

During this conversation Ms. Culhane also commented on how the participants would not discuss what happened in the workshops because "…they see that as very much their own space and time" (II6L344).

As the power struggles between the participants' and me eased and power relations appeared to become more neutralised, power relations between

some staff members and me appeared to become more tense. Commenting on the discussion that the research was generating in the school, Ms. Culhane noted that more teachers were becoming aware of the *type of work* that the participants and me were doing and that they were uncomfortable with the participants' unwillingness to talk about what happened in the workshops. Relaying her own perspective, Ms. Culhane commented that "…if there was an issue [in the workshops] we'd know. They talk about the problems and keep the good stuff to themselves" (II6L396-399).

As the workshops went on and more staff became aware of the relationship that was forming between the participants and me there appeared to be a subsequent distancing between some staff members and me. Staff members who previously engaged in conversation with me appeared to avoid me and other staff members' interrogations grew as they questioned me on the workshops and attempted to find out information about participants' lives outside of the workshops. This increase in surveillance along with some staff's distancing could potentially stem from an acknowledgement that the work that I was doing with the participants was activist in nature and actively sought to "…*work on* and *through power inequities*, and *across and through differences*" (Torre *et al.*, 2008, p.24) in an effort to "…intervene in reality instead of remaining onlookers" (Freire, 1974) and consequently "…join with others and transform" (Greene, 1997, p.10). These reactions could be explained in terms of 'counter-resistance' on the part of teachers and their attempts to maintain the current hegemonic systems, and consequently their own vested interests, in the education system (Apple, 2012; McLaren, 2013).

Participation

Participation and power relations are inextricably bound. Resistance to power, as has been noted, can be exercised through a refusal to participate or indeed through satisfactorily participating and no more (Apple, 2012). In

addition, other resistances to power, which actively engage participation can take the form of students:

> …creatively adapt[ing] to their environments so that they can smoke, get out of class, inject humour into the routines, informally control the pacing of the classroom life, and generally try to make it through the day.
>
> (Apple, 2012, p.87-88).

Students actively refute and contest power within schools through participation. Similarly, participation can at times be considered to be an acceptance of power as demonstrated in Apple's identification of "ear'oles" (Apple, 2012, p.90). That is, students who diligently accept the values of the school and teacher and are seen as espousing a pro-school attitude (Drudy and Lynch, 1993). Furthermore, Fielding's (2001) work, *Students as Radical Agents of Change,* outlines a typology of student engagement that recognises the potential for students to not only participate in the active shaping of their learning but to act upon this when given the power and autonomy to do so. In positioning students as researchers– the most autonomous level in Fielding's typology– he argues that meaning is made through dialogue with teachers when students are facilitated to actively participate in researching their own lives, which requires granting them the power and autonomy to do so. Inherent in this approach is the generation of new types of knowledge, knowledge that potentially argues against the valuing of technical/administrative knowledge. It appears here that there is a positive relationship between power and participation. The opposite, however, is the case when there is an oppressive status quo. Drudy and Lynch (1993) document the negative affects on participation when power is exerted over those who do not ascribe to the status quo. These students are labelled as deviants, allocated to lower academic streams, viewed negatively by teachers, develop a negative self-image, revolt against the academic structures and school values and participate less in the educational process, which frequently leads to their departure from education (Drudy and Lynch, 1993).

The link between power and participation has already been alluded to in this chapter– through participants' resistances– and their impact flows through the remaining discussions in this chapter also. With this in mind, the discussion throughout this section is concerned with contextualising participation in relation to its determinant factors. That is, what contributed towards and militated against participants' engagement and participation. The factors that positively affected participants' engagement were: the democratic relationships that were built; participants' sense of ownership over the workshops; participants' understandings of their role and my role; achieving success within the workshops; and peer relationships. The factors that negatively impacted participation within the process were: peer relationships, the presence of teachers and forced participation; participants' lack of previous arts engagement; participants' inherently negative attitude towards the arts; the presence of video cameras; and my perceived role and actions within the process. Although each of these factors are interrelated the following discussion attempts to elicit the multifaceted nature of participation.

Preface to factors positively influencing participation

The discussion of positive participation may seem at odds with the tone of this chapter thus far. The power struggles previously outlined have served to problematize the concepts of power, participation, and democracy within the research process. That, however, is not to suggest that more democratic relationships were not present. There were fourteen participants involved in this research and discussions to date have primarily concerned two, Tony and Cadence. Amongst the other eleven participants– George left after workshop one– power struggles were rarely engaged and their participation in the workshops was considerably more than Tony and Cadence's. In addition, more democratic relationships with the remaining eleven participants appeared to have been forged. Chapters six through eight provide a more balanced view of the research narrative, eliciting and offering examples of where democratic dynamics were active within the research process and where participants engaged in active decision-making around decisions within the process.

Factors positively influencing participation

PAR argues that the "…destruction of the asymmetric binomial is the kernel of the concept of participation" (Fals Borda, 1991, p.5) within meaningful participatory research. The implication of this is that the traditional relationship of researcher-researched be abandoned in favour of more democratic researcher-participant structures that facilitate collaboration. PAR consequently strives to generate a situation where "…buttressed by PAR, young people transform [their] important forms of knowledge to action, skills, and ultimately community change" (Ginwright, 2008, p.21). In order to achieve this, PAR necessitates a rethinking of traditional research dynamics between the researcher and participants (Brydon-Miller and Tolman, 1997; Anderson, 1998; Kane *et al.*, 1998; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001) in a move towards a more authentically participative model of research (Oliver, 2010).

This authentic participation is achieved through "…sharing the way research is conceptualized, practiced, and brought to bear on the life-world" of its participants (McTaggart, 1997, p.28; see also Anderson, 1998). Acknowledging this, one of the constant foci of the research process was to build and deepen a more democratic relationship with the participants, in keeping with Freirian philosophy. Although not always present amongst participants, I constantly attempted to create opportunities where our relationships could become more democratic and where participants could assume more autonomy over the process. Participants themselves named the democratisation of our relationship and their influence over the shape of the research as one factor positively affecting their participation. For them, the fact that it was their choice to participate and they were always made aware of their choice to refrain from activities served as a motivating factor as they felt there was a mutual respect and understanding.

Tony's and Greg's exit from the process, for the participants, signalled a further re-shifting of power relations, which arguably empowered other participants to engage. This empowerment to engage was also witnessed on

the rare occasions that Tony, and at times Pa, were absent from the workshops. Their absence, if only for a class, seemed to provide a space where power struggles were less active and participants commented on how they felt freer to engage and participate.

As well as the greater sense of democracy afforded to participants, through Tony's and Greg's exit, attempts to co-create with the participants provided an impetus for them to engage in the workshops. Throughout the process I actively sought participants' input in terms of the art forms that we were to engage with and the means through which we would engage with the art forms. Being actively included in decision-making also appeared to empower some of the participants to take ownership over their own learning and deepen their level of participation. While co-construction– in terms of co-planning workshops– was actively sought on my part, it was not always positively responded to from the participants' perspective. Much of this resistance to co-construction stemmed from participants' understanding of their role and my role within the process, which will be discussed in chapter six. During the final workshop participants discussed their role and my role within the process. Participants viewed my role as that of designer and motivator and theirs primarily as participants. Their view was that their responsibility and role within the research process was to participate when asked and this understanding of their role appeared to be a factor that positively influenced their participation. Participants' success within activities also appeared to motivate them to engage further. Recognising the difficulties that some participants were having in Block One and the lack of success that they were experiencing, they appeared less motivated to engage. In contrast, when activities were modified and participants experienced success within them, they appeared more motivated to engage.

Possibly one of the most influential determinants of participation was participants' relationships with each other. Peer relationships contributed both positively and negatively to participants' engagement at a variety of stages. This was first seen through Greg's engagement with his peers. During Block Two, Workshop Three, Greg served as a leader and motivator

in the construction of our dramatic piece, which was based around Picasso's *Guernica*. Not only was Greg the primary instigator within this process, he was also highly active in reshaping and directing the piece. As well as Greg's influence, this workshop also saw Cadence take control and serve as a positive role model, motivating Bonquisha and Alana to engage in the piece. Not only were Greg and Cadence fully engaged in the drama but, because of their positive influence over other participants, they extended the dramatic action to include all participants present on that day.

Factors negatively influencing participation

While peer relationships within the process held benefits for participation, they also contributed negatively, preventing participants from engaging at a variety of stages. One of the primary negative peer relationships was between Tony and the rest of the group.

The presence of teachers in the workshop space also contributed negatively towards participants' engagement. On several occasions they reiterated their desire for them to leave the space so that they could continue participating in the workshop. Although there were always teachers present at the start of workshops, to take attendance, the majority immediately left, and so only a small number of teachers were noted as negatively affecting participation through their presence in the space.

Participants' forced attendance also served as a negative influence on their engagement with the workshops. Although Tony's participation was sporadic at times, it could be argued that his being forced to attend created a desire within him to rebel against participating. When Greg and Tony were forced to attend the workshop, they, at several stages, refused to engage stating "…we don't want to be here. They made us come" (RRB2W1L232) as reasons why they should be allowed to not participate within certain activities. Wanting to respect their choice to stand out, I allowed them to do so, provided they did not distract anyone else who was participating. If they had been allowed to engage and opt out of the

workshops at their own will perhaps Tony and Greg would have participated more in workshops that they chose to attend. This however is speculative but it does bear thinking about in terms of the consequences of mandating that participants be engaged in classes/workshops/research. That is, how the removal of their choice affects their participation (Rudduck and Flutter, 2010).

Much of Tony's reasoning for not wanting to participate, as he revealed in discussions throughout the process, was his inherently negative attitude towards the arts. This attitude stemmed from an apparent lack of experience and knowledge of the arts; Tony stated that he had only ever been involved in visual art, mainly within school and once within a youth club that he attended. This phenomenon was not unique to Tony, and many of the other participants stated that they had a deficit of knowledge in relation to various art forms. This, they attributed to having minimal to no experience with the arts and was their primary reason for withdrawing and not participating in certain activities. Although this was noted by almost all participants at some stage throughout the research, many participants challenged themselves to engage in some way with the various art forms, which will be further discussed in chapter seven. Cadence, was an exception to this, however, having stated that she had tried the particular art form and didn't like it. For Cadence, her negative attitude towards the arts was the sole justification for her lack of engagement in some of the workshops.

As well as Cadence's negative attitude towards the arts, she and Alana commented that the presence of video cameras in the space made them uncomfortable and at times militated against their participation. Up until this point (Block Two, Workshop Seven) there had been no mention of the video cameras, aside from the first workshop where I told the participants that there was one in the corner. Alana and Cadence, in this conversation discussed how they couldn't be themselves in front of the video camera because they had to "…watch what we say." Although Cadence and Alana seemed preoccupied with the presence of the video camera, it didn't seem to

bother anyone else, and when the video cameras were removed participation levels didn't appear to change. Alana and Cadence's preoccupation with the presence of the video camera could be understood through a power lens in terms of 'technological surveillance' (Monahan, 2009).

Throughout the research process Dawn remained an utterly enigmatic character. From her entrance into the workshops in Block One, Workshop Two, her participation appeared passive and superficial. She appeared to be doing the minimum amount required (Apple, 2012) and at times even less than this. Throughout the following fourteen workshops there was no occasion where I observed Dawn actively participating. There were occasions where Dawn passively participated and just about did what was asked. On these occasions she would physically isolate herself from the group (although at times only a step or two, or a desk away) and feign participation or else she would simply go and sit down on her own and doodle. This, however, is not to suggest that Dawn didn't have a relationship with her classmates. The reality was quite the contrary, Dawn seemed very close to Cadence, Bonquisha, and Alana. Dawn's minimal participation appeared to be dependant on who was around her. When she was not with Cadence, Alana, and Bonquisha, or anyone else was added to the group, Dawn point blank refused to participate. Dawn's constant disengagement led to an argument between us during a dance workshop, where she was negatively impacting others' engagement. Dawn did not retaliate against me and simply took a number of steps backwards, balanced herself against the wall and crossed her arms. In this instance, Dawn's response was to entirely disengage. In a show of solidarity with Dawn, Alana and Cadence repeated this gesture. After the workshop I spoke with Cadence and questioned her as to why she thought Dawn wouldn't participate in anything[33]. Cadence summarised Dawn's lack of participation saying "… she doesn't like drawing attention to herself, and participating means she's drawing attention to herself" (II4L106-108). Dawn's behaviour was not unique to the workshops however and a number of staff members,

[33] Any previous attempts to talk to Dawn had failed and she simply wouldn't respond to me.

during informal conversations and formal interviews, commented on how Dawn completely isolated herself from any activity that they were doing and even refused to participate in class. Dawn, however, never chose to withdraw from the workshops, despite having the opportunity to do so repeatedly.

Although participants did have the opportunity to withdraw from the workshops only three participants did (George during the first workshop and Tony and Greg mid way through Block Two). However, there were many occasions during workshops where participants refused to engage, sometimes for unknown reasons. During interviews and conversations with staff, all of them noted a culture amongst the students in the school, not just those involved in the workshops, to drop out of activities. All staff members expressed concern at this culture of non-participation and dropping out and seemed worried that students were cutting off opportunities presented to them and consequently limiting and not realising their potential by doing so. Although many staff members were entirely perplexed and could not give reasons for this phenomenon amongst students, Ms Culhane proffered that it was because the students couldn't see immediate benefit from what they were doing. She discussed how their tolerance for activities was already relatively low and if they couldn't see an immediate benefit from the activity then they deemed it not worthwhile continuing. This was something that I too noted during the workshops; if participants were not experiencing success on their terms then the tendency was to simply stop trying and give up. In contrast, Ms. Power offered her insight into the culture of students dropping out as their 'fear of the unknown.' She discussed how students in the school have very little experience in many of the things that 'average' children take for granted and that anything that they have not previously experienced is met with trepidation and angst, which results in their refusal to engage in activities or quickly results in their dropping out of the particular activities. Although participants' lack of success within some activities was noted as negatively impacting their participation, this was almost exclusively during the first number of workshops where I was still getting to know the participants. After this, I

readjusted my own expectations of what was to be achieved in each workshop and this seemed to provide participants with a positive experience of the activities, consequently motivating them to participate further.

Chapter Conclusion

The above discussions chart the unsettling of power relations that are implicit within a process that "…blurs the lines between pedagogy, research, and politics" (Dimitriadis, 2008, p.viii). Invoking understandings of power relations from the work of Michel Foucault (1977a; 1979), Michael Apple (2012), Lynch (1989), Drudy and Lynch (1993), among others, power relations between various stakeholders both external and internal have been discussed and how these impacted participation.

In assessing the power relations between Tony and me, my understanding is that Tony initially viewed me as an extension or representative of the vertical hierarchy and hegemonic educative system that is characterised by a lack of autonomy, ownership and decision-making (Rudduck and Flutter, 2010). His refusal to participate and indeed the power games that ensued appeared to be in response or as a rebellion to his viewing me as an advocate and instigator of this hegemony that engages qualities of the *banking model of education* (Freire, 1970, p.53-54). Ironically, in the refutation of his positioning as a passive subject within the broader educational sphere, Tony generated his own vertical hierarchy through which he dictated power relations with his peers and consequently perpetuated the cycle of inequality (Apple, 2012). These power relations, which manifested themselves verbally and physically, were also embodied in action and appeared to appease or lessen when relationships between Tony and me became more neutralised. Tony's engagement with power games never seemed to fully relax however, as he frequently 'checked himself' in terms of his participation and engagement and on occasion still engaged in power relations with me, both within the workshops and in the hallways of

the school, arguably as a means of maintaining credit and social relations amongst his peers (McLaren, 2009).

Contrastingly, Cadence's power relations were site specific in that they appeared to only be active within the workshops. In addition, her power struggles were almost exclusively between her and me, and rarely engaged other parties. Cadence's power struggles appeared to derive from her attitude and negative disposition towards the arts, which also appeared to be form-specific. This can be seen in the fact that Cadence instigated the establishment of a music club, set up to learn how to play guitar.

Power relations between school staff and me were perhaps representative of the current "ominous silence" (Giroux, 2009b, p.439) within public schooling that attempts to maintain the current social order and work against more democratic models of schooling. Some staff members also engaged various 'modes of surveillance' (Foucault, 1977a) as a means of exerting power. These various modes involved both the participants and me. Furthermore, some teachers' actions could be, as Giroux describes, a retreat from democracy that eliminates the citizenship function of education and "…reformulates educational goals along elitist lines" (2009b, p.440). Through their physical presence and surveillance, it could be argued that some teachers engaged in more subtle forms of power exertion. In contrast, Mr. O'Dowd attempted to coerce the participants and me into engaging with her own agenda through a manipulation of our relationship, consequently ignoring participants' earlier refutation and desires to not be involved in his project. These forms of power, which are frequently present within the current educational system, resonate with Taylor and Robinson's (2009) five modes through which power is exerted in schools; coercion, domination, manipulation, authority, and persuasion.

As well as discussing my positioning in the research at the outset, I also acknowledge that my positioning within power relations is also revealed in discussing power relations with other parties. In addition, I recognise that, at times, I was actively engaging in power struggles with participants in

attempting to persuade and motivate them to engage in certain activities within the workshops and research. Similarly, at times throughout the research it was necessary for me to assert my position/authority in order to try and create a more democratic working relationship with and between participants. An example of this can be seen in my intervening in Tony, Jason, and Pa's power relations with the rest of the group.

The relationship between participation and power can be seen in the above discussion, at times characterised by accord and on other occasions by conflict. Within the learning situation, the unsettling of power relations in a move towards the development of a more democratic classroom has the potential to positively impact participation. In contrast, when power struggles spill over into conflict, as seen between Tony and his peers, and Tony and me, this can result in negatively impacting upon participation.

Chapter 6

Student Voice, (Co-)construction, and Social Media

Expecting to have one's voice heard and opinion count is a learned skill, and years of suppression cannot be overcome easily, if at all.

(Packard, 2008, p.74)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: to further the contextual grounding of the research through continuing the narrative, specifically within the context of voice, co-construction, and social media; and to highlight the interrelated nature of power, participation, voice, and co-construction.

Structurally, the chapter is divided into three; student voice, co-construction and social media respectively. The first section, on student voice seeks to unpack the role that student voice occupied within the research process and, noting the polyvocality and multiple nature of voice (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009), to examine the various sites and means through which participants expressed their voices. Within this, the relationship between voice and pARTicipatory methods (PM) is discussed in detail. In terms of extending an understanding of power relations into this chapter, Flutter (2010, see also Mitra 2008) purports that the teacher/researcher must recognise that their facilitative role within the process, as well as the act of attempting to elicit voice, actively shapes the voice that is expressed. The influence of the researcher over the participants' voices is acknowledged not only throughout this chapter but also throughout the following chapters. The discussion then moves towards participants' understanding of their own voices within different settings; within the research, their school community, and externally. This then leads the discussion towards the participants' perceptions of voicelessness (Freire, 1970), and the lack of autonomy in their lives, as well as a brief discussion on the different types of silence encountered in the research. The first section then concludes with a discussion on the difficulties with student voice as encountered in the research.

The second section of this chapter is on co-construction. The separate sections, however, are not to suggest that co-construction operates in

isolation of voice. In contrast, eliciting participants' voices is a pre-requisite to attempting to engage them in co-construction (Kane *et al.*, 1998). Again implicit within this discussion on co-construction is power, in terms of the democratisation of the research process and participants' active decision-making (McIntyre, 2008). The discussion around co-construction is also concerned with how participants' understanding of our roles influenced their co-construction. Considering a more liberal understanding of co-construction, more nuanced ways in which participants co-constructed are then discussed.

The final section in this chapter, social media, draws on elements that have been discussed in the previous two sections. Offering a definition of social media, this section then attempts to unpack the role of social media (specifically *Facebook*) within the research process and elicits the potential benefits of including a social media platform for voice within research.

Student Voice

Revisiting understandings of student voice

Although student voice has been defined and discussed in detail in chapter two, it is necessary to briefly revisit the concept in an attempt to maximise clarity and understanding throughout this chapter. Student voice has been defined in a myriad of ways: as a means of understanding students' lived experience and narratives (Thorne, 2002; Devine, 2004; Leitch, 2008); as a form of generating individual agency (Fielding and Rudduck, 2002; Enright and O'Sullivan, 2010; Oliver, 2010; Smyth and McInerney, 2012); and consequently as a means of generating wider institutional reform (Fielding, 2001; Delgado, 2006; Mitra, 2007; 2008; Czerniawski and Kidd, 2011).

The dialogue between power relations and student voice can be seen in its orientation towards challenging the "…taken-for-granted assumptions about children and young people … [in an effort to provide them with] a more

active, and participative role in their learning and schools" (Flutter, 2010, p.16-17) and consequently "[get] things on the agenda that would otherwise be lost or marginalized" (Baker, 1999, p.370, see also Bragg, 2007). In attempting to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions, one must generate a safe space where students feel that their voice is heard and valued (Bragg, 2007; Mitra, 2008; Clark and Moss, 2011). The process thus involves a rethinking of the researcher-researched relationship, as previously discussed within a PAR context, and moves to a re-viewing of the participants as possessing exclusive insider knowledge and the capacity to provide expert testimony on their own lived experiences (Oliver, 2003; Smyth, 2007; Leitch, 2008; Bland, 2011).

Engaging student voice: The role of pARTicipatory methods

While the creation of a more democratic research relationship is understood as being a prerequisite to student voice, the relationship– in this research– became rather like 'the chicken and the egg'. Which came first? At the beginning of the research, the relationship between the participants and me was more in line with traditional models of teacher-student or researcher-researched and consequently power relations were readily enacted. As the participants began to engage with student voice and as I actively sought their opinion, understandings, and input, the relationship between us became more democratic. In this way, the elicitation of student voice appeared to serve as a tool through which more democratic relationships could be engaged. This, thus, appeared to facilitate "…better communication … [and consequently helped to] build common ground between group members" (Mitra, 2008, p.29). While the workshops served as this space for many, Tony appeared to require a more personal, one-to-one space where he could express his frustrations with the process in terms of content and also our relationship. The interview space, for Tony, thus appeared to provide a site of transformation. That is, a space where assumptions, beliefs, and actions undergo a process of change and "cognitive reshuffling" (Leahy and Gilly, 2009, p.25). Leahy and Gilly (2009) suggest that relationships between people constitute one of these spaces or sites of

transformation, through fostering a greater sense of communication, reflection, and consequently re-viewing. The dialogue that occurred within the interview space, between Tony and me, appeared to provoke us into acknowledging the others' perspective and consequently facilitated a re-viewing of the situation and our relationship. As detailed in chapter five, this interview signified a turning point in our relationship, towards more neutral power relations, which extended into the workshop space.

The terse dialogue in the interview space appeared to provoke Tony into eliciting his voice around his participation and power relations. Within the workshops, PM appeared to fulfil this function for other participants. Accepting Couldry's (2010) understanding of voice as a process of representing lived experience and Barone and Eisner's definition of the arts as "forms of representation" (2012, p.1), one can see, theoretically, how PM, and consequently the arts, have the potential to actively support the elicitation of voice. PM not only provided a form through which participants could elicit their voice but a space where they began detailing their narrativisation, interpretation and understanding of the their lived experience (Harrison, 2002; Galvaan, 2007; Taylor *et al.*, 2007).

This active inquiry through PM was observed in Block One, Workshop Three, when participants were asked to discuss their arts experience and engagement throughout their lives. Orally questioning participants on this presented a challenge for them as they seemed to find it difficult to articulate the instances of engagement, or lack there of. In contrast to these difficulties, Block One, Workshop Four, presented participants with the opportunity to represent this engagement visually through the creation of a timeline. Providing an alternative form of expression, in this instance visual, seemed to aid participants in articulating their voice. Furthermore, once participants had completed their timelines they were then confident in discussing their artistic experiences and engagement, or lack of experiences and engagement. In discussing their timelines the participants not only discussed them with each other but also actively engaged in photo-elicitation, eliciting their experience to the video camera. This photo-

elicitation not only included what was 'present' on their timeline but also what was 'absent'; information concerning what inspired their engagement, or similarly caused them to cease engaging. Engagement with PM consequently offered "…novel routes of knowing about other people's lives and experiences" (Pink, 2011, p.609).

PM also aided in the generation of multiple and alternative perspectives through participants' discussion and interpretation of others' work (Hoffman Davis, 2008). Through this, participants were not only facilitated to express their own voices, but they were also facilitated to *hear* other voices through their engagement with PM (video/peer diaries). In *The Art of Listening*, Les Back (2007) discusses the necessity for speaking and listening in order to develop a culture of voice. Within this, Back argues that in order to:

> …listen more carefully [… we must develop] an imaginative engagement with the social world, utilizing a range of media, verbal and non-verbal forms of representation.
>
> (Back, 2007, p.7)

Within the workshops, it appeared that PM were providing this 'imaginative engagement' for participants, which facilitated not only their expression of voice but also their listening to voice.

It could thus be argued that in engaging with PM, participants were creating spaces or sites for transformation, or more specific to this work, sites of voice articulation leading to transformation. This has resonances with Habermas' (1981) theory of *communicative action* in that these sites of voice articulation could be considered the communicative spaces required to realise a mutual understanding amongst parities and an unforced consensus about action. This does not imply that articulating one's voice inevitably leads to transformation. It does however suggest that reflecting on one's lived and imagined experience can potentially stimulate "…the articulation of multiple voices and positions, and, through [this] process, lay the foundations for empowerment" (Veale, 2005, p.254). Through the research,

three primary sites for voice articulation were identified. These were; the group space, the virtual space (*Facebook*), and the individual space.

During the research the virtual space and group space were more often than not concurrently engaged. That is, engagement with PM and the arts often led to informal discussions within and after the workshops that were frequently taken up on the *Facebook* page. The extension of these conversations to the *Facebook* page was necessary for participants' expression of their voice; so that conversations weren't stunted for a week or longer. The relationship between both was reciprocal and frequently conversations that were initiated on the *Facebook* page were carried into the workshop. Extending the dialogue between these spaces was, for me, another means through which relationships became more democratic as we began to straddle group and virtual spaces. The mediating between *Facebook* and the workshop space provided for a greater sense of shared dialogue and reflection, which Waller (2011) reports has a positive impact on both relationships and the promotion of student voice.

Focus groups also constituted the group space and they were included within the reciprocal relationship between group and virtual spaces. Similarly to the nature of focus groups, conversations on Facebook were collective and had many contributors. The group and virtual spaces, thus, became collective platforms where participants could voice their own opinions and contest and challenge others' voices and opinions. This consequently led to a space for collective reflection, problem-posing and problem-solving and appeared to help generate a sense of unity and "…build students' collective identity" (Mitra, 2008, p.25). This seemed to happen as participants began to assert, through dialogue and argument, that everyone was here to have their voices heard in relation to their school, the workshops, and their lives in general.

The third space in which participants articulated their voice was through private discussions/individual interviews with me. The private discussions at times served as a space where a participant and I could 'iron out' any

tensions between us– highlighting problems in the relationship as well as what was potentially good about it– and at other times simply provided a more private space where we could talk about the specifics of their work, how we were feeling or how we were finding the process. One of the seemingly most important aspects of this space was that participants were free from the ridicule of their peers. The privacy inherent in the individual interviews was evident in my conversation with George. Within the group space George refused to discuss why he wasn't participating. However, within the private space he was more open in discussing his reasons for not engaging. This was also observed in a conversation between Greg and me. As with George, Greg refused to discuss his disengagement when his peers were present but when they were removed from the setting he appeared comfortable enough to do so.

As well as contributing to data generation, the group, individual, and virtual spaces provided an insight into participants' experience, deepening my knowledge of their lived and imagined worlds and seemed to create an increased sense of understanding amongst us. While much of our work– dialogue and engagement with the arts– was concerned with participants' expression of their voice, discussions also emerged as to where participants felt inhibited to express their voices.

Participants' voices: 'No one listens'[34]

Initially, the discussion around participants not expressing themselves was instigated by me and stemmed from my personal frustrations around their unwillingness to verbally voice their opinions[35]. What emerged once participants began to discuss the reasons, was their sense that their voice wasn't valued (Devine, 2004; Grover, 2004). I had entirely underestimated

[34] The title of this section 'No one listens' is a quote from Jason (FGB2WiiL25)
[35] This does not imply that I only valued the oral or sonic expression of voice but I felt it important that this element of expression be discussed with the participants as this is the form of expression that is most recognized within wider society.

the extent to which participants felt their voices were oppressed and devalued.

At the start of Block Two I was frustrated that participants' were not expressing their voices. Throughout Block One, I had purposefully tried to elicit participants' voices but had little success. In doing this I attempted to engage participants' voices in a very artistic and fictionalised way. For example, in Block One, Workshop Two, I attempted to engage participants in discussion around their lived and imagined experience through collective drawing. This proved very difficult for participants as it not only required them to reveal parts of their lived experience to the group but also required them to engage their imagination in thinking about experiences they would like to have and represent this artistically. In hindsight, I feel my approach during Block One may have been flawed by creating too much of a fictional distance. Maxine Greene states that "…our transformative pedagogies must relate both to existing conditions and to something we are trying to do" (Greene, 1995, p.51). Reflecting on my actions in Block One, perhaps my fictional distance was too great and unrelated to participants' 'existing conditions' or experiences. Returning to the literature in the weeks between Block One and Two I revisited Michael Fielding's (2001) typology of student engagement and Adam Fletcher's (2005) ladder of student involvement, both of which are modelled on Hart's (1992) ladder of participation. Inspired by all three of these publications I devised a voice scale (a self-designed PM), which involved participants ranking how 'heard' they felt within specific contexts and by specific groups (Figure 9). The voice scale served as a tool for the evaluation of the areas of participants' lives within which they felt their voices were heard and unheard, and it offered participants a forum through which they could directly assess their voice (Couldry, 2010). When the voice scale was further engaged through video diaries, photo-elicitation, class discussion and a focus group, valuable insights emerged as to where participants' felt voiceless, why this was, and what action could be taken.

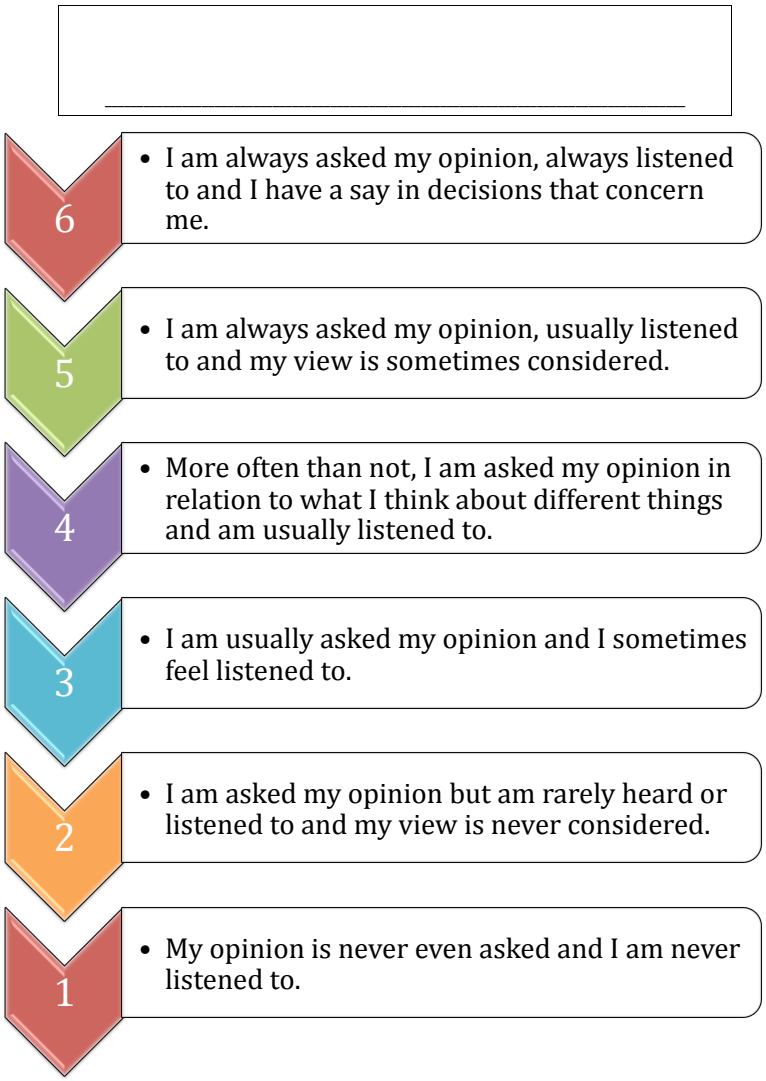


Figure 9 - Voice Scale

Before the workshop in which we used the voice scale, I was unsure how participants would respond to this very direct approach. Before engaging with the voice scale, I discussed my reasons for doing so with participants; to provide them with a method through which they could articulate groups, who they thought, valued their voice and identify those who did not. For me, this represented a shift in my thinking from engaging participants in more subtle ways to being more direct in my approach. The necessity for this more direct approach was commented upon by Ms Culhane, when she stated that she too had to come to the realisation that participants required a more upfront and direct approach in anything that they did.

> They need everything on the table really … you know, the issues. Sometimes we hedge around it [instead of being direct]. They don't get that here.
> (II6L515-522)

The discussions and focus group that were instigated as a result of using the voice scale illuminated this further and participants' voicelessness came to the fore. Voicelessness did not signify participants' lack of opinion but their subjugation by not having their opinions sought, recognised, or listened to. Arundhati Roy (2004) in her *Sydney Peace Prize Lecture* commented that "…there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheared." It appeared that many participants had been voiceless throughout the majority of their lives and as a result were accepting of and resigned to this state. Freire states that "…gradually, without even realizing the loss, [man] relinquishes his capacity for choice; he is expelled from the orbit of decisions" (1974, p.5). Participants' acknowledgement and apparent resignation to their voicelessness militated against any desire to "…intervene in reality in order to change it" (Freire, 1974, p.4). Or as Maxine Greene views it, an inability to imagine a different and better world "…can give rise to a resignation that paralyzes and prevents people from acting to bring about change" (1995, p.19). In light of Greene's comment, it can be argued that participants' inability to imagine an alternative to their situation led them to their state of resignation.

Participants' sense of voicelessness was most astutely articulated throughout a focus group during Block Two, Workshop Two, when they mentioned their lack of voice and voicelessness explicitly:

> Jason: No one listens.
> Anna: No one'll pay attention.
> (FGB2WiiL25-27)

Participants' acceptance and resignation of their voicelessness was repeatedly expressed and throughout the focus group participants stated that they didn't care about being voiceless.

> Dylan: I just don't really care (FGB2WiiL186)
> Tony: I duno man I duno like, I don't give a fuck if they don't

listen. I don't care. Couldn't be bothered.
(FGB2WiiL238-239)
Greg: The same as Tony, I don't give a fuck.
(FGB2WiiL250)
Dylan: I don't care.
Richie: Why don't you care?
Tony: Because it's just school.
Dylan: People don't listen ordinarily and that's their problem and I don't care whether they choose to or not.
(FGB2WiiL322-329)
Greg: (Responding to whether he feels people listen or not) I don't know if they do. I don't care if they do or not.
(FGB2WiiL345)

Participants' body language and tone during this conversation suggested that they did, in fact, care about what others thought but could apparently see no alternative. Participants reaffirmed this observation later in the focus group when they stated that attempts to change anything were futile; nothing was ever going to change, so why bother.

Throughout the focus group there appeared to be a great deal of aggression and anger aimed towards the groups that participants' felt didn't listen to their voices. This focus group, informal discussions afterwards and subsequent discussions and focus groups identified three sites that participants deemed as oppressing their voices. These sites were; school, home, and their community. Participants detailed, within each site, the parties that contributed to their disenfranchisement and the extent to which each of these were active. The various groups that were seen as generating this sense of disenfranchisement were; teachers, parents, peers, participants themselves, community groups, and me. Naturally, power was at the heart of many of these relationships. At this point, I feel it important to note the primary reasons for the disenfranchisement of student voice that were offered in chapter two; students voices hold little value (Devine, 2004; Grover, 2004), the generation of student voice holds the potential threat of generating different types of knowledge (Kincheloe, 2007), and self/community imposed disenfranchisement (McWilliam *et al.*, 2009).

Within the school community the participants named their teachers as the primary oppressors of their voices. They reaffirmed Rudduck and Flutter's

(2010) assertion that schools offer less autonomy and responsibility to students. Participants' voice scales documented the extent to which, from their perspective, teachers never sought or listened to their opinion. Reasons for this were centred on an understanding that teachers thought they knew what was best for the participants, held little regard or value in what they had to say and held a negative view of some of the participants.

> Pa: They hate people from Moyross
> Richie: I doubt that. If they hated people from Moyross they wouldn't teach in this school. No?
> Tony: That's where half d' school is from.
> Pa: Oi, Oi (demanding attention). D'you know what [teacher's name] said yesterday? Unfortunately she was left with me and Tony in the class. She can't throw us out. Unfortunately she has to keep us like …
> Tony: Ya. Ya.
> Richie: Why do you think she said that though?
> Pa: (whispering) 'cuz she's a cheeky cunt.
> (FGB2WiiL95-110)

> Richie: Why don't the teachers listen?
> Greg: 'cuz they're cheeky cunts.
> Tony: (shouting) 'cuz they're teachers and they think they know everything, but we don't. 'Cuz we're students, getting teached by 'em.
> Lily: Because they think that our answers are stupid and immature.
> John: They're ignorant fucks.
> Conor: What he said (indicating agreement with John).
> (FGB2WiiL282-291)

> Cadence: (Talking about a teacher) She wouldn't listen to no one.
> Bonquisha: Like, when you're trying to talk to her about one thing, she'll turn around and talk to you about [what she wants] and she won't hear a word you're saying. She'll only hear herself and what she wants and then continue from there completely ignoring you.
> Tony: I'll box the face off her. She's a cheeky cunt.[36]
> (FGB2WiiL463-469)

These excerpts briefly detail participants' interpretations as to why their voices weren't valued; because they were viewed as immature and not capable of making decisions about their learning and the perception that adults know what is best (Devine, 2004; Grover, 2004). The aggression

[36] It is noteworthy that while, out of context, Tony's comments appear to be of a threatening and violent nature, this language was common place and colloquial and did not signify any threat of violence and was very much in keeping with the tenor of many conversations.

inherent within these abstracts, voiced mainly by the males in the class, was not only identifiable by what they said but also through their body language, tone, and gestures. Up until this point in the conversation participants had mainly adhered to my request to tailor their language. In discussing their voicelessness, however, they appeared to be so enraged that they used whatever language, for them, most aptly described what they wanted to convey. This has resonances with Greene when she states that students "…will come to feel anger at being locked into an objective set of circumstances defined by others" (1995, p.124).

An interview with Ms. Power appeared to reiterate what the participants understood as adults' perspective that they know what's best. Ms. Power noted that one of the primary benefits of TY was that it kept students in school for an extra year. In discussing whether TY should be made mandatory for students, she commented that if it wasn't to be made mandatory, the decision should be made for students, at a stage in their life when they're too young to refute.

> I suppose in a lot of cases, where the decision has to be made is preschool, where [students] don't start until they're of the age, or alternatively that they stay back in primary school at a particular stage before they get to the stage where they have a choice themselves. And I suppose it's better to take that choice away from the child really, you know?
>
> (II5L52-56)

From this discussion, it appeared that Ms. Power's perspective was that students were not in a position to make informed decisions regarding their life and that decisions should, consequently, be made for them.

In addition to Ms. Power's understanding that the choice to stay back or enrol in TY should not be the participants, as detailed in chapter five, participants' wishes were ignored by some teachers when they attempted to leave the workshops. In this way, their very presence in the workshop was an example of how their voices were being ignored.

> Greg: We're in here because we didn't wanna listen to [teacher's name] roarin' at us 'n sendin' us home.
>
> (FGB2WiiL528-529)

As also discussed in chapter five, Cadence said that, for her, I was one of the primary oppressors of her voice. Through discussions with Cadence, both public and private, it appeared that she viewed my attempts to motivate her to participate as pressure to engage and that by doing so I wasn't listening to her voice. Interjecting, Alana also stated that, in relation to dance, she felt I had added to the disenfranchisement of her voice, as she had previously stated that she didn't want to engage in dance.

> Richie: Did anyone feel not listened to?
> Cadence: Ya.
> Richie: When?
> Cadence: When we told you that we didn't want to do drama
> Alana: or dance
> Cadence: I felt very unlistened to there!
> (FGB3WivL951-961)

> Cadence: Because we said we didn't want to do drama and then we did drama.
> (FGB3WivL512)

Extending their voicelessness to their homes, participants noted how their parents actively ignored their voices. When asked why their parents didn't listen to them, Tony stated how his mother always takes everyone else's side in an argument. He also specifically detailed how she puts too much trust in what teachers say, refusing to listen to his perspective or voice.

> Tony: 'cuz you know if I was out and got blamed for breaking a window and the person comes out and my mother'd always go for their side. It's the same in school. Jesus, the teachers are slow. That's the way it is like. If [anyone] calls her she believes [them].
> Richie: And is it that she expects you to be messing and she expects you to be in trouble?
> Tony: Na. She expects teachers to tell the truth.
> (FGB2WiiL73-81)

It appeared that Tony's mother held older and more authorative voices to be more 'truthful'. Anna added to this by stating that her parents "… think they know more and that you're better off (implying that they know what's best for you). They don't care" (FGB2WiiL60-61). These perspectives again have resonance with Grover (2004) and Devine's (2004) assertion that young people's voices are not listened to because they are perceived as holding little value. It is note-worthy that, in contrast to Anna and Tony's

perspective, some participants stated that they were always listened to at home and that their parents always tried to hear what they were saying, even if they didn't always understand. Mitra (2008) notes how these varied experiences have the capacity, within voice research, to generate a more solid vision of what participants hope to achieve and can create a sense of unity amongst participants.

Moving into the wider community, some participants discussed how they felt community groups oppressed their voice by providing rules that you had to adhere by. Many weren't involved in community groups and so the rules of community groups didn't seem to concern them. It was, however, a factor for George. In an individual interview George spoke of how he would like to be involved in the workshops but was restricted because of his involvement with his community-based dance troupe. He appeared to suggest that there were unwritten rules within the dance troupe that one could not participate in other arts projects. It is arguable then that George's voice was being silenced by these unwritten rules within his dance troop.

> George: No, like, I wouldn't do arts or nattin' outside my dance school.
> (II2L38)

> George: No disrespect or anything but just have, like, I stick by my school. I've been there for ... like ... first when I started dancing I was in so many shows, I got asked to do music videos and I turned 'em all down 'cuz I wouldn't do anytin' outside my dance school. The only time I would ... if I left my dance school in the mornin' I would do [the workshops]. But 'cuz I'm dancin' I won't do nattin'. And I'm in a team as well, so I'll stick by my team. Stick by my school.
> (II2L115-120)

Ms. Moynihan and Ms. Culhane, on a number of occasions, commented on how George's involvement with his dance troupe and their unwritten rules affected more than his participation in the workshops, as George opted out of all arts-related activities within the TY programme.

Revisiting Freire's (1974) assertion that groups can relinquish their capacity for voice without realising the loss, it seemed that participants had come to adopt the understanding that their voice held little value.

> Jason: If they do [listen], I come up with pure stupid suggestions anyway.
> Richie: Why do you call them 'pure stupid suggestions'?
> Tony: 'Cuz he's a stupid person.
> Jason: (In agreement) and that's it too!
> (FGB2WiiL29-35)

> Lily: they might think your opinion is stupid.
> (FGB2WiiL42)

> Conor: They think I've only somethin' stupid to say.
> (FGB2WiiL439)

It could be argued that participants' devaluing of their own and each others' voices served to perpetuate the cycle of disenfranchisement in becoming "…accomplices to their own subjugation" (Benjamin, 1977, cited in Giroux, 2009, p.42). This, Marker (2009) discusses has the potential to lead to a state where whole communities become disenfranchised as a result of adopting the understanding that their voices are of little value.

Other reasons offered by participants for the disenfranchisement of their voices were in relation to their age, socioeconomic status and background and how they were viewed differently, prejudiced against, and oppressed because of this. As a result of these factors, participants perceived themselves as being at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, as well as the bottom of the ladder in terms of being listened to.

> Tony: Probably where you're from like.
> Pa: They probably don't like ya.
> Lily: They think they're better than you.
> Conor: Ya, they think they're better than you.
> Pa: Your background.
> Richie: Well, first of all, how do they know where you're from? If you meet someone on the street?
> Pa: (sarcastically) 'Cuz you have it tattooed on your hand
> (laughter)
> Anna: Probably by the way you talk.
> (FGB2WiiL122-137)

Turning the focus to her own sense of disenfranchisement, Cadence stated how she was one of the contributory factors to the oppression of her own

voice because "I don't put my point across well. So, like, they don't know what I'm saying" (FGB2WiiL155-166).

Despite all of these factors, participants perceived that they should be listened to because they were attempting to articulate what was important to them.

> Alana: In case I've something important to say.
> (FGB2WiiL216)
> Pa: 'Cuz I'm interesting. (FGB2WiiL243)
> Conor: In case you have something good to say.
> Greg: I always have something good to say.
> Richie: Bonquisha?
> Bonquisha: I don't know. If I'm giving my opinion then obviously I'm saying something that I think is important.
> (FGB2WiiL256-263)

The extent to which participants' voices were disenfranchised was exemplified when they were asked to recall an example of any time in their life when they felt listened to or heard. Despite giving participants a number of minutes to think of a time, only Tony was able to articulate an example:

> Tony: People listened to me last Thursday at the You'[th]Bank[37] meeting. You'[th]Bank, you know for young people saving money. That yoke! People listened to me.
> Richie: Alright. Why did they listen to you?
> Tony: 'cuz it was my turn to talk.
> **Laughter from the other participants**
> Richie: Did you think you had something good to say?
> Tony: Ya, it was about raising money. That yoke.
> Richie: How did it feel? That people listened to you?
> Tony: Pretty good.
> **silence from the rest of the group followed by nervous laughter from Tony**
> Tony: They did though. They did, really (directed at his classmates to convince them).
> (FGB2WiiL399-421)

Although Tony was the only person who put forward an example of when he felt listened to, it appeared that he understood that he had to convince the other participants that it had actually occurred.

[37] The school had set up a student savings programme with the local credit union.

The very act of attempting to elicit participants' voices, it could be suggested, provoked participants to evaluate their disenfranchisement and served as the starting block from which empowerment through voice could begin. Furthermore, one could argue that in attempting to elicit participants' voices, I too was recognising participants' disenfranchisement as well as the value inherent in their voices, and concurrently attempting to cultivate an atmosphere of trust and care, which Smyth (2007) and McWilliam et al. (2009) argue is a necessary component for elicitation in voice research.

Interpreting silent voices

As previously discussed, voicelesness refers to a state of oppression where power is exerted through a devaluing of one's voice, a refutation to listen to that voice, or simply not seeking one's voice. Voicelessness consequently is concerned with the disenfranchisement and subjugation of voice. In contrast, listening to silence "…give[s] preference to what has been subjugated" (Mazzei, 2004, p.27) and in doing so one is attempting to elicit aspects of voice, narrative, and story that are yet untold (Mazzei, 2007). Silence in student voice, thus, should be understood not as representative of 'nothingness' but instead conceived as "silent speech" (Mazzei, 2007, p.1), which is "productive of meaning" (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009, p.4). That is, not as "…absence, lack, or omission, but as positive, strategic, purposeful, and *meaning-full"* (Mazzei, 2007, p.29, emphasis in original). In this way, silence within the research, when interrogated, revealed its meaning-full and purpose-full nature.

As outlined in chapter two, Lisa Mazzei (2004) divides silence into three categories; purposeful silence, intentional silence, and silences that are meaningful. The example above, in relation to participants' difficulty in naming times in their lives where they felt heard and listened to, could be considered an example of a meaningful/meaning-full silence. Looking beneath the veil of this silence, as Mazzei (2004) terms it, potentially reveals the extent to which participants' voices are disenfranchised.

Furthermore, upon first meeting Tony, it could be argued that he engaged a purposeful silence. Although he was loud and outspoken initially, after his final refutation (his physical move towards me) Tony returned to his seat and remained quiet for the remaining two to three minutes I was in the space. Unveiling this silence, one could argue that Tony's objections towards the research and me were contained in this silence as, having conveyed his perspective, he chose not to speak and engage with me any further. This could indicate that Tony's silence was purposeful in its communication that he was in control in choosing not to speak to me. It could also be suggested that at the start of the individual interview with him, Tony engaged in purposeful silence by not directly answering the questions I had asked but deflected them (Mazzei, 2004).

Mazzei's understanding of intentional silence is that it seeks to avoid "…exposing what is beneath the veil" (2004, p.30). Intentional silence was perhaps most evident in Dawn's relationship with most of the participants and me. Dawn refused to speak to those outside of her social grouping and rarely spoke to me. In explaining this silence Cadence proffered that Dawn didn't want to draw attention to herself and speaking and engaging was a way of drawing attention to herself and potentially opening herself up to questions and ridicule from others. In this way, Dawn's intentional silence appeared to be a protective shield that she could engage. Ms. Culhane also commented on participants' silence, which appeared to also be an intentional silence. Ms. Culhane commented that the participants "…see [the workshops] as very much their own space and time" (II6L344). She viewed this as a positive thing and noted that it was important for the participants to have this space that they could consider theirs. Questioning the participants as to this silence, they detailed how it was an intentional silence, in that they didn't want the teachers looking beneath the veil to the workshops because it was their space, where they were free from the everyday demands and politics of school life. Commenting on this, Bonquisha described it as having a sense of "…freedom in [the workshops] because it was a space where we could voice our opinions whenever we wanted, as long as we listened to others" (Sp7L15-17).

This understanding of participants' intentional silence could be extended to their silence when teachers entered the workshops space. As detailed in chapter five, Alana stated "[he] can't come in here. This is our space" in response to a teacher's presence. Furthermore, while teachers were in the workshop space, the participants were extremely quiet, to the point of refusing to answer questions that they were asked. The silence that accompanied the teachers' presence in the workshops could be considered an intentional silence or a purposeful silence, in participants' objection to their. This silence could also be classified as *induced silence*, as teachers' presence in the workshop space appeared to induce a state of silence amongst the participants any time that she entered the space. Broadening understandings of silence to include this induced silence, one could view silences in the workshop when Tony was present as induced silences also. For some of the workshops that Tony was present, some participants didn't speak at all, even when I directly asked them questions. This silence, as elaborated by participants in later workshops, was as a result of not wanting to be ridiculed or bullied by Tony. This induced silence shares many similarities with each of Mazzei's classifications of silence. It is uniquely different, however, in that the silence is being induced by someone other than the person engaging in the silence, which is in contrast to other classifications of silence which are self directed or self imposed.

Throughout all stages of the research I attempted to attend to silences in an effort to "…hear the multiple layers of meaning present in the conversations" (Mazzei, 2004, p.31). Thus, while specific instances of silence and how they were engaged and interpreted have been discussed here, other interrogations of silence within the research are both explicit and implicit within the chapters of this thesis.

Difficulties with voice

Interpreting students' silence is one of the inherent difficulties with voice (Mazzei, 2004; Lather, 2009). However, exposure to these silences as well as the various opportunities that participants and staff afforded me to question and interrogate these silences helped to generate a deeper sense of meaning-fullness from them. Revising the transcripts and action of the workshops on a weekly basis afforded me the opportunity to recognize some of the silences, which I could then interrogate with the participants or staff to try and excavate meaning from them.

As well as the difficulties inherent in interpreting silences within voice, there were a number of other difficulties, in relation to voice. These difficulties were related to; respecting contrasting voices within the workshops, the time pressures associated with eliciting student voice, minimizing peer oppression while remaining respectful of all voices, and the difficulties encountered with respecting and challenging voices.

Addressing Tony's domination over his peers and attempting to respect his voice was one instance where a difficulty arose in relation to voice. In the private space, we appeared to be able to reach a more democratic conclusion which appeared to lesson Tony's domination over others. This, however, was not always successful with other participants. During Block Two, Workshop One, Pa actively oppressed his peers through refusing them access to workshop resources (participants were using chime-bars and percussion sets to compose a soundtrack to their work-experience placement). Pa assumed ownership over the instruments and, turning his back to the rest of the group, refused to allow anyone else to use them. Talking to Pa and highlighting to him how he was negatively impacting his group appeared to aggravate him and cause him to become irate. Not wanting to engage in further confrontation I asked Pa to leave the space and return to class. Refusing to do so, Pa continued to play with the instruments. After asking him a number of times to leave the space, Pa got up, violently grabbed his school bag, threw open the door and screaming "fuck you all" slammed the door and went back to class. Respecting Pa's

voice in this instance proved difficult due to the confrontational nature that he presented. Having analysed my options at that point, I decided that removing Pa from the space seemed to be the most sensible thing.

Attempting to acknowledge and respect contrasting voices also emerged as a difficulty. For example, in eliciting art forms that we would and would not like to engage with; some participants stated that they would like to try dance, while others stated that they did not want a workshop on dance. This raised two difficulties within this particular project (i) how to respect contrasting voices and (ii) the negotiation between respecting and challenging voices. These two factors are heavily linked. Grounded in an understanding that participants' negative attitude towards the arts may be as a result of previous negative experience or a lack of experience, the PAR process sought to challenge participants to engage in varying art forms and broaden their horizons. A group discussion between Cadence, Alana, Bonquisha and me highlights this tension. To contextualise the discussion, Alana and Bonquisha were talking about their desire to engage a variety of art forms, specifically drama, dance, visual art, and music. Cadence, on the other hand, stated her dislike of drama and dance and her unwillingness to participate within these art forms.

> Bonquisha: Ya, I'd like to do film and drama and music and them things.
> Richie: To do drama?
> Alana: Ya, like!
> Richie: I would love to do drama with you guys.
> Cadence: Drama is so bad.
> Alana: No, it can be good and funny.
> (FGB2WiiL804-813)

> Richie: … and what about dance?
> Cadence: No!
> Richie: Why not?
> Cadence: Because I have the coordination of a stroke victim.
> (FGB2WiiL930-936)

Despite her closed attitude towards drama and dance, Cadence acknowledged other participants' desires to be involved in these art forms, or at least to try them out. While this was a successful mediation in terms

of respecting and challenging Cadence's voice, her interpretation of 'trying out the art forms' was limited as Cadence dropped out of workshops after a few minutes saying "I don't like moving around and stuff … it's ridiculous" (II4L10) and "I don't like it. I didn't like it when I was a child either" (II4L26). After some discussion around this Cadence acknowledged "I said I'd be willing to try dance and then I didn't" (II4L63), recognising her own lack of openness towards the art forms and admitting that "[t]here's nothing you could've done, like. It's just not something that's going to be done" (II4L91). Within this, the negotiation between challenging and respecting Cadence's voice was unsuccessful as far as she was concerned, viewing my efforts to challenge her as my active ignoring of her voice.

In other instances, the negotiation between listening to and challenging participants' voices was successful, with participants initially stating that they didn't like the arts, but after the series of workshops admitting that they enjoyed themselves and had a different perspective of the arts now.[38] This, in essence, is the transformative potential of PAR, the arts, and student voice, challenging participants to reflect, re-think and re-view their attitudes and engagement (Tandon, 1988; Barone, 1995; Greene, 1995; Fielding, 2004; Bragg, 2007; Fine, 2007a; McIntyre, 2008).

In addition to my own struggles with negotiating listening and challenging, during an interview with Ms. Culhane she too discussed the difficulties that she encountered in terms of participants' requests for activities and their lack of participation when provided with the opportunities to engage.

[38] Participants' attitudes towards the arts will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Co-Construction

Co-construction between the researcher and participants is a vital tenet of the PAR framework (Rahman, 1993; McTaggart, 1997; Dittmar, 2008). Acknowledging this, this section attempts to present the flexible understanding of co-construction that was embedded throughout this research.

What I expected

At the outset of the research my understanding of how I would co-construct the workshops with participants, was in terms of participants co-planning workshops with me, and taking full responsibility for planning small activities within workshops. This intention stemmed from the understanding that "…when people own a place they look after it. When it belongs to someone else, they couldn't care less" (Graves, 1983, p.23), or perhaps as Taylor (1998, p.48) more eloquently states, "[s]tudents are likely to have a greater investment in the activity if they are the source of its construction." I, thus, envisioned the participants as "active accomplice[s]" (Taylor, 2000, p.51) within the generation of the workshops. This very direct sense of co-construction is in line with Fielding's (2001) 'students as researchers', as well as much of the PAR literature (Brown *et al.*, 2002; Castellanet and Jordan, 2002; Delgado, 2006; Fine, 2007a), which seeks to provide a greater sense of autonomy to participants. This, however, proved difficult. I do not view this entirely as a comment on the research project but more of a commentary on the education system and its structures. In an autocratic and hierarchical educative system that perpetuates inequality and rewards compliance and passivity (Lynch, 1989; Apple, 2012) it appeared that the implementation of co-construction was a leap that participants were unwilling or unable to make. Co-construction within the project was, thus, a lot less than I hoped it to be.

Problems with co-construction

Distraught, frustrated, perplexed and deflated, the reality forced me to reconsider my understanding of co-construction, which brought it more in line with my nuanced understanding of voice and the meaning-full spaces that exist in dialogue and silence. In light of this, I now consider co-construction to have been a success, however it involved quite a journey.

Requests to get participants to formally co-construct the research workshops were met with a purposeful silence, as participants avoided the request either through their silence or in changing the subject or proposing other questions to talk about (Mazzei, 2004). Initially, I interpreted participants' silence to be representative of their lack of knowledge and confidence around co-construction. However, in later workshops, participants informed me that this silence was in fact their unwillingness and resistance towards co-constructing. The reasons attributed for participants' unwillingness to co-construct were their learned passivity and their desire to just see what happened or 'wing it':

> Bonquisha: I think we just don't like planning. I think we just like winging it
> Anna: Planning is hard work. We're lazy.
> (FGB3WivL989&995)

In evaluating participants' resistances towards co-construction, four identifiable themes emerged: participants did not see it as their role; it was too much work to plan; they sought to take the easiest route; their learned passivity prevented them from actively co-constructing; and the participants felt that their co-construction wouldn't be worthwhile due to their lack of experience with the arts.

In the final workshop I asked participants why they were unwilling to co-construct. This led them to individually evaluating our roles within the process and was reported through video diaries. Participants viewed my role as that of director, to use a theatrical term, whose responsibility was to plan and direct the workshops. Using a term borrowed from Augusto Boal (1974; 1995), participants saw themselves as 'spect-actors'. As spect-actors,

participants' role was divided between participating (acting) and viewing, observing and analysing the activities that were going on (spectators). There was, thus, a clear divide in terms of our rights and responsibilities. Participants' refusal to co-construct and their perpetuation of these roles, in keeping with the stereotypical student-teacher relationship did not give us the basis through which inequality could be addressed (Apple, 2012) and ran contrary to our attempts to problem-pose (Kindon *et al.*, 2007; Full, 2011).

> Conor: Richie's roles were, making the activities, having fun and keeping everyone participating. My roles were having fun and participating.
> (VD3L1-2)

There was crossover however, as some participants stated that one characteristic of my role was to join in and be involved in activities as much as participants. Anna also commented that part of my role within the process was to get to know the participants, understand them, and trust them to do things their own way at times.

> Extract taken from Anna's video diary
>
> Richie's [roles] I think, were to get us to join in. To join in as much as possible. To show up, that's pretty much important for everybody. To make things interesting enough because we tend to get bored very easily and distracted. To understand students, there are some things that we don't like and others that we do. At times let the students do things their own way so that they are comfortable. Where as if you prescribe it yourself, some people don't like doing certain things for certain reasons and that's important.
> And then me: Show up – ya I do that every day. Pay attention, because I am distracted very easily. Be polite, as much as possible … Join in in activities as much as possible and to have fun. That's basically it.
> (VD1L2-14)

In contrast to Anna's more inclusive view, Lilly viewed me more as a motivator and director, although she discussed overlap between our roles as we both became spect-actors at different stages. Similar to Anna, who discussed the necessity of my role in getting to know the participants and give them the freedom they required, Lily commented on how part of my

role was to elicit things from the participants and to get them to move outside of their comfort zone:

> Am, [Richie] asked us to come out of ourselves and I felt as though I did, which I thank you for.
>
> (VD2L4-5)

Despite having asked participants to co-construct with me a number of times, none of them made reference to their role including any element of planning or co-construction.

There is a clear link between participants' laziness and their typical experiences of 'winging it'.

> Richie: A number of times throughout the workshops I tried to get you guys to plan with me and I tried to get you guys to help me shape the workshops but it didn't quite work. How could we have made that work?
> (Prolonged Silence)
> Bonquisha: I think we just don't like planning. I think we just like winging it!
> (Laughter)
> Richie: That's fair enough. Ya.
> Anna: Planning is hard work. We're lazy! . . .
> Bonquisha: If you yelled at us we probably would've co-planned some of them.
> Richie: That's fair enough but would ye have actually planned or would ye have just sat there and huffed because I'd shouted at ye?
> Anna: We'd get into an argument.
> John: Probably both.
>
> (FGB3WivL983–1010)

Participants' laziness can be better understood as passivity. Participants stated that any attempt to get them to co-construct was a 'catch twenty two'. Thus, they were reproducing the inequalities of the education system that they were engaged in. In probing their resistance, participants pointed out that throughout the school day they were rarely involved in decision-making and simply did what they were told. This apparent passivity in their everyday school life led them to seemingly believing that all aspects of education involved this passivity and consequently they shouldn't have to co-construct or co-plan. Participants' understanding of their role as passive recipients has resonances with Freire's (1970) *banking model of education*.

Their perspective appeared to be that challenging the hierarchical structures was futile, which resonates with their sense of voicelessness.

Writing about aesthetic education, Bundy argues that in generating a connection with the 'idea' or essence of the work, trust is required. This trust, she argues, extends to:

> [t]he workshop leader; the group process; the physical, emotional and intellectual responses of other participants; their membership and status in the group; the appropriateness of their own responses; their image/perception of themselves; and the disclosure of the private self in the public sphere.
>
> (Bundy, 2003, p.179)

This trust undoubtedly takes extended time to build up and the reality that Phase Three of the research was sixteen workshops (25 hours) in duration has to be taken into consideration. Perhaps, for participants, the short time spent together and the power struggles that existed were not conducive to the building of this trust.

Reconstructing co-construction: Towards collaboration

Reconceiving co-construction required a re-examination of what I was attempting to do, but in line with what participants were willing to contribute. Rojas-Drummond, Allbarrán and Littleton's (2008) understanding of collaboration is that it includes, oracy, literacy and uses of ICT. They, thus, conceive it as collaborative creativity that employs a variety of artistic forms, dialogue, and the appropriation of diverse cultural artefacts. This understanding of collaboration is not only broader and all-encompassing, but it also speaks more to the multi-modal nature of the workshops and the variety of means through which participants could collaborate and influence the shape of the workshops. In this understanding of collaboration, participants primarily shaped the workshops through their dialogue and participation in the workshops, through *Facebook,* and through their engagement with the arts.

Participants, thus, engaged in collaboration through their participation but also through their refusal to engage with some workshops and art forms, and also through dialogue, all of which actively shaped future workshops. For example, participants' disengagement in an activity in Block One that required them to discuss their emotions and feelings shaped my planning of similar activities in subsequent workshops. In this, I responded by providing participants with an alternative means through which they could engage feelings and emotions, notably through the arts. Expressing their emotions through a visual and musical activity provided participants with an entry point for them to begin discussing their feelings and emotions.

PM also served to inform the shape of the workshops. For example, through her photo-diary Bonquisha not only engaged in capturing the arts in her life but also the arts that she wished were in her life and would like to engage in. This shows the communicative potential of PM and their ability to inform the PAR process. Another example is participants' construction of timelines, which led to a discussion of their previous experiences of the arts and actively helped me to plan some of the workshops in terms of challenging their negative attitude and experience with certain art forms.

Through their engagement with the *Facebook* page, participants also communicated various aspects of the arts that they would like to engage with. Users on social media sites, such as *Facebook*, represent themselves digitally "[u]sing text, images, video, audio, links, quizzes, and surveys" (boyd, 2007, p.1). By digitally representing and expressing themselves participants were generating an online profile and identity (boyd, 2007; boyd and Ellison, 2007), much of which was related to the arts. Consequently, arts-related videos, images and audio shared by participants on *Facebook* instigated discussions around the arts and informed the direction of some of the workshops. At frequent intervals participants inquired as to what we were doing that week in the workshops. Through *Facebook* I was thus able to tell them what activities were planned and get their feedback on these, which enabled me to edit my plans or remove or insert activities as appropriate.

In contrast to the model of collaboration that Rojas-Drummond, Allbarrán and Littleton (2008) details, within this project the responsibility of planning lay with me as opposed to being shared. Participants were, thus, further perpetuating inequality by actively refusing to co-construct. They were rendering themselves more passive than the situation allowed for.

Social Media

Social media and social networking sites are becoming more commonly engaged within educational research, in a variety of ways, from primary to third level education (Waller, 2010; Davis and Yin, 2011) and are defined as:

> …web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the same system.
>
> (boyd and Ellison, 2007, p.211)

Social networking sites include *MySpace*, *Facebook*, *Bebo*, *Cyworld*, and *Twitter* (boyd, 2007; boyd and Ellison, 2007). Within this research *Facebook* was chosen as the social media platform because, as Alana stated, "…we all practically live on it" (FGB4WivL784). In addition, *Facebook* had the capacity to privatise a chosen page/profile so that only persons accepted to the page could see content that had been added. Furthermore, Facebook facilitated immediacy of publication (Davies, 2006, cited in Waller, 2011) when participants were added to the page, as posts would arrive on their 'newsfeed' instantaneously.

In addition to *Facebook* providing one of the means of participants' co-construction, it served a number of other functions within the research also. Namely, it bridged an understanding of the participants' language; helped to build relationships with participants; provided an e-platform where research materials and data could be shared amongst the group; served as a practical means of communication in relation to updating

everyone on the practicalities of the workshops (when they were on etc.); and created a connection and flow between workshops.

Within PAR, Fals-Borda (2001, p.28) notes the necessity to discard:

> …our learned jargon so as to communicate with everyday language even with plurivocal means [when] doing research work with collectivities and local groups so as to lay sound foundations for their empowerment.

Acknowledging the necessity to abandon more technical and high brow language, Finley argues for an understanding of "vernacular language" (2008, p.74), particularly within arts-based research that is oriented towards social justice. Similarly, within the context of student voice, Mitra comments on the necessity for a "common language" (2008, p.23) between teachers and students as a means of enabling a shared knowledge base from which the respective parties can communicate. Waller (2011, p.101) argues that social media platforms provide a means through which student voice can be harnessed and enhance learning through shared dialogue. In this way, *Facebook* provided a platform where the participants and me could develop a common language and engage in a shared dialogue. This meant that I had to abandon much of my learned jargon in favour of a more colloquial, vernacular, and everyday language.

This process not only required me to favour the everyday word but also demanded that I acquire a new vocabulary through which the participants and me could communicate. This can be described as language acquisition. Waller (2011, p.101) discusses the potential of social media sites to make "…children feel comfortable at experimenting with language." In this context, the social media platform also provided me with a space where I could feel comfortable experimenting with and acquiring a shared language. My language acquisition began the first day that participants joined the *Facebook* page and continued throughout the research process.

> Richie: ftw? Is that ANOTHER one I have to learn?
> Bonquisha: For The Win … Jeeze Richie you're gonna have to brush up on your street slang if you plan on relating to us modern-day youths …
>
> (FB 06/02/2012 L50-66)

Bonquisha's witty comment, in this context, echoed the sentiments of Fals-Borda, Finley, and Mitra. *Facebook* also appeared to deepen the relationship between participants and me. Many of the conversations that occurred on *Facebook* were unrelated to the workshops but provided a context through which we could communicate and get to know each other better (Waller, 2011). For example, integrating my newly acquired words into a discussion about *Xfactor* with participants. Cadence commented that "…telling you all of those words and using them with you was our accepting you and letting you in" (HR10L103-104). Cadence's comment echoes that of Finely (2008), when she asserts that language acquisition is the first step to integration into the community of participants. In addition to language acquisition and the development of relationships, *Facebook* provided a bridging space between workshops where participants and me could discuss any concerns, questions or elements related to the workshops.

Facebook also played a functional role within the research process in terms of providing a platform where participants could share photographs, videos etc. with me. With such a strong emphasis on PM and practical engagement it was, at times, necessary for participants to be able to transmit videos and photographs that they had taken in the workshops. Moreover, participants could choose whether to send these in private messages to me or within the public domain of the *Facebook* page, if they wanted to share their work with other participants. Using *Facebook* as an e-platform created a sense of continuity to the work as we could physically see developments in terms of the work that we were doing just by browsing the work that had been uploaded.

Crucially, *Facebook* also provided a means of participants generating their own research data through the development of *What People Think I Do*

Memes[39] (Image 9). Alana also required that I complete a meme so that I could be included in discussions (Image 10).



Image 9 - A Participant Generated Meme



Image 10 – Researcher Generated Meme

[39] A meme is an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture. Within this context *What People Think I do Memes* were a collection of photographs or computer-generated images that depict participants' viewing themselves from others' perspectives.

What these *Memes* offered was a platform where we could discuss what other people thought of us. This discussion also furthered previous discussions around our disenfranchised voices and provided an insight into how we might contribute towards this process through our actions or lack-there-of. In this way, the *Memes* offered a practical means of re-viewing our actions and behaviours in terms of what we present to other people and how this might be interpreted.

At times *Facebook* also provided a means of distancing communication between the participants and me, and aided in relieving tensions. During Block Two, Workshop Eight, I had a confrontation with Dawn, due to the fact that I felt she was preventing others' participating. After the workshop Dawn immediately left the school and went home. Cadence revealed Dawn's reasons for leaving so quickly and not staying back for music club:

> [Dawn] got annoyed at you and she wasn't going to be able to put up with it for another while so she just went home. … anything she would've said ... she was mad ... so anything she would've said, it wouldn't have been the right way to say it. It would've just been angry, so I think she was actually better off walking away.
>
> (II4L120-136)

In an attempt to relieve tensions, I contacted Dawn on *Facebook*. While others informed me that Dawn received the message, Dawn didn't acknowledge the message by responding or mentioning it in further workshops. Although the potential for Facebook to be used as a form of distancing communication was highlighted, it was not realised through Dawn's lack of response or acknowledgement.

Communication with participants through teachers was difficult due to timetabling and miscommunication, as highlighted by Cadence in a focus group:

> Cadence: I was disappointed that one time when we were sitting in Religion and you never told us you weren't going to come in and we went looking for you and stuff and you weren't there. And we came back and we sat down and [teacher's name] tried to take me and Bonquisha and it was a horrible experience.

… And then we went up to music and you were all like (flamboyantly) 'Hi' and we were like (angrily) 'Where were you?' and you were all like (relaxed) 'I wasn't coming in today', but you never told us. It cut me deep.
Richie: Well, I had told you. I had told … Sorry, I should rephrase that … I had told someone else in the school.
Cadence: Ya but you have to tell 'us' because 'they' never tell us anything.
(FGB3W1L144-176)

On this, *Facebook* became an invaluable communication tool in updating participants on timetable changes, as well as reminding participants to bring in completed work. By using *Facebook* as a medium through which I could communicate directly with the participants in relation to schedule changes, it meant that they weren't waiting around for me when workshop times had been changed, or when they got the times of the workshops wrong.

Cadence: Rich what the hell man where are you?
Richie: What you mean? I'm seeing you all at 1:05 (after lunch)
…
Cadence: No man. Small lunch is when you were meant to come in.
Richie: Na, I'm telling you it wasn't. Remember, I told you the last day.
(FB11/05/2012)

The inclusion of *Facebook* in the process was not without it's difficulties however. Anna didn't have a *Facebook* account because her parents didn't approve of it, and so was at times lost in conversations that were happening during the workshops. Discussing this with Anna, I asked how she felt about the fact that she wasn't on *Facebook* and at times was lost. Her response was;

Anna: (Shrugs shoulders) I never go on it … I'd rather not.
Richie: That's fine, but did you feel left out because you weren't able to communicate with the others or I?
Anna: No I didn't really feel left out! I'm very anti-social so . . .
(FGB3Wiv)

Apart from Anna, the rest of the participants were on *Facebook*. Interestingly, there was a gendered engagement with *Facebook*, in that the

girls all commented publicly on the *Facebook* page but the boys refused to comment on status changes, posts, or engage in public conversations[40]. Questioning the boys on this several times, none of them could articulate a reason why they didn't write on the page despite the fact that they said they were on *Facebook* every day and always saw the posts and conversations that were happening. In contrast to their public silence, any time that I contacted the males in the group via private message there was always a relatively quick response. Again, they were unable to articulate a reason as to why they would respond to private messages but not public ones, or engage in public conversations with the girls and me on the *Facebook* page. Although no one appeared to be able to articulate a reason for this, my sense was that the boys didn't communicate publicly on *Facebook* because anything posted could open them to ridicule from their classmates. Thus, their silence was a protective silence and an attempt to avoid being bullied by others.

In assessing *Facebook* within the research process, participants commented on how it provided the easiest way to contact people and relay messages due to its instant nature and most participants had ready access to it on their phones.

> Richie: Why do you think I decided to use *Facebook*? …
> Bonquisha: [*Facebook*'s a good thing] because it's really easy to like get through to people if you need to tell them stuff.
> Richie: How often were you on *Facebook* looking at the page or looking at updates?
> Alana: Anytime you put stuff up there.
> Cadence: Ya, they came up in the newsfeed.
>
> (FGB3WivL745-804)

Closing the discussion around the use of social media within the research, the participants concluded that there was no other form of social media that they knew about that would give them the same level of access, ease of communication and efficiency as *Facebook*.

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[40] Although the word 'public' is used, the only persons who could see posts on the *Facebook* page were the participants as all of the privacy settings had been engaged. Thus, conversations were only being shared amongst the group.

Chapter Conclusion

The elicitation of student voice within the research was heavily linked to the arts through the use of PM. Insightfully, participants didn't respond to more subtle and nuanced attempts to elicit their voice and instead required a more upfront and explicit request to discuss their voices. Resulting from this, it emerged that participants felt voiceless within their school, home and community setting at various stages and appeared resigned and accepting of this to the extent that they, in line with Marker's (2009) research, began to embody this in the form of devaluing their own voices. The development of a culture of listening (Back, 2007) can be viewed as being partly successful, as participants on occasion began to not only voice their opinions but also began to hear and contest others' perspectives (Mitra, 2008). The interrogation of silence (purposeful, intentional, meaningful, and induced) proved important in not only understanding participants' voicelessness, but also in attempting to understand their perspectives on their own voicelessness, as well as exposing various tenets of the relationships within the work.

The difficulties raised in terms of the tensions between PAR and student voice are significant and attempts to respect and honour both of their principles were primarily successful. Other difficulties highlighted through the work related to difficulties around minimising induced silences and instances of oppression while attempting to remain respectful of the voices of those inducing the silences and oppression, including participants, teachers and myself.

The research also suggests the necessity to view the co-constructive intention of PAR in a more fluid way, acknowledging the impact that participants have on the emergent shape of the work both through deliberate and unintentional avenues, including participants' engagement and disengagement with activities, their creation of digital identities and sharing of digital resources via social networking sites. One of the inherent strengths of *Facebook* was its facilitation of a common language between the

participants and me (Waller, 2011) which is a necessary attribute of PAR, ABER, and student voice research (Fals-Borda, 2001; Finley, 2008; Mitra, 2008). Facebook held other benefits within the research for the participants and me through providing a platform where we could share resources, engage in discussions around the research, and update each other on the workshops and potential schedule changes.

Chapter 7

The Arts

Introduction

Acknowledging the centrality of the arts to this research, their discussion has been implicit in the previous two chapters. This chapter specifically explores the role of the arts and participants' responses and attitudes towards the arts in more depth. In doing so, I map participants' engagement with the arts throughout the workshops, which was deeply complex and constantly shifting. Their attitudes towards the arts were ever changing, and thus both their attitude and engagement were constantly in flux. Participants' previous engagement with the arts influenced their attitudes and engagement with the arts throughout the research process and each of these contributants will also be discussed.

Within the structure of this chapter, I take participants' previous experiences as my starting point; thus, returning to participants' past experiences before exploring their responses to the arts within the research process.

The arts in St. Nessan's

Bamford (2009, p.39) notes that poor provision of the arts:

> …may be particularly evident within 'at risk' school communities, where there is a perception that literacy and vocational education take precedence over the arts.

Within the context of St. Nessan's as a DEIS school, an 'at risk' school to use Bamford's term, this appeared to be the case. Although other curricula have the capacity to engage the arts, this potential was not realised within the school. For example, as one of the seven curricular PE strands (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2003), dance is not taught in St. Nessan's and teachers reported that it wasn't even taught when student teachers were on teaching practice. Similarly, music is not offered as a curricular subject, and while there have been attempts to establish after school music clubs by teachers these were not availed of by students and were withdrawn. Equally, film was not offered through any computers,

media or English modules in the school apart from the study of a film text for the comparative study on the LC English course. Both students and teachers in the school reported that drama was not integrated within the English or other language curricula and the only time students were given the opportunity to engage in drama was through the performance of a play in TY. The lack of opportunities to engage in the arts in St. Nessan's is clear.

Previous engagement, experience and views on the arts

As with Phase 1 of the research, Phase 3 reported the deficit of arts engagement within participants' lives. While this was representative of the majority, it was not unanimous. Some participants reported that they had never been involved with the arts while others' engagement ranged from brief to on-going. One participant, George, was engaged in the arts through a community dance school and regularly took part in national and international dance competitions. His arts engagement, however, appeared to be confined to dance, and particularly street dance.

It emerged that participants' arts engagement occurred in two sites; in St. Nessan's and within community-based clubs. Although the sites were different, according to participants they shared many characteristics such as promoting a formulaic approach the arts that involved participants being passive and engaging primarily in mimetics. These characteristics were very much related, as the participants discussed both sites as requiring little to no imaginative engagement and a mere reproduction of what the teacher instructed or demonstrated. These factors impacted negatively on participants' attitudes towards the arts and they frequently cited the passive nature of their previous arts engagement as a reason for their dislike of the arts.

Community-based arts engagement

Bonquisha and Alana discussed how, through their early years they were exposed to the arts primarily through dancing clubs in the area[41]. Both girls' participation in their clubs appeared to provide them with a negative impression of dance and the arts more generally. Bonquisha told of how she had been asked to leave the club because she wasn't good enough to continue and was falling behind, consequently slowing down the rest of the group. Bonquisha also detailed how she found learning the dance moves difficult because she had to perform them exactly as shown and wasn't allowed to have a creative input. She attributed the lack of creative input, and consequently her difficulty in learning the dance moves, as the reason she fell behind the rest of the group and was asked to leave. It could be argued, in tandem with Taylor (1998), that Bonquisha was less invested in dancing because of her lack of creative involvement. Alana also found her dance experience very restrictive in her Irish dancing club. However, Alana's reason for leaving the Irish dancing club was because her aunt, who was a similar age, had left. In discussing her exit, Alana seemed relieved that she no longer had to go. Although the girls recounted their experiences individually with me, both of them asserted the fact that their participation with the clubs was inevitably going to be short lived anyway. This was because their families would not be able to pay for them to attend long-term. Alana admitted that the cost of weekly classes was not much, but that there was a considerable amount of hidden expense in terms of costumes, shoes, hair, make-up and tan.

As well as being involved in dancing clubs, Cadence talked about how her parents paid for her to attend numerous arts activities such as drama clubs, acting lessons, speech and drama, and group singing lessons. She spoke of how she found them all boring and uninteresting and gradually began to resent having to attend the classes on a weekly basis and stopped attending as soon as she was allowed. In talking about arts activities Cadence might

[41] Questionnaires revealed that dancing was the most common art form engaged within the school community, which is arguably linked to the publicity given to the success of local dance troupes and clubs (Irish dancing, hip hop, street dance etc.) in the area.

like to be involved in, she stated how she had asked her parents to send her to music classes so that she could learn an instrument. However, she revealed, her parents were not in a position, financially, to send her to music classes because they were considerably more expensive than all of the other arts clubs Cadence was involved in. It emerged that her negative attitude towards the arts stemmed from her experiences of being sent to engage in dance and drama clubs as a child. Cadence generated a hierarchy of the arts that she valued, which is similar to that discussed by Robinson (2009) and Bamford (2009) with visual art and music at the top of the hierarchy and literature, drama, dance as the least favoured.

In contrast to the inherently negative experiences of Bonquisha, Alana, and Cadence, George's experience of the arts in his community were very different. George was seventeen and he recounted how when he was twelve or so his mother sent him to dance classes, which he resented. Over time, however, George grew to like dancing and consequently competed and was placed in the Street Dancing World Championships. George's success continued as his skill level increased and eventually he outgrew his initial dance club and moved to, as he perceived it, a better dance club.

> At first I didn't really like it and then at my first competition I came first. Then I progressed and then I came fourth in the World Champs and I just kept on going then and now I left [name of dance school] and went into [name of a different dance school] instead.
>
> (IIL58-61)

Unlike others in the group, George's previous experience within his dance club and the success he achieved appeared to motivate him towards continued engagement. The previous experience of participants stands in contrast to Harland et al.'s (2000) study of arts education in post-primary schools, where they suggest that within and outside of school dance is the art form that students have least experience with.

School-based arts experience

Out of the fourteen participants only the four named above (Bonquisha, Alana, Cadence and George) identified themselves as being involved in the arts outside of school. Anna, Lily, Conor, Alana, and Bonquisha were the only participants out of the group of fourteen who had chosen visual art for JC. Thus, seven participants stated that they had no arts experience. Participants' identification of visual art as their primary involvement with the arts within the school context is in line with Harland et al. (2000) who found that visual art was the most common art form taught in post-primary schools.

Participants' identification that they had no arts experience within primary school proved problematic, as a number of participants came from different primary schools and yet they all regarded themselves as not having any experience with the arts in primary school. This is problematic as it is unlikely that all of the primary schools concerned didn't teach the arts, as they are part of the curriculum. Towards the latter end of the workshops, participants acknowledged that they had been engaged in the arts in primary school but found it difficult to identify and name them because the arts were a vehicle through which other subjects were engaged, which Bamford (2009) argues is more often the case in primary schools. The *Primary School Curriculum* (Department of Education, 1999) does recommend engagement with the arts through a cross-curricular model, but also as specific subjects. It was only when the vehicular nature of the arts was suggested to participants and examples of this cross-curricular model at primary school were suggested that they seemed able to identify their own experiences with the arts at primary level. Participants' difficulties in naming these experiences as the arts were because they didn't view them as 'real arts'. It appeared that participants regarded 'real arts' as discipline based arts education, which they were currently engaged within post-primary school through the visual art curriculum.

Discussing other areas that participants may have been involved in the arts, the English post-primary classroom was identified. While participants

identified that they *read* poetry in English class, they also didn't regard this as arts engagement. In discussing their engagement with poetry, participants described it as uninteresting, bearing no resemblance or connection with their lives, and they also detailed how they never understood the poems. Kusserow (2008, p.74) discusses the unique 'colliding of worlds' that occurs when one inquires into our lived experience. Perhaps the fact that participants were unable to see a connection between the poetry and their lives prevented this colliding of worlds and the introspection required to generate meaning (Winner *et al.*, 2013). Deepening the discussion around poetry and literature, participants talked about how, as a result of the above reasons, they rarely paid attention in English class when poetry or literature was being dealt with. In not understanding the material and finding it boring, participants regarded themselves as passive recipients where poetry and literature were concerned and equated it to watching someone 'busk' on the street; it wasn't really engaging, just watching. As a result of this passive interaction, participants refused to identify their experiences in English class as the arts and consequently no participants listed poetry or literature on their initial timelines.

As might be expected, participants' timelines were more concerned with visual art in post-primary school than any other art form. In discussing the placement of visual art on their timeline however, participants stated that they didn't like visual art. Reasons for not liking it were attributed to the previous teacher that they had for visual art and her approach. Participants discussed how in thinking about visual art they expected to be allowed to experiment and use their imaginations and consequently imagination and creativity would be the foci of their engagement. The reality, however, appeared much different, with participants describing their engagement largely in terms of mimetics– focusing on the exact replication of form– and detailing how they were discouraged from being creative, limited in the materials that they were allowed use and were regularly given out to for making errors.

> Anna: We weren't allowed do art, what we wanted, and if we made a mistake we were given out to.
> Lily: Like, it had to be done in a certain way and if it wasn't then we'd have to do it over again.
> Conor: She'd like make you rub it out and do it perfectly.
> Richie: Who did?
> Conor: The old art teacher …
>
> (FGB3WivL218-226)

This lack of creativity and imagination is in contrast to much arts research, which regards the cultivation of imagination and creativity as one of the unique strengths of the arts (Donmoyer, 1995; Bloomfield and Childs, 2000; Bundy, 2003; Murphy and O'Keefe, 2006; Hoffman Davis, 2008). Commenting on this, Winner *et al.* (2013, p.19) note that much of the capacity for realising creativity and imagination in the arts lies within the approach and attitude of the teacher, in that as well as having the capacity to realise and enhance creativity and imagination, arts classes "…can leave creativity and imagination untouched if poorly taught."

In contrast to the majority of participants who viewed their previous visual art teacher as dominating and negatively impacting their experience, Bonquisha discussed how in order to release her creativity and engage with visual art on her terms, it was necessary to defy her art teacher and ignore her instruction.

> Bonquisha: Ya, I liked doing it because, really, we just got a subject to do it on. We picked a subject or whatever and then we'd just have to make our pieces and I just didn't really listen to what she was saying, it was funny.
>
> (FGB3WivL230-235)

Out of the fourteen participants, only five of them chose visual art within school. This meant that for the other nine participants, their engagement with the arts in school, throughout the first three years at post-primary level, was through their questionable engagement with poetry and literature. This marks a further deficit in terms of participants' involvement with the arts.

TY seeks to provide alternative educational opportunities for students and its guidelines actively incorporate the arts within this (Department of

Education, 1993). In line with these recommendations, the school attempted to engage participants within an arts project, as mentioned in chapter five. Mr. O'Dowd chose the project without consulting participants and consequently they refused to be involved. In discussing their refusal, it emerged that, from the participants' perspective, the project was form and product driven and they were expected to engage in it without having any creative input. In this way, their potential as collaborators was not recognised (Barone, 2008b; Bamford, 2009) and their sense of autonomy denied (Devine, 2004; Hoffman Davis, 2008). The participants also highlighted how the project itself had nothing to do with their lives– there was no social meaning– and this served to solidify their decision not to be involved (Walsh, 2002). Refusing to engage in the project with Mr. O'Dowd appeared to then signal an end to the participants' involvement in the arts with him.

While a number of participants had some experience of the arts, others stated that they had no exposure to the arts. These participants were Greg, Jason, Tony, and Pa. For example, Greg stated: "You don't get it. We're from Moyross. We don't do these things (meaning the arts)" (RRB1WivL178-179). Greg's sentiments were not unique to these four participants and others also attributed their lack of exposure to the arts as a result of where they're from (Bamford, 2009). Participants appeared to see it as others' responsibility to present these opportunities for engagement, which they could then avail of. When questioned as to their role within this and their role in seeking opportunities for engagement, the majority of participants stated how it wasn't their role to find the opportunities and they attributed their lack of motivation to their laziness:

> Richie: Would you be motivated to go and find out at least? (about arts in your area)
> Cadence: It depends on how much you want to do it.
> Richie: No, but that's what I'm asking. Would YOU now be motivated to go and find out?
> Cadence: No, not really! …
> Richie: Like, if there was no music club in school …
> Cadence: No, I mean, just in general. We're lazy.
> Richie: Oh, ye're lazy. OK. But if there was no music club would you go and look for one?

Cadence: Nope!
(FGB3WivL703-723)

In contrast to the view of the majority, Bonquisha, on several occasions, discussed how she had looked online for opportunities, but had never followed anything up because they were too expensive or she quite simply didn't know where they were located within and around Limerick City.

> Bonquisha: I, like, looked online for them before but like I couldn't find any that I knew where that place was or anything like that and they're all really expensive as well.
> (FGB3WivL729-731)

In this way, lack of access, cost, and information around the arts provided a barrier for Bonquisha.

Teachers' perspectives on the arts

In discussing participants' lack of exposure to the arts with members of school staff, it emerged that the staff were divided on why participants weren't involved and also the role of the arts in the school. Some school staff attributed participants' lack of exposure to the arts as stemming from the lack of tradition of artistic engagement within the community. Specifically, Ms. O'Donnell was also of the opinion that post-primary level was too late to intervene in the process and attempt to establish a culture of the arts. Consequently, she appeared to be resigned to the fact that students in the school would have limited to no arts experience throughout their lives.

> If there's a culture of arts in preschool, primary school and it's carried up along then it seems very easy to continue when they come into [post-primary level]. It's the norm. Students going into that [school] then are caught up in that because that's the profile of the school. The problem with us is … if you're trying to change the profile, [which we would have to do,] then it's very difficult to get students on board. So that's where the problem is. It's too hard.
> (II7L487-494)

In sharp contrast, other staff members within the school acknowledged that students "…today don't seem to be exposed to [the arts] on their own or at

home" (II6L74-75) and "…if it's something that their parents are involved in or their neighbours or kids" (II6L151-152) they would be more likely to engage. Furthermore, disputing the previous perspective, other staff perceived it as the school's responsibility to provide the opportunities for students' engagement with the arts. They reiterated that this should be the case regardless of whether arts subjects were offered for examination or not and irrespective of students' previous experience or lack there of. Critiquing the school's current approach, Ms. Beech questioned whether pupils would have "…enough exposure to the arts before they leave school" (II8L431-432). This appeared to be a very real concern for Ms. Beech, who returned to students' deficit in the arts a number of times.

Staff members were also of differing opinions when it came to the role of the arts in the school. Some staff viewed their role as that of generating a product while others focused on the importance of engaging students in the process. Staff members' divide on this can also be linked to a divide amongst arts practitioners and arts educators, some of whom view the arts as product focused and others valuing their more process orientated nature. Some staff focused entirely on the generation and presentation of product and in discussions spoke of the role of the arts as culminating in the Christmas concert and graduation ceremony. Notably this perspective was only shared by two staff members. Discussing this view, Ms. O'Donnell revealed her perspective was a result of her own engagement with the arts in primary and secondary school, where their primary purpose was to highlight individual students' talents. Within this view, Ms. O'Donnell spoke about the "community process" and "inter-subject sharing" (II7L245&248) that emerged from the Christmas concert. This was viewed as providing a benefit to the school staff primarily, in generating a sense of community, as staff members were required to pull together to create backdrops, create a stage, get a choir together, or indeed perform themselves.

Ms. O'Donnell's view was in sharp contrast with that of Ms. Culhane– who discussed the more holistic and process oriented nature of the arts– and this

divergence of views is mirrored in the literature (Fleming, 2012). Ms. Culhane was positively disposed to the arts and students' engagement with the arts, seeing it as contributing towards their "personal development" (II6L242). She specifically noted the positive impact that engagement with the workshops had in terms of participants' behaviour, confidence, self-esteem, relationships with others, independent and critical thinking, and their educational motivation (Hoffman Davis, 2008). Other staff members viewed the arts, and specifically the workshops, as a space which participants felt was theirs, a space where they could be themselves and appeared to link this to a sense of escapism, and the introspection and reflection which the arts facilitate (Hoffman Davis, 2008; Bamford, 2009; Winner *et al.*, 2013). These staff members appeared to hold the arts in high regard, viewing them as a process through which participants could generate meaning and learn about themselves and others. This perspective resonates with that of Maxine Greene (1995, p.181) when she discusses the necessity for students to be "…personally present to their own learning processes and self-reflective with regard to them" and the necessity for teachers to "…teach self-reflectiveness originating in situated life…" (1995, p.126). This also resonates with Hoffman Davies when she elicits the process of "inquiry and reflection" (2008, p.71) and the development of respect for, empathy with, and social responsibility towards others that are evoked through engagement with the arts.

Engaging with the arts: Experiences from the workshops

Based on their previous experience, participants' view of the arts was that they were primarily concerned with form, largely mimetic, and were a range of activities that they couldn't engage in or had little interest in engaging in. The purpose of this work (PAR, the arts, and student voice) was to challenge participants' taken-for-granted understandings, and lead them towards a wide-awakeness and "…search for alternative possibilities" (Greene, 1995, p.42). In challenging participants' understandings and assumptions of the arts they repeatedly commented on their surprise at being able to engage and enjoy themselves.

Documenting this surprise, Conor said, "I actually did stuff and enjoyed it" (VD5L1-2). Similarly, discussing his engagement with the arts in the workshops, Pa commented on how the activities were "active" and "fun" and that he "…thought it was great … there was natin' that I didn't enjoy" (VD4L20-31). Notably, almost all participants expressed their surprise and enjoyment during the early workshops in particular. During these workshops the focus was on providing participants with a positive experience of the arts and of success, through engaging them in various arts-based activities. In engaging participants in a variety of arts-based activities, it was hoped that they would gain an understanding of different approaches to and types of the arts.

Acknowledging that "[t]here is no single sacrosanct vision of the aims of arts education" (Eisner, 2002, p.25), this research attempted to provide students with a number of different types of engagement, or in Eisner's terms, to give them experience of the different aims of the arts. The various aims of arts education Eisner (2002) espouses are: discipline based art education, visual culture, creative problem solving, creative self-expression, arts education as preparation for the world of work, the arts and cognitive development, using the arts to promote academic performance, and the integrated arts. These aims of arts education are embodied within the various approaches to arts education which Hoffman Davis (2008) describes. For Hoffman Davis, arts education includes the following approaches; arts based, arts integrated, arts infused, arts included, arts expanded, arts professional, arts extras, aesthetic education, and arts cultura. Within this project two primary approaches to the arts were understood, discipline based arts education (DBAE) and, what I have called, the integrated-applied arts (IAA). These approaches engage many of the criteria of Eisner's (2002) aims of arts education as well as borrowing from Hoffman Davis' (2008) outlining of different approaches. The approaches, which will be described below, differ as one focuses on form (DBAE), and the other experience (IAA), or alternatively, one is product focused while the other is process oriented.

As an approach within this research, DBAE is more closely aligned to Hoffman Davis' (2008) 'arts included approach' and is the dominant model of the arts in Irish education. DBAE within this project refers to engagement with individual art forms and the focus is specifically on looking at aspects of form and finesse. IAA is not associated with Hoffman Davis' (2008, p.16) 'arts integrated' where the arts are "…cast with non-arts subjects in equal ensemble roles". Instead, the integrated nature of the approach simply refers to the engagement of the arts with each other, or the engagement of a number of art forms together within the same workshop and around the same topic. The *applied* nature of IAA is specifically derived from an understanding of applied drama, which incorporates Theatre in Education (TiE). Within this understanding, the applied arts refer to the overlap between art form, education, and the lived experience of participants or audience members, which seek to generate "…new ways to speak to [new] audiences" (Jackson, 1993, p.1). In engaging in form, education, and lived experience, the applied arts attempt to challenge and provoke participants and audience members into examining "…pertinent curricular themes and social issues…" (Riherd and Hardwick, 1993, p.205). The IAA approach can also be further understood and aligned with Hoffman Davis' (2008, p.21) 'arts cultura', which enable human beings to make sense of their experience through the "tangible shape" of the arts.

Within the context of engaging DBAE and IAA, participants' responses appeared to be more related to the individual art forms engaged than the approaches. With that said, however, each approach held advantages and difficulties for participants. Despite these difficulties, engagement with both approaches provided participants with experience of the arts. Notably, as participants began to gain more experience with each of the art forms, their knowledge deepened and their attitude towards the art form became more consolidated, either in favour of or against the art form. That is, their engagement revealed a new appreciation, understanding and openness towards the art form or else it reiterated their dislike of the art form. This was not only observed by me but was also commented on by the participants at regular intervals. In providing participants with more experience of the

arts a number of tensions emerged between individual art forms and the various approaches to the arts that we were using.

Discipline-based arts education:

Although the research from Phase 1 suggested that participants in this setting were less interested in DBAE, I thought it was important that the participants in Phase 3 were given the breadth of engagement to decide for themselves. A number of DBAE workshops were generated in the areas of visual art, music, and dance. Participants' engagement with and attitudes towards these workshops appeared to vary depending on the art forms that were engaged; which seemed to be impacted by their previous experiences with that form.

The DBAE workshop on visual art was specifically concerned with photography, which participants had expressed a desire for. Participants' response to this workshop was very positive. Although participants' experience of visual art appeared to be predominantly curricular, form focused and mimetic, their attitude towards the photography workshop was one of openness and excitement, perhaps as a result of the art form or perhaps the technology of cameras and fascination of using them motivated participants (David, 2010). It is pertinent to note that during TY all participants were engaged in visual art classes in parallel to their engagement in the workshops in Phase 3. Visual art in TY appeared to be a very positive experience for participants and they discussed their new art teacher's encouragement of creativity and experimentation with form, which characterised a new approach to visual art for them. Participants also appeared to have a very positive relationship with their new visual art teacher and I would argue that her new approach and their positive relationship with each other impacted participants' openness towards visual art and, in this case, photography. Within the photography workshop, I encouraged participants to maintain a focus on form, through considering the background, rule of thirds, and various angles when taking photographs. Within this, participants were also encouraged to explore how they could challenge themselves in exploiting and manipulating these

elements. The majority of participants appeared to engage well with the photography workshop and only Pa and Tony didn't engage. Questioning the boys as to why they weren't engaging, they informed me that visual art and photography were boring and uninteresting and this attitude appeared to dominate their engagement. It is pertinent however to note that Tony, Pa, and me had a rather serious confrontation at the start of the workshop. The boys hid the cameras that I had brought in and this lead to an argument between us, which could have had a negative impact on their engagement. In the photography workshop those participants who engaged moved about the school premises taking photographs and at the end of the workshop all of them exclaimed their enjoyment of the workshop. Tony and Pa consequently stated their boredom during the workshop.

Similarly to the mixed reaction of the photography workshop, the DBAE dance workshop also received a mixed reaction from the participants. Although there were differing opinions about engaging in a dance workshop, all participants agreed that they would try the workshop. This was a very positive step, especially for Cadence who had reiterated her dislike of dance a number of times. The technical elements of dance that participants were asked to consider throughout the workshop were the creation of line, various levels, dynamics, body fluency and language, body tension, tempo, rhythm and physical responses to external stimuli (music). Throughout the workshop participants were encouraged to consider how the form was affected by each of the elements above and consequently how integrating and considering these could add to or detract from the form. As discussed in chapter five, during the workshop Dawn and I had a confrontation in front of the group. In response to this Dawn walked backwards, leaned against the wall and then crossed her arms. Cadence and Alana, who were up to this point on the periphery of disengagement, replicated Dawn's actions in an act of solidarity. They later commented that they were already disinterested and the confrontation between Dawn and me gave them motivation to stop engaging. In contrast to Dawn, Cadence, and Alana, the other participants (Pa, Jason, John, Lily, Conor, and Anna) appeared fully

engaged throughout the workshop. Through their video diaries these six participants commented on their enjoyment of the workshop:

> Pa: We did something good today … I loved making a holy show of [my]self [dancing].
> (VD6L22-23)

> John: What did you enjoy about today?
> Conor: Pretty much everything. It was fun.
> (VD8L11-12)

Jason discussed how, while he enjoyed the workshop and being with everyone else, he didn't enjoy dancing within the workshop.

> Pa: What did you not enjoy?
> Jason: Ahhhh the dancin'.
> (VD7L18-19)

Despite Jason's dislike of dancing within the workshop, all participants who had positively engaged, including Jason, stated how they would like to try a similar workshop again. A few weeks later however, when asked if they would like to be involved in a dance workshop again, there was a unanimous no from the group. Questioning them as to why this was, they didn't appear to be able to articulate a reason for their change of decision and simply stated that they had changed their minds when they were given time to think about it.

In contrast to the positive attitudes of the six participants who engaged in the dance workshop, Cadence, Alana, and Dawn documented– through their video diaries– their disdain at having had to participate:

> Alana: What didn't you enjoy?
> Cadence: All the movement and stuff … I felt like I was pressured into doing it and I didn't want to.
> Alana: How do you think you participated?
> Cadence: I didn't participate because it's not what I signed up for. I told him I didn't want to do it and I was still made to.
> Alana: Would you consider doing it again?
> Cadence: No. Never.
> (VD9L26-53)

Alana's responses were similar to Cadence's and focused on her feelings of being pressured into participating. In contrast, when asked what she didn't enjoy about the workshop Dawn's answer was very succinct: "Richie"

(VD9L135). Apart from her answer to this question, all of the other questions that Dawn was asked were responded to with two replies "I didn't" or "I don't care".

In contrast to some participants' feelings of being pressured to engage in the dance workshop, participants instigated their involvement with DBAE in the form of a music club, which was set up and run after school. The participants and me set up the music club, as previously discussed, in response to their desire to learn the guitar and the piano. Their desire was not only communicated in their talking about setting up a music club but their action in doing so. Attempting to challenge participants, I discussed the possibility of setting up a small singing group. However, this was met with immediate disapproval and participants stated that under no circumstances would they sing in any of the workshops or in music club. Respecting this, we decided that guitar and piano would be taught in music club. Although there was a high turn out for the first session of the music club (seven participants) this quickly diminished after just three weeks (three participants, Cadence, Bonquisha, and Alana). Music club was relatively well attended for the remaining weeks of school by these three participants but there were occasions where Cadence was the only person who attended. The three girls showed a very positive attitude towards learning the guitar and simply seemed frustrated with the length of time it was taking to master it. This was complicated by the fact that the guitars were supplied by the school and anyone who did not have one at home was unable to practice during the week[42].

In talking about music club I questioned participants about the differences between it and the workshops. As a whole, participants' responses were most clearly articulated by Bonquisha when she said: "[i]t's more specific so you kinda, you won't be doing stuff one week that you don't want to do because it's always learning the thing that you want to learn"

[42] The school had six guitars and although participants were allowed to take them home to practice, they stated that they didn't want the responsibility as they might get broken or stolen.

(FGB3WiL235-237). While some participants saw this as a positive, others viewed engaging in DBAE as a negative as they perceived that they had a lack of talent in that art form. For example in discussing music club, Anna stated that she didn't attend because "…I can't play an instrument" (FGB3WiL223). Despite the fact that the music club was established so that people could learn the guitar and piano, Anna perceived herself as lacking in musical ability and so wasn't willing to engage in music club.

In addition to DBAE described above, participants were involved in a daylong workshop with an external drama practitioner, Gary[43]. In recounting the workshop, participants detailed how the product-focused nature of the drama that Gary had engaged them in was the exact reason that they didn't want to do drama. Throughout the workshop it appeared that participants were given lines to learn, which they then had to regurgitate. Participants also perceived that Gary's view of them was inherently negative as he repeatedly gave out to them and appeared to not listen to what they were saying. Participants' reactions to Gary were characterised by some refusing to engage and others warranting removal from the space. Those participants who did engage detailed how they were embarrassed as they felt they weren't given a choice and had no say in what went on in the workshop. Furthermore, at the end of the workshop participants were brought into the general-purpose area in the school and had to 'perform' their play for all the first year students. There appeared to be ethical issues with this as participants were adamant that they had told Gary that they didn't want to perform for anyone else in the school. Participants discussed how they were uncomfortable with being made "…act out some stupid play" (RRB1WivL114), especially when they had said that they didn't want to.

[43] Not only was I unaware of the workshop with Gary but staff within the school were also unaware that the workshop was happening. One staff member in the school had organized the workshop at short notice and so some staff also spoke about how they felt they were pressured into allowing the workshop to take place.

In addition, when talking about the workshop Jason expressed his fear and anger towards Gary:

> [w]hen [Jason] spoke, it became clear that not only did he not enjoy the workshop but he was afraid and furious with [the external practitioner]. [Jason] told of how he had been screamed at by the practitioner as part of the drama and how uncomfortable he was with this. Others sensed and commented on Jason's fear of [the practitioner] and their outrage at how he had behaved throughout the whole day.
>
> (RRB1WivL122-129)

I had not been told that Gary was coming in to work with the participants and later that night received an email from a teacher in the school who appeared to be extremely concerned about what had happened. Discussing the workshop with me the next day, the teacher described it as 'traumatising' and commented on how it negatively affected all of the participants, having witnessed part of the workshop and seen the participants' reactions. Furthermore, the teacher discussed how she was particularly concerned for Pa because during the performance of the play he forgot his lines. The teacher described how, when this happened, Gary got up and chastised Pa in front of his peers, the first year cohort of students and teachers who were present. Gary then stopped the play and told the first years to return to their classes before once again giving out to Pa.

The workshop seemed to have a very negative impact on participants and from this point on they refused to speak or act in any elements of drama that we engaged. Despite assurances that I would be facilitating the workshop, they would be helping to plan it, and it would be a different experience, participants reiterated the fact that they did not want to engage in 'that type of drama' again.

<u>The integrated-applied arts</u>

In choosing to offer participants choice in terms of approaches to the arts, I was attempting to recognise the "…importance of exploring alternative avenues of engagement and inquiry" (Siegesmund and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p.233). An integrated model of the arts was combined with the more applied arts because not only were the art forms engaged in a more

integrated fashion, but in directly linking them to participants' lives they sought to provoke reactions and stimulate thought around participants' understanding and actions. Furthermore, the majority of participants' previous experience was through DBAE and a more IAA approach offers an alternative view of the arts to their previous experience. This was, thus, an effort to step beyond:

> …familiar understandings and representations, allowing the beholding of new information and interpretations that can change ways of knowing, seeing, and being in the world.
> (Bickel, 2008, p.132)

In addition, throughout the early stages of the workshops participants noted that being active and constantly engaging in different activities was important to them and encouraged them to participate. With this in mind, I felt that an IAA approach would at times provide this variety of engagement.

Participants responded very differently to the IAA approach as they did with DBAE approach. The difference in participants' response can be seen in Anna's engagement. Anna refused to engage in music club because she perceived she didn't have the musical ability. In contrast, within an IAA approach Anna engaged with the musical elements of the workshops. For example, in Block Two, Workshop Seven, participants interpreted a visual art piece, they then generated a visual narrative based around the piece by drawing a story board, chose specific instances in their narrative to physicalise (through linking various freeze-frames), and then composed a soundtrack to accompany their physical story. In engaging with this workshop Anna was a very active participant and appeared to be one of the leaders of her group in terms of physicalising the story and also generating the musical soundtrack to accompany it. In addition, Conor, who had only attended the first meeting of music club and who attributed his reason for leaving to not being good enough, appeared to fully engage with all aspects of this workshop and seemed specifically focused on adding percussion to his group's sound track.

Similar to the above example, participants were first introduced to the IAA approach through a workshop around Picasso's *Guernica*. After engaging with the painting and exploring our interpretations and response to it, we hypothesized about the events that may have inspired Picasso, after which we viewed someone else's interpretation through their creation of a three dimensional film of the painting. Having acknowledged the variety of interpretations that can be explored through the visual, participants then physically (through various drama techniques) and visually (through drawings and storyboards) recreated the events surrounding *Guernica*. In attempting to ground the events in modern day life, participants adjusted the dramatic piece that they had created to fit with what they perceived a twenty-first century Irish atrocity might encompass. This approach not only drew on the various art forms of visual art, music, drama, and film but also attempted to ground the action of the painting within the participants' lives, in terms of contemporary confrontation. This was made very real for participants when they began to discuss the gangs and murders that occur within their own community and how they are affected by them. In addition to this discussion, a number of participants commented on the ease of engagement and how they didn't feel like there was anything or any art form involved that they couldn't engage with.

Although the majority of participants found this approach easy to engage with, Cadence highlighted her difficulties in engaging with it. Cadence's specific difficulties with the approach appeared to relate to her negative attitude towards the arts other than learning a musical instrument. In terms of the music that was engaged through an IAA approach, Cadence stated that the instruments were 'child-like' and as a result didn't want to engage in 'that type of music'.

Another difficulty that Cadence expressed with this approach was the fictional lens that it regularly employed. For example, the workshop on *Guernica* engaged participants in imagining the bombing of Guernica, what people might have been doing, how people might have felt, and how people around the world might have reacted to the atrocity. While engaging this

fictional lens appeared to be a safety net for some participants, it seemed to act as a barrier to others. Cadence belonged to the latter group and throughout later workshops, engaging a fictional lens appeared to disengage her. One understanding of Cadence's attitude towards the IAA, and the arts in general could be their lack of grounding in her own life and her difficulty in generating meaning from engagement with them. This opened the question of whether or not Cadence was opposed to the art form, or opposed to the approach that was adopted and the fictional lens that was offered. In considering this, it appeared that Cadence was more engaged with the activities in the workshops when they were firmly grounded in her own life experience. It could also be argued that Tony's engagement within the workshops could also be understood through this view. When Tony was engaged in work that centred around his own life experiences he appeared to participate more in the workshops and consequently his negative impact on others appeased. An example of this can be seen in the group's creation of timelines in Block One. In addition to my own observations, Tony commented on this stating, "I liked ... da timeline yokes" (II3L32). In contrasting this engagement with other artistic experiences that Tony had within the workshops, he stated his dislike of engagement with art forms that were not centred around his own experience, in this case the workshop on physical theatre: "… when you'd make shapes outta your body. I didn't like that [workshop]" (II3L31). Tony's engagement when the arts were grounded in his own life was also witnessed during the poetry and writing workshop. In analysing the song lyrics/poems, Tony created resonances with his own life experiences and his engagement with writing a poem was concerned with his own life experiences and portraying a specific view of himself. In this case, while the song lyrics/poetry was not exclusively concerned with Tony's life, he created links with his own life that made the poetry more meaningful and real.

Throughout the workshops, the arts-based activities that centred most on participants' lives were the PM. PM are inherently arts-based and engage a number of different arts in both their inquiry and representation. Arguably, PM provided participants with an holistic, creative and practical means of

participation that connects imagination with their lived experience (Anning and Ring, 2004, cited in Leitch, 2008). Thus, what began as a research tool quickly emerged as a vital means of engaging participants in the IAA. Within this form of engagement the fictional lens was minimized as participants were actively inquiring into their own lived and imagined worlds and thus had a choice to engage the fictional lens or not. In line with this, participants' engagement with the IAA, and more specifically PM, enabled participants to communicate their personal and unique narrative through the arts, in line with Hoffman Davis' (2008) arts cultura.

As an approach to arts engagement, it could be argued that engagement with IAA and PM was less intimidating for participants concerned with their lack of experience and expertise in the arts. On this, Butler-Kisber comments on the potential of PM, particularly collage, to move beyond the constructs of form and towards a greater level of expression and understanding:

> [t]he potentially evocative power of art forms, in particular visual ones, produces a sensory or embodied response that can help the viewer/responder generate meanings in very concrete ways.
> (2008, p.268).

Butler-Kisber's (2008) perspective is also in line with Veale's (2005) argument around the transformative potential of PM to articulate multiple voices and positions. This transformative intention is also very much in line with Barone and Eisner's (2012) and Greene's (1995) assertions that the arts have the potential to challenge established orthodox meanings and enable the participant-artist to view the world afresh.

An example of this re-viewing through engagement with PM was observed in the latter stage of the workshops. On several occasions throughout the research, particularly when engaging with the IAA, participants questioned whether what we were doing was the arts. Furthermore, while others readily accepted that engagement with PM was engaging with the arts, this proved problematic for Cadence as she didn't view the work that she had made as pieces of art. Cadence commented that in creating the pieces she

had been focused on the communication and articulation of her voice and experience and consequently hadn't focused on form. This lack of focus on form appeared to be why Cadence didn't view her pieces as pieces of art. However, throughout the latter workshops, in generating revised timelines, participants commented on how they were now able to see that what we had been doing was the arts, but simply a different way of engaging with them. In acknowledging this, participants were acknowledging the capacity of the arts to produce knowledge and consequently cause us to question our previous understandings (Irwin and Springgay, 2008). In this case, Cadence's understanding of what constituted engagement with the arts was challenged. Cadence too added that in looking at her new timeline she agreed that she had engaged with the arts. In this instance, creating a revised timeline provided a form through which Cadence and other participants were enabled to re-view their arts engagement, which facilitated them to "…summarise and make meaning of our efforts" (Jenoure, 2008, p.166).

In contrast to the various resistances towards DBAE and some forms of IAA, no participants expressed specific difficulties engaging with PM. This appeared to be due to the grounded nature of their inquiry and the understanding that everyone could engage with them. In addition, the grounded nature of the IAA appeared to provide participants with a safety net within which they could talk about and discuss their feelings and emotions, which Harland et al. (2000), Hoffman Davis (2008), and Turino (2008) argue are facets and outcomes of arts engagement. Specifically, the arts can provide a vehicle through which emotions can be expressed (Behar, 2008). Throughout the first number of workshops participants were quite resistant to any discussion of emotion or how they were feeling. As well as this, the general consensus amongst the group appeared to be that showing your feelings or revealing your emotions weakened you in some way, particularly in the eyes of your peers. In discussing this with Ms. Culhane, she commented that, from her experience, participants are frequently frustrated but have grave difficulty showing emotion and are as a result "…are not able to articulate what's wrong or they don't know what's wrong"

(II6L403-404). Throughout the early stages of the research Ms. Culhane's comments rang true and participants showed great difficulty in talking about their feelings and emotions. However, as participants began to engage more with the arts, particularly through an integrated-applied model, they seemed to begin discussing their emotions. Initial discussions of how participants were feeling emanated from an arts-based activity on expressing experiences through line and sound. The visual and musical compositions then lead to a discussion amongst each other as to what emotions and feelings they thought were contained within others' lines, sounds and consequently experiences. This activity facilitated participants' discussion of various emotions and they began to recall instances where they too shared those emotions.

After engaging in this activity participants seemed to be more forthcoming when talking about emotions or indeed expressing themselves, either verbally, visually, physically or through the written word. In this way, engaging with the IAA seemed to facilitate participants' expression of their feelings and emotions.

Barriers to arts engagement

While the previous section elicited the ways in which participants engaged with the arts through various approaches and models, there were notable external barriers to participants' engagement. Through various discussions and their various arts-based compositions participants also detailed other barriers towards the arts that they encountered. This section seeks to unpack and discuss these barriers. The barriers to the arts that participants' identified were as a result of (i) lack of availability and others' attitudes, (ii) financial constraints, (iii) peer disengagement, and (iv) the threat of bullying.

Lack of availability and other people's attitudes

Bamford (2009, p.39) states that low artistic provision appears to be characteristic of 'at risk' school communities, "…where there is a perception that literacy and vocational education take precedence over the arts." Bamford's assertion, in terms of lack of artistic provision appeared to be the case amongst the communities of Moyross, Ballynanty and Kileely/Thomondgate. Consequently, lack of availability and lack of opportunities for engagement were frequently discussed as a barrier to the arts. This has not only been noted by participants but also acknowledged through various reports and organisations (Fitzgerald, 2007; Limerick Northside Regeneration Agency, 2008; Limerick Regeneration Agencies, 2008a; 2008b). These reports discuss the necessity for an increase in arts provision within these communities. Specifically, Limerick Northside Regeneration Agency's (2008) publication, *Our Community, Our Vision Our Future: The Regeneration of Moyross*, not only calls for an increase in arts provision within the community but outlines the various arts spaces that were to be built and how these will increase the artistic provision within the community. To date, however, none of these arts facilities have been built and increased arts provision has not been realised.

Acknowledging that there are a small number of opportunities to engage in the arts within the community, participants argued that these are not well advertised and so are not availed of. The primary art form supported within the community was dance and this was through various dance clubs, ranging from street dancing and hip-hop to Irish dancing. Having previously been involved with and left these dancing clubs, participants stated that they would not be willing to return to them and further expressed their frustrations at the lack of additional arts within the community. On one occasion Tony documented his engagement with the arts in the community when he commented on how he had recently done "…paintin' on da Chinese window yoke and Christmas stuff [in] dat youth café thing" (II3L53-57). Enquiring as to whether they engaged the arts in any other way within the youth café, Tony informed me that they just

played pool and games and didn't do any other visual art, music, or any other art form.

While Tony didn't appear too concerned by the lack of arts provision within the community, as previously discussed Bonquisha regularly expressed her frustrations at the lack of opportunities. At several stages she commented on the lack of opportunities to engage with the arts in the surrounding communities and even detailed times when she had gone online looking for opportunities. While she had found advertisements for different arts engagement, she stated how they were outside of the community and she either didn't know where they were or her parents weren't in a position to bring her to them.

In addition to the lack of opportunities, a number of participants commented on the fact that when there were opportunities to engage in the arts within the community they heard about them too late because the advertising was not adequate or didn't reach the intended target audience.

> Cadence: You never hear about 'em. Like, you're here saying there's loads of them. I've never seen any! I think the most I saw is like a poster in the church saying they do guitar but it was like religious guitar.
> Richie: OK.
> Lily: They're not advertised that well.
> Richie: They're not advertised well? OK. Have you ever seen anything like that Lily?
> Lily: I've seen one of them like. It was about a piano club. It was years ago. And then I went to the place and it was closed.
> (FGB3WivL652-671)

In discussing possible solutions to the problem, participants suggested organisations and clubs should target them through *Facebook* and through the school, as they were sure to encounter the advertisements then.

As previously acknowledged, participants had no interest in engaging with arts provision within the community that they had previously been involved with. This appeared to be as a result of their negative experiences within the arts clubs and their negative attitudes towards that art form as a result. Responding to questions around her previous experiences with drama and

dance through community based clubs, and her established negative attitude towards that form within the workshops, Cadence commented:

> Cadence: I don't like [drama and dance]. I didn't like [them] when I was a child either.
> (114L26-27)
> Richie: So, even though you said you would try [dance], how come you didn't today?
> Cadence: I did it last week and it was really bad.
> Richie: No, you did last week, you started (cut off by Cadence)
> Cadence: And then I didn't like it so I stopped. But I tried it.
> Richie: But today was different ... (cut off by Cadence)
> Cadence: (angrily) It's the same kind of thing. It's the same movement and going around and stuff. It all goes into the same category for me.
> Richie: OK. Is there any way that I could get you to try anything like that?
> Cadence: No. There really isn't. There's nothing you could've done like. It's just not something that's going to be done.
> (II4L74-91)

In this instance, Cadence's previous experiences generated a negative disposition towards drama and dance and this limited her engagement within the workshops, as she was unable to overcome her negative attitude.

In addition to their attitudes, having engaged in the arts forms as children, participants perceived that they would be put into classes with children and that this would place them in a position of ridicule and embarrassment:

> Cadence: Like, if you're say interested in dancing, not that I think any of us are, but like everyone else might be way better than you are and you'd be coming in as a beginner and that's really hard.
> Anna: Especially because they started so young.
> Cadence: Ya and you wouldn't know who you'd be in with.
> (FGB3WivL693-700)

> Richie: Why aren't you involved?
> Bonquisha: Because like the older you get, when you go into these things and they teach you dance and you're looking at all of these seven year olds are there and you look like a complete fool.
> Alana: Or all of the seven year olds are like a million times better than you.
> Bonquisha: Ya, and you're there and you're trying to do it and thinking everyone else is ten times better and you're like 'oh my god'.
> (FGB2WiiL978-985)

In this way, participants perceived their lack of ability, in relation to others in the class, as a barrier and this was something that dominated their choice not to be involved in the arts in their community. Confounding their choice not to get involved in arts in the community, primarily dance, participants also referenced the elitist attitudes of coaches/teachers and the young people involved in the clubs. This focus on competition and winning was an inherent deterrent for participants as some of them recalled the reasons why they had to leave the clubs in the first instance.

Finance

Amongst the participants, finance appeared to be the most common barrier to their arts engagement. Although finance was mentioned as one reason that participants had previously stopped engaging with art forms, it was still identified as the most common contributor to disengagement with the arts and extended across art forms (Hoffman Davis, 2008). With two thirds of households in the Moyross community reporting that social welfare payments are the primary means of income and over seventy percent reporting difficulty in making ends meet (Humphreys *et al.*, 2012) it is not surprising that participants listed finance as a barrier to their arts engagement.

In specifically commenting on his new found interest in visual art, Conor discussed how the materials required were "… just a waste of money" because they were "…too expensive and get used up too quickly" (VD10L94-98). In this case, Conor's lack of materials proved a barrier to his engagement, which stems from the fact that they were too expensive. Similarly, Anna commented on her primary barrier to engagement with visual art as being the fact that she couldn't afford the materials and thus was unable to engage:

> Richie: And why aren't you [involved in visual art if you like it]?
> Anna: Small [little] thing – I only enjoy doing it during art class.
> Richie: How come?
> Anna: 'cuz I don't got any material at home.
> Richie: OK.

> Anna: it's hard to find all the things that you need and they're not cheap, are they? I once went into an art shop and the paint there cost over a fiver, maybe even ten, certain colours. It's a bit expensive.
> (VD11L53-65)

Finance as a barrier to artistic engagement was not unique to visual art however. Participants commented on the cost of musical instruments and also the on-going costs of attending lessons:

> Cadence: Guitar lessons are like a hundred euro per lesson or something like. They're really expensive or something ridiculous like that.
> Bonquisha: No it's like a hundred euro for a couple of weeks like.
> Cadence: Ya, it's something ridiculous like and d'ya know, it's a lot.
> (FGB2WiiL777-782)

Similarly, in an informal conversation with me during music club Lily revealed that she had been interested in attending piano lessons for a long time but her parents were never in a position to be able to pay for the lessons. Despite this, she had acquired a second hand keyboard and regularly 'messed around with it' but had never been able to advance because of her lack of knowledge. With that said, Lily still expressed her desire to engage and her enjoyment in playing with her keyboard.

Presence of peers

The presence of peers and negative impact of power struggles also proved a barrier to participants' engagement. At several stages throughout the research peer attitudes and engagement seemed to have a negative impact on others, as participants were encouraged to join their classmates in off-task behaviour. Similarly, those who were off-task attempted to disrupt those who were engaging in the workshops through arguing with me and each other, as well as picking on and bullying their classmates. In addition to deliberate attempts to interrupt other participants' engagement, it was observed a number of times throughout the workshops that when some participants disengaged this served as motivation for others to join them. The reason for this, offered by participants, was that they were conscious

that they were being watched and were uncomfortable with this, so they too disengaged.

Bullying

At times, the presence of some participants within the workshops served as a barrier to others' engagement. On this, the majority of participants commented on how Tony's presence within the workshops prevented them from engaging. As previously detailed, Tony, Jason and Pa regularly bullied other participants. Discussing this bullying and their subsequent disengagement, participants spoke about how they stopped engaging in an effort to avoid being bullied. Conor was an example of this when he selectively withdrew from a workshop for a number of minutes while he tried to compose himself after being bullied by Pa. Having asked the participants to identify three things that were important to them Pa shouted "[y]ours'll be a tub of Vaseline anyway [Conor]. Ya faggot" (RRB2WiiL69-73). Talking to Conor after this event, he discussed how angry he was with Pa and how he felt he had to stand out of the activity or else the bullying would continue. After some time, and having composed himself, Conor rejoined the group announcing to John and me "[f]uck them. Fuckin' ghouls" (RRB2WiiL75). Although Conor had decided to join back in, there were occasions during the workshops where participants sat out for longer periods and even a full workshop, as the threat of being bullied appeared too great. In talking about the impact that Tony and Greg's departure had on the workshops, participants discussed the positive atmosphere that this had within the workshops.

Although the bullying that occurred within the workshops was not entirely as a result of participants' engagement with the arts, participants did name the threat of being bullied as a result of arts engagement, as one of their most dominant barriers. Discussing this threat, Bonquisha recalled how she had previously been bullied by other students in the school for partaking in a play during her first year in St. Nessan's:

> Bonquisha: I did [a play] in first year and we did it in the *Belltable* and some other place and everyone came to see it and it was embarrassing.
> Richie: Why?
> Bonquisha: Amm … I duno, because any time I passed someone in school they would quote me from the play or even things I didn't say, they would shout them at me the whole time.
> (VD13L89-97)

Bonquisha continued to describe how this event and the bullying that followed was what prevented her from engaging in any more plays within school.

Furthering participants' experiences and perceptions that they would be bullied if they engaged in the arts, all staff members interviewed attributed the threat of being bullied as one of the primary reasons why young people didn't engage with the arts within the school and surrounding community. Staff members linked this to the fact that there wasn't a 'culture of the arts' within the school or surrounding communities and so, for the students, it was 'the unknown', something foreign, and something to be feared.

> There's a fear of being bullied over [being involved in the arts] and it's that there just isn't enough exposure to it in the community and they just feel that it's something different and they don't want to be different.
> (II6L143-145)

All staff members interviewed were also of the opinion that in order for students to engage in the arts without the fear of being ridiculed or bullied there needed to be a change in the culture of arts (dis)engagement within both the school and the surrounding communities. In seeing any future where the arts were included within school life, both participants and school staff were of the same opinion, that bullying– as one of the most dominant barriers to engagement– needed to be tackled and dealt with.

Participants' attitudes towards the arts

Maxine Greene comments that the nature of reality is that "…it is never complete" (1995, p.131). Similarly, participants' attitudes towards the arts were constantly in flux, arguably in response to the work that we were doing. While these attitudes have been implied throughout the discussion chapters so far, the purpose of this section is to directly discuss participants' attitudes towards the arts at the close of Phase 3. In addition, this section seeks to further the discussion of the arts within the communities surrounding St. Nessan's in discussing the participants' photography-diaries.

Taking the previous discussion of participants' barriers to the arts as a starting point, it can be viewed that Conor and Anna's desire to engage in visual art outside of school was communicative of their positive disposition towards visual art. Sharing a similar positive disposition towards music, Cadence documented her desire to engage in formal guitar lessons, but again, the financial aspect prevented her from doing so. Bonquisha's desire to engage with many art forms had led her to looking up possible clubs in her area but she noted the distinct lack of availability of arts provision within the community. Lily also expressed her desire to engage with music through attending piano lessons, but stated how time constraints and finance prevented her from doing so. Despite participants' barriers to engagement with the arts, they all noted their persistent desire to engage in the various art forms.

In attempting to understand the role that the arts play in the participants' lives as well as getting a greater understanding of what participants viewed as art, we decided that they would create photography diaries. The participants had two guiding questions for their photography-diaries, what art forms are in my life? And what examples of the arts are there in my community? Considering one of the participants' barriers to the arts was that of availability, it was unsurprising that they found it difficult to photograph examples of the arts in their community. Out of the seven participants who were present during the workshop only two were able to

find examples of the arts in their community; Anna and Cadence. Anna identified two pieces of art within her community, a piece of sculpture (Image 11) that she passed on her way to school every day and Thomond Park stadium which she regarded as architectural art (Image 12).



Image 11 - Sculpture, Anna



Image 12 - Architectural Art, Anna

Cadence stated how she was only able to identify one art form within her community, graffiti, but found two examples of it and documented this in her photography diary (Images 13 & 14).



Image 13 - Graffiti #1, Cadence



Image 14 - Graffiti #2, Cadence

In contrast to the lack of arts within participants' communities, they identified a number of different art forms that were important to them in their lives. In discussing these art forms and their place within their lives participants also began to reveal and discuss their attitudes towards the arts in more detail. In discussing the arts in her life, Bonquisha detailed how she didn't have many arts present within her life, besides visual art and the workshops, as there were few opportunities to engage. On this, the only photograph that she had taken for her photography diary was of a digital image that she had created in visual art class (Image 15). Her desire to engage in the arts was, however, reflected in the rest of her photography diary, which comprised of fifty-two images that she had taken from the Internet. Bonquisha stated that she had to take images from the Internet because she had nothing to take pictures of. The fifty-two images that Bonquisha took from the Internet were concerned with a wide variety of the arts in modern society and Bonquisha detailed how they were

representative of all of the different areas of the arts with which she would like to engage (see Image 16 as an example).

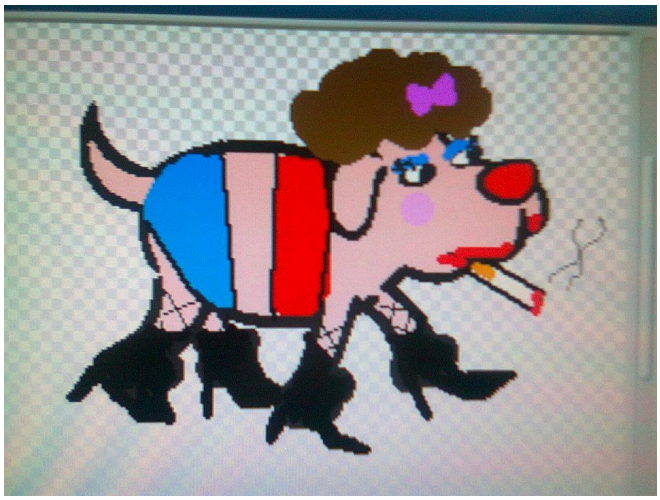


Image 15 - Digital Composition, Bonquisha



Image 16 - Visual Excerpt from Photography Diary, Bonquisha

Conor and John shared similar photos in terms of the arts in their life, and like Bonquisha, this engagement was focused around the workshops and their visual art class, particularly their designing and making of a costume (a suit of armour and a samurai sword) for an in-class competition (Image 17).

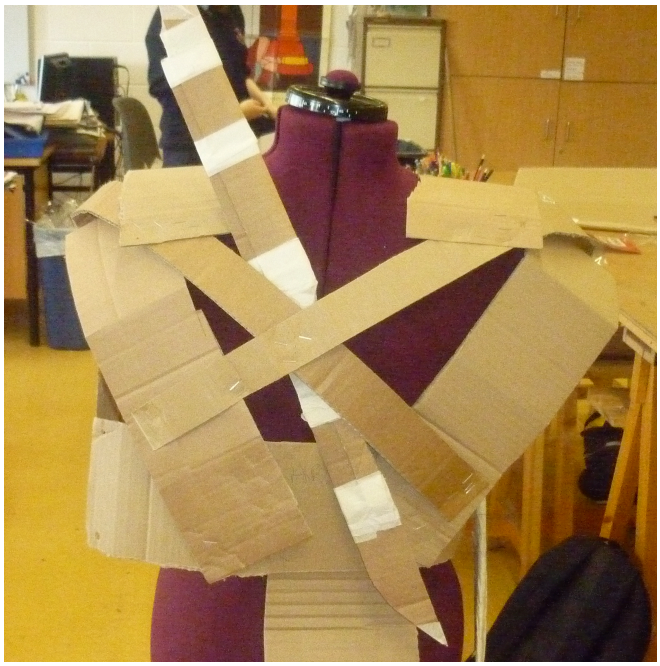


Image 17 - Suit of Armour and Samurai Sword, Conor and John

In contrast to difficulties that some others had in photographing the arts in their lives, Alana not only documented her own engagement with the arts in her life, but also documented her sister's engagement as she felt that this directly impacted and shaped her attitude towards the arts. In presenting her own engagement, Alana chose her *Beats* (headphones), her *Ipod*, her *Ipod* speaker (Image 18) and her guitar (Image 19), which were all linked to her engagement with music. Alana also chose to document and discuss her love of reading, particularly teenage fiction (Image 20). The final element of Alana's photography diary in relation to her own engagement was the inclusion of her camera (Image 21). Photography is something that Alana had grown passionate about during her year in TY and she discussed how important it had become to her and that one of her priorities every week was to regularly engage in photography.



Image 18 - Beats and Ipod, Alana



Image 19 - Guitar, Alana

Image 20 - Teenage Fiction, Alana





Image 21 - Photography, Alana

In terms of representing her sister, Jade's, engagement with the arts, Alana focused on her engagement with dance (Image 22) and the numerous trophies and awards that she has won (Image 23). In including these photographs, Alana began to discuss the role that dance played in Jade's life and how by Jade engaging with it, Alana had grown an appreciation for dance. Alana also discussed that, while she had no interest in dancing herself, she was very open to dance as an art form and watching others engage in it.



Image 22 - Jade Dancing, Alana



Image 23 - Jade's Trophies, Alana

As has been previously highlighted, participants' attitudes towards visual art appeared to change throughout TY. Participants' new visual art teacher, Ms. Arnott, appeared to have a different approach to visual art and actively encouraged students' experimentation with form and their creative input. Discussing her approach to visual art education with her, Ms.

Arnott's approach was that "…the materials are bought by the school for the students to use, they belong to them" (RRB2WviiiL8-9). Ms. Arnott's approach to visual art education and her focus on engaging students creatively was something that the participants seemed to respond very positively towards. I noted this during Block Three when, discussing rearranging the workshop time, the participants warned me not to organise it during their art classes on Friday morning. This attitude seemed to stand in contrast to participants' previous experiences and attitudes of visual art, and indeed their attitudes towards visual art earlier in the year. I feel participants' change in attitude towards visual art was two fold. Throughout the workshops many of the activities were visually based or had large elements of visual art and consequently participants were more exposed to visual art. In addition, Ms. Arnott's positive influence seemed to create a sense of openness towards visual art within the participants. I feel that both of these factors contributed to participants' changing attitude towards visual art from something that was creatively bound and mimetic to something that they enjoyed and saw value in.

As well as participants' more implicit attitudes towards the arts, which have been discussed previously, a large portion of the final focus group was taken up with directly exploring and discussing participants' current attitudes towards the arts. Out of the eleven participants who remained involved in the workshops, there were eight present during the final workshop, and consequently during the final focus group.

At the start of the focus group participants talked about their previous attitudes towards the arts. We then progressed the conversation towards their current attitudes, having had sixteen arts-based workshops. Contrasting her current attitude with her previous attitude, Anna commented how she was now "…more open to certain parts of the arts" (FGB3WivL415). Similarly, Lily commented on how she now felt more motivated to engage with music having had some experience of it: "I'm more focused on music now than before" (FGB3WivL433). In contrast to Lily and

Anna's approach, Alana focused on how participating in the process had reinforced her dislike of drama and her interest in the other art forms:

> Alana: I still don't' like drama or dance.
> Richie: That's OK. But what about the other arts?
> Alana: It's got me more interested in them.
> (FGB3WivL583-588)

Focusing on visual art, but commenting more generally on the arts, Conor commented on how the workshops changed his opinion of and attitude towards the arts:

> Conor: I like art now. I used to not like art though. Whenever I'd look, it was weirder. Like, I'd look at different shapes of art and think, that's weird but now I'm thinking of them, they're actually pretty cool.
> Richie: And what about, lets say, as well as just art, what about all of the arts, so music and drama and all of that?
> Conor: I used to, I didn't do arts like that but right now, pretty cool. Ya (Signals thumbs up).
> (FGB3WivL316-324)

Similarly, John commented on his changed attitude and how he has become "more interested" (FGB3WivL593) in the arts as a result of the workshops:

> John: Am, I find the arts a lot more interesting now.
> Richie: Why?
> John: Like, you always judge stuff before you know 'em because they're different but then when you actually do them you find out that they're actually pretty cool.
> (FGB3WivL329-335)

While the other participants discussed how their attitudes towards the arts had changed as a result of the workshops, Bonquisha commented on how, similar to her opinion prior to the workshops, she was positively disposed to the arts. Bonquisha discussed how each workshop and each artistic form that she encountered reiterated her passion for the arts: "…every art thing that I do reaffirms my opinion of them, that I still like them all" (FGB3Wiv345) … "I'm equally interested as before" (FGB3WivL571).

In contrast to Bonquisha's affirmation of her openness towards the arts, the workshops for Cadence affirmed the opposite. In discussing her opinion of the arts and how this hasn't changed Cadence said, "…I still don't think about them" (FGB3WivL351). Despite quizzing Cadence about the art

forms that we had engaged and her attitude towards them, her response remained the same, that she was unaffected by the arts as they simply held no place in her life, nor could she ever see them doing so, and so remained "indifferent" (FGB3WivL577). While Dawn was present throughout the entire focus group, she refused to answer any questions and any attempts to engage her were met with complete silence. Dawn did communicate with Bonquisha however and in response to my question of how she felt about the arts and what she thought of them, Bonquisha relayed Dawn's message, "same as" (FGB3WivL367) with reference to her aligning herself with Cadence's view of the arts and how she was unaffected by them.

In attempting to elicit more information around participants' experiences within the workshops and their attitudes towards the arts we talked about whether the participants were glad that they were involved in the workshops. Unanimously, participants answered yes, albeit for different reasons. For Bonquisha, Anna, Alana, John, and Conor, their responses all centred around their enjoyment of the art forms that we had engaged in and how they were empowered to try out and explore new things. In contrast, Cadences' response was:

> Cadence: Ya.
> Richie: Why?
> Cadence: I got out of religion man.
> Richie: Ok. Is there any other reason why you're glad you got involved in them?
> Cadence: No.
> (FGB3WivL462-470)

In contrast to Cadence's response, Dawn's response was– while she was glad she was involved in the workshops– she couldn't' articulate a reason why:

> Richie: Dawn, were you glad that you were involved in them?
> (Dawn nods) *silence*
> Why?
> Dawn: I don't know.
> (FGB3WivL472-478)

Delving deeper into participants' attitudes towards specific art forms, they discussed how they were more open to the arts as a whole, except for Cadence and Dawn, but some still had little to no interest in engaging with

dance and drama. This was surprising considering the extent to which John, Conor, Alana, Anna, Bonquisha and Lily had engaged within the drama work in both Block One and Block Two. Participants also discussed how working with photography and audio-visual cameras made engagement with the arts more interesting and new because typically they would not be allowed to engage with these things. While dance, drama, literature & poetry, and music received mixed reviews from participants in terms of whether they would like to engage with them again, in discussing visual art all participants stated that they would engage with visual art again.

Participants' attitudes towards the arts were further exposed when they discussed how they felt now that they workshops were finished. As the discussion continued everyone began detailing how they felt now that the workshops were over. John and Conor's comments were concerned with wishing we could continue the workshops for longer and rewinding to earlier in the year so that they could engage with them again. Similarly, Bonquisha's comment echoed Alana's when she said, "[m]elancholy … 'cuz, I duno, it was fun and I don't want to. I'd like to keep doing it" (FGB3WivL1049-1051). In keeping with her previously expressed attitude towards the arts, Cadence said that she felt "[i]ndifferent. It doesn't bother me either way" (FGB3Wiv1060). In contrast to Cadence's indifference, the reality of Lily's comment seemed to hit home as its gravity was conveyed in the silence that followed:

> …I feel sad because I really enjoyed it and we may not get to do this kind of stuff again. It could be the last time we ever do stuff like this.
>
> (FGB3WivL1037-1039)

The weight of Lily's comment seemed to hang on everyone for the minute or so that was left in the focus group and the reality that despite their attitudes towards the arts, the participants may not be presented with the opportunity to engage in the arts in the future. This is a particularly bleak thought but one that some participants felt they had to come to terms with.

Chapter Conclusion

The purpose of chapter seven was to deepen the narrative of the research through discussing the role that the arts played and participants' responses to the arts. As detailed, participants' attitudes towards the arts were predominantly negative as a result of their previous experience with the arts in their community-based clubs and through their visual art classroom in school. Theoretically, TY provides the ideal space within which participants can experience the arts. The inherent flexibility in the curriculum serves to support the provision of alternative learning experiences for students. In St. Nessan's, this research and deeper/alternative engagement with the arts formed part of those learning experiences. In terms of the school staff, they appeared to be divided amongst the product/process orientation of the arts, with some viewing the arts as primarily a product and others viewing them in terms of offering students' personal development.

Within the workshops, two primary models of the arts were used to understand engagement, DBAE and IAA. The discussion in this chapter around the models engaged is not intended to argue for one approach over the other, but simply to elicit how the models were employed and how participants responded to them. On this, both models saw some participants engaging positively with them while others found difficulty with them. Notably one of the necessities for some students to engage in the arts was the lessening of the fictional lens and the grounding of the arts in participants' lives. This was achieved through the inclusion of PM. PM were initially conceived as a research tool but their importance in terms of participants' engagement with the arts soon emerged and they became a vital part of the process. Notably, the IAA, within which PM are included, provided a means through which participants could begin to express themselves emotionally and arguably developed a sense of empathy. For example, in relation to the work on *Guernica*.

The participants also identified four primary barriers to their engagement with the arts; availability and opportunities to engage, finance, peer disengagement, and bullying.

Through participants' engagement with the workshops it appeared that a number of them had become positively disposed towards the arts and now appeared to be more motivated towards engaging with the arts in future. This however was not the case for all of the participants and Cadence and Dawn stated that the workshops had reaffirmed their dislike of the arts and were now just as indifferent towards them as previously. Bonquisha stated that she was as positively disposed towards the arts as she was before the workshops and her photography diary captured the degree to which she wanted to be involved in various arts activities. Alana also stated that she was positively disposed towards the arts, particularly photography which she had become interested in during the year. Alana also commented that seeing her sister engage in dance made her appreciate it more but she still had limited interest in dance.

At the close of the workshops, many participants expressed their desire to be engaged in the arts again and appeared almost melancholic and sad because the workshops had come to an end, which some admitted might mean the end of their arts engagement throughout their life.

Chapter 8

Halting PAR: (Re)presenting our Experiences through the Arts

Truth is revealed and established more through the testimony of actions than through logic or even observation.
(Fals-Borda, 2001, p.30)

We are, in a sense, looking for new stars … [and] new seas. We are … exploring the edges. There is, I think, no better place from which to see the stars and no better position from which to discover new seas than the view one gets from the edge.
(Eisner, 1997, p.9, refering to alternative forms of data representation)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to continue the storying/narrativisation of the research (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin and Murphy, 2007) as participants and I furthered our action. The narrative in this chapter builds upon previous chapters and, through international literature, grounds our action within the artistic, educational and PAR spheres. Much of the discussion in this chapter is about various interactions and relationships between different parties. This is in recognition of the fact that generating work in the arts is ultimately about creating relationships and connections (Bartleet, 2009). In this vein, the chapter seeks to openly talk about the relationships so that they are open for others to "…relate to, learn from, and maybe challenge" (Bartleet, 2009, p.729).

Although much of the PAR literature documents the necessity to establish and exercise a sense of action orientation, rarely does it discuss how this can be done. In engaging this action, one is partaking in the final phase of PAR, change agency. As is the cyclical and iterative nature of PAR, this change agency can occur at various stages throughout the research. Agency was exerted in two particular instances in this research. When participants acknowledged a change or reiteration of their attitudes towards the arts this could be conceived of as their change agency. That is, having reflected on the workshops, they acknowledged a change to, or affirmation of, their previous attitude. This change agency was engaged after the three previous stages of PAR; assessment, broadening horizons and reassessment (Enright

and O'Sullivan, 2010). For some, their change agency culminated in this acknowledgement. For others, their involvement in Phase 5 signified an iterative movement through the phases of PAR again, specifically those of reassessment and change agency. This revisiting of the PAR stages signified a greater sense of change agency, as participants were concerned with acting upon their agency and generating a "speak out" (Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p.5); a space and platform where their voices and experience were given privilege of expression. Phase 5 of the research took place in St. Nessan's between January 2013 and May 2013, nine months after the end of Phase 3.

Validating the data

Within ABER, student voice, and PAR scholars state that participants should be engaged within all stages of the research (McTaggart, 1997; Delgado, 2006; Finley, 2008; McIntyre, 2008; Mitra, 2008; Leavy, 2009; Luttrell and Chalfen, 2010). Furthermore, member checking/validating the data was a means of attempting to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Bryman, 2008). With my field notes and reflections forming a large part of the data, set I wanted to "…ensure that there [was] good correspondence between [my] findings and the perspectives and experiences of [the] research participants" (Bryman, 2008, p.377). In addition, this research belonged as much to the participants as it did to me, and I felt a sense of responsibility and duty to share my interpretation of the data with them so that they weren't left contemplating the point of the workshops or what had happened to the research and me (Kane and O'Reilly-DeBrun, 2001, see also Grover, 2004). Participant validation is also considered a validity check within PAR projects (Fine, 2007a) and thus became a necessary element of Phase 5. As well as this, in the process of moving forwards, towards a further sense of agency, it was necessary to reassess and recap what had previously happened. Paradoxically, this meant that going forward first involved traveling backwards.

In the nine months between Phase 3 and Phase 5 the minimal contact that I had with participants was over *Facebook*. Using *Facebook* to arrange a time that suited participants and then checking this with the school, I went into St. Nessan's in January 2013 so that participants could validate the data. The data was presented to the participants through themes; in a similar format to how it is presented in this thesis. I selected quotes from interviews, video diaries, and focus groups to highlight and explain some of the discussion points and arranged this all in a *Keynote* presentation.

When I entered the school Cadence, Alana, Anna, Bonquisha, Lily, George, Tony, Pa, and Dawn came to the space to meet me. After saying hello and telling the participants what we would be doing Tony stood up and said "I'd rather be back in class than doing this shit" and with that he and Greg left the space. There didn't appear to be any aggression or malice in the way the two boys left the space and I felt it important that I respect their decision to leave. With that said, I also felt that there were enough participants present to provide a necessary critique of the data.

With the contentious nature of some of the analysis, in terms of power struggles and some participants' negative attitudes towards the arts I was concerned that some might take offence. This wasn't the case however and areas that I expected tension and protestation were met with laughs, jeers, and smiles. Participants recommended that none of the analysis should be changed or modified as it presented a true reflection of the events that had occurred. After discussing the presentation I asked participants if anyone would be interested in generating a performance-exhibition to feed some of the information back to the school, much in line with Fals Borda's (1991, p.9) assertion that:

> [t]here is an obligation to return this knowledge systematically to the communities and workers' organizations because they continue to be its owners.

Cadence, Bonquisha, Dylan, and Alana said that they would be interested and so we agreed a date and time to have our first meeting about the performance-exhibition.

During member checking, participants also talked about what had happened to the group since we last met. Specifically, they noted how Jason, John, and Conor no longer attended school. Jason had been expelled from school and a week later readmitted. He, however, had chosen not to attend school since that point. After TY, John and Conor enrolled in LCA but similar to Jason no longer attended school. Further discussions with staff revealed that the boys sometimes came into school, on rare occasions attended the first class, and then left the school grounds. Teachers stated how John and Conor had 'gone off the rails' and expressed their frustrations with the two boys as well as their lack of understanding around why they no longer attended school.

Why a performance-exhibition?

Furthering Fals Borda's (1991) assertion, Swantz (2008, p.45) too mandates that "…knowledge gained through research [must] become part of people's lives" and that this is a vital element of the emancipatory and transformative nature of PAR. In feeding back this knowledge to the community, it was important to consider the audiences and acknowledge that we were trying "…to reach audiences that are not normally very accessible to academic researchers" (Knowles and Promislow, 2008b, p.518). The generation of a performance-exhibition to do this appeared to make "…inherent sense given the focus and substance of the research" (*ibid.*), as well as "…enhancing the possibilities for gathering a different quality of information and interpreting and presenting it creatively" (Knowles and Promislow, 2008b, p.519). Commenting on the development of an effective communicative base through which to feedback knowledge, Fals Borda (1991, p.9-10) recommends the development of a:

> …total or intentional language [which includes] the use of image, sound, painting, gestures, mime, photographs, radio programs, popular theatre, videotapes, audiovisual material, poetry, music, puppets and exhibitions. … The resulting plan and understandable language is based on daily intentional expressions and is accessible to all, voiding the airs of arrogance and the technical jargon that spring from usual academic and political practices …

In devising this total or intentional language, the focus is not only on the end product but also recognises the transformative potential inherent in the creation of the artistic pieces (Barone, 2008a). That is, the process of generating the work impacts on the researcher and participants, just as the product impacts those who engage with it. The process orientated nature and the inevitable impact of generating and presenting the pieces also speaks to the transformative and action oriented nature of PAR (Herr and Anderson, 2005; McIntyre 2008). Parts of this change agency stem from the necessity for the participants and me to embrace the artistic process as visual artists, poets, authors, photographers, musicians etc. (Knowles and Promislow, 2008b). This is not to suggest that we are claiming to be professional and experienced arts practitioners, but an acknowledgement that there is a:

> …willingness to come to know the art form (or forms) in some depth and to a degree that makes inherent sense for the purposes of the project at hand.
>
> (Knowles and Promislow, 2008b, p.519)

Furthermore, as Knowles and Promislow (*ibid*) highlight, there are no standard measures of artistic abilities within the context of the scholARTistic work, but an acknowledgement that the art forms are a tool in the re-presentation of data and experience. In re-presenting the data and experiences we were of the view that:

> [a]n understanding of the language of the self can help us better negotiate the world. It can also help us to begin to forge the basis of *social transformation;* the building of a better world, the altering of the very ground upon which we live and work.
>
> (McLaren, 2009, p.80)

The focus in using the arts as a tool to share experience and meaning does not suggest that form was not considered. Similarly, it does not attempt to nullify the artistic process that we engaged in to generate the works.

With this in mind, perhaps the aim in generating the performance-exhibition can best be understood as an effort to "…understand this world and provoke others to understand it[, so that] in some fashion [we could move] to transform it [together]" (Greene, 1995, p.44-45). Furthermore, this conscious action was an attempt to "…see beyond … the normal … and to carve out new orders in experience" (Greene, 1995, p.19). In consciously coming together to generate action we were also acknowledging the "…very real ties between conception and action" (Apple, 2012, p.80) and that "[i]magining things being otherwise may be a first step towards acting on the belief that they can be changed" (Greene, 1995, p.22).

Generating the performance-exhibition

The agreement between the participants and me, in preparing for the performance-exhibition, was that we would meet eight times and that each meeting would last for approximately an hour. This timescale was incredibly naïve, however, and didn't account for the necessary time to re-build relationships (Delgado, 2006), begin to see "…below the obvious surface" (Oliver, 2010, p.45), conceive and engage in the making of the arts pieces (Finley, 2008; Knowles and Promislow, 2008b), and most importantly it didn't account for the time necessary to get lost (Lather, 2007). As the process unfolded and more time was required to tend to each of these factors, the participants and I spent thirty-six hours together in preparing for the performance-exhibition. In terms of documenting the time, I took field notes during each meeting and used a research journal to order my thoughts and the various experiences within the meetings. It is from these two sources and my own memories of the meetings that the content of this section is derived.

In approaching the first meeting to co-generate the performance exhibition I presumed a certain familiarity would be present, both in terms of the participants' relationship with me and also their familiarity with the arts, as a result of the work that we had done last year. Although the familiarity with me was present, and very clearly identifiable from the way in which the participants spoke and engaged with me, their familiarity with the arts seemed to have been lost. My reflective diary on this meeting brings to the fore my sense of deflation. It was as if the work that we had done last year had never happened. The participants that were present (Cadence, Dylan, Alana, and Bonquisha) articulated their feelings of being *at sea* and entirely unsure of how to approach the arts, and indeed the performance-exhibition. Talking with them about this, it emerged that these feelings stemmed from a renewed unfamiliarity with the arts. In my research diary I documented my realisation that "…we have to start from the start again … and begin to build up the participants' confidence in relation to the arts" (RRH2L70-75). Discussing their engagement with the arts, the participants noted their lack of engagement since the end of Phase 3. Lily's comment during the final focus group, "…we may not get to do this kind of stuff again" (FGB3WivL1037-1038), now seemed prophetic. Alana was the only participant to continue engagement with the arts, through her photography. She, however, highlighted that this was the only art form that she had engaged in since. This in itself was action however, as prior to the workshops in Phase 3 Alana had not engaged with photography.

Within the first meeting, participants had great difficulty in recalling and documenting the Phase 3 workshops and their responses to them. In keeping with the nature of PAR and its focus on honesty between the researcher and participants, I decided to document my memories of the action and my own reactions to this. Stumped at what to write herself, and seeing me "…unleash my mind and fill the front and back of an A4 page … [Cadence exclaimed] … 'you remember all that? Look at how much you're writing'" (RRH229-31). My writing was concerned with recalling various memories from Phase 3; "…my attitudes towards the participants, my frustrations in relation to their lack of engagement, the teachers and their

attitudes, and Ms. Culhane's concern for the participants" (RRH2L31-36). I shared the sheet with the participants and they seemed surprised that I would do so. Seeing the honesty within my sheet and my desire to capture what I could remember seemed to encourage the participants to do so too. Generating a scaffold for them to engage with, I asked them to generate a number of *thought bubbles* around what they were thinking during the workshops or what, in hindsight, their opinion was of the workshops. What emerged from this task was an entry point into our experience. Cadence's speech bubbles documented her reflection on the workshops and a re-evaluation of her attitude and actions:

> -Looking back! The workshops pushed us out of our comfort zones which is why I got grrr.
> -The workshops made me more open minded and now I don't scoff at the idea of new things
> -Looking back: On reflection, I don't think I'd go back and participate more but I would be more pleasant about it.
>
> (RRH2L45-49)

Dylan's thought bubbles were just as honest but were concerned with what he hadn't gotten from the workshops because of his absence from them:

> I felt bad being out alot because people got to do alot in the workshop and I wasnt there to experience it[.]
>
> (RRH2L53-54)

In talking to Dylan about this, he discussed his loneliness in school and spoke about how the group last year became very close and he wasn't a part of that because of his frequent absences. For Dylan, his involvement in the meetings and the performance-exhibition wasn't just about taking action and expressing his voice; it was also about trying to create connections and relationships with the others that he had missed out on last year. Turino (2008, p.2) argues that "…the forming and sustaining [of] social groups" are one of inherent benefits of the arts and this, for Dylan, appeared to be one of his foci in being involved in the meetings.

In journaling the first meeting with participants and then discussing this with my critical friend, Fiona, I realised that it wasn't simply a case of starting again with participants. The more that I engaged in discussion around the meeting the more I realised that the participants were in fact

open to the arts and had a positive view of them but were stuck in terms of how to engage with them once again. Acknowledging that I had attempted to engage participants exclusively through the written word, I was provoked to consider alternative ways of engaging them. My word-centric approach hadn't attempted to engage the participants in any creative or imaginative way and so my rethinking required an acknowledgement that "[i]magination breathes life into experience" (Greene, 1995, p.22). The space that I had created was one of fact-finding and rigid reflection, instead of attempting to generate a space that possessed an "…affective dimension and oneiric dimension" (Boal, 1995, p.18). Opening a dialogue on *Facebook,* I encouraged participants to think about the various things that had happened and messages we might want to communicate. Acknowledging participants' positive engagement with visual art in Phase 3, I then set about generating a number of visual tasks through which we could reflectively engage on our experiences.

When I next met the participants I prefaced our meeting with my reasons for generating a piece of scholARTistry (Knowles *et al.*, 2008). In doing this, I was attempting to keep participants informed and ensure that they understood, from my perspective, why we were engaging in the process. This led to a discussion of the audience for the performance-exhibition. Recalling their drama experience with Gary last year, participants stated that they did not want any of the students in the school present at the performance-exhibition. I reassured the participants that both the generation and presentation of the pieces would have to be democratically agreed. This joint-decision making was enacted immediately when Cadence argued that she didn't think we should put our names to pieces. Talking about this, all participants agreed that creating anonymity around the pieces was a good idea. Their primary argument behind this was a fear that their pieces would receive less attention than mine, which would militate against our intention of having everyone's voices heard (Devine, 2004; Grover, 2004; Clark and Moss, 2011). The participants' were also afraid of a possible backlash, if some of the audience members responded negatively to

the pieces, and so we decided to simply put all of the pieces forward from the group.

Despite not seeing the participants for nine months, there appeared be a clear development in our relationship, a mutual care and trust between us. This appeared to manifest itself in Cadence asking:

> [w]hat do you get from this? I mean, we're getting the chance to participate and involve ourselves in the arts, last year we had the workshops, but what do you *actually* get out of this? (RRH3L126-129)

Cadence was unhappy that I was only getting a 'PhD' and was adamant that I receive something else from the process. In thinking about this, I spoke to the group about how, as a teacher, engaging in this process was deepening my knowledge of how to engage students and the power of listening to their voices. Cadence's concern appeared genuine and I was quite touched by this. This led me to contemplate the development in our relationship and so I re-opened the topic of the various power struggles that we had engaged in last year. The participants' discussed their initial responses to me and the instigation of power struggles through a negative case. The group detailed how, two months before I met them (Phase 3), another researcher had been in the school. She appeared to be researching DEIS schools and particularly students' attitudes towards attending third level. Recalling the researcher, participants detailed how she was very formally dressed, wore designer labels, *Gucci* shoes and had a *Chanel* handbag. Discussing the focus groups that participants were involved in with the female researcher, Cadence spoke about how she felt looked down upon and how her voice was repeatedly ignored. The group also detailed how they felt the researcher had "…preconceived notions of what she would find" (RRH3L89). The participants also spoke about how the female researcher promised that she would debrief and share the results but never did, which Grover (2004) notes is prevalent within research with children. Consequently, having heard that I was entering the school to do my PhD research, the participants discussed how this was a negative thing, based on their previous experience. "Bonquisha: you were doing your PhD research

and so was she. When we heard that, we presumed you'd be the same as her" (RRH3L148-150). Participants' attitudes towards external researchers appeared to be inherently negative and they explained their power struggles in terms of this. Furthermore, they speculated that Tony's original aggression was as a result of his experiences with the female researcher also. In concluding the discussion, participants briefly talked about how they had felt the other researcher was talking *at* them and doing research *on* them. They contrasted this with the work we had done, where they felt their voices were heard and we were doing work together.

This brings me back to a quote that I referred to earlier in this thesis in relation to the participants' difficulties in co-constructing. Bundy (2003) discusses the necessity for trust in co-constructing with children and students. That is, trusting:

> [t]he workshop leader; the group process; the physical, emotional and intellectual responses of other participants; their membership and status in the group; the appropriateness of their own responses; their image/perception of themselves; and the disclosure of the private self in the public sphere.
>
> (2003, p.179)

While participants' had difficulties with co-constructing previously, perhaps due to a lack of trust and care both for our relationship and the process, it appeared that there was now a great deal of care and trust between us and that they were more open to being active co-constructors and collaborators within Phase 5.

Returning to the work of the performance-exhibition, our ideas and messages appeared to be in a constant state of flux. Over a number of weeks we brainstormed and, while doing so, were reminded of various events that had occurred during Phase 3. These events appeared to anchor the messages that we wished to express, as we each came to feel strongly about various experiences that we had during Phase 3. Interestingly, in talking about an event, everyone recounted their own version of it, which provoked us all to re-view what had happened in line with others' understanding, which inevitably served to enlarge our understanding

(Barone, 2008a; Eisner, 2008a; 2008b; Mitra, 2008; Barone and Eisner, 2012) and had the potential to lead us towards a "wide-awakeness" (Greene, 1995, p.35).

Although we each had difficulties in articulating our messages at times, Cadence and Alana seemed to be able to articulate their messages more clearly when fuelled with anger. This resonates with Maxine Greene when she says:

> [g]iven [students] expanding sense of diversity, their storytelling and their joining together may be informed now and then by outrage too– outrage at injustices and reifications and violations.
>
> (1995, p.42)

During one meeting the two girls entered the space outraged at what had happened in school that day. They felt that their voices were being actively ignored by some of their teachers and this enraged them to the point of action. In this meeting, the girls repeatedly stated how they *wanted* to be heard and that the performance-exhibition was one of the platforms that they could do this. From my perspective, the performance-exhibition was not only a space to recount the experiences of Phase 3, but it was also an opportunity for participants to share their past and current educational experiences. In this sense, it was an opportunity for participants to have their voices heard and counted and it was important for me that the participants understood this too. In line with the girls' outrage, it appeared that the performance-exhibition was increasingly becoming a space where we were positioning ourselves as "…truth tellers, theorists, and experts, to help teachers critically examine their own beliefs, compulsions and practices" (Rodríguez and Brown, 2009, p.31).

Alana and Cadence's frustrations appeared to empower them towards being heard and created a resilience and determination. After their diatribe the atmosphere settled in the space and a discussion around 'voice' took place. Alana and Cadence both admitted that last year, during Phase 3, they hadn't thought expressing their voices would be possible. They, however,

acknowledged that in my returning to work with them, they were enabled to realise the potential of their voices and that the arts can provide a form through which their voices can be heard (Hoffman Davis, 2008). It became apparent that the participants had been moved towards action and now shared a common action orientation, to have their voices heard (Mitra, 2008). Participants appeared to have developed a sense of personal agency, where, as autonomous individuals, they "…have the capacity to imaginatively shape their own lives by having the courage to write their own stories" (Siegesmund and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p.244).

In engaging in alternative forms of data representation we were, however, presented with difficulties. Due to their limited experience with the arts between Phase 3 and Phase 5 a reintroduction was required. Part of this reintroduction was viewing the artistic pieces that we had previously generated. These pieces seemed to motivate participants and they expressed their willingness to experiment with varying art forms in an effort to convey their voice (Hoffman Davis, 2008). In keeping with the integrated nature of the research and the sense of democracy that had been created, participants were free to choose the art forms they wanted to present their messages through. Some participants chose individual art forms, in terms of a poem or a visual, while others chose to integrate and combine art forms. As we began to play and experiment with combining art forms, or indeed articulating our messages through individual art forms, we began to reveal more of ourselves to each other (Eisner, 1997). I felt it was pertinent that my voice be present within the performance-exhibition too, and so I decided to contribute to a number of pieces.

My decision to generate pieces for the performance-exhibition stemmed from a number of factors. I had shared a great deal in the research and undoubtedly my response to participants' power struggles and decisions that we made during Phase 3 impacted the work. Furthermore, I felt that if all of the pieces were from the participants' perspective, the teachers might view this as being unfairly biased and by adding my voice to the pieces they were, arguably, receiving a more balanced story/perspective. Additionally, I

was aware of the multiplicity of voices inherent within the research and felt that making a "…story in collaborative dialogue" and action with each other would generate an awareness that our "…story is one of many stories, one of many versions of the story" (Leggo, 2008). Another reason that I felt the inclusion of my voice was important within the performance-exhibition was so that:

> [t]hrough performing, our representations of our research experience [are] personalized for the audience participants, enabling them to grasp some of our thoughts and feelings in the process of the [researcher-participant relationship].
>
> (Roulston *et al.*, 2008, p.216)

In line with PAR and ABER philosophies, I acknowledge that the research impacted and changed me in various ways– generating resonances, challenging opinions and interpretations, and respecting and acknowledging new and different understandings (Jenoure, 2008)– and I felt that I would not be respectful of this change if my voice were not present. Furthermore, PAR, ABER and student voice research ascribe that the participants and researcher are involved in all aspects of the research. The performance-exhibition formed an element of the PAR process and our collective action as a group. In deciding to make my voice present within the performance-exhibition I was acutely aware of the danger of 'going native' (Bryman, 2008), however, but felt that including my voice would further democratise my relationship with the participants as we were generating collective social action. This danger of going native was very real however, and at various points I found myself consciously taking a step back to re-evaluate what, as a group, we were doing and whether we were achieving our aim through the pieces. While I had my own feelings on why my voice should be included, this was also discussed amongst the group. The participants argued for my involvement, stating that we were all involved in the research and consequently should all contribute to the pieces. They also noted that having my input in the performance-exhibition would make them more comfortable and feel less exposed.

The pieces generated for the performance-exhibition engaged our own lived experience as well as our imagined experience; creating pieces from our own

and others' perspectives. For example, a participant writing from my perspective, me writing from their perspective, or indeed writing from an external perspective such as a teacher's. In doing this we were forcing ourselves to re-view our experiences from alternative perspectives. While this may prove a tension to some audience members and scholars who agree that "…fiction remains a no-no, a mode of expression … that is simply off-limits" (Banks and Banks, 1998, p.17, cited in Barone and Eisner, 2012), the world of fiction presents a range of possibilities within ABER. Barone and Eisner urge researchers to resist the intimidation inherent in creating works of fiction from those who view it as "…a bridge too far" (2012, p.101). They encourage those who generate ABER to acknowledge that works of fiction possess the:

> ...extraordinary power to disturb and disrupt the familiar and commonplace, to question and interrogate that which seems to have already been answered conclusively, and to redirect the conversation regarding important social issues.
>
> (Barone and Eisner, 2012, p.101)

Furthermore, Barone and Eisner comment that regardless of fact or fiction, we must come to an understanding that "…others with alternative backgrounds, ideologies, and worldviews will do with it what they will" (2012, p.120). In this way, they assert that a certain bravery and risk-taking is required of the researcher and encourage those engaged in ABER to be wiling to take these risks.

The factual and fictitious pieces that we presented went through a rigorous editing process by us. Having presented my own pieces to the participants, we discussed them and decided that parts of them needed to be changed and edited, which the participants then helped with. Likewise, when participants brought in their pieces, we problematized how they were communicating our desired messages and attempted to create clarity. In doing so, we were each contributing towards the creation of all of the pieces. In this, and in deciding to include my voice amongst the participants I shared Jones/Olomo's opinion that "[c]ollective scholarship works as a buoy rather than a weight" (2008, p.196).

With that in mind, I do not suggest that showing our pieces to each other was an easy process and I draw particularly on my own experience as an example. As facilitator, I felt that the onus was on me to present my pieces to the group first and distinctly recall my nervousness around this. As I approached the *parents' room*, where we had our meetings, the tart aroma of coffee wafted towards me. Usually this smell was a welcome invitation into the space. On this instance however, it made my stomach turn as I was reminded of the promise I had made to participants in the previous meeting, that I would show them my pieces. As I reluctantly entered the *parents' room*, I hoped that the participants would have forgotten. Bounding into the space ten minutes later, after saying hello, Cadence and Dylan quickly reminded me. Having worked on the pieces for a number of weeks I was still grossly unhappy with them and made several excuses as to why they weren't ready to be seen. Not accepting this, Cadence placed her hand on my shoulder and said, "[y]ou'll be fine. We want to see them." Although I trusted them to be respectful, I had never shared my compositions with anyone and there was an innate fear of ridicule. As I took the pieces out of my bag and unrolled them, butterflies began to swarm around my stomach. Recounting the event, even now, causes them to return, and I distinctly remember my tenseness as I watched the participants' eyes roaming the A2 sheet. Cadence was the first to react and she said "[a]ww, I love it." This settled my nerves a little but it wasn't until all group members had given their approval that I began to relax. In a very supportive manner, the participants suggested areas that might be changed in order to make the message clearer and taking note of these I agreed. I found this experience extremely stressful and it developed my sense of empathy when participants expressed their nervousness in revealing their pieces to the group.

Over the next number of weeks we each began to share our pieces and work on them as a group. This proved to be a very rewarding experience as each person added his or her individual contributions and support. In addition, those who were comfortable at drawing added elements of images to some pieces, and those who were comfortable at writing returned the gesture, and

so we "…exploit[ed] individual aptitudes" (Eisner, 2005, p.181). In doing so, all pieces can be viewed as being co-constructed, with many contributors, while still paying attention to the unique message and communication of individuals. As more pieces were shared and explored I began to feel more enthused and secure in the process. I looked forward to the meetings and it was "…riveting and … refreshing … to see the extent of co-construction and support for each other" (RRH7L86-88). As enthusiasm turned towards excitement, I decided to challenge ourselves in turning some of the poems that we had created into songs. My motivation in doing this was to personally challenge us but also to vary the forms that we presented in the performance-exhibition so that further spaces could be created "…where new and wider audiences can access the articulation of new knowledge" (Knowles and Promislow, 2008a, p.2). As a group, we decided that two poems should be set to music. It was agreed that I would perform them as all of the participants refused to sing but thought that adding music and performing the poems was necessary for the two pieces. While everyone had contributed to the poetry composition in some way, participants felt very restricted when it came to putting the poetry to music. In preparing for the meeting I played with some melodies, all of which were instantly rejected by the participants because they "…sound[ed] like a church song" (RRH8L58). Willing the participants to compose the pieces with me, their frustrations grew. They seemed frustrated that they were unable to help, with every question from me being met with "I don't know. I don't know anything about music" (RRH8L61). Acknowledging that "[i]f the arts are about anything, they are about emotion, and emotion has to do with the ways in which we feel" (Eisner, 2008a, p.11), we turned from composing music, towards emotion. We began to discuss the emotions that were contained in the poems and the emotions that they attempted to evoke. This led us to talking about how these emotions could be created in sound and how these different sounds should support the poetic message. Doing this seemed to help the participants to feel more comfortable, as they began to express where they felt the music should change, become angry, anguished and sad. Taking these suggestions on board the participants assigned me homework to compose the melodies and then bring them in for their approval.

Although I have been singing for many years this was my first attempt at composition and I enlisted the help of two friends, Owen Gilhooly and Hazel Tuohy, which the participants first approved. Owen and I worked on the melody of *What I Know* and taking the various ideas and directions that the participants had given me, considered them and tried to integrate them into the melody of the piece. Our focus within this was to capture and represent the various emotions and changes that participants had described. I composed the melody of *Our Experience* on my own, and attempted to capture, as the participants had described it, the reflective nature of the piece. Hazel and I then composed the accompaniments to both pieces. All three of us, Hazel, Owen and myself were acutely aware of the communicative intent of the pieces and so the melodies and accompaniment had to reflect the poetic intention that the participants and me had discussed.

Although this process has been described in a short number of lines, it took a number of weeks of revisiting and tweaking, bringing to the participants for them to hear and then recomposing and altering the poems and compositions. All of the work on the musical compositions happened outside of the meeting times and took in excess of forty hours to complete between composing and recomposing elements. For me, this element was a form of extended co-construction, and had qualities of what Hoffman Davis (2008) terms arts expanded education. That is, the co-construction moved beyond the school setting and engaged those who possessed more acute knowledge or skills where we were lacking. Through this we were also extending our audience community to Owen and Hazel who were engaging, interrogating and learning from the work in actively composing and discussing the pieces.

In talking about the musical compositions Cadence questioned whether the musical style was appropriate considering it was being presented in the school and people may not like opera or classical singing. This opened up the discussion of the audience's interpretation of the various pieces. I explained to the group that while the pieces weren't composed in a classical

style, because of my technique the sound might still be classical. This led to an exploration of my voice and the participants guided me in terms of choosing a sound that they felt was more appropriate to the compositions. This however made me very uncomfortable as singing classically and being able to engage my technique is my safety net. It did however provoke me to expose facets that I feel may have added to the piece and also the audience's interpretation.

I was very conscious that my role in composing and presenting the vocal pieces signified another means through which my own voice was being utilised as a mediating voice, with all the limits and potential opportunities inherent in any act of interpretation. Within the composition of the pieces, my voice was attempting to mediate the participants' wishes, desires, and intentions and ensure that these were adhered to and respected, while also creatively engaging in the composition of the melodies and accompaniments. This generated a further sense of equality and democracy but also signified a further act of translation. In engaging this act of translation not only was I interpreting the work myself, but I was attempting to interpret it while being respectful to the intention and interpretation of the participants also, considering what they wanted communicated through the pieces. My voice was thus not only a mediating voice in terms of the compositional elements of the pieces but also in terms of the expression of the songs. Consequently, my voice sonically, expressively, and metaphorically included participants' voices through what was expressed but more importantly through *how* that voice was expressed, the vocal colours elicited, the timbre and placing of the voice, and indeed the more somatic elements to the expression.

In terms of the various other compositions that were generated throughout the meetings, many of us experienced difficulties with form. The majority of these difficulties, however, were overcome by a communal approach to the composition process. Although one person may have been responsible for the instigation of a message, they may have harnessed the talents and strong points of others to complete their composition. In addition, with poetry being the most familiar art form to participants, it meant that we

had a disproportionately large number of poetic compositions. Feeling uncomfortable about relying so heavily on the written word, some participants decided that they would convert their poems to alternative forms– drawings, photography, and integrated pieces– in an effort to communicate their messages differently. In this way, perhaps "…writing in different ways [helped us to] discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it" (Richardson, 2000, p.923, cited in Bartleet, 2009, p.723).

While many of the compositions derived from personal experience in the workshops, some participants chose to interrogate some of the 'findings' from Phase 3. Not only were data/findings included within individual compositions but, as a group, we also decided to include some group-composed pieces. As well as pieces specifically composed for the performance-exhibition, we decided to curate one of the pieces that had been generated through the workshops as we felt that it was quite powerful and was also representative of the entire group's view, as opposed to just the five of us involved in the performance-exhibition. In addition to curating this piece, we decided that we would try to involve all of the participants within another piece called *Our Thoughts*, which documents various thoughts of participants during the workshops in Phase 3.

As the performance-exhibition approached, I felt that the atmosphere in the school became quite tense. Towards the latter stage of Phase 5 it emerged that a student had written a letter to the school principal detailing instances of staff bullying. Five teachers individually approached me to inform me that, although there was no evidence, there was a consensus amongst the majority of the staff that the letter had come from one of my participants. The teachers who came and spoke to me appeared to have done so out of concern and care for both the participants and me, as they expressed their anxiety that we might 'get caught in the crossfire'. In recounting the tensions amongst the staff, some staff members described the letter as an act of 'treason' and that the very act of speaking against staff was 'audacious' and 'threatening'. These comments, which originated amongst the staff, create resonances with one of Kincheloe's (2007) reasons

for voice not being elicited within schools; knowledge generated through voice research is viewed as threatening and dangerous. These tensions were something that made both the participants and me very nervous, as our performance-exhibition was entirely concerned with presenting our voices within a public sphere. In an effort to appease our concerns we asked the principal of St. Nessan's, Eugene O'Brien, to view the exhibition the day before it was presented to the staff. In viewing the exhibition, Eugene acknowledged the power of the voices contained within the work and the level of dedication and amount of time that went into generating the exhibition but stated that he couldn't find anything offensive about it. Eugene's approval of the exhibition relaxed both the participants and me, and in talking about his positive reaction, we began to look forward to the performance-exhibition.

Our compositions

Preface to our compositions: The participants and I understood that all of these pieces had to be captured in some way for the thesis. We were content that the images spoke for themselves but thought it important, in line with our understanding, that poetry and music be heard and experienced as opposed to just being read and so the disc attached to this thesis has a recording of the performance element of the performance-exhibition.

Fourteen pieces were generated for the performance-exhibition. The variety of form represented was in acknowledgement that people express their voices through "…protest, praise, silence, words of anger and acts of kindness, music, poetry and Web sites" (Rodríguez and Brown, 2009, p.31). Furthermore, the variety of form acknowledged that the performative aspects of ABER may be demonstrated in a range of mediums and modalities, such as story, dance, poetry dialogue, script, argument and more (Mullen, 2003). As well as individual and collective pieces, we decided to include a piece that had been generated during Phase 3, *Voice Scale*, which focused on areas of participants' lives, where they felt some people heard and others silenced their voices. Each category was given a numerical representation, which then corresponded to the voice scale in the centre of

the piece. Beside the group that was being ranked, there were two numbers which corresponded to the variance of values given, in the case of Image 25, 'my friends in school' received values between two and six. The average of these scores was five, and the description of the fifth rung of the voice scale was placed below (For the full range of groups and scores please see Appendix E).



Image 24 - Voice Scale, (Performance-exhibition)



Image 25 – Voice Scale, My Friends in School

In viewing the performance-exhibition as a whole, each of the pieces focused on different elements of the workshops; ours and others' experiences and responses. Engaging the fictional lens within pieces facilitated a further re-viewing of our experience and caused us to consider others' perspectives. In this way, by employing a fictional lens we:

> …continue to see the world as we have always seen it, but now we also see it as others see it: we see ourselves as we see ourselves, *and* we see ourselves as we are seen.
>
> (Boal, 1995, p.26)

Two pieces that clearly exemplify this fictional lens are *Teachers' Diaries* and *What We Saw*. *Teachers' Diaries* are two fictional compositions, composed by the group, from two different teachers' perspectives. The content for the diaries stems from how we perceived teachers reacted to the workshops and participants' involvement in the workshops.

26/02/2012

The TYs had their fifth session with Richard today. They came out laughing and looking happier than usual. I think the space away from teachers does them well. Some of their teachers have started to complain about them missing class and they've tried to sit in on the workshops. I'm still not fully sure what it is exactly that they do but it gives the students something to look forward to on a Tuesday and even Greg participated today. At the end of the year I'll try get one of the students to talk about their experiences with Richard and maybe that will show the other teachers that it was actually beneficial to them.

14/03/2012

I collected the TYs today and had planned to finally start their projects but they refused to come with me and instead ran to the lecture room. The students who stayed told me that Richard was in today. I stormed up to the room and walked in. They were playing with a giant red sheet of material instead of actually doing work with me. As soon as I came into the room Richard came over and asked if I was OK. I told him that he was supposed to have finished up last week and that I had planned work with them for this week. He apologised and said that there had been changes to the timetable. Not knowing what to say, I went back to the other students who had actually come to the class. I asked the students, who had decided to leave the workshops, what they actually did with Richard. They informed me that they played games like 'stuck in the mud'. They're missing out on actual work so they can play games ...

Image 26 - Teachers' Diaries

Another fictional piece that was generated was *What We Saw*. This piece is again a series of diary entries from two different characters' perspectives. One perspective is that of the female researcher who had done her PhD research with the participants earlier in the year and the second perspective is that of the participants. *What We Saw* was presented as a book, with both sets of diary entries juxtaposed on opposite pages. The inspiration for *What We Saw* was communicated on the front page of the book and read: "These thoughts are inspired by other people who came in to do their 'research' on us" (Appendix D). In questioning participants about *What We Saw*, they discussed the easiest way to show how to do things correctly, in terms of researching with students, is to give practical examples of what is being done incorrectly. Participants felt that in doing so, they were creating a contrast between the previous research that they had been engaged in and this research and that through viewing the performance-exhibition as a whole, audience members would understand this contrast.

Juxtaposing how participants felt in the workshops with how they felt in school, *School vs Workshops*, *My Disguise*, and *Awake* all formed one integrated piece. These pieces were originally composed as individual pieces but then integrated as one, as we felt they were more powerful as a collective. Many participants contributed to ideas within the piece and the poems complimented the provocative visuals. The piece attempted to capture the difference between how participants felt within the workshops as opposed to school and how they acted differently depending on the context they were in and how valued they felt. The poem *My Disguise* was attached to the drawings on the black sheet, representing school, and the poem *Awake* was attached to the drawings on the white sheet, representing the workshops.

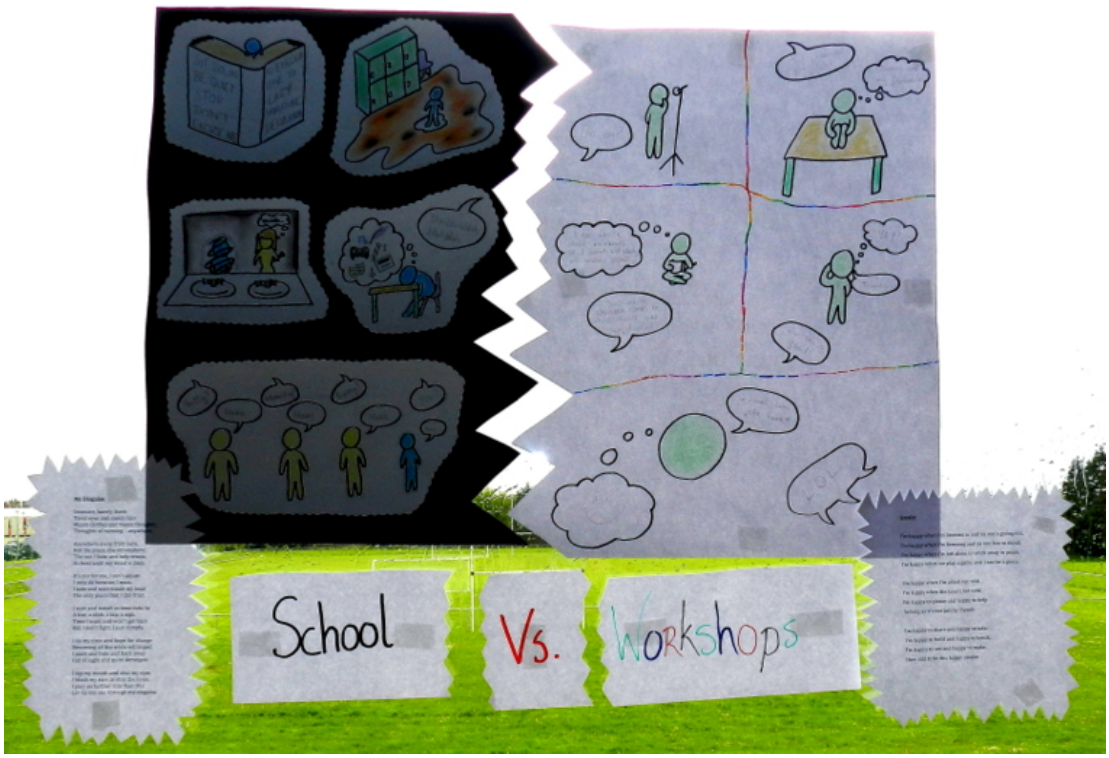


Image 27 - Overview of School Vs. Workshops, My Disguise, and Awake

My Disguise

Insecure, barely there
Tired eyes and messy hair
Messy clothes and messy thoughts;
Thoughts of running – anywhere.

Anywhere away from here,
Not the place, the atmosphere;
The one I hate and help create,
At least until my mind is clear.

It's not for me, I can't adjust
I only do because I must.
I hide and wait inside my head
The only place that I can trust.

I wait and watch as time ticks by
A tick, a click, a tap, a sigh.
Time I want and won't get back
But I don't fight, I just comply.

I do my time and hope for change
Becoming all the while estranged.
I push and hide and back away
Out of sight and quite deranged.

I zip my mouth and shut my eyes
I block my ears to stop the noise.
I play no further role than this
Let no one see through my disguise.

Image 28 - My Disguise

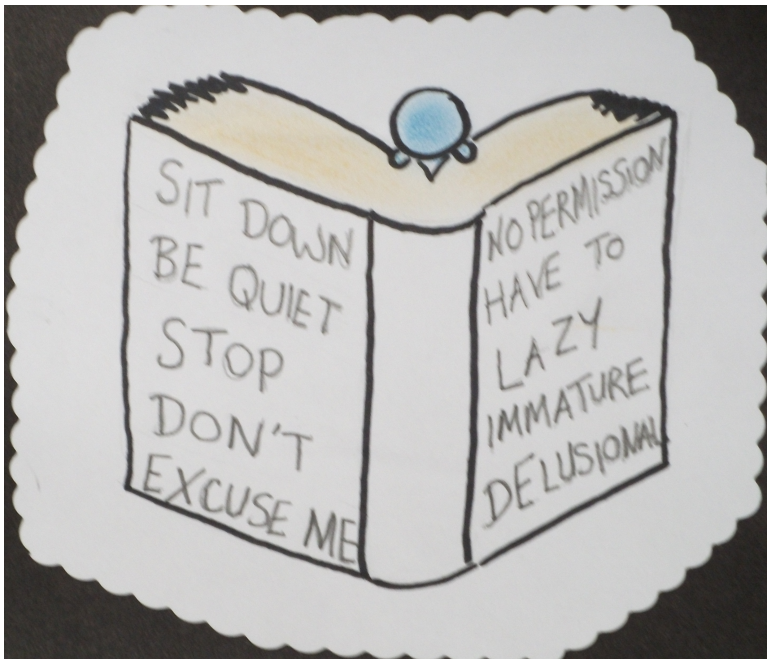


Image 29 - School Vs Workshops, School #1

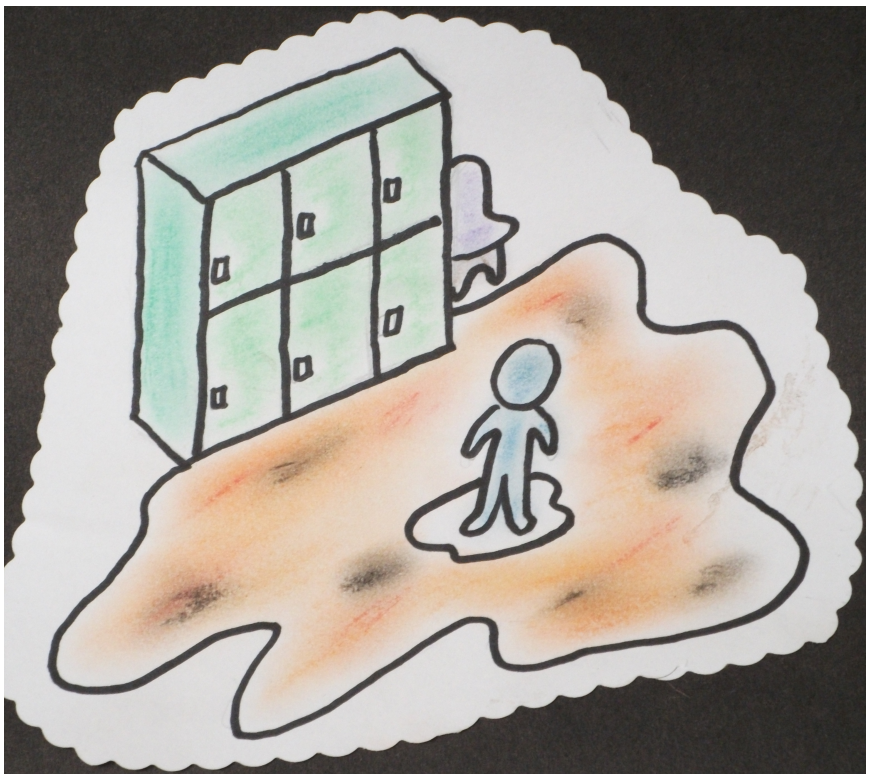


Image 30 - School Vs Workshops, School #2



Image 31 - School Vs Workshops, School #3



Image 32 - School Vs Workshops, School #4

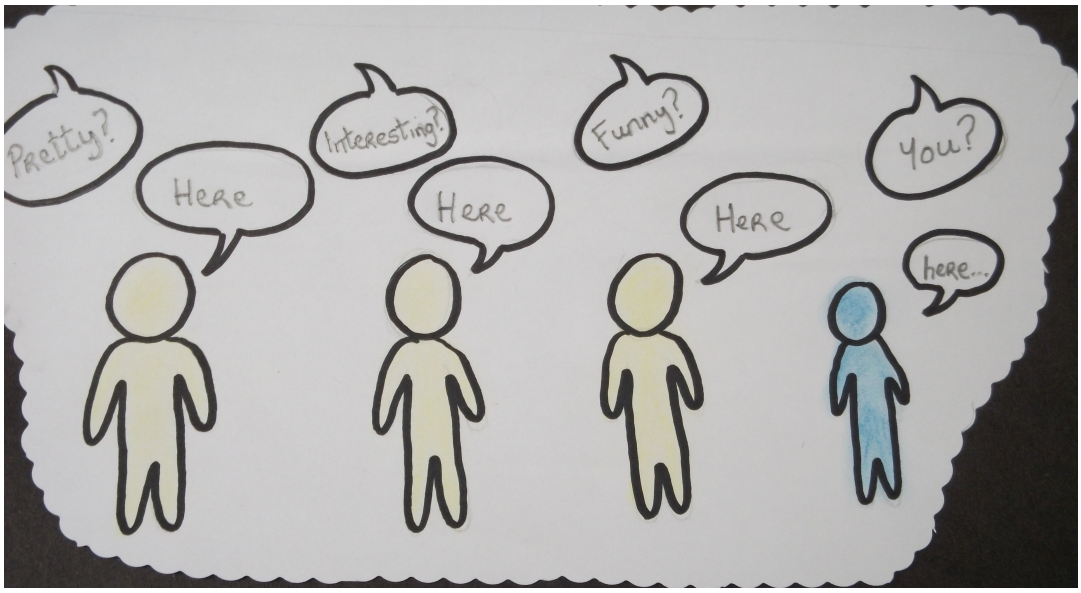


Image 33 - School Vs Workshops, School #5

Awake

I'm happy when I'm listened to and no one's giving out.
I'm happy when I'm listening and no one has to shout.
I'm happy when I'm left alone to work away in peace.
I'm happy when we play a game and I can be a piece.

I'm happy when I'm asked not told.
I'm happy when the tone's not cold.
I'm happy to please and happy to help
As long as it's not just by myself.

I'm happy to share and happy to take.
I'm happy to build and happy to break.
I'm happy to see and happy to make.
How odd to be this happy awake.

Image 34 - Awake

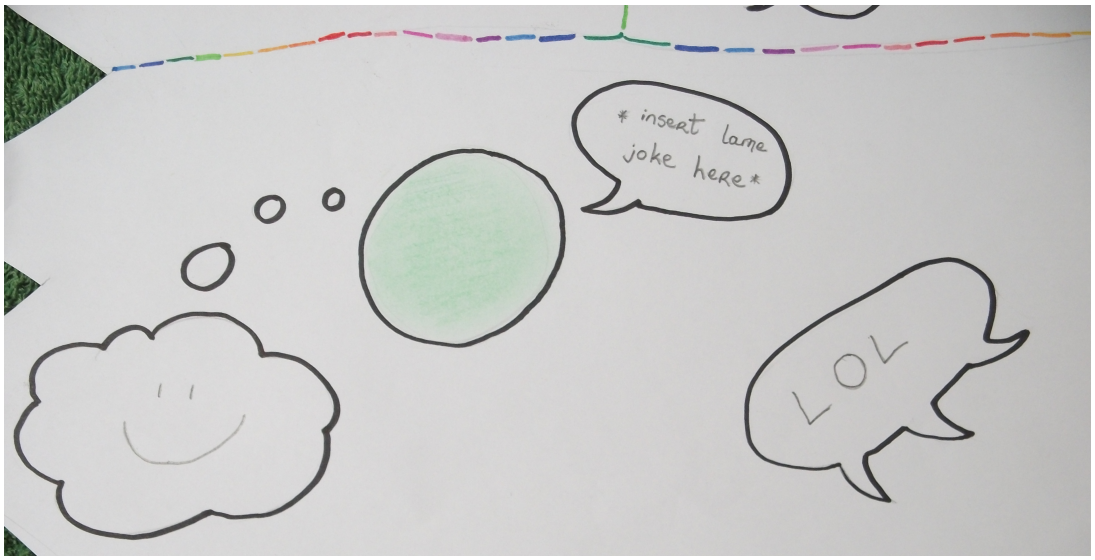


Image 35 - School Vs Workshops, Workshop #1



Image 36 - School Vs Workshops, Workshops #2



Image 37 - School Vs Workshops, Workshops #3



Image 38 - School Vs Workshops, Workshops #4

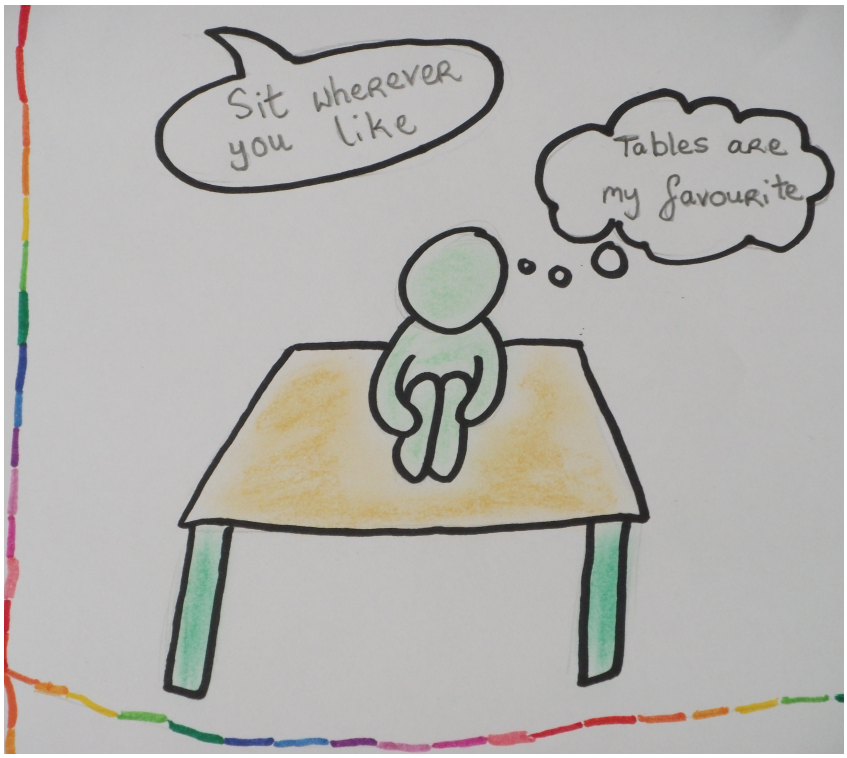


Image 39 - School Vs Workshops, Workshops #5

This Is Our Space was a photographic and visual piece that was composed in response to the participants' impression that the workshop space was their space. However, this was constantly not respected and invaded by some of the teachers.

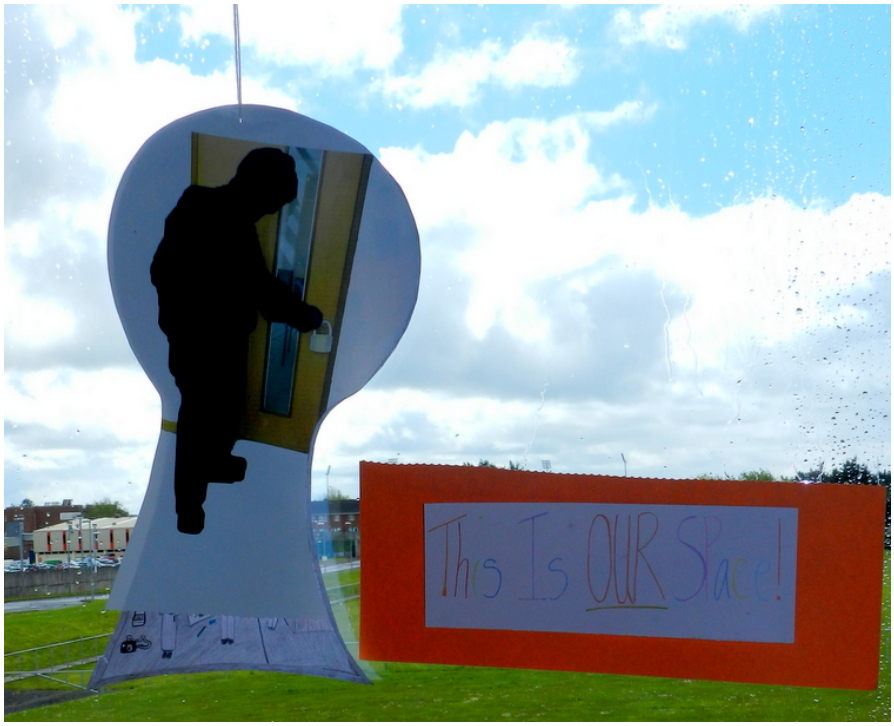


Image 40 - Overview of This Is Our Space



Image 41 - This Is Our Space, #1



Image 42 - This Is Our Space, #2



Image 43 - This Is Our Space, #3

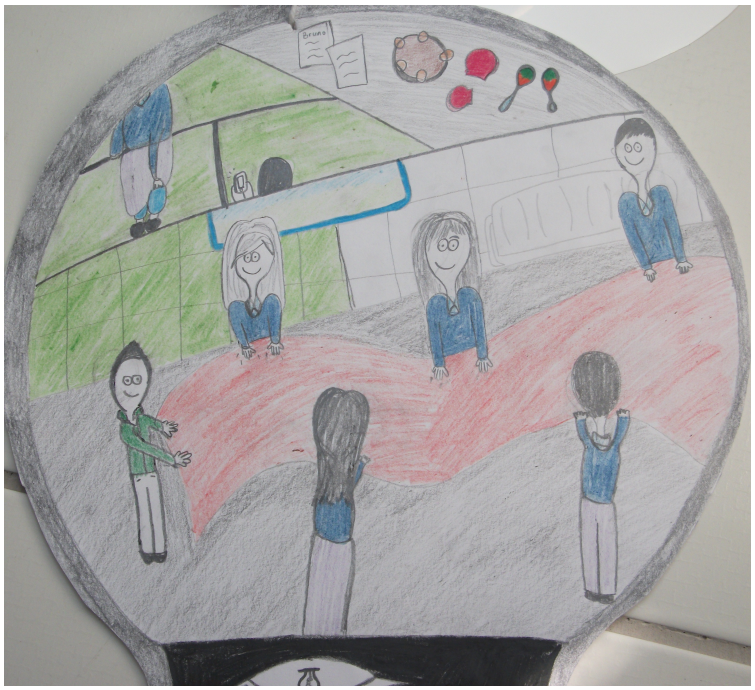


Image 44 - This Is Our Space, #4

Isolation as the name suggests, sought to convey the sense of isolation that was experienced through the workshops as a result of not always being in school to experience them.

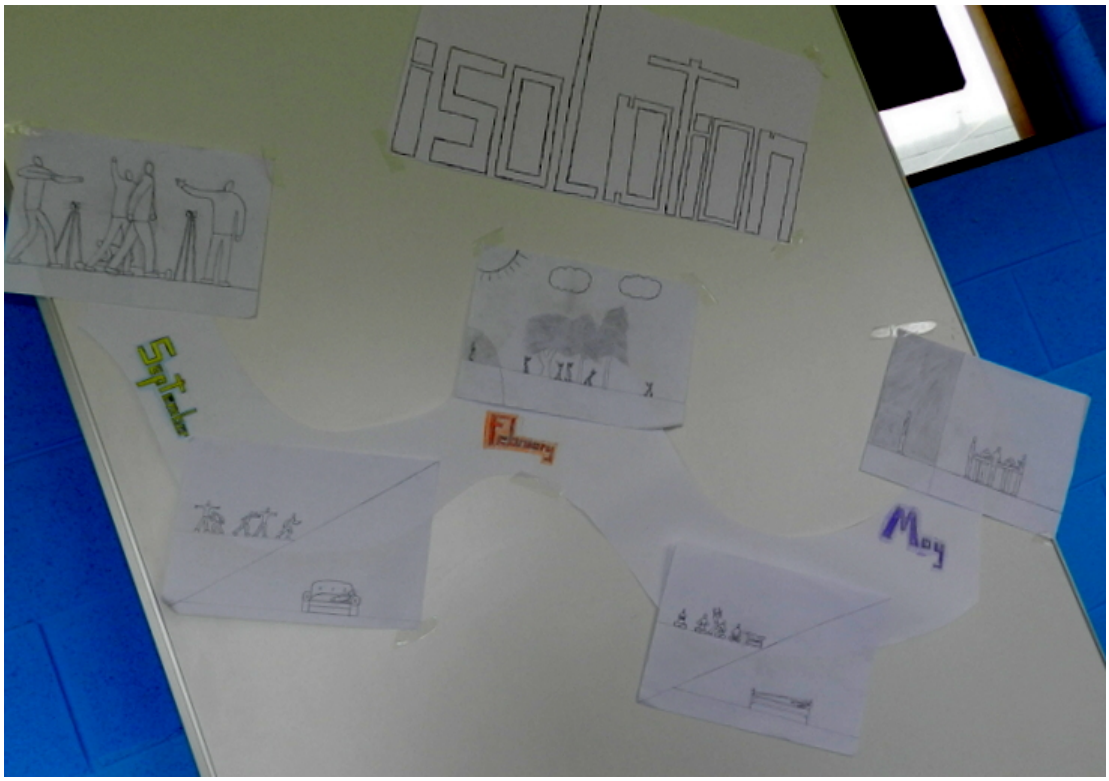


Image 45 - Overview Isolation

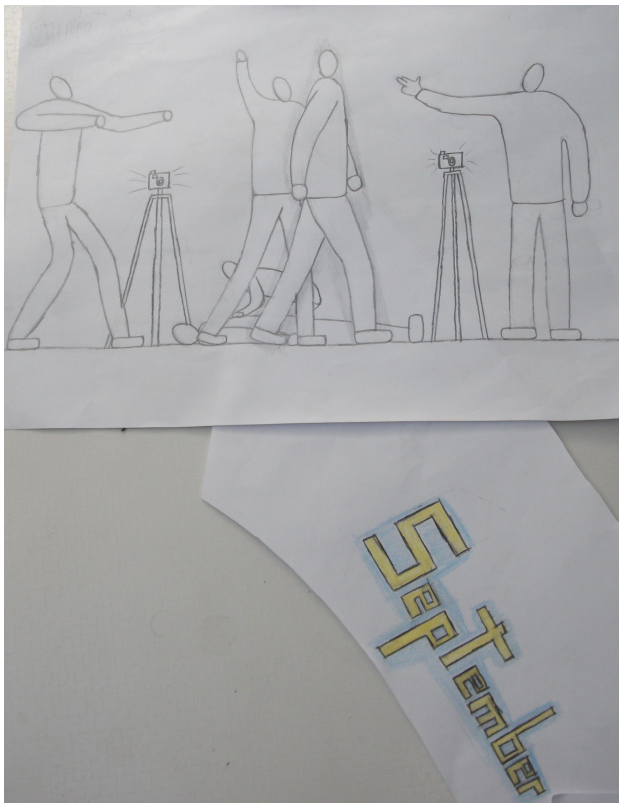


Image 46 - Isolation, #1

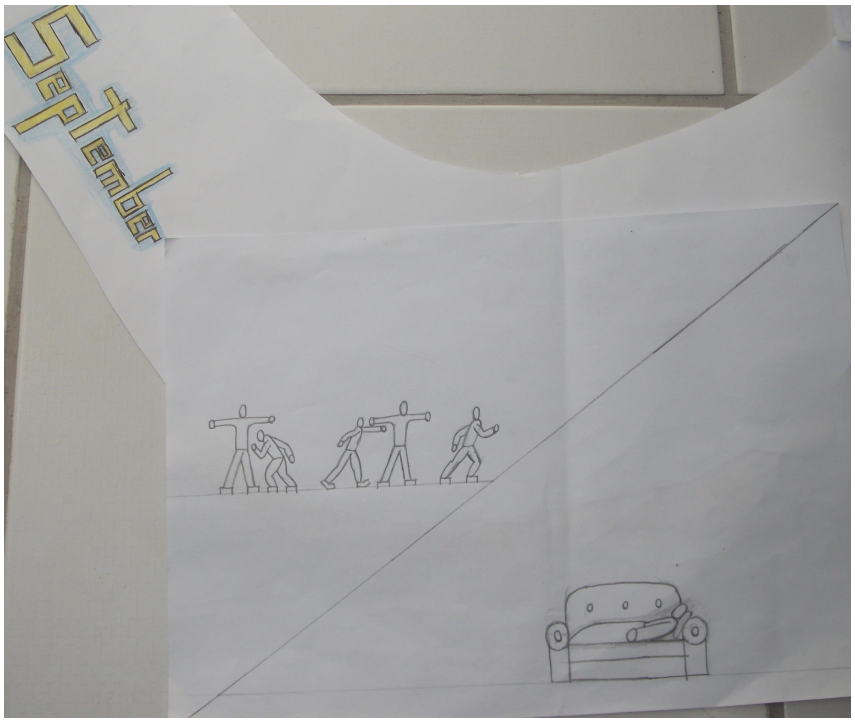


Image 47 - Isolation, #2

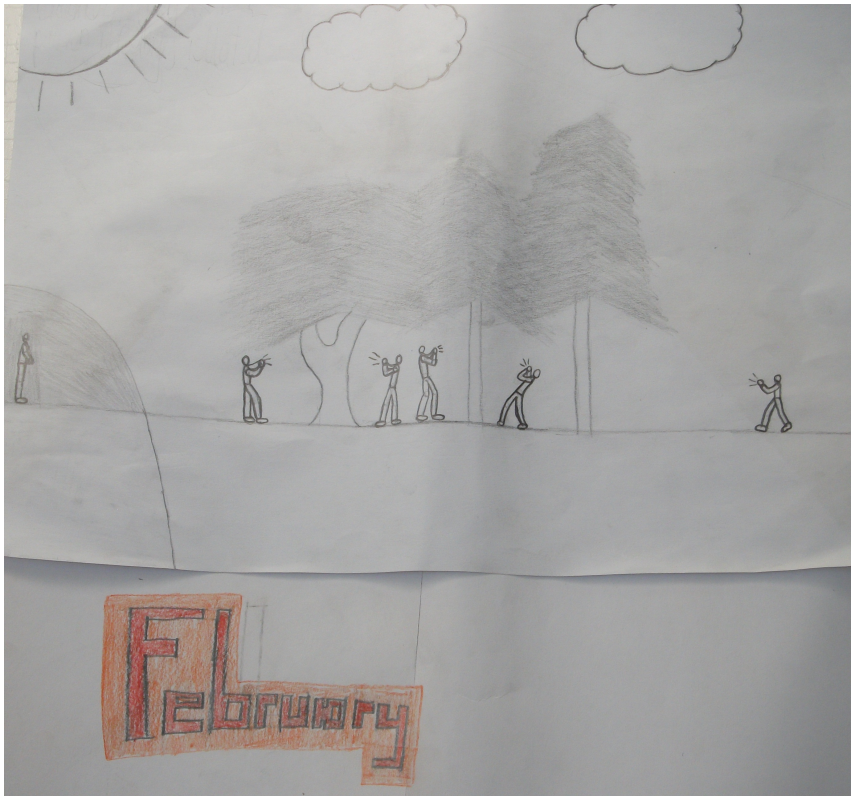


Image 48 - Isolation, #3

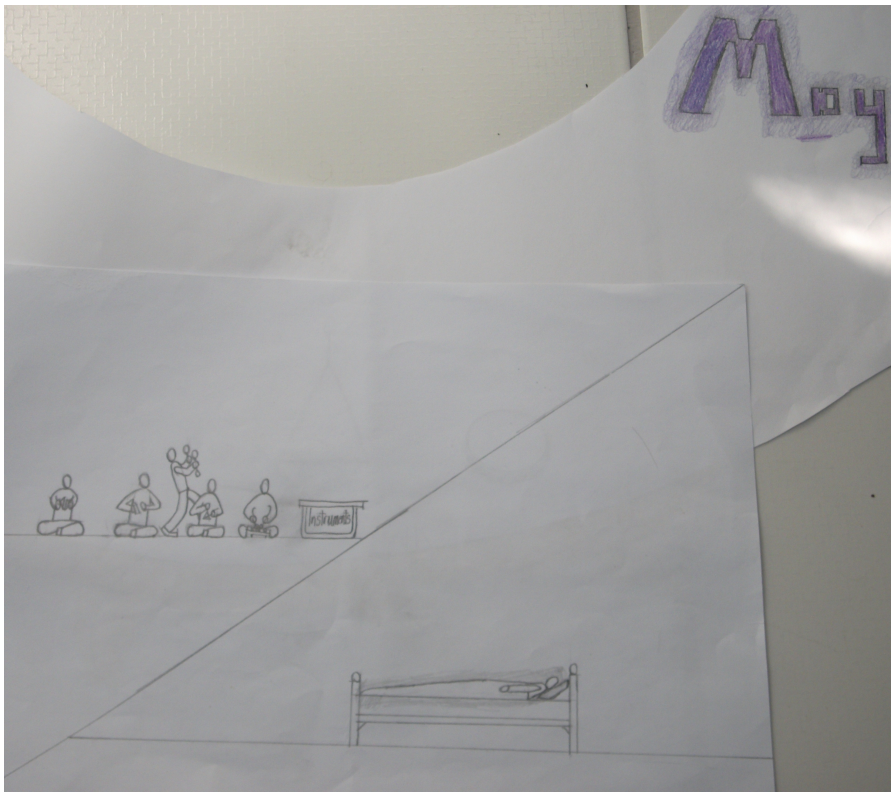


Image 49 - Isolation, #4

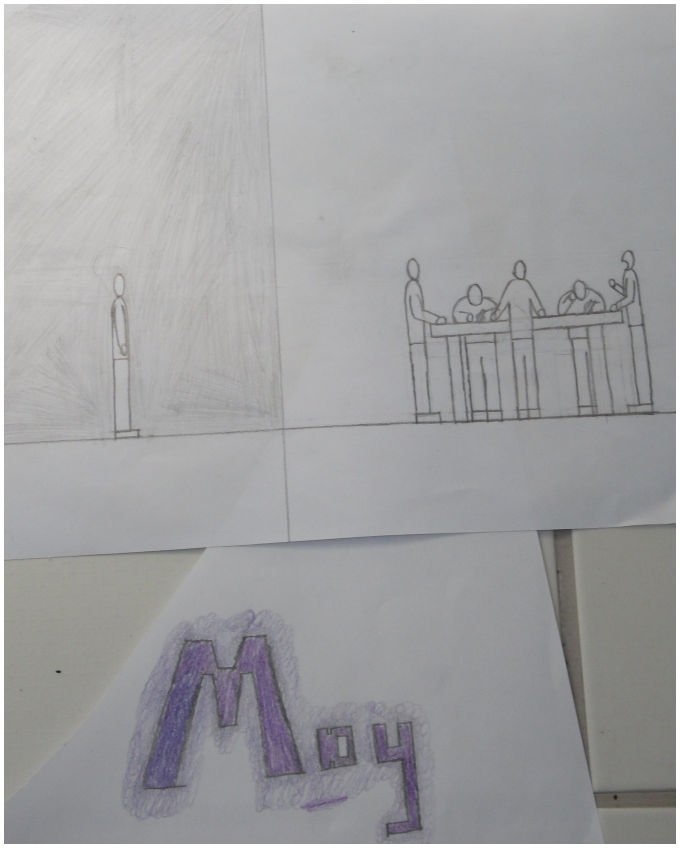


Image 50 - Isolation, #5

Using the concept of *What People Think I Do Memes*, *Perspective* sought to provide a variety of re-viewings of what we did in the workshops from others' perspectives.



Image 51 - Overview, Perspective



Image 52 - Perspective, #1 What Some Teachers Think We Do

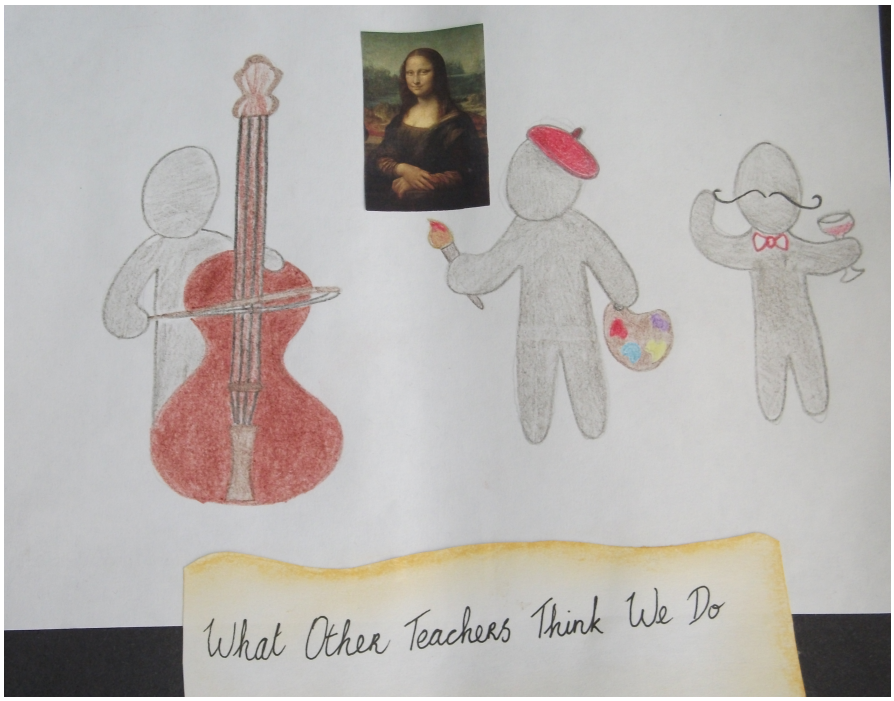


Image 53 - Perspective, #2 What Other Teachers Think We Do

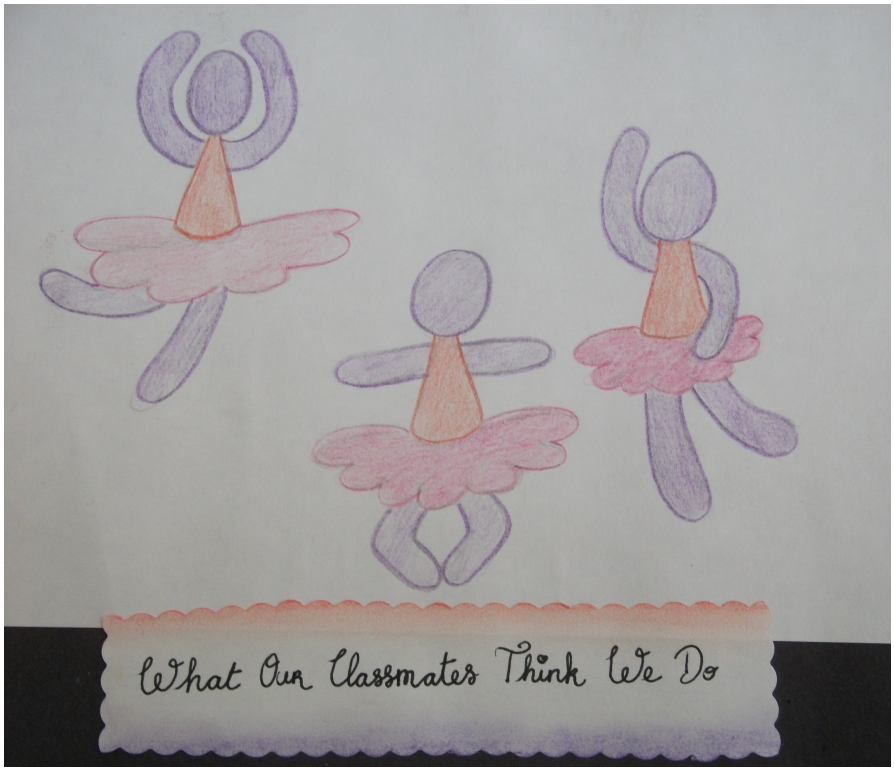


Image 54 - Perspective, #3 What Our Classmates Think We Do



Image 55 - Perspective, #4 What I Think We Do

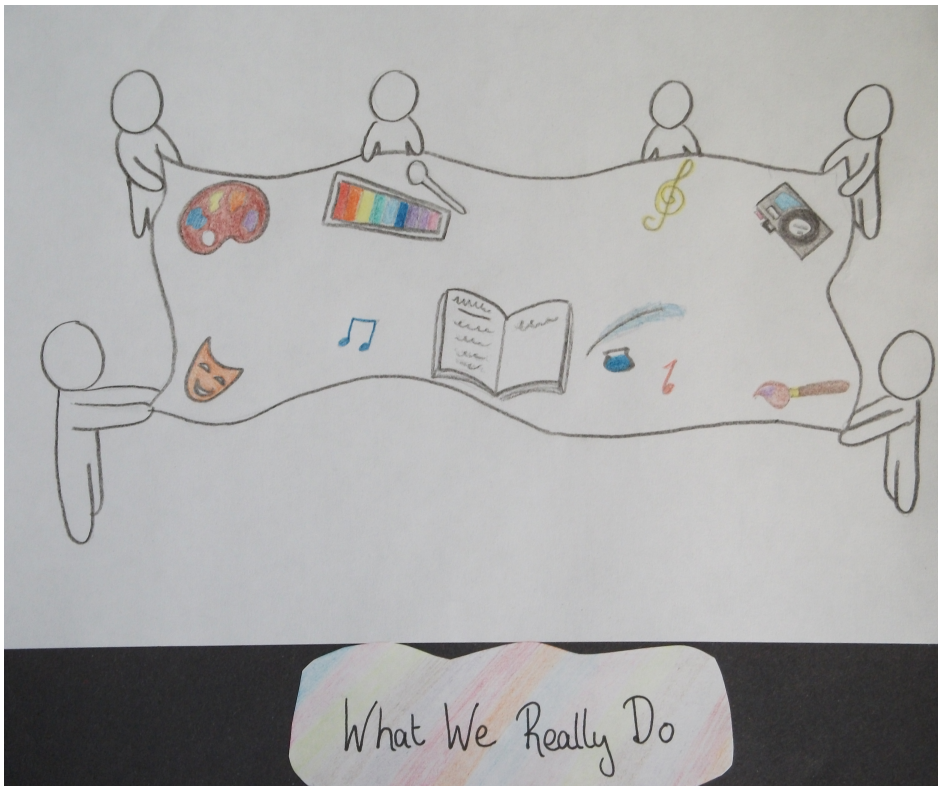


Image 56 - Perspective, #5 What We Really Do

Our Thoughts was a piece that the whole group from Phase 3 contributed to. Through *Facebook* I asked participants from Phase 3 who weren't involved in the performance-exhibition to chart any thoughts that they had last year in relation to the workshops. Combining these with those who were involved in Phase 5, we arranged and presented them.

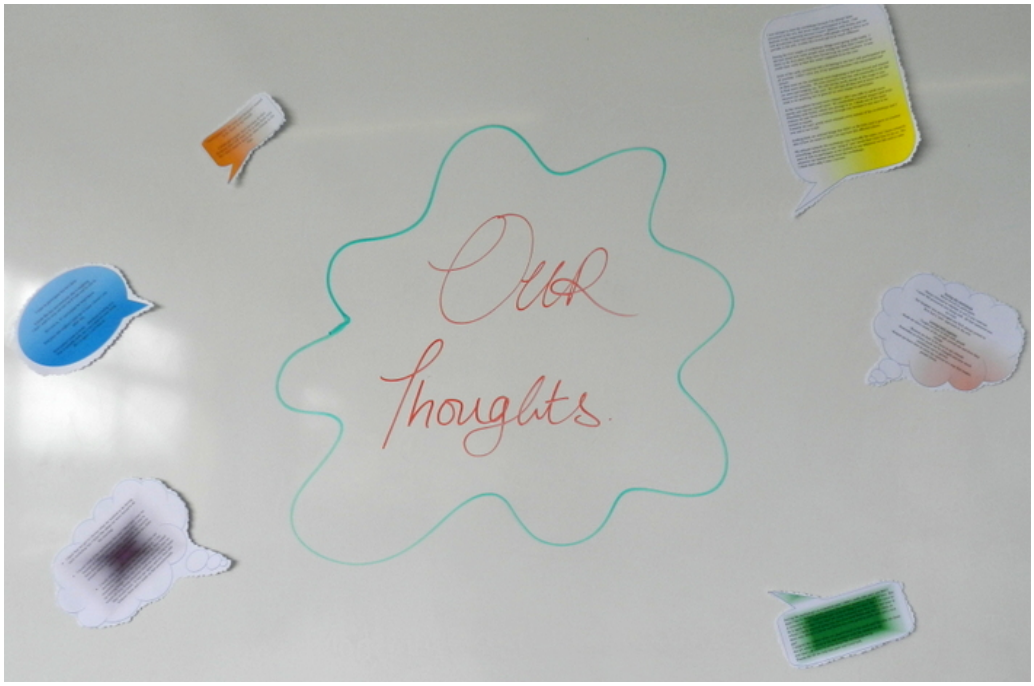


Image 57 - Overview, Our Thoughts

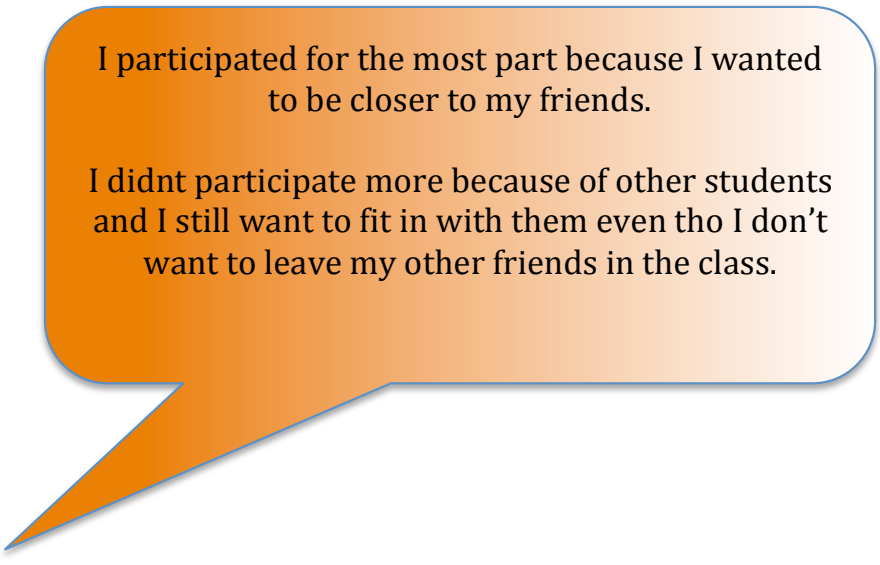


Image 58 - Our Thoughts, #1

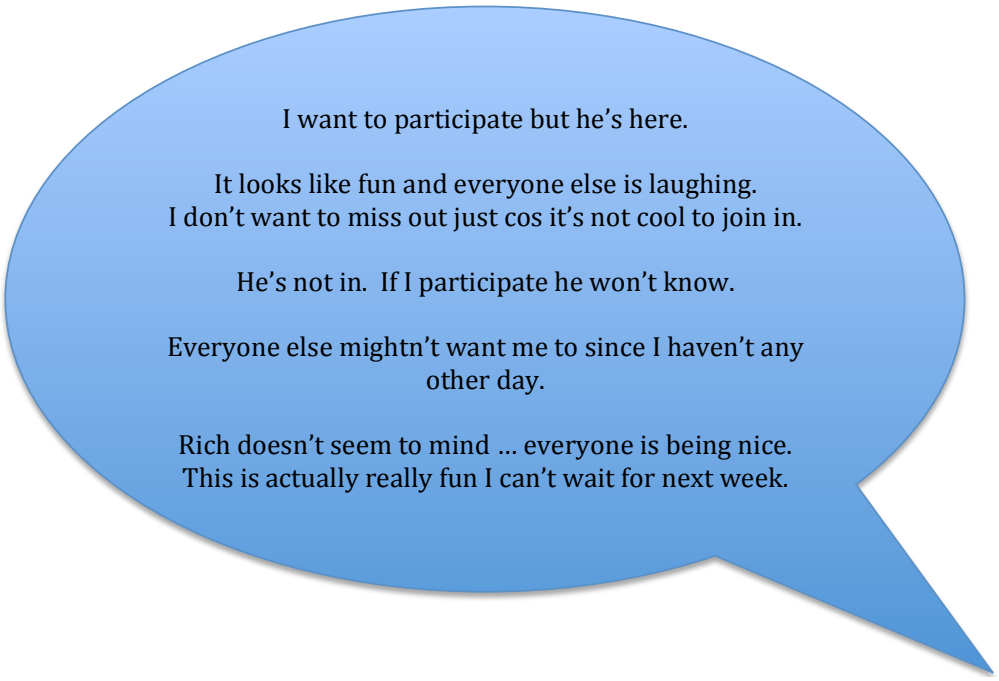


Image 59 - Our Thoughts, #2

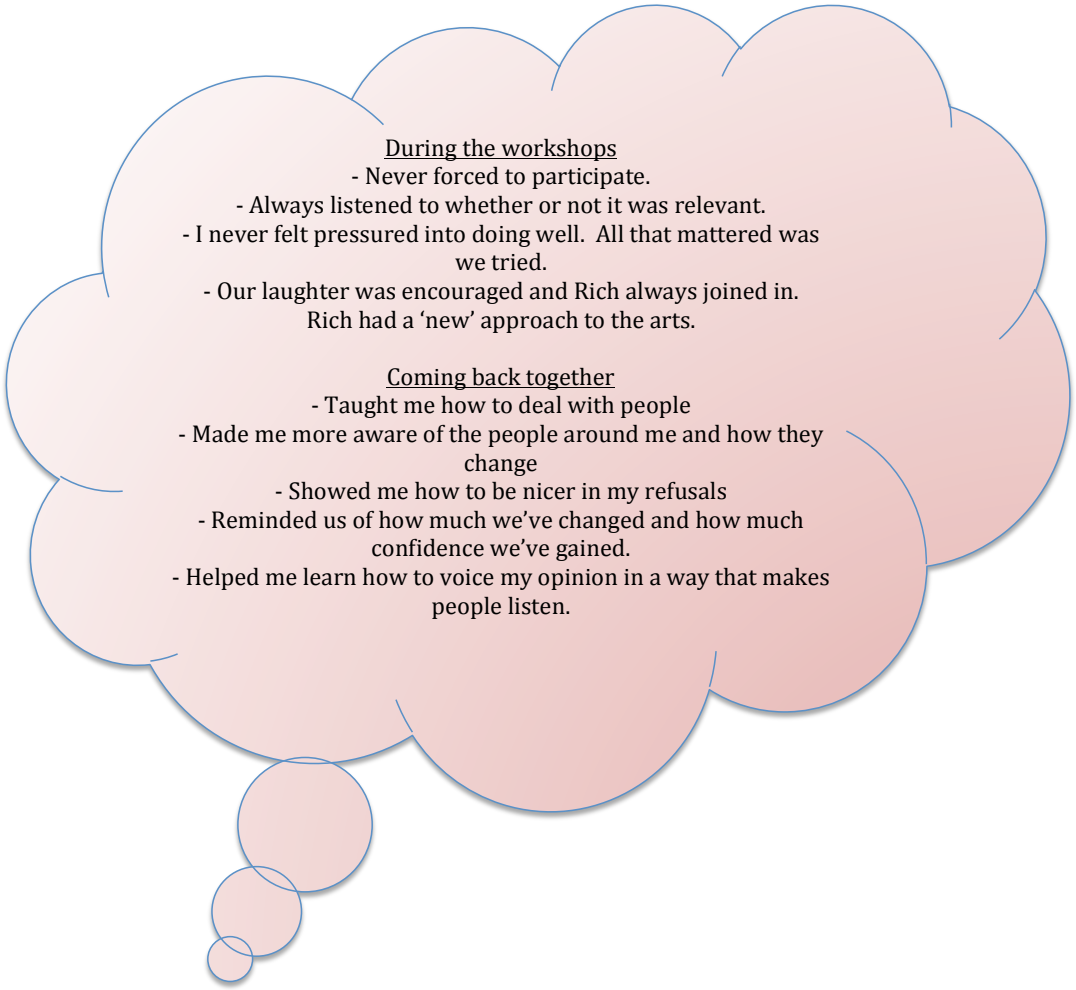


Image 60 - Our Thoughts, #3

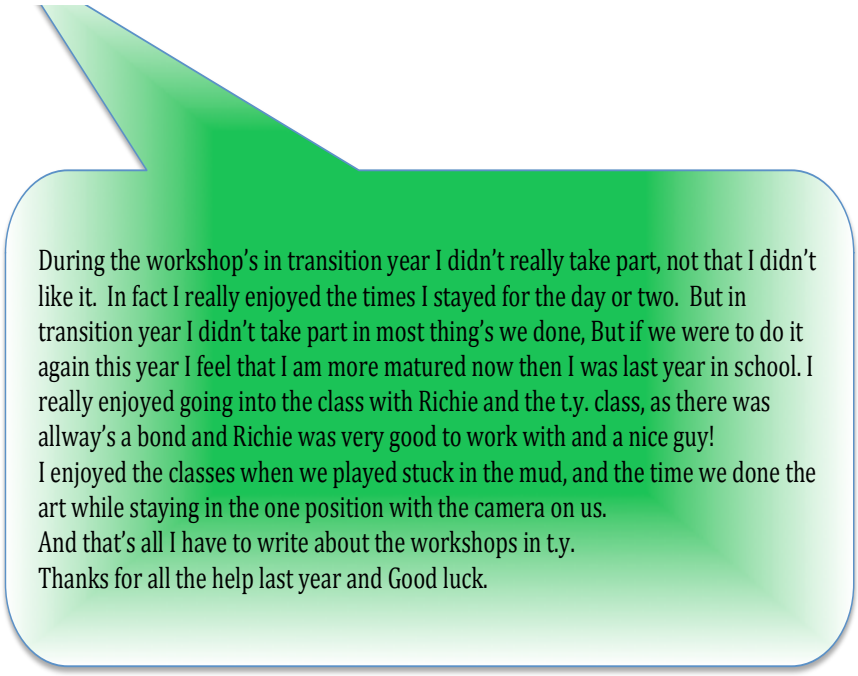


Image 61 - Our Thoughts, #4

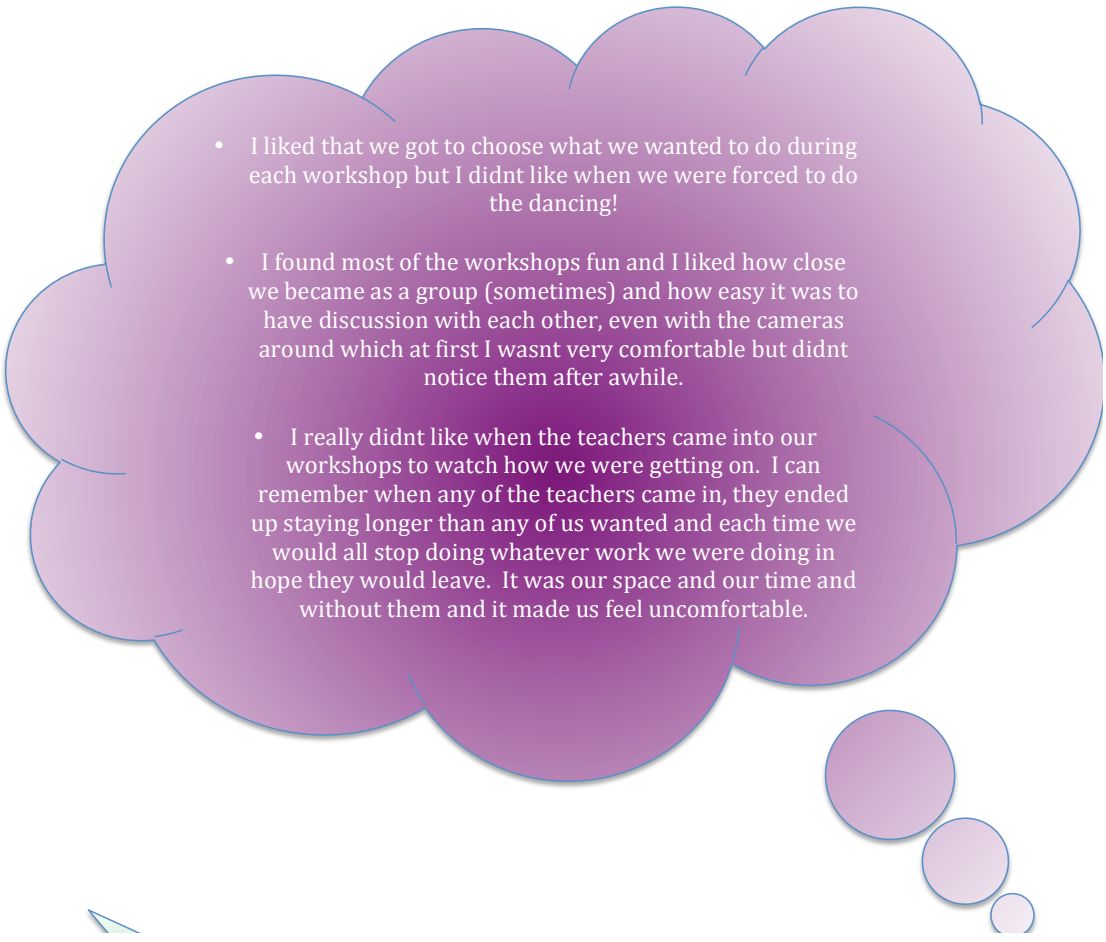


Image 62 - Our Thoughts, #5

I was excited to start the workshops because I've always been interested in the arts, but never really participated in them. I felt hesitant at the beginning because I wasn't familiar with Richie, and we had already had some bad experiences with people trying to force us to partake in the arts. Luckily this turned out to be much different.

During the first couple of workshops, things were going really badly. I felt bad about how some people were acting, but they didn't want to be there in the first place, they were forced to go by some teachers. It was made clear early on that this wasn't supposed to be the case.

Some of the early workshops felt a bit boring to me, but I still participated out of courtesy. I didn't voice any of my opinions because I felt intimidated and unsure.
As they went on, the workshops were beginning to feel less forced and started to flow more naturally. We even started to have fun, and eventually it felt like we were just hanging out. We still did the work, except at this stage it was because we wanted to take part. We still had off days and at times we didn't want to do anything, but in general we were happy to participate.

As the atmosphere became more relaxed, I felt I was able to speak more openly and express myself more. We established a mutual respect and even friendship with Richie, which was strange to us. I think one of the main reasons we saw these workshops through was because it was nice to be treated as equals.
Towards the end I pretty much enjoyed every minute of the workshops and I was sad to see it end.

Looking back, we noticed things that didn't at the time, and it gave us a better idea of how we acted or didn't act and how this affected others.

My attitude towards the workshops was basically the same one I have towards everything, which was to just "wing it" and I loved that I was free to do so. We were all free to participate as we wished, to say whatever we felt and to take whatever we wanted away from the workshops.
I think that's why it was a success.

Image 63 - Our Thoughts, #6

Your Words was inspired by many discussions that the participants and me had about the potential of their voices to communicate. *Your Words* assumes my perspective in attempting to capture many of these dialogues.

Your Words

I try and I try
to say the things,
to echo your words
and convey the things.

But no matter what happens,
No matter what I say.
The power is yours
each and every day.

Your words have more power
than you thought they should.
They magnify your experience;
what is and could.

And though it would be easier
to say how *I* feel,
what *I* think,
and what *I* see.
it wouldn't be real.
No, it wouldn't be real.

Your words are full of action;
resistance and fight.
But your action is different;
real and light.

Your instinct is
"no! I don't want to; get lost"
but you feel quite alone when
you're the only one there.

The barriers melt
like an Irish spring,
Slowly and slowly
just like everything.

Your words begin to change,
they're more trusting and real
but always there's suspicion
to know how I feel.

As summer arrives,
things begin to break down.
Though a long time in coming
we're getting closer now.

You begin to describe
what you see
and you feel.
Your words have more power now,
because they're real.

Although it's easier
to just say what I hear.
The power to convey
Is in what you fear.

Image 64 - Your Words

Look, Listen and See was the original title to a poem that served as the prologue to the performance-exhibition. Within this, the participants and I attempted to capture some of our motivations in generating the performance-exhibition. The poem also served as a call for the audience to attend to the communicative and artistic elements of the pieces. Each piece had an A3 sheet of paper beside that audience members were invited to scribble or write on in response to the piece they were viewing. In response to this piece, one of the comments was "You forgot to ask us to feel. For me, this was all about FEELing the performances and the art work." Reflecting on this comment, we decided that not only would we change the name of the piece and the last line, but that it was important to chart that change, and so the original title and final line are present within the new, *Look, Listen and ~~See~~ Feel*.

Look, Listen and ~~See~~ Feel

You're not going to read a big
book full of words,
But you might like to look
at *our* drawings and words.

The bigger the words, the smarter
we are?
But who wants to be smart, when
you're alone with that 'art' ?

What needs to be explained
over a hundred pages,
I can capture for you
in a few simple phrases,
a stroke of my brush,
or the flick of my pen.

Listen with your ears to the sounds
that we've made.
There's meaning within everything
despite what *you* crave.

Nothing is an accident,
a word, a phrase,
a colour, a dynamic,
it has meaning on the page.

There's a reason they're there-
so look, listen, and ~~see.~~ feel

Image 65 - Look, Listen and ~~See~~ Feel

Our Experience served as a reflection on Phase 3 and Phase 5 and some of the things that we felt were important to us. Furthermore, *Our Experience* built upon *Look, Listen and ~~See~~ Feel* as a further introduction to the performance-exhibition and an introduction to our world, our experience, and our relationships. Both of these poems were set to music and can be found on the accompanying disc with this thesis.

Our Experience

Listen with your eyes to
The things that we have done,
See within your ears the
world that we have spun.

A world that creates meaning,
Makes sense of what's around,
takes the fragments of experience
and lays them bare upon the ground.

Not everything was pleasant,
most things were hard to bear
but what made it all worthwhile
was the friendship that we share.

A friendship, unsuspecting,
it took us by surprise.
No longer the outsider,
You've been welcomed inside.

I do not regret refusing,
but the way that it was said;
I regret how I went about it,
and the means through which I led.

Returning has helped us see
How to open those around
to our vision and our experience
and what's now laying on the ground.

So Listen with your eyes
to the things that we have done,
and See within your ears the
world that we have spun.

Image 66 - Our Experience

What I Know served to capture the contentious relationships present within the research process and stemmed from a conversation that I had with the participants about *why* they continually fight and argue with their teachers and their peers.

What I know

I argue and fight
and tell you where to go.
I tell you
you've no place,
so go on, and go.

I tell you what I've told
those who came before
and said the same.
So do as they did,
go, walk away in shame.

Why should I talk
to someone like you?
Why should I tell you
what makes me blue?

What gives you the right
to think you know about me?
What makes you think you see
what I don't want you to see?

Why do you bother coming
back every day, when all I want
is for you to go away?
But you come back.

Why do you come back,
despite what I say?
What I do, how I feel,
the way I act, I call you gay.

I argue and fight
and tell you where to go.
Not because it's you,
it's all that I know.

Image 67 - What I Know

Presenting our work

Throughout the day of the performance-exhibition participants routinely expressed their concerns; that no one would attend, that teachers might not take their work seriously and that they might focus on the form instead of engaging with the communicative element of the pieces. Participants also expressed their concern that members of the audience might think that the form isn't good enough and might dismiss the performance-exhibition because of that. Assuring them that our form was good enough, I was reminded of Tom Barone's assertion that, in ABER, "[w]e do not need to match the high art of the masters in order to make history" (Barone, 2008b, p.46).

17 staff attended the performance-exhibition and accounted for 40% of the teaching staff in the school. In a way, I was surprised that the number was so low, as this time was allocated for staff meetings and staff had been released from their staff meetings early so that they could attend the performance-exhibition. That being said, I was also grateful that 40% of the teaching staff had taken enough of an interest in the work, or were curious enough to attend.

Although I recognised that "…the manner in which the work is used [and understood by the audience] will depend on a complex interplay between text, context, and reader that occurs within each specific 'reading' event" (Barone and Eisner, 2012), I found the performance-exhibition very stressful, which stemmed from the uncertainty of the audience members' reaction. We were exposing and publicly sharing parts of ourselves, and there was a very real sense of vulnerability about this. Much of my nervousness and stress specifically emanated from having to perform the vocal pieces. Although I am used to vocally performing in front of groups, the participants had instructed me 'not to sing in an operatic way'. This meant that my support had to be more relaxed, which I felt exposed me and moved me from my comfort zone. Considering that the pieces were jointly generated, I owed it to the participants to adhere to their request. The performance-exhibition was divided in two, the aural/oral element;

comprising of the poetry and songs, and the exhibition element which was exclusively visual in nature.

Bearing in mind Eisner's (1997, p.9) caution that "[w]hen terrain is new, we need context", I introduced the audience to the work through telling them the story of the research; different things that we did, how some of the work unfolded, and our aims in presenting the performance-exhibition. After this short introduction the performance-exhibition began. During the first half of the performance-exhibition I found myself mediating between participant and observer. As participant (singing the two vocal pieces) I found it nerve wracking and exposing but at the same time there was a very real sense of joy in sharing the pieces and being part of what was months of work. When the participants were reading the poems I found myself assuming the role of observer; not only observing the participants who were reading the poems but observing the audience members and taking note of their reactions to the pieces. As I observed the audience members, their reactions were very clearly communicated by their physical responses to what they were hearing. As the participants read the poems, audience members conveyed their reactions through their changing body language and facial expressions. "When Bonquisha finished reading I could see the pleasant surprise on the audience's faces and I found this very encouraging" (RRH13L121-122). At other stages in the performance element of the performance-exhibition I noted "…nods of recognition on the faces of the audience and smiles of encouragement" (RRH13L146-147). As an observer, it was refreshing to see the physical reactions to the poems and vocal pieces as it reassured me that audience members were engaging with the pieces. In addition to the physical reactions, both the participants and I later commented on the poignant silence after *What I Know*, which seemed to indicate the impact that it had on the audience.

With the performance element at a close, the participants and I invited the audience members to move around the space and engage with the visual pieces that were on display. All of the poems and songs that had been performed in the first part of the performance-exhibition were also on

display for audience members to further engage with. As the audience members began to move around the space, the participants and I also moved around the space, mindful that some audience members may have questions or might need or want some information on some of the pieces. For the most part, the verbal feedback from the audience members was very positive as they moved around the space, with the majority engaging with both the form and the communicative intent of the pieces. As I moved around the space, I found a small number of teachers had focused on the vocal performances and their discussions were exclusively around the last time they heard me sing and the development in my voice. Willing the teachers to also engage with the other pieces, I thanked them for their kind comments and enquired as to their thoughts on some of the visual pieces. This seemed to serve as a realisation to these teachers that there were visual pieces on display and they then began to move around the space. At different stages, Cadence, Alana, and Dylan[44] approached me and gleefully commented on the positive reaction that they were receiving. There appeared to be a very strong sense of pride in the three participants and I shared this sense of pride also.

After about ten minutes audience members gradually began to leave the space and move to another room on the corridor where we had left audience comment cards[45]. That being said, a number of audience members remained in the space engaging with and commenting on the pieces for up to twenty-five minutes. Many of those audience members who remained in the space were responding to the pieces on the sheets provided.

With the performance-exhibition over, I was consumed with two emotions; pride and relief. Examining my reflection on the performance-exhibition, these two emotions are very evident. My sense of relief stems from the build up to the performance-exhibition, all the work that went into it and the

[44] Bonquisha had to leave immediately following the performance element of the performance-exhibition due to family commitments.
[45] Audience members were asked to fill out brief comment cards related to their reaction to the performance-exhibition (Appendix F).

relief that it was now at an end. Reading my reflection from that day and thinking back to how I felt, I remember being enormously proud of the participants, almost to the point of tears. In line with Bundy's (2003) understanding of collaboration and trust, we had trusted each other to a great degree in revealing parts of our inner-selves to each other– as well as recognising this within ourselves– and also in relation to artistic guidance. Our relationship at this point appeared to be more democratic than at any other stage in the research.

There was also a clear development in participants' relationship with each other. I noted in my reflection that:

> …it was lovely to see the participants working so well together, even in as simple an activity as rearranging the two rooms that we had used today. … [In contrast to previous interactions, now] there was no bickering, no fighting, everyone was simply here to do a job and was very happy to be working together to do that job.
>
> (RRH13L211-213).

The closeness between the group and me was also noted in my reflection throughout the day, as participants eased my concerns and worries and supported and helped each other in completing and displaying the artistic pieces. It was through this that I fully understood the 'buoy of collective scholarship' (Jones/Olomo, 2008).

Teachers' responses

Some of the audience's responses have been alluded to in the above section. Considering the activist and transformative intent of the performance-exhibition it is necessary to further document these. These responses should be prefaced with information of what happened throughout the day of the performance-exhibition. Seeing me around the school, many staff members approached me at different stages to "…ensure that their participation this afternoon was acceptable" (RRH13L65). The majority of teachers that I met in the school corridors that day stopped me to reassure me that they would be there and commented on how much they were looking forward to attending and engaging with the presentation. Within

this, there was a very clear desire amongst these staff members to be included in the work in an effort to understand the research more thoroughly as well as engaging with the participants' point of view. The participants also commented several times on different teachers who had told them that they were looking forward to attending the performance-exhibition and seeing their work.

In relation to the performance-exhibition and the teachers' responses, the following discussion is generated from comments and opinions shared by staff members on the comment sheets beside each of the artistic pieces as well as the audience comment cards that they filled out after the performance-exhibition (Appendix F).

One of the pieces that seemed to generate most discussion amongst the audience was *What I Know*. Previously, I noted the poignant silence that followed the piece and audience members commented on the impact that this piece had on them. For them, it resonated with the everyday reality that they were engaged in and they expressed their surprise at the articulate honesty within the piece, with many commenting on the great insight that they gained into the participants' perspective through this piece (Lahman *et al.*, 2010). Some commented on the impact of the last stanza:

I argue and fight
and tell you where to go,
not because it's you,
it's all that I know.

And how this presented a very different perspective to the one that they previously held, consequently provoking them towards a re-viewing of their relationship with the students in the school (Barone and Eisner, 2012). Others noted how this line captured the essence of many of the students in the school and the difficulties of expression that they encounter on a daily basis. Focusing on the vocal melody and accompaniment, some audience members noted how, for them, the music helped to expose the sense of vulnerability within the poem and how this reminded them of the

"…vulnerability of students that teachers so readily forget on a daily basis." Others commented on how the music "…gave the poetry more life" and helped to make it an experience. Similarly, others commented on how the poetry "…showed such a fresh perspective on life", one that the teachers are not usually privy to. Viewing the poetry as a collective, some teachers commented on the power of the poetry, which stemmed from the very real nature of the content and the honesty of the poets in exposing their experiences, dreams and desires and how all of the pieces "…came from the heart".

Audience members also commented on the combination of the visual with the poetic in *School Vs Workshops* and *My Disguise* and *Awake*. For some, the communicative power of the piece was contained in the various juxtapositions of form and content, and contained a "…refreshing insight into teenage angst" while for others it caused them to evaluate how they interacted with students.

A number of audience members commented on the professionalism of the visual work and the creativity employed to communicate the various messages. One example of this creativity, noted by a number of audience members was *Perspective*. Within *Perspective* they commented on the use of humour in the adaption of an already established *Meme*. This was noted in audience members' verbal response during the performance-exhibition and their comment cards. In terms of the form used, audience members also commented on how effective the pencil drawings and use of colour were: "[t]he drawings were very effective … It made me laugh and I think it hit the nail on the head." Others also admired participants' ability and maturity in their capacity to see varying perspectives in generating this and other pieces. Delving into *Perspective*, one respondent discussed how it highlighted, for them, the fact that "[e]ach of us as an individual is a meaning-making organism in a complicated and chaotic world" and provoked them to consider "…what is reality? I mean really?"

This level of provocation was not unique to *Perspective* and many other pieces provoked audience members into challenging the accepted norms. One such piece was *What We Saw*. Commenting on this piece, audience members noted that there needs to be more rigour in allowing external people into the school considering the impact that they can have on students and how this can negatively shape the students' minds and alter their opinion of external facilitators. *This is Our Space* provoked one staff member to re-consider their understanding of space within the educational context and for them opened the dichotomy between allowing students the space that they sometimes require and recognising their responsibility as a teacher and ultimately adhering to the curricular demands that are placed on them. They highlighted this dichotomy as taking place within the dichotomy of the professional and personal; between their professional responsibilities and their personal sense of empathy with students. In viewing *This Is Our Space* another audience member commented on how the piece struck a resonance with them in terms of the amount of locked doors in the school and the lack of trust between students and teachers. Another resonance emerged when one teacher commented on the impact that *Isolation* had on them and how it created a resonance with how they themselves feel down and alone at times and find it difficult to express this, or indeed having no one to express it to. Within this, there was a deep sense of empathy with the artistic piece and with the participants and me.

Almost unanimously, audience members commented on the clarity of communication and the ease with which they were enabled to understand the varying messages conveyed through the visual and performative pieces. Interestingly, one respondent felt that they didn't always understand the messages, which stemmed from the inherently interpretive nature of the arts, stating, "…arts has more meaning than just one." In contrast to this view, one person attributed his/her clarity to the fact that the thoughts and expressions within the pieces were predictable and were not mysterious in anyway. Dissimilarly, others referenced the honesty and authenticity of the voice as helping to increase the clarity of communication. Deepening their engagement with the communicative element of the artistic pieces, one

respondent commented on the resonances that the messages struck within them and how this helped to enhance their understanding: "[a] secondary voice was given to the students to express themselves and their feelings are similar to ones I would have experienced in school."

While many of the comments were related to specific pieces, others were more general and moved from the personal impact that the performance-exhibition had on audience members as well as their commentaries of the overall process. Tending to the latter first, a number of audience members commented on the tangibly safe environment, for both audience and participants, that was created within the performance-exhibition space and they extrapolated from this and commented on how the workshops must have provided the same atmosphere. Others expressed a sense of sadness that the process had come to an end and began questioning how, as a staff, they could continue the work of helping students to articulate their voices, so that they were more widely heard and appreciated. Related to this, one audience member called for teachers to acknowledge students' messages when they express how they don't feel listened to. Many other comments called for work that focused on motivating students' towards being confident enough to share and express their voices more regularly in public, particularly gaining the confidence to do this through singing and music.

Moving to their relationships with students, there was a general consensus that relationships with students needed to be built more democratically and that the role of the school is to begin to build these. Critically commenting on the current autocratic relationships in the school, some respondents commented on the necessity to form a relationship with students "…no matter what barriers they put up." Furthering this, others commented on the need for breaking down the walls that currently exist between staff and students in acceptance of the fact that "…it's not us and them." Staff members commented on how these issues were brought to the fore through the "…helplessness of students when faced with new experiences" which from their view was "…communicated through a number of pieces." One way that teachers perceived the democratisation of relationships with

students was to have more work of this sort, recognising and valuing students' voices in a more democratic process. Highlighting the power of the performance-exhibition for them, one respondent's 'gut reaction' to the work was a calling to action, stating that "…more of this type of work needs to happen in the school" as a means of boosting students' confidence, have their voices heard and listened to, and begin the process of breaking down the walls.

Another way that staff perceived the demolition of the barriers between students and staff could be achieved would be to repeat the process from the teachers' perspective to see "…if the two will ever meet." This audience member also acknowledged the courage of students in expressing their voices within the school and empathised with their difficulties in doing so, stating that expressing one's opinion was something that both staff and students struggled with in the school. For some audience members, they expected themselves to be in a position to empathise with students' difficulties and expressed their disappointment that the students felt that the teachers didn't understand their perspective. He/she also commented on how, in teachers seeing exclusively from their own perspective they were negating their responsibilities to the students and that part of the process now needed to be viewing from alternative perspectives.

Moving to more personal comments, many noted the personal impact that the performance-exhibition had; motivating them to a re-viewing of their own perspective and their understanding of students' perspectives, experiences, and understandings. More generally, some audience members commented on their surprise with the performance-exhibition and how "…it was such a different performance to what I was expecting." Further comments by this person alluded to the striking honesty of participants and how they possessed a greater sense of courage than him/her because they were enabled to speak out. One audience member commented on his/her enjoyment of the performance-exhibition because it allowed them to assume the role of observer and they enjoyed watching others' reactions to the pieces, particularly the songs, and how these reactions reflected or

contrasted his/her own. A number of other respondents commented on 'the power' of my voice not only in terms of the sound generated but also in terms of the colouring and portrayal of the text. For them, this was a realisation of the communicative potential of the arts.

One of the most striking personal commentaries on the performance-exhibition was identified by a number of different audience members. Discussing how they felt after the performance exhibition one person commented that they found it deeply emotional and yet very therapeutic. As a collective, these audience members discussed the therapeutic nature of the performance-exhibition in not only calming and focusing them after a long and stressful day of teaching but also as providing a "release" for them where they didn't feel alone. Within this, it appeared that the sense of not feeling alone stemmed from their identification with some pieces and others' reactions to them. For others who commented on the therapeutic nature of the performance-exhibition they referenced their sense of rejuvenation and being motivated in their job through seeing the potential of the students and their voices in the performance-exhibition.

One audience member expressed difficulties in engaging with the performance-exhibition and his/her comment card was largely concerned with this. One of these reasons was because the performance-exhibition was created by such a small number of students and they felt that it should have included the wider school community. In addition, with the student pool so small, they felt that the performance-exhibition was "too researcher focused" and this, for them, detracted greatly from its impact. Explaining this, the audience member also commented that the music was ineffective because it was "… out of sync with the students tastes". Noting what surprised them, the audience member moved from the musical to the poetic and commented on how they saw the visual art as being "simplistic" and expected them to "… be less conventional and go beyond the medium of pencil". With that said, however, the respondent felt that they connected with the poetry and the "…message of teenagers trying to find their place in the world." The concerns raised by this audience member were very real

and certainly bear highlighting. However, they didn't appear to be shared by the majority and others seemed to look more towards the communicative and expressive elements of the work than the form.

Having engaged with the performance-exhibition there appeared to be a very real sense of personal and collective agency (Siegesmund and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). Barone (2008b) argues that ABER has the potential to reach out to audiences who might be less affected by traditional forms of research and the audience's response to the performance-exhibition seemed to signify that, causing many to reflect on their relationships with students (Mitra, 2008) as well as tending to "…aspects of educational life that normally get neglected" (Eisner, 2008b, p.18) and an apparent move towards a wide-awakeness (Greene, 1995). The performance-exhibition also appeared to represent a colliding of worlds (Elvy, 2008) between the participants and the teachers which provoked each to re-see the other. This colliding of worlds and consequently the teachers' reactions could be suggestive of an understanding that "…both students and teachers needed to accept responsibility for the problems in the school" (Mitra, 2008, p.28). In addition, it appeared that the teachers' participatory encounters within the performance exhibition, as Maxine Greene (1995, p.27) suggests, motivated them to engage "…cognitive rigour and analysis" as well as responding affectively. The teachers' responses to the participants' personal agency could be suggestive of a coming together to develop a collective and conjoined sense of agency. For,

> [o]nly if more and more persons in their coming together learn to incarnate such principles [that centre around belief in justice and freedom and respect for human rights], and choose to live and speak in accord with them, are we likely to bring a community into being. All we can do is speak with others as passionately and eloquently as we can; all we can do is to look into each other's eyes and urge each other on to new beginnings.
>
> (Greene, 1995, p.43)

The sense of personal agency that participants and teachers expressed through the performance-exhibition and their responses leads me to a brief discussion and consideration of various audiences within ABER, drawn from

the work of Tom Barone (2008a). Barone (2008a) defines five different potential audiences within ABER. These are (i) the artist researcher; (ii) the informants, whose lives have been represented in the research text; (iii) lay audiences, whose life experiences are similar to those of the research informants; (iv) lay audiences, who are often viewed as residing in a realm quite distant from the world of the researcher and informants. Barone (2008a, p.487) also defines this audience as an "…audience of the lay public, or better, the various publics at large". The fifth and final audience defined by Barone (2008a) covers persons who commission evaluations of social programmes, those who implement arts-based social programmes, and those who have the potential to impact policy regarding these programmes. Barone posits that ABER has transformative potential to connect with and impact each of these audiences. Some of these impacts have been documented throughout this thesis and particularly this chapter. Due to the focus of the research, other audiences– such as policy makers and the lay public– have not been targeted but their potential is noted and may be engaged as a means of extending the impact of the work.

Chapter Conclusion

Chapter eight sought to provide a further context of the research and specifically document the last phase of the research continuum, Phase 5. Phase 5 also formed the final stage of the PAR process for some participants, action orientation or change agency. The generation of the performance-exhibition was in recognition that "[i]magination breathes life into experience" (Greene, 1995, p.22), that representing this experience artistically is transformative (Knowles and Promislow, 2008a) and sharing these artistic pieces contain transformative potential within wider audiences. The audiences concerned with this performance-exhibition were the participants and me, Owen and Hazel– who helped compose some of the music–, the teachers and audience members at the performance-exhibition, as well as others who heard of the performance-exhibition through these audiences.

The generation of the performance-exhibition raised tensions amongst participants and me at times but more importantly, appeared to develop our relationship. Consequently, this led me to a place where I understood some of the action from Phase 3 more because it was given a deeper context through discussions that occurred in Phase 5. In this way, dialogue within the meetings served to illuminate and continue to provide alternative perspectives, which had the potential to challenge and transform.

It appeared that engagement with the performance-exhibition generated many resonances with audience members and also provoked them to re-assess and re-view their perspectives and consider others' viewpoints and experience. Extending this, there also appeared to be an intent to change the relationships between staff and students within the school and an acknowledgement that walls need to be broken down between them. Audience members also commented on the capacity of the artistic pieces to evoke emotions and various meanings, which Maxine Greene recognises as a unique feature of imaginative literature and form:

> …unlike documentary material, [it resonates]. That is, the words mean more than they donate, evoking those wiling to pay heed other images, memories, things desired, things lost, things never entirely grasped or understood.
>
> (1995, p.44)

Each of these elements seemed to motivate the teachers to a call for action and further highlighted the transformative potential of alternative modes of representation and ABER (Finley, 2008; Knowles and Promislow, 2008b; Knowles *et al.*, 2008).

The audience members, participants, and I were highlighted as three or four of the potential audiences for this work and through Barone's (2008a) discussion of audiences, policy makers and the general public were also highlighted as potential audiences.

Chapter 9

‘But You Came Back’: Concluding Comments

Generating Synergies across the Research

The title of this chapter '[b]ut you came back', is a quote taken from *What I Know,* the song/poem that was composed/written as part of the performance-exhibition and for me forefronts the necessity of reflection in order to act, much in line with Freire's concept of *praxis*. The importance of returning to the setting and keeping the participants informed and included is also articulated in the final lines of *What We Saw*– through participants' description of a negative experience– and in the following two stanzas of *Our Experience*:

I do not regret refusing,
but the way that it was said.
I regret how I went about it,
and the means through which I led.

Returning has helped us see
how to open those around,
to our vision and our experience
and what's now laying on the ground.

It is in this vein, of reflection leading to dissonance and critical awareness, that this chapter seeks to generate synergies between the previous chapters. These synergies are extended to all of the previous discussions; those that addressed the original research questions and those that tended to the hidden curriculum or "…unintended outcomes of the [research] process (McLaren, 2009, p.75). It is within these discussions that the uniqueness of the project emerges. This research is the first in-depth study that explores the potential for students to generate their own learning experiences within an Irish TY classroom in a DEIS school. It is also the first study to explore the arts within an Irish TY DEIS context. This study adds to current research studies on TY classes on the potential for TY to help students develop personally, socially, and culturally (Jeffers, 2002; 2007; 2008; 2011) and presents an additional range of voices in relation to this. The uniqueness of the study also lies in its use of the arts as tools to investigate the arts, and also to (re)present its findings through the arts. The study also engages a PAR framework to explore ABER and thus marries the two methodological approaches. The study is also the first of its kind to explore

student voice within the context of a mixed-sex Irish TY classroom in an innovative and sustained way.

Herr and Anderson (2005, p.55) note that their validity criteria (Table 3) for AR can also be thought of as "…indicators of quality for action research studies". In seeking to create synergies, I want to frame the discussion in terms of Herr and Anderson's five indicators of quality; process indicators, dialogic indicators, democratic indicators; outcome indicators, and catalytic indicators. In discussing the research under these five indicators one is discussing; the generation of new knowledge, the action-oriented outcomes of the research, the learning of both the researcher and participants, the local applicability of results and the evolution of the research methodology.

Goals of Action Research	Validity Criteria
1) The generation of new knowledge	Dialogic and process validity
2) The achievement of action-oriented outcomes	Outcome validity
3) The education of both researcher and participants	Catalytic validity
4) Results that are relevant to the local setting	Democratic validity
5) A sound and appropriate research methodology	Process validity

Table 3. The Goals of Action Research & Validity Criteria

It should be noted that these indicators are symbiotic and actively support each other. That is and for example, actions are not exclusively involved as outcome indicators, but are included within the remit of catalytic indicators and democratic indicators also.

Process indicators

Process indicators are concerned with the appropriateness of the methodology and how well it functioned to answer the research questions. PAR was chosen as the methodological framework because it attempts to actively engage participants, recognises the potential for participants to be valuable knowledge holders, actively elicits their voice, and forefronts

collective action. This process of generating alternative types of discourse unsettles and disturbs power relations. These power struggles extended from the research space to the wider school and were between participants, teachers, and me. The collaborative and dialogic nature of PAR contributed towards a provoking of these power struggles, as participants were challenged to reconsider their passive and oppressive state. The PAR process also aided in revealing some of the power structures within the research and the school more generally.

The reflective nature of the PAR cycle facilitated the constant modification of the process. That is, the process was responsive to the action that occurred. Thus, not only were research questions addressed, but the reflexive and cyclical nature of the process facilitated further problem-posing and problem-solving by the participants and me. The process was, thus, responsive to the social and political context within which it took place and was continually made more personal and meaningful for the participants and me.

Dialogic indicators

Dialogic Indicators are concerned with the 'goodness' of the research, which is monitored through a process of peer review.

In positioning the participants as architects within the process, investigating and excavating facets of their lived and imagined experiences, the PAR process involves them as researchers. The participants can thus be viewed as fellow researchers or peers within the process. Dialogue with participants provoked and challenged our perspectives and led us closer to a state of critical awareness. Dialogue could thus be considered critical and reflective; engaging with and reflecting on the world in which we live. Participants contributed to dialogue through their engagement with the arts, through which we found new avenues of expression that helped to further excavate meaning. Our continual participation within this process lended itself to a more authentic form of research and dialogue where peer review was not something separate from the research process but was organically integrated into the activities in which we engaged. Further

reflecting this authenticity, after the grounded theory and thematic analysis of data– which participants were not actively involved in– peer approval was sought through a critical viewing of my analysis, through member checking.

Democratic indicators

Democratic indicators seek to ensure that there is authentic collaboration within the process and that participant voices are valued.

There is considerable overlap between dialogic indicators and democratic indicators. Throughout the process conscious efforts were made to generate more authentic research through participants' active involvement. Participants' involvement in visual analysis furthered this and acknowledged their possession of valuable insider knowledge. Holding this voice as knowledge-full and attempting to elicit it proved difficult, through traditional verbal and written forms of elicitation. In contrast, the arts provided an appropriate multi-faceted form through which participants could document, elicit, and express their voices. Using the arts to express their voices, participants' feelings of voicelessness and their own devaluing of their voices emerged. The arts provided a form through which participants could express and recognise their disenfranchisement, and consequently act to change this, through becoming critically aware but also through the performance-exhibition. Participants' voices were juxtaposed with the researcher's voice throughout the research and this is reflected in the structure and style of this thesis.

Outcome indicators

Outcome indicators refer to the extent to which action occurred that led to a resolution of the initial research questions.

Through engaging in the process participants were enabled to problem-pose and problem-solve issues around their voicelessness, and their participation and attitudes towards the arts. Through eliciting participants' voices, their previous experiences and attitudes were challenged through the arts-based workshops. Indeed, by eliciting their voices through the arts participants were being challenged to engage with the arts. This engagement formed

one of two approaches to arts engagement within the research. Both approaches challenged participants' understanding of and engagement with the arts and their participation in the workshops can be considered a form of action. Their challenge or reiteration of their previously held attitude towards the arts can also be viewed as a form of action

Catalytic indicators

Catalytic indicators are concerned with the emancipatory and transformative elements of the research.

There is significant overlap between catalytic indicators and outcome indicators, as both attempt to assess the extent to which the original research questions were addressed. Catalytic indicators move beyond this, however, and are concerned with the extent to which the emancipatory and transformative intent was realised.

Through artistically engaging participants in the PAR process I attempted to lead them towards a realisation of their own position in relation to the arts, and as the research evolved, within the education system. This manifested itself in participants' expression of voicelessness and their resignation of this state. Through engagement with the arts, participants appeared to be better positioned to realise their state of oppression and were empowered to act upon this.

While action can be understood in many ways within PAR projects, within this project action was understood as participants challenging themselves to engage in the arts, an acknowledgement of change in their attitude towards the arts or affirming that their attitude remained the same, and through the performance-exhibition. Notably, only four participants, out of the fourteen initially engaged, chose to be involved in the performance-exhibition. The performance-exhibition was the embodiment of Freirian *praxis*; critical reflection that informs and leads to action. This reflection engaged previous action and part of the performance-exhibition was concerned with participants' communication of their voicelessness and lack of autonomy within school and society. The action was not confined to the

participants however, and through this process of generation and presentation I also exerted my agency in contributing to and performing some of the pieces. In doing so, I was acknowledging the impact that the research had on me personally and professionally, which compounded my critical and participatory ontological and epistemological views.

The performance-exhibition, thus, was a space where we demonstrated *communicative action*, both individually and collectively. Democratic, outcome, and catalytic indicators are concerned with 'who the action is successful for' and on this, I would argue, that it was not only successful for the participants and me but also for the staff members who attended the performance-exhibition. Their engagement with the exhibition instigated a re-viewing of their world, from the participants and my perspectives, and appeared to provoke them into action, consequently challenging the current educational structures. Some also called for a sense of *communicative action* that acknowledged their re-viewing of the situations and events that they were engaged in every day. These included a reconfiguration of the traditional student-teacher relationship and a call for teachers to be more attentive to the holistic needs of students.

With this in mind, the emancipatory and transformative intent of the research was realised in the communicative potential of the arts to expand human understanding, and reach audiences that other, more traditional means of re-presentation, may not have spoken to, impacted upon, or transformed.

Limitations of the Research

Before presenting the findings, implications, and recommendations of the research it is necessary to outline the limitations of the work. In relation to transferability within research, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.298) note that:

> …if there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere. The original inquirer cannot

> know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do. The best advice to give to anyone seeking to make a transfer is to accumulate empirical evidence about contextual similarity; the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible.

In line with Lincoln and Guba's assertion, I have attempted to provide detailed descriptive data so that other researchers can generate transferability if appropriate.

This study documents the impact that a series of arts-based workshops had within a DEIS TY classroom. The limits of the study are in terms of the TY classroom that it explores. TY offers a curricular space where the arts can be engaged in an attempt to provide alternative educational experiences for students. No other space in the post-primary school curriculum offers this, and this is something that needs to be considered. In addition, the study context is that of a DEIS school and so may not be appropriately extrapolated to schools that are not involved in the DEIS initiative.

The study also raises a tension. PAR requires a more democratic relationship between researcher and participants. In engaging a PAR process within a school setting the realisation of this more democratic relationship may not be possible. For example, participants were allowed to leave the workshops if they wished. Within a traditional school setting this may not be possible and if participation is mandated, this could hamper the aspired democratic dynamic between teacher and student. Furthermore, the deficit of arts engagement may not be the same in other schools.

Findings, Implications, & Recommendations

Jennifer C. Green (1992, p.39) points out that the real issue for qualitative research is to "mak[e] it meaningful" for those engaged in the process as opposed to "getting it right". With this in mind, the previous section considered the quality of this research in terms of the criteria set out by Herr and Anderson (2005), and in doing so elaborated upon what might be considered as the outcomes of the work. Implicit within this was 'who' the research and action were successful for. In essence, one could consider the quality and success of the research as its findings. Engaging the work of Pitt and Britzman (2003), Lather (2007, p.13) points out that research findings often present "lovely knowledge" and "difficult knowledge". Adapting Lather's discussion, the purpose of this section is to explicate upon previous discussions and to consider their potential as lovely knowledge and difficult knowledge. Moreover, the discussion also considers the implications of these findings, whether lovely or difficulty, for future research as well as researchers and parties both within and external to the field of educational research. The below discussion on the findings of the research includes possibilities for future research and also considers the implications of these findings. Implications of the work and recommendations from the work are also discussed within their own respective sections.

Findings

Considering the four theoretical and conceptual strands of the project, ABER, PAR, student voice, and power and educational disadvantage, it is not surprising that many of the findings of the research are directly related to and concerned with these areas. The findings of the research are concerned with the clarification of various attitudes and 'truths' relating to the arts in this DEIS setting, the evolving understandings and uses of the arts throughout the research, the potential of the arts to negotiate issues of power and voicelessness within the research, and the necessity for broader conceptions of what qualifies as action and agency within educational

research. The findings also highlight the capacity and potential for the arts to liberate and 'give voice' to a multiplicity of voices.

Clarification of various attitudes and 'truths' relating to the arts in this DEIS setting

One of the strengths of this research is its empirically grounded nature, with the data firmly grounded in the lived experiences of both the participants and the researcher. Through the methodological framework of PAR, the research engaged participants in a process of problem-posing and problem-solving. Furthermore, in positioning participants as 'architects' (Oliver, 2010) the work aspired to being as democratic as the context allowed. Democracy was enacted within the process through joint decision-making and these decisions impacted upon the shape, evolution, and direction of the research. Thus, the research was responsive to the changing situation and action that occurred on a daily basis. This fluidity facilitated a more personal and meaningful experience for participants and further facilitated inquiry into aspects of both their lived and imagined experience that they deemed important or insightful. One of the emergent areas of inquiry, which the research initially set out to explore, was participants' previous engagement with the arts. Having established the minimal experience that participants had with the arts in this setting, their barriers to the arts were then explored. While these barriers (lack of availability and other's attitudes, finance, the presence of peers, and the threat of bullying) may not appear ground-breaking in that they are assumed through various texts, this research provokes an evidence-based discussion of participants' barriers to the arts. Future research should consequently interrogate these barriers in various social and educational contexts.

The research found that some of the participants' barriers to the arts were linked to their socio-economic status and the socio-economic status of the community. Within the communities surrounding St. Nessan's there is a very strong dance tradition (Irish dancing, hip-hop, and street dancing). Dancing was the primary art form available to participants and they argued that when other opportunities to engage with the arts arose, they were

notified of them when it was too late. In addition, while some participants expressed a desire to engage with the arts, financial limitations restricted their engagement both within and outside of their community. This highlights the necessity for intervention within these communities in terms of the provision of resources and accessibility to the arts, encouraging community-driven engagement. While participants noted that engagement with dancing was still open to some of them, previous experience (negative or a lack of experience), and for others finance, meant that they were uninterested in or unable to engage. Moreover, the aim of arts provision within this community needs to be interrogated and broadened. The research found that participants' perceptions were that they were unable to engage with some art forms in the community due to their largely competitive nature and focus. This competitive focus militated against their engagement and excluded them from aspects of arts engagement within their community. Arts provision within the community needs to meet the full demands of the community and acknowledge and account for the fact that there are young people within the community who wish to engage in the arts in a non-competitive environment. Links with arts opportunities within other Limerick suburbs could also be made but would need to take account of the travel and financial limitations of some young people and families within the socio-economically disadvantaged communities surrounding St. Nessan's. Future research could track the enactment of this approach and also the impact that it has on participants and the communities.

Evolving understandings and uses of the arts throughout the research

Another finding from the research is in relation to the arts themselves and to their evolution during the process. At the outset of the research, participants appeared to hold a very narrow and constricted view of the arts, which was derived from their previous experience with the arts. This view was one that positioned the arts as being form focused and mimetic. Acknowledging this view, and attempting to provide participants with various experiences of the arts, two models of arts engagement were used; DBAE and IAA. Engaging these models presented challenges and

difficulties for participants as well as many successes, which have been discussed in detail throughout chapter six and chapter seven of this thesis. In providing participants with alternative approaches to the arts, through DBAE and IAA, their understanding of what constituted the arts appeared to change and evolve. Engagement with DBAE and IAA caused participants to question their assumptions of the arts and subsequently a re-viewing of what constituted the arts. Consequently, one of the findings from the research is the necessity for research in the arts and ABER to provide its participants with different and, at times, contrasting approaches to the arts. Embracing and incorporating different approaches to the arts has the potential to more readily engage all participants in the arts and generate more inclusive and engaging experiences. A related finding is in terms of the nature of arts engagement. The research recognises the potential for the arts to explore participants' imagined worlds and facilitate an experiencing and imagining of what could be (Greene, 1995). Within this, however, the research found that for some participants the imagining and exploration of the alternative had to firstly be grounded in their own lived experiences. Thus, for some, their engagement with the arts was essentially about using them as a tool to inquire into and re-present their lived, everyday experiences. Emerging from this is an understanding that in presenting the arts to young people, one must view the arts as malleable and fluid. That is, in attempting to engage young people and students in the arts one must acknowledge the fluid nature of the arts, researchers, teachers, and practitioners must consider the reality that, while some may engage fully in the aesthetic, cognitive, emotive, and somatic domains of the arts, others may engage them purely as tools for inquiry and representation. Thus, the approach to and understanding of the arts must be malleable enough to embrace all levels of engagement with them. This evolution in relation to the purpose of and approach to the arts within ABER also appeared to be mirrored in the evolution of the arts in terms of what some participants considered the arts. That is, they transcended form focused definitions and moved towards more holistic conceptions of representational forms of meaning and emotion.

The potential of the arts to negotiate issues of power and voicelessness within the research

A third finding was the negotiating potential of the arts within issues of power and voicelessness. ABER, student voice, and PAR all attempt to subvert traditional models of the researcher-researched and teacher-student relationship through the generation of more democratic relationships, through positioning students' and participants' knowledge as valuable, insightful, and unique. This re-positioning– as Greene (1995), Maguire (2001), and Cammarota and Fine (2008) argue– forefronts power struggles as parties negotiate the terms of their engagement, which is frequently initially characterised by resistance (Fine, 2007b; Giroux, 2009a). As discussed throughout this thesis, some of these power struggles were as a result of participants' perceptions of the hierarchical relationship between them and me, and their voicelessness in various aspects of their lives. Through engagement with the arts, particularly PM, participants' voices were engaged, their voicelessness articulated, and power struggles between us made more neutral. The arts provided a multi modal means through which participants could express their voices and also a means through which they could emotionally engage with the workshops, each other, and aspects of their lives outside of the workshops. In addition, this also led participants to articulate their issue of voicelessness, which Kilkelly *et al.* (2005) note is one of the pertinent issues within all voice research with young people. In providing participants with various forms, through the arts, through which their voices and voicelessness could be articulated, I was recognising their right to have a voice as well as acknowledging the importance of that voice. In doing this, more democratic relationships were being negotiated and enacted and this served to neutralise some of the power struggles between some participants and me. The arts, not only facilitated participants in expressing their voices and voicelessness but also served as a tool through which we could communicate and (re)present our experiences of subjugation, voicelessness, and the process of coming to acknowledge, realise, and express our voices. Thus, the scope and impact of ABER and work into student voice was dually realised, and this in itself forms another finding from the research.

ABER and student voice actively supported each other throughout the research process and the scope of both was realised in particular through the generation of the performance-exhibition. The process of generating the work caused the participants and me to review the action we engaged in, decisions that were made, and experiences that we had during Phase 3 to be re-viewed. This reviewing began a journey towards 'wide-awakeness' (Greene, 1995), where multiple perspectives were elicited, articulated and considered. This led to both an individual re-viewing of the action as well as a collective re-viewing of the action. The impetus for this re-viewing was the further combining of the arts and student voice, as we engaged the arts as a tool through which we could (re)present our experience and voices to school staff. This process uniquely caused us to order our thoughts and experiences and evaluate our role in the perpetuation and challenging of power, and our role in the continued subjugation and emancipation of our voices. The scope and impact of the arts, ABER, and student voice was further realised in performing and curating our work. Through the performance-exhibition school staff were enabled to understand and engage with our expression and experiences and for many this led them towards a wide-awakeness of their role in perpetuating states of inequality through the continued subjugation of students' voices in the school. The impact and scope of ABER and student voice was larger than this, however, as some staff expressed the necessity to re-evaluate their approach to teaching, their relationship with students, and the means through which they perpetuate states of inequality and contribute towards the subjugation of voices. For some staff members, the impact of the work lay in the resonances that it created with their own voicelessness. Through forefronting participants' voicelessness, the teachers were enabled to empathise and express their own feelings of voicelessness within the education system. The arts, ABER, student voice, and PAR actively supported each other in this process and while their scope and impact has been noted in terms of those that it influenced, other audiences have also been noted, at the close of chapter eight, through Barone's (2008a) discussion of audiences in ABER.

The necessity for broader conceptions of what qualifies as action and agency within educational research

A related finding from the work is in terms of the necessity to reconceptualise and broaden ideas and theories of action and agency within educational research. The performance-exhibition was one means through which action and agency were enabled within the research. Within this research, action was engaged through a number of different means; through an acknowledgement and reiteration of bias, through an acknowledgement and challenging of bias, or through actively exerting agency in an effort to lead others towards an examination of their own biases and how they contribute towards or militate against the perpetuation of inequality within the school. This research has, in line with PAR literature, explicated the necessity for educational research to re-conceive the very notion of action and to, through a democratic educational process, allow participants and students to define the parameters of that action as opposed to external agents, teachers, and adults imposing their own conceptions of action and agency on students and young people. The research has also highlighted the potential of the TY programme to be harnessed as a space, within the post-primary structures, where students can be consciously given a voice and encouraged to question taken-for-granted assumptions about the education system, their role within it, and situations of inequality and voicelessness in their lives. There is scope for future research to engage these elements and explore the potential, within the formal curricular structures of TY, for the forefronting and interrogation of power struggles, and questioning of states of inequality, biases, and voicelessness.

Giving voice

One of the overarching findings of this research is around the potential and capacity of the arts to 'give voice' to various parties within the educational and research process, and events that occur within the research itself. While this finding has been implicit throughout the previous discussion, it is necessary to explicitly examine this. Discussions in the thesis to date have outlined my role in mediating voices and my voice as a mediating voice, bringing voices together and making sense of them in light of the action and

events of the research (Back, 2007). In engaging my voice as a mediating tool, the research gave voice to various perspectives and voices both individually and collectively. The most predominant of these were those of the participants. The participants' narratives and experiences were given voice through the work in terms of reporting what they said, the action that they engaged in, power struggles that were engaged, maintained, or neutralised, and the various decisions that we made. Furthermore, participants' voices were also directly given voice in presenting their various artistic works throughout the thesis, so that these can be interrogated, supported by the narrative in the thesis, by the reader. Through my mediating voice and in participants' voices as expressed through their artistic pieces, the various domains that the arts engage can be witnessed, highlighted and engaged. This research engaged participants in the emotional, cognitive, and somatic domains and each of these in turn impacted the voices that were generated and how this voice was expressed and engaged, which can be witnessed throughout the thesis. As well as my voice being utilised as a mediating tool, the research also gave voice to my own experience, in the inclusion of my research reflective diaries as a data source and the quasi-narrative style assumed throughout this thesis. Through both of these– my voice as a mediating tool and giving voice to my own experiences– the research itself was given voice and brought to life.

School staff were also given voice through recording informal conversations that I had with them during the my day-to-day interactions in the school and through audio-visually recording interviews with school staff and including these as data sources. Members of the school's staff were given further voice through presenting the performance-exhibition to them, recording their responses to this during the performance-exhibition (through response sheets) and filling out audience response cards after the performance-exhibition. The various parties that were given voice in this research present a plethora of voices around issues associated with the arts, participation, power, voice and voicelessness, and educational disadvantage. This variety of perspective potentially increases the audience and impact of the research and its remit can include educational and social science

researchers, teachers, school management, and other educational partners, community based arts practitioners, and policy makers.

Implications

In light of the above discussion, three key parties can be identified in terms of the potential impact of the research; school communities, community based arts organisations (CBAO), and policy makers. The direct implications for these three parties are outlined below.

School communities

Within educational contexts, students are regularly perceived as the problem and their oppression the solution (Mitra, 2008). The findings of this research strongly support the fact that students, themselves, are not the sole problem within the education system and support the existing knowledge base of studies and reports that call for recognition of the potential of students' voices. These studies also document the successful institutional reforms and responses to the inclusion of students within the decision-making processes. Within school communities this embracing of student voice and the importance of student consultation should be realised beyond mere tokenism through student councils. This researched has illuminated the potential of student voice to inform educational practice and pedagogy within schools and it is important that schools tap into, exploit, and value this unique and insightful knowledge.

Furthermore, the research highlights the extent to which participants felt voiceless within their school community. The extent to which students feel heard and included within their community is a challenge that schools must address in attempting to combat issues of inequality. Marker (2009) notes that miscommunication between parties can lead to voicelessness. As suggested in this research, schools must be attentive to the different ways in which young people express themselves and must transcend the word-centric nature of *listening* and move towards embracing new modes of expression such as artistic and technological modes that *hear* students'

voices. Schools must actively elicit student voice and consider alternative means of doing this as well as considering and valuing the sonority of voice. This research presents the arts as a viable and successful tool through which student voice can be elicited, expressed and articulate, heard, and engaged within an educational climate.

Schools should evaluate their power dynamics and assess the impact that these have on students. Our schools are sometimes characterised in the lack of autonomy and responsibility that they offer to students (Rudduck and Flutter, 2010). By eliciting students' voices, schools can move towards offering students the potential to take ownership over their own learning and provide them with an increased sense of autonomy and responsibility. This facilitates a valuable means of curricular feedback, where students can highlight areas that they feel are not attended to, such as arts provision. This can lead to more meaningful curricular experiences for students.

Regardless of whether the arts are offered for State examination, schools should provide students with a multitude of opportunities to engage in the arts within both curricular and non-curricular contexts. Schools should also attempt to provide students with varying experiences of the arts, such as DBAE and the IAA. Offering alternative foci and approaches can serve to further engage students who may perceive the arts as being inaccessible. Furthermore, this research also highlights the necessity for young people to be presented with various opportunities to engage in the arts. Schools should provide the educational and developmental space for young people to experiment with the arts and should consequently harness the openness and holistic focus of the TY programme as one of the crucial spaces through which this can be achieved.

Schools should also attempt to generate close connections with community organisations and attempt to link the arts within the school to these community organisations. Creating a partnership of engagement could serve as motivation for students to become engaged in various art forms, as well as helping to maintain this engagement.

Community-based arts organisations

CBAO should attempt to generate and strengthen links and connections with schools so that they can access their target audiences. Creating strong links with local schools could also motivate students to more readily engage with CBAO.

CBAO should also attempt to facilitate students who do not wish to engage in the arts competitively but seek engagement for personal fulfilment and enjoyment. It is important that young people are provided with a positive experience of the arts and CBAO should take account that not all young people wish to competitively engage with the arts.

In attempting to provide adequate services to the community, CBAO should attempt to establish lines of communication with various community members as a means of ascertaining what art forms young people are interested in. This information can then be acted upon so that provision is in line with the demand of young people within the community.

Policy

Policy should actively promote the inclusion of student voice within TY so that more meaningful and personalised curricula can be devised to respond to the changing needs of the students. This is not to suggest that TY should be a space where students are allowed to do as they wish, but should encourage teachers to elicit and hear the voices, concerns, and desires of their students. A guidebook for an arts module in TY could be developed, similar to that for development education (Tunney, 2010), which could include various approaches to the arts. This is in line with the philosophy of TY. The development of a guidebook could motivate non-specialist teachers to engage the arts and give them confidence to teach a module in the arts. It would simply require, as Hoffman Davis (2008, p.38) suggests, teachers to be "arts-friendly" and open to engaging in and with various art forms.

Adequate resourcing needs to be given to CBAO and schools so that they can provide the appropriate resources. Policy should account for the need for additional funding for the arts, particularly within socio-economically disadvantaged areas. The increase in resources could facilitate young people's engagement with the arts by minimising the financial barrier and providing them with more opportunities and avenues for engagement.

Recommendations

Although some considerations and recommendations for future research have been made within this chapter already, three additional key areas also present themselves through the findings of this research. These areas include; curriculum development, power structures within schools, the role of teachers in the integration of arts in schools.

Researchers should engage or consider investigating the construction of curricula with students and the impact that this has on student engagement. Another area could be to engage with arts-based programmes in TY, perhaps in a similar or different setting. Action research projects could also be established to research the area of student-designed arts-based TY modules. Other research could also evaluate teachers' and schools' power structures, their embodiment of power and how these can be challenged or investigated through and within the arts.

Further research should investigate teachers' responses to the integration of the arts with other curricular areas. Alternative avenues could be explored from the teachers' perspectives, in terms of teachers' involvement in arts-based workshops and their (re)presentation of this through the arts to students. Other research endeavours might seek to engage students' voices or teachers' voices more readily within school life and evaluate the impact that this has on a personal level as well as professionally and institutionally.

Conclusion

In attempting to 'reach' student voice through the arts, this research has framed itself through a number of resonant frameworks, which were explored through agency giving methodologies and methods. Consequently, a number of key findings emerged in relation to; the clarification of various attitudes and 'truths' relating to the arts in this specific DEIS setting, the evolving understandings and use of the arts throughout the research, the potential of the arts to negotiate issues of power and voicelessness within the work, and the necessity for broader conceptions of what constitutes action and agency within educational research. These emergent findings also speak to the capacity and potential of the arts to liberate and 'give voice' to a multiplicity of voices and strongly support the use of the arts within educational and social science research.

Throughout this thesis the importance of eliciting, listening, and hearing students' and young people's voice has recurrently been inferred and stated, and this is one of the elements that we must continually keep sight of. I would thus argue that any research that attempts to engage students and young people must attend to their voices– valuing the narrative and sonic aspects of voice– and position them as valuable knowledge bearers who have the potential to not only enlighten and illuminate aspects of their world but have the capacity to generate and lead others towards deeper understandings of action and agency, or lack there of, within the research and young people's social contexts more generally. The potential for voice to be engaged in everyday engagements with young people and students should thus be realised both within educational institutions and societal structures more broadly. The arts provide one means through which we can forefront, elicit, represent, hear and listen to voices so that we can learn *from* them and not just *about* them.

Perhaps the capacity of the arts to 'reach' student voice can be best articulated through the participants' and my collective voice, in the pieces that we generated for the performance-exhibition. Reaching student voice through the arts enabled us to "lay [things] bare upon the ground" so that

we could listen with our eyes, see with our ears and spin a world of different voices and multiple perspectives. In doing this, we were empowered to unveil what was beneath our disguises and come to understand that through looking, listening, and feeling we can awaken ourselves and others to the realities of oppression and subjugation, and in the process, the possibilities of emancipation and liberation.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Information Sheets

COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH
MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

Richie Hayes
Department of Arts Education and Physical Education
Faculty of Education
Email: richard.hayes@mic.ul.ie
Phone: 061 204976

'*The Arts are for Posh People*': A Participatory Action Research Project Exploring the Arts in a Post-Primary Transition Year Classroom

Pupil Information Sheet

24 / 10 / 2011

Dear Pupil,

This information sheet is in relation to research being done in your Transition Year class in St. Nessan's Community College. The research is being done by me as part of my 'PhD' (Doctor of Philosophy). The title of the research project is: *'The Arts are for Posh People': A Participatory Action Research Project Exploring the Arts in a Post-Primary Transition Year Classroom*.

The research will involve both classroom and practical work. Those people who decide to be part of the research will be given the opportunity to participate in a variety of art forms. Some of these art forms are: literature, visual arts, drama, dance, film, and music. The research will comprise of 12 weeks of workshops. Each workshop will be a double class period long and there will be a maximum of one workshop per week. This means that the total time that anyone will be involved in the project this year is approximately 19 hours.

Participants in the research will be asked to keep a diary relating to the work done in the workshops. The diary might consist of writing, pictures, or an audio-visual (video) diary that you make yourself. As well as keeping the diary itself, participants will also be involved in individual interviews and focus groups with their classmates. The difference between individual interviews and focus groups is: Individual interviews will be one on one with myself or one of your classmates and will happen in a corner of the workshop space. Individual interviews will occur at different stages of the project, but it is estimated that every person involved in the project will be interviewed at least twice during the project. In contrast, focus groups will happen after every workshop. The focus group will be a discussion, among the entire class, of what was done in the workshops, and as a class you will be asked certain questions and invited to comment on the work that went on in the workshop. Both focus groups and individual interviews will be recorded using a video camera: audio-visual recording.

As well as making video diaries, you might also be asked to create a diary out of photographs that you take. We will also be discussing your experiences with the arts to date and what you think about them. During the project you may also be asked to make a number of things such as a timeline of your experience in the arts, or to mark on a map the areas in which you travel on a weekly basis. As well as these, you may also be involved in creating and performing pieces of art (drama, visual art, music, film, poetry, literature, and dance). In addition to performance within the project you may also have the opportunity to participate in a performance piece at the end of the project. If this is the case it will be entirely voluntary and will happen sometime between September 2012 and May 2013. Involvement in this performance will mean that you will be involved in some additional workshops with your classmates and I.

Throughout the project, I will be the only person who will be allowed to see the audio-visual recordings and I will also be the only person who will have access to your diary and any of the things that you make or present in the workshops. All of the recordings and your diary will be treated with the utmost of confidence and you will have the choice whether to be named or not in any of the data or in the writing up of the project.

There is no pressure on you to be involved in the project and it is perfectly OK if you do not wish to be involved in it. In addition, if you decide that you would like to be involved in the project, you are not 'tied in' to it. This means that you can withdraw from the project at any time or decide that you do not want to participate in specific activities if you are very uncomfortable doing so. If you decide that you do not wish to be involved in the project, or wish to withdraw during it, you will not be penalised in any way. You will simply continue on with class, with that particular class teacher, as normal.

If you have any queries about the project please feel free to contact me on my email or contact _____ (TY Coordinator), in the school, who will be happy to answer any questions that you have or help you contact me about your queries or questions.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Kind Regards,

_____
Richie Hayes

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

COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH
MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

Richie Hayes
Department of Arts Education and Physical Education
Faculty of Education
Email: richard.hayes@mic.ul.ie
Phone: 061 204976

'*The Arts are for Posh People*': A Participatory Action Research Project Exploring the Arts in a Post-Primary Transition Year Classroom

Parent / Guardian / Responsible Other Information Sheet

24 / 10 / 2011

Dear Parent / Guardian / Responsible Other,

I am writing to inform you of research that will be done in your son/daughter's class in St. Nessan's Community College. I am a fully qualified post-primary teacher and will be conducting the research myself. The research is being done by me as part of my 'PhD' (Doctor of Philosophy). The title of the research project is: *'The Arts are for Posh People': A Participatory Action Research Project Exploring the Arts in a Post-Primary Transition Year Classroom*. The research is being supervised by Dr. Michael Finneran of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

The project will explore your son/daughter's experiences in the arts to date, both within and outside of school. Should your son/daughter decide that they would like to be involved in the project, and with your permission, the types of activities that they will be involved in are in the areas of: drama, dance, film, literature, music, and visual arts. These areas of the arts will be integrated throughout the project in both classroom based teaching and practical group and individual work. During the project participants will be asked to keep a 'diary'. Participants will be allowed to keep a written diary, image diary, audio-visual (video) diary, or a mix of all of these. This diary will serve as a place where participants can express their successes, frustrations, and thoughts as well as documenting their own progress. As well as this, participants will be recorded in the workshops using audio and visual means: the purpose of which is purely for research. At all stages in the project the only person who will have access to the participants' diaries and audio-visual recordings will be myself. In conjunction with these methods, participants in the project will also be invited to join a specially set up facebook page related to the work in the workshops, as a means of communicating with each other and myself. At all times privacy will be maximised and noone will have access to the facebook account except myself and the participants.

I will be working with participants over the course of approximately 16 weeks. The time allotted for the project each week is that of one double class.

In addition to working within the workshops and project, participants may be invited to participate in an arts-based performance, relating to the work that they did in the workshops, at the end of the project.

The project has been passed by MIREC (Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee) and will be supervised by Dr. Finneran. As well as this, I will be liaising with school staff, particularly _____ (Transition Year Coordinator) throughout the duration of the project and afterwards also. In addition to myself being the only person in possession of the collected data, each participant will have the choice to be named or not named in the collection of data and write up of the project. No participant is forced to be involved in the research and any participant can withdraw from the research at any time. If participants choose to withdraw or not to be involved they will simply continue on with their timetabled classes.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Kind Regards,

_____
Richie Hayes

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

Appendix B – Consent Forms

COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH
MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

Richie Hayes
Department of Arts Education and Physical Education
Faculty of Education
Email: richard.hayes@mic.ul.ie
Phone: 061 204976

'*The Arts are for Posh People*': A Participatory Action Research Project Exploring the Arts in a Post-Primary Transition Year Classroom.

Pupil Consent Form

24 / 10 / 2011

Dear Pupil,

If you have read the attached information sheet and wish to be a part of the project, please sign this consent form and return it to the school by 07/11/2011. If you do not wish to be involved in the project, please do not return this consent form to the school.

If you have any queries about the project please feel free to contact me on my email or contact _____ (TY Coordinator), in the school, who will be happy to answer any questions that you have or help you contact me about your queries or questions.

Thank you for taking the time to read this consent form.

Kind Regards,

Richie Hayes

I wish to acknowledge that:

- I have read and understood the attached pupil information sheet.
- I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.
- I am fully aware that I will not be penalised, in any way, if I choose not to be involved in the project. If I choose not to be involved I will simply continue on with my timetabled classes with the appropriate teacher.
- I am aware that I can choose to not be identified, in any way, through any writings related to the project, and that if so all materials relating to the project will be kept confidential.

By signing this slip I am acknowledging that I have read the above bullet points and am fully aware of what each one means.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Pupil

COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH
MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

Richie Hayes
Department of Arts Education and Physical Education
Faculty of Education
Email: richard.hayes@mic.ul.ie
Phone: 061 204976

'*The Arts are for Posh People*': A Participatory Action Research Project Exploring the Arts in a Post-Primary Transition Year Classroom.

Parent / Guardian / Responsible Other Consent Form

24 / 10 / 2011

Dear Parent / Guardian / Responsible Adult,

Before reading this consent form you should have read the attached information sheet. Please ensure that you retain the information sheet for your records. If you give permission for your son/daughter to participate in this research project please sign this consent form and return it to the school on or before 07/11/2011. If you do not wish your son / daughter to participate in the project, please do not return this consent form to the school.

If you have any concerns relating to your son/daughter's participation in the project, please contact either the school or myself and we will be happy to address your concerns.

Thank you for your cooperation on this matter.

Kind Regards,

Richie Hayes

I wish to acknowledge that:

- I have read and understood the attached Parent / Guardian / Responsible Adult Information Sheet.
- I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I know that participation is voluntary and that participants can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.
- I am aware that participants can choose to not be identified, in any way, through any writings related to the project, and that if participants opt to not be identified all materials relating to the project will be kept confidential.
- I give permission for my son/daughter, _____, to participate in the research that is being done by Richie Hayes of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

By signing this consent form I am acknowledging that I have read the above bullet points and am fully aware of what each one means.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Parent / Guardian / Responsible Other

Appendix C – Questionnaire

COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL ~OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH~ | MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE ~UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK~

Questionnaire on pupils' participation in the arts

This questionnaire is in relation to your participation in the arts previously and at present. The different forms of the arts include: **music, dance, visual art, drama, literature,** and **film.**

This questionnaire is entirely confidential. Please do NOT write your name anywhere on it.

Section 1 - You

Gender : Male ☐ Female ☐

Age: 12-13 ☐ 14-15 ☐ 16-17 ☐ 18-19 ☐

Year: 1st ☐ 2nd ☐ 3rd ☐ 5th ☐ 6th ☐

Section 2 - Your Previous Experience

Q.1 Which arts activities have you been involved in, **in the past**? Tick more than one if appropriate.

Music ☐ Dance ☐ Visual Art ☐ Drama ☐ Literature ☐ Film ☐ None ☐ Other _____

Q.2 Where did these activities take place?

In School ☐
Outside of School ☐
Both ☐

Q.3 In what ways did you participate in the arts?

_____
_____
_____

Q.4 Did you enjoy participating in these activities? Yes ☐ No ☐ Please give reasons why.

_____
_____

Section 3 - Your Current Experience

Q.1 Are you involved in music, dance, visual art, drama, literature or film **at the moment**?
Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered YES to Q.1 in this section then please answer Q.2 – Q.8 on the next page.
If you answered NO to Q.1 in this section then please answer Q.9 – Q.11 on the next page.

Section 3 continued

If you answered YES to Section 3, Q1 then please answer Qs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8.

Q.2 What forms of the arts are you **currently** involved in? (Specific type of dance, music, visual art, drama, film, literature etc.)

_____

_____

Q.3 How often are you involved in these forms of the arts?

		Types of art forms
Every day	☐	_____
Once a week	☐	_____
Twice a week	☐	_____
Once ever two weeks	☐	_____
Once a month	☐	_____
Less than once a month	☐	_____

Q. 4 How much, if anything, does your involvement in the arts cost you every week? _____

Q.5 Where do you participate in the arts?
- In my local community ☐
- In my school ☐
- Outside of my local community ☐
- Somewhere else _____

Q.6 Who got you involved in the arts? How?

_____

_____

Q.7 Are there any art forms that you **wouldn't** be willing to be involved in? (Specific types of dance, drama, music, visual art, film, or literature?) **Name these and give reasons why?**

_____

_____

_____

Q.8 What do you like and dislike about being involved in the arts?

Like: _____

_____

Dislike: _____

If you answered NO to Section 3, Q1 then please answer Qs 9, 10 & 11.

Q.9 Give the reasons why you're not involved in the arts at the moment?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.10 Were other people involved in your decision not to be involved in the arts? If yes, who?

_____

_____

_____

Q.11 At the moment you're not involved in the arts. Is there something you **dislike** about them that causes you not to be involved?

_____

_____

Appendix D – 'What We Saw'

WHAT WE SAW

These thoughts are inspired by other people
who came in to do their 'research' on us.

Mr. O'Brien opened the door and let me walk in ahead of him. I'd been dreading coming into the school, especially having heard the horror stories from my friends who'd been here before. A movie was playing but no one was watching it. Instead, the students were ignoring the teacher, as she tried to get their attention, and were chatting amongst themselves. I guess the stories were true. Eventually we managed to get the students' attention and Mr. O'Brien began explaining why I was here. As he was talking I began to look around the room at the students I'd be working with. A group of antisocial looking boys were sitting in the corner. Two of them had their feet up and were staring at me. They were the only ones showing me any attention, but I'm not sure it was for the right reasons. Then it was my turn.

I began to quickly explain why I was here and what I was going to be doing with them. I bet they don't even know what a PhD is. I told them I was going to split them into two groups of six and take one group this week and the other group in a few weeks. I asked for volunteers not really expecting any. Surprisingly one of the boys who had had his feet up launched himself out of his chair and sauntered towards me. I quickly moved out of the way to stop him colliding with me and looked to see if I had any more volunteers. When there wasn't any I picked five of the least intimidating ones and we headed up to the classroom I had set up beforehand.

We were in a free class talking when she came in with Mr O Brien. The teacher who took us had put on 'Michael Collins' but we'd already seen it before and weren't paying attention. Mr O Brien introduced her and started to explain why she was here. As he was explaining, I took a closer look at her. She had freshly dyed blonde hair, unsmudged make-up, a well-tailored dress and a Chanel bag. I could smell her perfume from the back of the class. I saw her looking around and focusing on the boys. Her look changed to one of contempt, which she quickly tried to hide. While Mr O Brien went on, she started shifting slightly, as if afraid to touch anything. Her eyes kept darting back to the boys and looking away. Mr O Brien finished up and stepped back so she could speak.

She asked for volunteers and Jason stood up. He slowly walked towards her and she jumped out of the way before he was any where near her. Nobody else got up so she took her pick, avoiding the boys in the corner completely. They all then left with her.

Entering into the focus group room the six of them shoved past me and ran to the chairs. I explained about the microphone and then asked my questions. They were completely uncooperative, only nodding, shrugging or shaking their head. I was forced to constantly remind them that the microphone couldn't see them and that they had to speak up. Eventually the boy who had tried to bulldoze through me started answering. His accent was too strong for me to understand. How am I going to understand the recordings? I wonder if I know someone who'll be able to translate it for me? Once my questions were answered I sent them back to class and went home. Today has been worse than I thought.

The six of them came back to class and the teacher asked what the lady had done with them. They said she just asked them a load of questions and sent them back to class and that she never explained what her thesis was about. Alana then told us that the lady kept snapping at them when they didn't answer and when Jason tried she looked even more annoyed so the rest of them didn't bother.

I reluctantly came back in for the second group a few weeks later. They happened to be in the same class as before so I took the other six and we went back up to the room. I had been dreading this group because it had most of the boys I had avoided in the last group. I wasn't expecting much from this group either. Why should I?

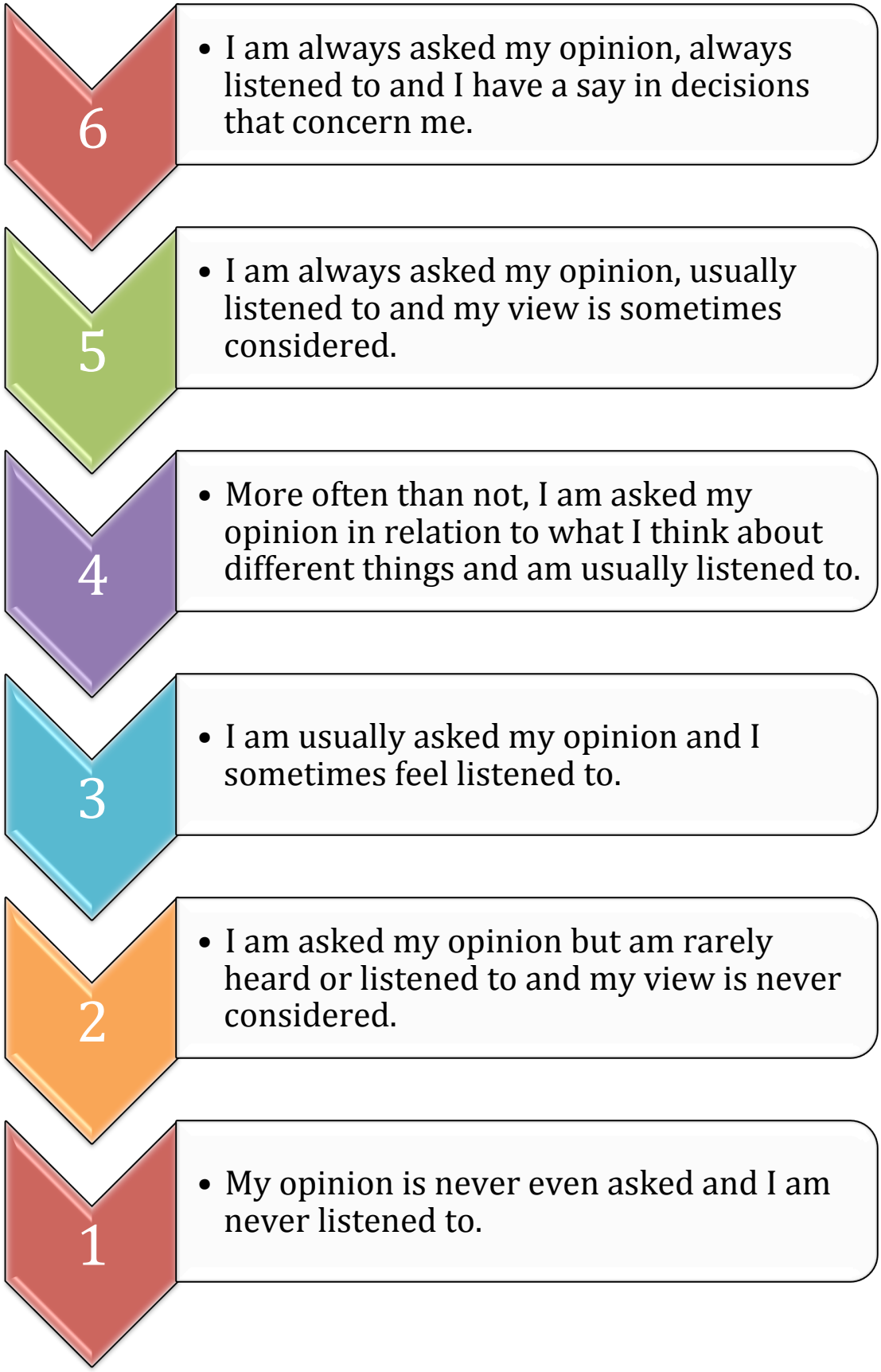
A few weeks later the lady showed up again and took the rest of us. We all walked up slowly, dragging our feet. After hearing what she was like with the others none of us wanted to go. Why should we?

This time I stayed out of the way to let them go first, learning from my mistake the last time. I asked my questions and no surprise they didn't answer me. Once I asked about college, two of them spoke; the girl sitting closest to me and a boy sitting at the back of the room. The girl said that she'd definitely be going to college but it was hard because no one else in the school cared if they went or not. Someone actually wants to go to college? The boy rudely cut across her saying he'd never bother going to college as there was no point. He said more but I couldn't understand him, I barely understood his previous outburst. Unlike before, I was prepared for their silence; I had put together a sheet of questions for them to fill out. After I sent them back to class I saw the boy's sheet was barely filled out and spelled wrong, I wasn't surprised.

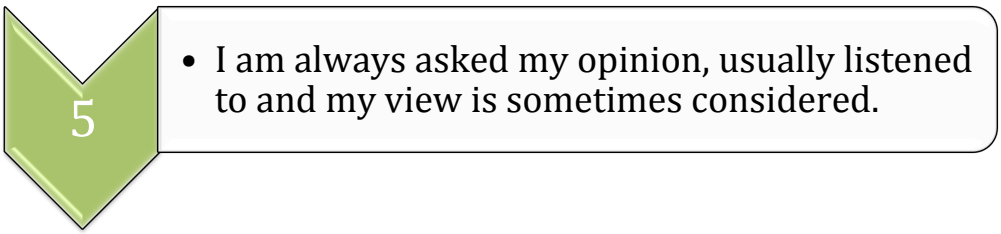
We trailed into the room and sat down, wondering how long we'd have to stay. She'd barely sat down herself when she started asking the questions. At first none of us answered until she mentioned college. Anna started talking about how her parents are making her go to college whether she wants to or not. The lady smiled and was listening intently until Tony started talking. He said she didn't see the point in going to college when he was better off just getting a job. She barely glanced at him while he spoke, instead she kept looking back at Anna to see if she had any more to say. The lady then gave us a sheet with questions like "how much do your parents earn each year?" and "do you feel that money will stop you going to college?" The questions were really strange and no matter what way you answered them it sounded like you were poor and neglected.

When she left we never heard from her again.

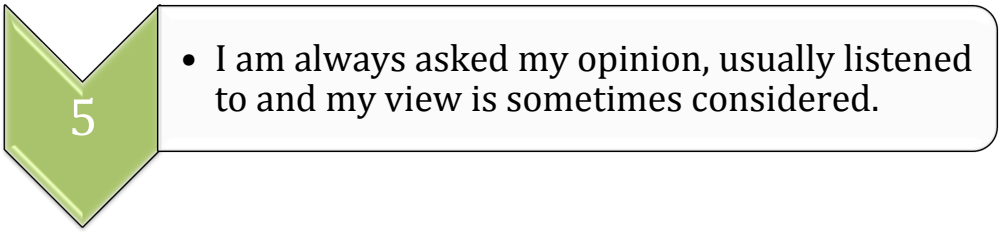
Appendix E – Voice Scale



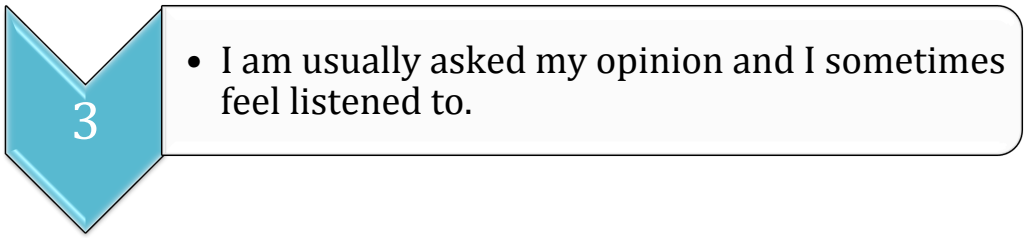
My Friends In School (2-6)



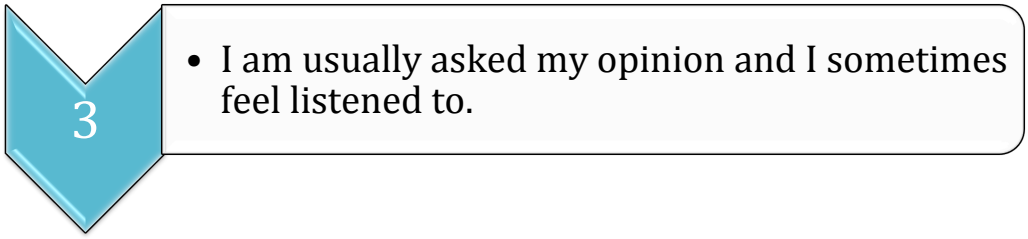
My Parents (2-6)



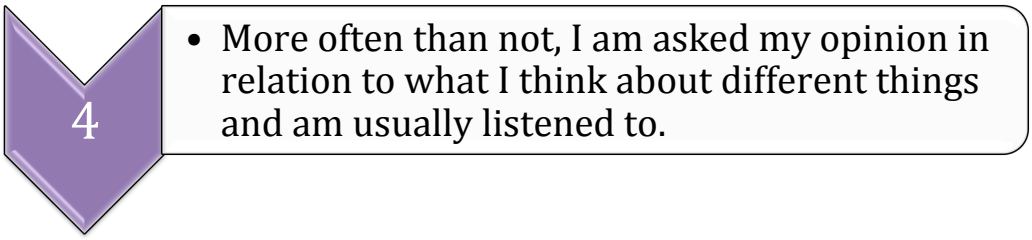
My Teachers (2–4)



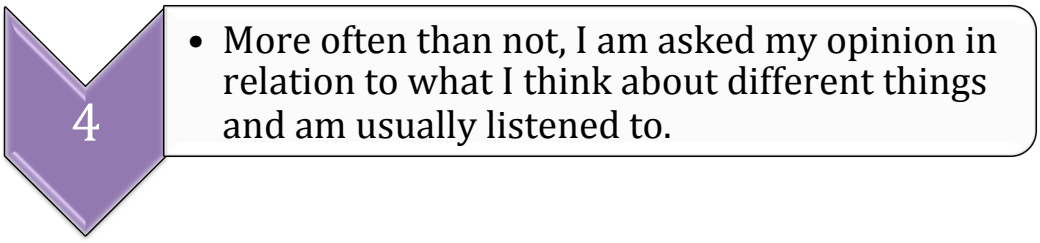
School Management (1-4)



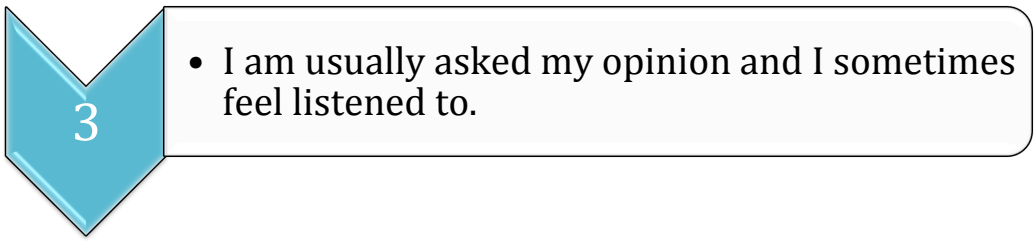
Friends Outside of School (4)



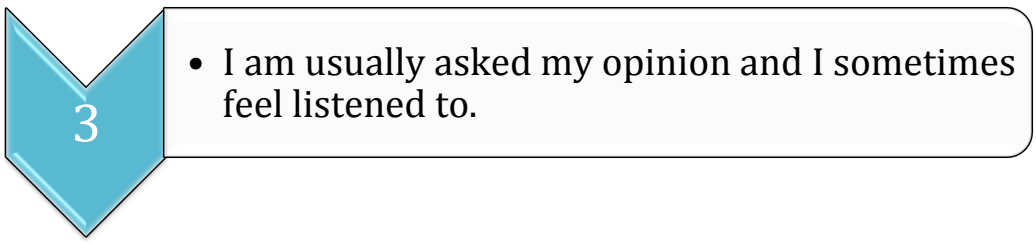
TY Coordinator (2-5)



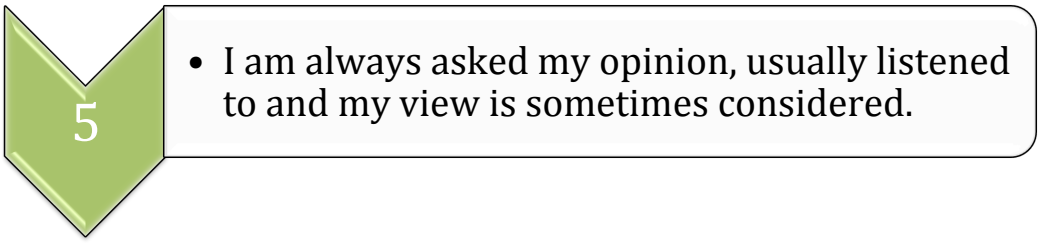
Brothers and Sisters (2-5)



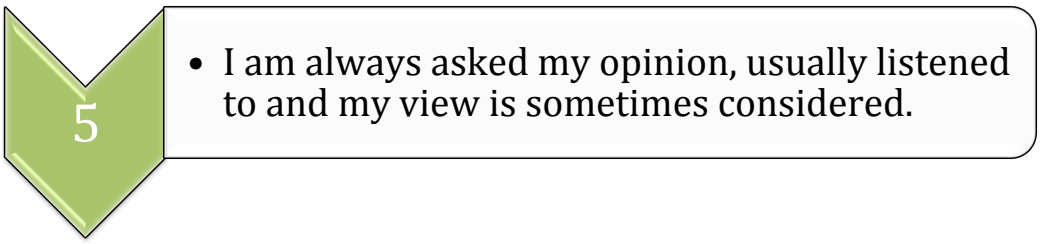
People in My Community (1-5)



Richie & Workshops (4-6)



TY Work Experience (4-5)



Appendix F – Audience Comment Card

Audience Comment Card

Q1. What is your 'gut reaction' to the performance-exhibition?

Q2. What piece(s) did you feel you engaged with the most? Why?

Q3. Did any pieces surprise you? In what way?

Q4. Did you feel you understood the messages that were trying to be communicated? Why / why not?

Q5. Which message(s) did you feel resonated most with you?

Q6. Are there any other comments that you would like to make in relation to the performance-exhibition or the research?