Locating learning within children's perceptions of present and future selves: a phenomenological study using funds of identity.

Ellen Margaret Buck

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

University of East Anglia
School of Education and Lifelong Learning

October 2019

“Pleasure is even to be mingled with study that the child may think learning an amusement rather than a toil”

Cardinal Thomas Wolsey [n.d.]
c.1473-1530

Abstract

Since the publication of the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) there have been a series of government policies and strategies to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing higher education (HE.) Under the banner of Widening Participation, increasing educational attainment has been extolled as the way to raise low aspirations among society's disadvantaged. There is considerable research exploring impact of class, gender, ethnicity and disability, and the ability of those from "disadvantaged backgrounds" to negotiate them. There is little research which steps back from the cultural arbitrary of educational systems and cultures, or that gives voice to younger children as they establish identities as learners within these contexts.

The aim of my research was to understand the experiences of learning for children at a life-stage of physical and social transition, when they would be expected to begin to form aspirations.

Using a phenomenological methodology of self-portraits and informal interview I listened to seven eleven-year-old children describe their current and future worlds. Drawing on funds of identity, I identified who and what shaped their identities, now and in their envisaged futures. Through voice centred relational analysis and modalities of agency, I heard their ability to enact and articulate agency. I deliberately stood back from social categorisations of class etc. in order to develop alternative conceptualisations of learning, engagement and aspiration.

The findings of this research can be used to understand engagement with learning through alternative lenses. The conceptualisation of good learning as relevant, active and 'own-able' will support 'knowledgeable others' in designing learning which establishes a bi-directional bridge between formal and informal learning experiences. I also hope the findings help those informing the policy and practice of widening participation to understand that aspirations may be distant not low; and are embodied as civic values rather than careers, earnings and academic achievement.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the children who participated in the fieldwork. Thank you for letting me see into your worlds. It has been both a pleasure and a privilege to come to know who you are and who you hope to become.

Special thanks go to my supervisors, Dr Yann Lebeau and Dr Michele Otway for their unwavering support, encouragement and critical eye. Under your guidance I have learned so much about myself, growing in confidence and finding my voice.

Thank you to my friends and colleagues at the University of Suffolk, particularly Fiona, Laura, Aaron, and Professor Mohammad Dastbaz. Over the last five years, your watchful eye, faith in my ability, support in keeping me on track and much needed humour is hereby acknowledged. I may not have made it this far without you.

A final thanks goes to my family. To my Mum and Dad, thank you for never limiting my horizons. To Dave, you have walked this journey with me, supported me emotionally and practically, poured the wine and believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. Your love and support has enabled me to give this work the energy and time needed to enable us all to hear the children's voices.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Setting the scene

In 2013, I attended a Round Table event hosted by Suffolk Libraries. I was invited in my professional capacity as Head of Library and Learning Services at the University of Suffolk, and as a professionally qualified Librarian in my own right. Throughout the day, groups discussed national decline in Library use. We considered how, in Suffolk, the Library positions itself within its local communities and what the service should be doing to further children's literacy, educational attainment and aspiration. As a Librarian and education professional these are questions which I also want to find answers to, but as we talked I began to wonder if we were asking the right people the right questions. I wondered if we really understood perceived barriers to success, and how these did, or did not, appear to the children we were talking about.

After attending the Round Table event I reflected upon different learning spaces and activities. What assumptions had we made about the impact of these different experiences for children? How well did we understand the capacity of children to make decisions, shape their own lives, and develop a conceptual understanding of their future selves?

A county of low educational attainment

While this study deliberately steps back from a focus on learning in a school environment, it is necessary to acknowledge them, and the wider conversation, in and about Suffolk, on educational attainment, levels of qualification, aspiration and deprivation (Appendix 1).

The report, *No School is an Island* (Bamfield et al., 2013) provides some hard-to-read facts about the socio-economic and educational backgrounds of many of the children in Suffolk. In its foreword, the report states that as a county, Suffolk had fallen behind in the standards required and educational outcomes expected from schools and the local authority. A solution, it suggests, would be an "integrated strategy to transform school performance, narrow the socio-economic gap in children's learning and broaden young people's horizons for employment and adult life" (p. 20).

The children in this study attended two different schools. The schools, and the study participants are located in an urban environment, defined through Index of Multiple Deprivation[1] as being one of low socio-economic status.

The first school, which I have called *Spirethorne Primary,* is a larger than average mixed, state, primary. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and the school has lower than average levels of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, or with a statement of educational needs. The school educates children aged 7 – 11 years, and views education as a collective responsibility between school and parents. The majority of pupils transfer into the school from the same infant school, and then move on to the same local academy. Pupils, including disadvantaged children, in the school make good progress, with standards of literacy and writing noted as high or exceptional. The school offers a wider range of extra-curricular activities, which positively contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These are embedded into school values of tolerance and respect, and a culture which promotes self-discipline, confidence and independence. The quality of teaching in the school, the teacher's enthusiasm for subject and learning activities designed to capture interest and motivate students is acknowledged, with strong relationships between pupils and staff ensuring that pupils are well known and their individual needs reflected in support provision. This school has been rated by OFSTED as good.

The second school, which I have called *Elliott Row,* has a similar demographic, and is part of an academy network. The school provides a curriculum which is underpinned by creative learning and high aspirations, so that children can make a positive contribution as global citizens. There is a range of extra-curricular activities. The most recent OFSTED inspection rated the school as 'Requires Improvement', recognising that improvements are being made. It highlights that children at key stage 2 did not make good enough progress across the curriculum, and disadvantaged pupils achieved below other pupils nationally. It also notes that the quality of teaching and learning is not yet consistently good, with some teachers having low expectations and failing to stretch the most able. Those teachers who use the subject knowledge and enthusiasm in designing creative

[1] Index of Multiple deprivations: relative deprivation in small areas in England: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-indices-of-deprivation

and interesting learning activities engage pupils well, where they do not, behaviour can be poor.

Recently, Suffolk has been identified as a social mobility cold spot (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2016). The *Social Mobility Ipswich: Opportunity Area 2017-2020 Plan* identifies the "limited experiences…which limit future horizons" of the young people in the town (Department for Education, 2017a, p. 8). It calls for actions which will "inspire and equip students in the skills and guidance they need to pursue an ambitious career pathway" (p. 10). The plan repeats the rhetoric of disadvantage; those who are disadvantaged are more likely to achieve less, earn less and, by definition contribute less to the UK economy. Local schemes, e.g. *Raising the Bar* (Suffolk County Council, 2015, 2018) have been established and are ongoing in their attempts to find solutions.

The schools educating the children in this study each take approaches to counter this. The University of Suffolk, one of the newest universities in the country, established as University Campus Suffolk in 2007, also works to be part of the solution to the problem of educational attainment in the county.

<u>The Widening Participation Agenda: Higher Education as the answer</u>

The Widening Participation (WP) Agenda in Higher Education (HE) is well established, and has been supported through successive parliaments. Following the *Dearing Report* (NCIHE, 1997) recommendations that government should develop strategies to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain access to HE, New Labour pledged that 50% of adults aged 18-30 years would be actively participating in HE by 2010, (Department for Education and Skills, 2002). The White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education* (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) made it clear that HE had to be available to the "talented and best from all backgrounds" (p. 2), while stating, that "it is especially important that those who come from families without a tradition of going to HE, and whose aspirations are low, are supported" (p. 69).

Fifteen years later, the challenges of increasing access to HE for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are still being felt (Hillman, 2017, Augar et al., 2019). Those targeted continue to be cast as having low aspirations, albeit with little supporting evidence (Whitty et al., 2015). Increased attainment in education and

participation in HE are promoted as ways of raising aspiration, increasing social mobility, and increasing economic wealth.

The government paper, *Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential* (Department for Education, 2017b) commits to "put real emphasis on the places that are not yet fulfilling potential and where resources and additional support are needed the most" (p. 7). The paper presents (pp. 8-9) four ambitions which cross all life stages, the first to "close the word gap in the early years", culminating in enabling everyone to achieve "their full potential in rewarding careers" noting that "if disadvantaged pupils in all regions of this country performed as well as disadvantaged pupils in London, this would lead to an overall benefit to the UK economy of over £20 billion" (p. 7).

While the University of Suffolk is not unique in its commitment to WP, it was ranked third in the country for WP (University of Suffolk, 2018b) and recruits 26.5% of undergraduates from backgrounds defined as 'disadvantaged' (University of Suffolk, 2018a).

Institutional, local and national reports and policies each talk of barriers, disadvantage and helping children to aspire for and realise the *right* horizons. Academic research on the disadvantages of class, economic capital and cultural capital suggest the disadvantaged have limited capacity to make good choices, move beyond 'by-birth' social classes, and flourish in higher-paid careers (Gewirtz, 2001, Reay, 1998, 2001, Wilkins and Burke, 2015). Yet, how often do these papers seek the voices of the children themselves in understanding aspiration and future self? Are the voices of those deemed to lack the right type of capital heard and reflected in government policy and strategy on aspirations and attainment?

Rationale

Goleman (1986) reports an interview with psychologist Howard Gardner. In it, Gardner says, "the single most important contribution education can make to a child's development is to help him toward a field where his talents best suit him, where he will be satisfied and competent… There are hundreds and hundreds of ways to succeed, and many, many different abilities that will get you there." This is the rationale for my research.

My research does not seek to find new ways of increasing engagement with formal education, nor increasing aspirations for University-level education. It deliberately ignores individual characteristics and labels associated with disadvantage. Instead, it sets out to understand the 'where' and 'why' of learning environments and learning, as reported by the children themselves. As education professionals we might, then, find new ways of supporting learners in achieving the aspirations that are the *right* 'fit' for them. It applies a 'life world lens' and seeks to understand capacity and agency as the product of "aggregated lifestyles" (Kettley, 2007, p. 344), where there is always the possibility of action to deconstruct, reassemble and affect change.

The study

Objectives

The objective of the study is to hear the unadulterated voice of the participating children. I want to gain insight into how their agency may be situated or universal, how their perceptions impact on their sense of ability as learners, and how, in relation to an envisaged future self, the children are willing or able to engage with future lifeworlds and aspirations.

Research questions

I constructed three research questions which I hope will enable me to gain the insight I am looking for,

1. How do school aged children portray their current and future worlds and themselves within them?
2. Where is learning located within their current and future worlds?
3. What places are associated with learning, and how are they perceived?

Design

Hearing the voice of the children is fundamental to the research design, and so I adopt a phenomenological approach, requiring me to 'bracket' my own experiences and assumptions (Dahlberg, 2006).

The project was designed to work with a small group of children, in their final year of primary schooling, as they consider their transition to high school. All children attend schools in an urban area defined as being of low socio-economic status. I worked with the children on an individual basis, using drawings as a gateway for

children-led informal interviews or conversations. This activity was conducted on two separate occasions, where possible, and focussed on current and future worlds respectively. The interviews took place outside of the school term and school environment, to create as much distance from the notion of 'school' as possible. The collected data was analysed using the Funds of Identity framework to establish presence and prevalence of themes, with a second analysis listening for the children's voices, and experiences in activities, places, as agents and learners.

Thesis structure

This thesis guides the reader through current knowledge and understanding of the concepts of the project, methodology and methods, findings and discussion before presenting the thesis conclusions.

Chapter 2 situates the project conceptually and theoretically, drawing on literature to establish and define key concepts used in this study; those of learning and identity as learner, engagement and aspiration. This provides a foundation for later discussion of the findings presented by the children.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology, including epistemological foundations and conceptual framework employed to enable the children's voices at the heart of the phenomenological approach. The chapter goes on to present methods used to gather and analyse data, including how I have adapted the voice-centred relational analysis method (Brown and Gilligan, 1991, Dillon, 2010, Fairtlough, 2007) in this work. Ethical considerations arising from the approach, with particular focus on working with children are also presented.

Chapter 4 presents the research data; portraits, funds of identity, and an analysis of these highlighting prevalence and impact. It also reports the children's articulation of agency and self as young people, and as learners. Chapter 5, discusses the children's creation of self and identity. Chapter 6 focusses on their sense of identity as learner, and how this identity is shaped and reshaped through different kinds of learning interaction.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, draws these discussion chapters together to answer the research questions. In doing so, it becomes possible to describe the essence

or *eidos* of learning as it is experienced by these children, a critical purpose of phenomenological research. In concluding, the chapter revisits the concepts presented in Chapter 2, and considers new understandings which can be drawn from this research project, before turning to considerations of what these findings might mean for agendas such as WP and my own work. I conclude with reflections on the impact of this study for me more personally, allowing myself to reconnect with my bridled experiences.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and research in context

Introduction

In this chapter I position my research within current published literature, providing background and context for my work. The thesis, as a whole, focuses on the core constructs of learning and aspiration. These are explored within a theoretical framework of identity creation, and proposes that just as learning takes place through identity creation, so identity creation is an outcome of the learning experiences children have.

I begin this chapter with a brief definition of these core constructs and, at the same time, present the concept of the 'life world' as the arena within which these activities are undertaken and represented. I then describe how I have undertaken the literature review, and selected my reading.

Structuring my discussion

I have structured the discussion in this chapter to reflect my research questions. I begin with the theorizing of identity creation and present the theoretical framework for this work. This provides the rationale for my adoption of the Funds of Identity work of Esteban-Guitart (2012) and the foundation for the exploration of the children's worlds in response to the first research question.

The second section considers the places and spaces of learning. It explores the construct of engagement and what the literature tells us impacts on learning, and approaches made to increase engagement across learning landscapes. This is done in response to the second and third research questions.

The final section discusses how sense of self, approaches to and engagement with learning, interconnect to define aspiration. This provides a way for professional considerations and recommendations in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Definitions

Learning

In looking to understand the place and perception of learning in the lives of the children, and how they engage with it, I adopt a broad and inclusive definition of

learning. I position it as an activity which is an “integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 31), that gives us “knowledge for living” (von Kotze, 2002).

Aspiration

The term aspiration may be defined as a desire for profession, career and economic wealth; “cash value” (von Kotze, 2002, p. 237). In this project I take broader view and propose that our understanding of what we aspire for should reach beyond these material consideration and reflect that suggested by Gorard et al. (2012, p. 73) to include “well-being, preparation for citizenship, resilience and happiness”.

Lifeworlds

As will be discussed in Chapter 3, this study adopts Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. For Husserl, *life-world* was the arena for all human experiences endeavours, and consciousness (Moran, 2000). In this study, lifeworlds are also arenas of human experience; experiences through which the children participate in social interactions, develop knowledge and skills, and ultimately come to know themselves as individuals within communities of being, and as learners. More specifically, in this study the lifeworlds are the coming together of the funds of knowledge and funds of identity, presented in the theoretical framework. They provide the socio-cultural environments in which children present and represent themselves in response to the experiences they encounter and create.

Locus of control

Locus of control (Gorard et al., 2012) is used here to represent the sense of self - efficacy we each hold in relation to our abilities to do, and achieve. This is core to our ability to enact agency and to influence the social structures in which we live.

<u>The literature search</u>

I began by searching my own University collections for learning and engagement with learning, aspiration, funds of Identity (FOI) and funds of knowledge (FOK) as separate constructs. This included databases such as Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts, Education Database and the Social Science Database. These are aggregated databases which include coverage from collections published by Sage, Taylor and Francis and Wiley amongst others. To increase

relevance, I limited search fields to subject term only, English language and initially excluded newspaper articles and book reviews.

When searching for learning, and engagement with learning, I found over 4000 articles relating to models for understanding the construct, as well as reviews of metric-based measures (e.g. National Student Satisfaction Survey.) Metrics based surveys are common in higher education (HE), and while I approached this study from a professional stance of HE, I wanted to focus on application and understanding in school aged children. In excluding the subject term "higher education" I was able to reduce the number of articles to 1,117. Further analysis indicated that when exploring engagement, the construct was predominantly being applied to formal, institution-based learning, while I was also interested in literature discussing engagement with learning in environments outside of school. "Learning outside the classroom" returned studies of teacher-led creative approaches to pedagogy, as well as empirical research exploring the 'bridging' of learning environments. I manually explored abstracts to identify literature relevant to my research interests.

Initial searches on aspiration and children retrieved a plethora of literature of a medical nature. I had not considered this when beginning the search, and so made use of discipline terms; education, social sciences, sociology, to refine the results. Many of these focussed on the aspirations of parents *for* their children. I wanted to remove parental voice, and manually explored abstracts. In both this search and that on engagement I also made use of cited and citing references.

My search for both FOI and FOK resulted in much smaller findings with only 35 publications being retrieved. I repeated the search in UEA library databases, and using the search engine Google to capture as much as possible on these aspects of the project. These also introduced me to the 'Funds of Pedagogy' concept of Zipin et al. (2009).

Theorizing identity creation: a theoretical framework

Identity is a dualism that exists as a result of the individual to whom it belongs. It is an iterative, developing construction; the product of relative positioning within, and reaction to, a host of social environments and interactions with others. Identity, Hall and Du Gay (2013) write, is always constructed "on the back of some

common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity" (p. 2) (see also Mead (1934), Elliott (2014), McAdams and Zapata-Gietl (2015).) Solidarity and commonality are, according to Dewey (1916), the foundations of community, and so enable individuals to come together to create and communicate through shared languages, symbols and aspirations, with accepted rules and expectations, shaping the development of selves.

As social beings, we move between a host of social spaces, encountering a variety of systems and structures. We must learn what it means to be 'self' within each of them; or even if it is possible to be 'self' within any of them. Hall and Du Gay (2013, p. 4) write that identities are "increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions." In interacting with others in these multiple spaces, the threads of 'self' identities will be woven into different layers, resulting in compromise between "idealised images and imputed social identities" (Snow and Anderson, 1987, p. 1348), lodging identity in contingency (Hall and Du Gay, 2013, p. 3), and the crafting and recrafting of identity masks (Goffman, 1959).

How our identities are created, shaped or informed has been theorized in different ways, and present social actors as being, at varying degrees, limited by and product of the social structures in which they live. The following discussion presents rationale for the theoretical framework used in this work, that of Funds of Identity and Funds of Knowledge and the rationale for its application. I have prefaced this with a brief overview of some of the other theoretical frameworks applied in similar work.

Possible selves theory

The theory of possible selves provides a future gazing lens through which we can come to understand who or what we might aspire to be. Conceptually presented by Markus and Nurius (1986) it forms part of a wider psychology-based self-concept framework, a "multi-dimensional cognitive structure made up of potentially competing past, present, and future identities" (Oyserman and Destin, 2010, p. 1004). The theory recognises the social, cultural and historical sources for the self

(Oyserman and Fryberg, 2005), that identity is a product of who we have been, who we are and who we will become.

As a theory it provides opportunity to understand and explore the relationship between these different selves through the 'working self' concept. This is the self in our current minds, it is formed as a result of recent experiences, shaping a positive or negative perception of current and potential capacity and ability. Possible selves, the "cognitive bridges between the present and future, specifying how individuals may change from how they are now to what they will become" (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 961) enables insight into how it may be possible for individuals to strategically develop 'roadmaps' (Oyserman et al., 2004) toward (educational) achievement, with aspirational goals based on current self-perception.

In its application in empirical research, the theory has enabled exploration of the dichotomy between current and future selves (Strahan and Wilson, 2005) finding that time, like space, is measured or viewed in distance. Goals associated with events, ages, experiences perceived as being closer in time, are more related to each other, more relevant to now and as such have more energy expended on achieving them than those which are farther away. Nurra and Oyserman (2018) have argued for the need to support children in connecting the current and future self-constructs, creating elaborate possible selves (Harrison, 2018) to ignite motivation for action.

Agency

Developing from Possible Selves theory, Identity Based Motivation theory, is a social-psychological theory of motivation towards the achievement of particular goal. It can be understood as a vehicle for agency; prompting action to enable personal change and become the identified, and idealised possible self. Oyserman et al. (2017, p.140) write that "people are motivated to act and make sense of the world using the identities on their minds", the thinking involved in this is situated, responsive to the external and internal and maybe subconscious. The enactment of agency could, therefore, be said to be contextual. However, while Markus and Nurius (1986) state, "an individual is free to create any variety of possible selves" (p. 954), "only the individual himself or herself can determine what is possible" (p. 963), suggesting potential for an unlimited capacity for personal change, they also

write that the idealised self represents “what *could* be realised given appropriate social conditions” (p. 965), my emphasis. This seems to suggest that within the theory of possible selves, agency is not simply contextual in terms of time and space it is constrained by time and space; and by social conditions.

This is more explicit elsewhere in literature (Harrison, 2018, Wainwright et al., 2018), with Oyserman and Fryberg (2005, p. 21) writing “individuals learn not only who people like them can become, but also who people not like them can become”, and this only changes when societal norms are also seen to change. These societal norms appear to be external to those living them, beyond the influence of the idealised possible self.

Bourdieu’s habitus

For Bourdieu, the concept of *habitus* is the guiding factor for how individuals react to and engage with the word around them. It is “society written in to the body, into the biological individual” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 63) a system of “durable, transposable dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 53); it is culture embodied. The embodied culture operates as a kind of second nature, operating at a sub-conscious level. This results in a “genetic structuralism” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 14), which (re)produces types of people who are predisposed to speak, talk, think, behave in a particular way.

As external to those living within it, the habitus is both structured and structuring, rigid and impersonal. Social practices, rules and norms are conceived of on the basis of what is known, and as such promotes a deterministic, social reproduction of the hierarchies and structures in which people live. Within these we acquire capitals as they are available to us; which fit with the accepted, or perhaps attributed preferences of the cultures we come to embody. These social assets, our education, intellect, ways of dressing and speaking not only define who we are, but where we fit socially (our class), and inhibit our abilities to become anything else. As definitions of social status, capitals may also be used to secure advantage over other social groups, maintaining the social status quo.

Identity, then, as the product of social interactions and environments is pre-determined to a large degree. While Bourdieu may have been opposed to the concept of self (Skeggs, 2004), his theory does enable us to understand identity to

be informed and constrained by the systems and structures surrounding us, and the opportunities they afford us.

Agency

Capacity for agency is attuned to an individual's capital and habitus. In his work exploring the learner and social identities of young, white working class males, Stahl (2014) draws our attention to the "embodied dispositions" (Nash, 1990) of habitus, leading individuals to certain ways of behaving; constructing and presenting their identities. He cites Reay's (2002, p. 221) presentation of a "hard-working, well-behaved, poor, white, working-class boy" and the challenges *Shaun* faces in trying to reconcile his identities across social spaces. The impact of the transition into environments and structures of learning and education cannot be underestimated. These are spaces and structures in which children begin to (re)configure self and identity through the eyes of new colleagues and existing family members (Forrester, 2002, Reay, 2010). The structures encountered will force new boundaries and constraints; new environments in which children come to experience, interpret and locate themselves, either as conformer, or challenger. We see similar struggles articulated in the works of Willis (1977), Corrigan (1979), with Wexler et al. (2005, p. 7) reporting that "becoming somebody…a real and presentable self...[was] anchored in the verifying eyes of the friends whom they came to meet at school".

Although not denying young working-class people agency and choice, these studies adopt a Bourdieusian position on habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977), which locate young people within rigid, impersonal social structures limiting their capability to affect change or engage with capital outside their own social sphere (Reay, 2001, Archer et al., 2007, Reay et al., 2010). As identity is the product of social interactions, communities, shared artefacts and symbols, "specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices" (Hall and Du Gay, 2013, p. 4), it is easy to see the impact of lifeworld structures and systems on the development of self and society. However, if society is understood *not* as a "disembodied entity which stands apart from human action" (Shilling, 1992, p. 78), which "engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions, and no others" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 95), but rather as structures or cultures, dynamic and open to change (Walker,

1993), identities can be seen through a lens which affords agency, the potential to do and be different, through a dialectic or locus of control.

Giddens' structuration theory and project of the self

In the modern, post-traditional world, Giddens (1991) argues that the pace of social change is so fast, and with a scope so profound that as a result social institutions became "disembedded" or "lifted out" of their social contexts, affecting pre-existing social practices and behaviours. This resulted in a modern reflexivity, as a way of living and coming to know and experience anew. The post-traditional social world creates alternatives, with choices to be made, on what had shifted from a 'plain' made up of small communities and traditions to one which provided a global stage, of "variegated settings" (Giddens, 1991, p. 35).

As human beings, Giddens (1991) suggests, habit and routine play a fundamental role in shaping our behaviours, and informing our relationships from the early days of our lives. In what he calls our "natural attitude" (p. 37), we accept traditions and parameters for activity; developing our ontological security, in essence, the "bracketing of a potentially almost infinite range of possibilities open to the individual" (p. 36). In a modern, reflexive world, however, he suggests that reflexivity is at the core of us, and who we are; "all human beings continuously monitor the circumstances of their activities as a feature of doing what they do" (p. 35). Living in this environment causes us to need to explore and reconstruct ourselves on an ongoing basis, connecting personal and social change, (re)creating our identities. This is the premise of Giddens' project of the self; a "reflexive project, for which the individual is responsible" with a "fundamental aim of building/rebuilding a coherent and rewarding sense of identity" one which provides a "trajectory of development from the past to the anticipated future" (1991, p. 75).

As with the theory of Possible Selves, identity is a shifting and dynamic creation, responding to the socio-cultural contexts in which we find ourselves. Different from Possible Selves and Bourdieu's habitus, in Giddens' theory, our knowledgeability and capacity for agency as humans is not constrained by social structures external to us, it enables us to reshape those structures.

Structuration Theory (ST) emerged as a way to explore the interaction between social structure and people's capacity to employ agency. Giddens' ST offers the opportunity to find a middle ground for human agency between the mutually exclusive objectivist and subjectivist perspectives on the relationship between social actors and the structures within which they live. Giddens presents a social structure as a duality; "both the medium and the outcome of the human activities which it recursively organizes" (1987, p. 61). A structure is not to be understood as static and pre-determined, existing separate from human beings, but evolving, and responsive, changing as a result of the choices and actions made by those living within it.

While recognising identity as a duality, and an individual endeavour, Giddens does not discard the impact of the community or collective in which the individual resided. Instead, he argues that lifestyle, itself influenced by socio-economic factors, and group pressures was at the core of identity creation, something adopted rather than handed down and something which could be actualised by letting go of the past, and, through a practice of reflexivity, by becoming free (Giddens, 1991).

Agency

In understanding the construction of identity as the process of social interaction, it is necessary to consider the impact of power relations within social spaces. Within social groups, there are, what Giddens (1979, p. 117) defines as social positions, that "carry with [them] a certain range …of prerogatives and obligations that an actor who is accorded that identity may activate or carry out." These obligations are enacted, and in doing so may seek to reinforce and maintain a status quo, reproducing an associated power dynamic and position of being. "Structural constraints" he states, "always operate via agents' motives and reasons, establishing conditions and consequences affecting options open to others, and what they want from whatever options they have" (Giddens, 1984, p. 310).

Power, the dialectic of control, Giddens (1979) tells us, is integral to agency. It is not a particular kind of action, but is embedded within actions taken; used to achieve particular outcomes. As a social force, power may be seen in a transformational capacity or the result of actions or systems of domination. The outcome does not exist as part of the concept of power in its own right (as a

disembodied entity), but is dependent on the motivation of those involved in the interaction. Giddens argues that power is relational; that within every relationship each 'actor' has a degree of autonomy and a degree of dependency, that the "could have done otherwise of action is a necessary element of the theory or power" (p. 92) and its application by each party.

This is not to suggest a state of free agency, or that all children have the ability to counter power relations, to 'do other' in all situations. Instead, agency, power and competency of action should be understood as a potential, acquired through development (Oswell, 2013). As the mask of identity shifts according to context, so identity as active and empowered agent can only be tested and demonstrated in situ, through a range of responses and manifestations (Alderson and Yoshida, 2016), through negotiation of self and other (Hutchby and Moran-Ellis, 1998), and the "context and nature of any given sequence of action or strip of interaction" Giddens (1984, p. 177). As agency manifests itself in a range of reactions, responses and behaviours, so too does power. The impact of the power dynamic, on the duality of power (autonomy versus dependency) is contextual.

The Internal Conversation

As with each of the theories introduced so far, Margaret Archer's Internal Conversation, or Reflexivity Theory recognises the influence of experiences and society in the creation of identity. She writes (Archer, 2003, p. 120);

> "Personal identity is the achievement of subjects themselves in relation to their environment and is thus a personal emergent property. It emerges from our inescapable involvement with the three orders of a natural reality – nature, practice and society."

Our identity is also recognised as dynamic, there is a need to 'keep up' with the fast pace of change in our cultures and societies. Archer (1995) states that our rapidly changing society is one which has shifted from being "morphostatic", driven by stability and reproduction (and promoted in Bourdieu's habitus) to "morphogenetic", subject to constant change. Consequently all social beings are innately called upon to "confront contextual incongruity between new openings and the expectations emanating from their family background" (Archer, 2013, p. 9). This is done through ongoing or consistent reflexivity, internal conversations with

ourselves, and helps us to develop which our personal priorities, what Archer (2012) terms our “ultimate concerns”. These then become our foundational personal identities, from which our reactions to new situational contexts are born. Reflexivity is our vehicle for changing our social life.

Agency

Internal conversations are conversations about who we are now, and who we see ourselves becoming (Archer, 2007). While we reflect upon this, only the current ‘I’ has voice, although this current ‘I’ is itself temporal. While influenced, and irrefutably connected to a past ‘Me’, ‘I’ alters as it moves along the life-line of each person, accumulating new experiences, with reflexive consideration simultaneously reshaping the future “you-to-be” (Archer, 2013).

As Giddens’ theory acknowledges the “complex diversity of choices” (Giddens, 1991, p. 80) presented by society in late modernity, so does Archer, suggesting that the increased need for reflexivity we experience through the passing of modernity is derived from accompanying decrease in social tradition and availability of social guidelines (Archer, 2012). This does not mean that the influence of the structures is gone completely, for we feel “both free and enchained, capable of shaping our own future and yet confronted by towering, seemingly impersonal constraints” (Archer, 1996, xii - xiii). How this is understood and presented analytically is where one of the key differences between Giddens’ ST and Archer’s Internal conversation becomes apparent.

While Giddens’ ST positions social structures as both medium and outcome of human agency (Giddens, 1987), for Archer, this is a conflation, the social culture must exist before it is enacted and reflected upon, while the subsequent changes or elaborations postdate the interaction. For Archer, the conflation of these temporal spaces, makes reflexivity impossible. She argues that to be able to take agency and to practice reflexivity, there is a need for subjective and objective distinction. It is only when this is present that a subject can have objectivity and make the choice of one course of action over another, and deliberate our agential placement socially (Archer, 1995, Archer, 2003).

The practice of reflexivity, undertaken to enable agency, also differs between Giddens and Archer. In her work, Archer presents Giddens’ agency as

homogenous (Archer, 2013); while she argues that the internal conversation, the drive for social change has to be different, according to the context and ultimate concerns. At the same time, however, agency is still shaped by and reshaping social structures.

Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity

The application of FOI and FOK as a theoretical framework for the exploration of identity creation brings together elements from the other frameworks presented here. It recognises the personal reflection of social influence we see in Archer's Reflexivity theory. As present in Giddens ST, there is capacity for agency and identity to be both medium and outcome of the interactions they are experienced in. Like both Giddens' and Archer's work FOI and FOK argues against Bourdieu's theory of habitus, and the view of culture as an external construct which limits.

Empowering and enabling theories of identity creation place the locus of control (Gorard et al., 2012) with the subject. As human beings we can make choices, we do have influence over our lives. As will be seen in the following discussion on its application in empirical work, FOK is understood as enabling cultures and societies, and encourages the sharing of those cultures across socio-cultural boundaries in learning.

At the same time, the theory recognises the impact of tradition and habit, embedded within the five funds presented by Esteban-Guitart (2012). Archer has argued that tradition, habit or habitus can no longer be seen as reliable guides (Archer, 2012), but Giddens' recognises their impact, introducing the concept of ontological security (Giddens, 1991). This security blanket allows tradition and habit to influence our personal identity, it is the commonality or even social glue of the social group. This glue helps us understand why changing our practices may be hard, but stretching and reshaping that glue is not impossible. At the heart of the FOK theory, is a recognition of the challenge large impersonal organisations, born in modernity, makes to the sustainability of small communities and their traditions. The foundation of FOK can be found in this dichotomy. It will also be experienced by the children in this project as they leave small-community primary schools and move into larger cross-community high schools.

In my work, I want to recognise this challenge, and understand how it forces children, aged 11, to confront complex choices, and any contextual incongruity they experience in positioning themselves against them. Do the children understand who they are and have they have become, as Taylor (1992) suggests we must if we are to understand where we are going? FOI and FOK provides a framework for the exploration of both, and will help me to hear if the children articulate ontological security, or if their modern worlds have, as Archer suggests, cast these habits aside.

Socio-cultural and historical development of the theory

Funds of Knowledge (FOK) grew out of the anthropological work of Greenberg (1990), exploring how knowledge and skills were transmitted by households along the US-Mexican border where children struggled to settle into formal 'white community' school structures. Individuals in these border-communities were forced to move back and forth between white-English speaking institutions and Mexican-Spanish speaking social communities, and found themselves living in a society trying to retain cultural traditions whilst being exposed to and trying to align with the new cultures experienced in their new state.

Growing out of the FOK work of Moll et al. (1992), Funds of Identity (FOI) recognises the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and wellbeing" and the position of them in the (re)construction, (re)definition and (re)presentation of self. The FOI theory was developed in part, to give voice to the narrative identities of younger, pre-adolescent children; countering the belief that autobiographical life story narratives only emerge in adolescence (Habermas and Reese, 2015). As such, FOI aims to overcome a deficit approach to understanding capability to discuss self and identity; resonating with the Sociology of Childhood (Moran-Ellis, 2010) which underpins my methodological framework as discussed in the next chapter, and giving space for the child to develop.

In seeking to overcome approaches to cultural capital and habitus, where poorer households may be seen as "somehow disorganised socially and deficient intellectually" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 134) FOI allows for exploration of ways in which children "build literate identities and early repertoires of practice in relation to valued artefacts and within the material culture of their everyday lives" (Carrington

and Dowdall, 2013, p. 96). It also provides space for the consideration of how children challenge the power of systems and their representatives.

Leading the development of this theory, Esteban-Guitart (2012) originally provided five fund types into which resources may be categorised; geographical (country, river, landmark), practical (activities, sports, music), cultural (artefacts, symbols, flags, but also social categories such as gender and race), social (significant others) and institutional (social institutions including family and marriage). More recently, both Esteban-Guitart (2016) and Poole (2017a) and have discussed the digital expansion of cultures and social groups, changing the ways in which individuals can present, test and reshape identities in potentially global networks (Carrington, 2008). Mass media and online social networks have not only changed the ways in which individuals communicate with each other; “in our pockets, we take our family, friends, and connections and we can connect and disconnect with them just as we can with our work: anywhere, anytime” (Esteban-Guitart, 2016, p. 15) they also provide new ways of participating in collective identities, potentially blurring the lines between fund types.

Agency

The FOI work of Esteban-Guitart (2012) provides an empirically tested framework to understand the place and impact of shared artefacts or symbols, which are, in essence, funds, or capitals, in the development of identity from the very young through to older adults.

In using FOI to understand the individual parts of a child’s constructed identity, it is possible to visualise the lens through which children “view and absorb new information”, making FOI a “dynamic composite of who we are and who we are becoming” (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014, p. 44). In this way identity and structure exist as a duality; to use Giddens’ terminology, both medium and outcome of the interaction they are situated in. We can understand practices and artefacts, many with roots in socio-historical contexts (Rodriguez, 2013) as the cultural capital appropriated into unique personal subjectivities (Nogueira, 2014). The resulting identity or disposition of cultural tastes and social preferences becomes the structure, or habitus through which individuals mobilise agency and creativity of action. In FOI and FOK, the cultural traditions, artefacts and symbols are not static, existing separately from those living within them. Instead, through

processes of reflexivity social practices are constantly (re)examined (Elliott, 2009). The result is multiple, unique instances of being and engaging with social worlds, linked through some common understanding.

In FOK, engagement with learning is underpinned by the development of relationships which are 'thick' and 'multi-stranded', meaning that one may have multiple relationships with the same person or with various persons" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133), in a social community. In learning located in social communities, where 'thick' relationships were built in the socio-cultural spaces FOK draws on, children, as informal learners have more capacity to take agency in their own learning, and develop their locus of control, and identity as effective learner.

The application of the framework into empirical practice

As noted above, this theoretical framework has its roots in anthropological studies into the transmission of knowledge between communities, and how those within the Mexican-US border communities have embodied the knowledge, and its associated artefacts, representations, symbols etc.as personal identity. As an applied theoretical framework, its predominant use has been to understand how relationships between educational institutions and those from marginalised cultures can be improved through bringing cultural artefacts and social presentations into the classroom. The development and testing of the framework as culturally informed pedagogical practice has typically taken place where frameworks first began, with Gonzalez et al. (2005) leading FOK work in Southern US states, and Esteban-Guitart (2012) conceptualising FOI and leading further work primarily in Spain.

In these applications, and beyond, the work has been driven by a need to find ways to better educate and integrate communities experiencing rapid changes in their socio-cultural and ethnic profiles, the result of global mobilisation; voluntary or forced immigration. Jovés et al. (2015) situate their work against a backdrop where the diversity of the Catalonian population has increased by 12.2% in a five year period. Saubich and Esteban (2011, p. 81) consider the impact of an "abrupt and continuing influx of migrants" in Spain, and focus on the development of a specific curriculum unit while working with one Moroccan immigrant family living in Girona, Spain. More examples of work in this vane have been produced by Lamping and McClelland (2018) in New York and Australia, Esteban-Guitart et al. (2016) in

Mexico. Recchia and McDevitt (2018) have used the theory to understand how immigrant teachers can bring personal and professional identities together, and maintain their own authenticity while supporting culturally diverse infant and toddler classrooms.

Empirical research has also seen FOK and FOI used to understand marginalised communities, which are more akin to those we might identify as low participation, targeted by the widening participation agenda in the UK. Charteris et al. (2018), whose work is located in Australia, explores how the life experiences of mature students returning to education can be brought into the curriculum. Zipin's work (Zipin, 2009, Zipin et al., 2015, Zipin et al., 2012) focusses on how FOK and FOI should influence pedagogic practice and curriculum design in high-poverty regions of Australia. In his work in Adelaide, Australia, Zipin (2009, p. 318) explored how the approach could be used to "redistribute these codes of elite cultural embodiment – which 'other' learners do not inherit from their families by making them explicit and practicable", highlighting lifeworld based assets. In this work, he challenges teachers 'deficit' perspective, teachers who thought children should find school a safety zone, whereby "disengaging from the lifeworld is in fact one of the benefits of being at school" (p. 322). He asks teachers to embrace what he terms as "dark funds" (Zipin, 2009), asking "can only '*positives*' in learners' lifeworlds constitute positive learning *assets*?" (p. 322), emphasis in the original. This is an avenue of research also applied in the context of China, where Poole (2017b, 2016) has tested the theory as a way of empowering those disadvantaged by government policies.

In the UK, there has been little adoption of the FOK / FOI theoretical framework. Application has predominantly reported in a special issue of the journal Education Review, which reported on an ESRC funded research piece, the Teaching and Learning Research Programme and more specifically, the Home-School Knowledge Exchange project based in two culturally diverse cities, Cardiff and Bristol. In this special issue, Hughes and Greenhough (2006) report the use of videos to further parental understanding of in-school literacy teaching with the hope of shaping how parents might sustain this in their home-based literacy work with their children. Children were also given shoeboxes or bags to take home and fill with artefacts which represented them and their interests. Teachers used these in class to get to know their pupils, and try to build connections between artefacts

and curriculum-driven teaching. The research reported by Andrews and Yee (2006) highlights the rich, but essentially hidden knowledge developed by children in their home-based life worlds, recommending more exploration of how FOK could be used to develop the “relatively new concept of personalised learning” (p. 447). This echoes the work of Hedges et al. (2011) in New Zealand.

While empirical literature provides compelling evidence for the use of FOK in connecting the lifeworld and school world of young learners, giving space for the learners to bring their own knowledge into the classroom, critical analysis of the pedagogy has questioned the actuality of a shift in power dynamics. Oughton (2010) contends the cultural arbitrariness of the framework, and the potential for teachers to legitimise certain funds over another. This dynamic and potential are discussed further by Rodriguez (2013), as she questions how inclusive FOK pedagogies are in practice. In her discussion, Rodriguez tells us the potential of teachers as agents, having choice for subject teaching and curriculum design, is constrained by the school, and external frameworks and standards. Parents and community, as agents, have muted voices, viewed more as background providers; something which teachers can draw on and make “of greater use (by virtue of its enhanced, school-defined form)” (p. 108). Students, as agentic learners are caught in the middle. They may bring the knowledge to the classroom, but the depth of that knowledge and how it is applied, is constrained by both parents and community elders as providers, and teachers as owners of the school learning landscape.

It is disappointing that the FOK / FOI theory has not been applied more extensively in social research in the UK. Given current Government-driven agenda to raise participation and further the educational attainment of children identified as being from within area of low participation and low educational attainment, I would suggest that using the framework to understand how children develop their sense of identity alongside and through their learning, would be extremely beneficial. This is not only true of areas where communities are increasingly diverse, but also true of communities such as Suffolk where diversity exists only in pockets. Outside of these pockets, children continue to be influenced by home-based traditions and habits, the educational experiences and profiles of their families and those around them.

Given challenges many UK Universities face in relation to continuation and degree outcomes, I would also suggest that supporting children to come to understand themselves and their potential is also crucial. While the theory of Possible Selves and the work of those such as Oyserman has made recommendations for strategic road-mapping from primary school, I argue that FOK and FOI also has a role to play in helping to recognise the valuable knowledge which exists in every household, and the potential for the application of this across educational environments. Echoing the words of Taylor (1992, p. 47), “in order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become”.

Conceptualisation of the funds

Reflecting further on the lack of application in the UK, I want to consider the conceptualisation of the funds in the literature, and consider how these may or may not be applicable to children in the UK, such as those I will be working with. There are three considerations to be made; firstly, how can these funds types be recognised in narratives when lines may be blurred, secondly, given the highly individualised society we now live in, will the collective funds, such as institution and culture be as visible or indeed present as they may have been when the theory was developed, and finally with increased, remote access to a much larger, global world via media and global social networks, how might spaces and the relationships within them be perceived?

I find it necessary to expand on the brief definitions provided by Esteban-Guitart as follows, and acknowledge that the blurring of lines between funds may result in multiple funds being attributed to a reference in conversation.

Social funds: individuals identified by name or relationship type. These may include those closely related to the child or others identified as role models, and accessed via media or online networks.

Practical funds: activities which may be passive or active, individual or collective. This might include reading or drawing, football, or other team sports. It might also include practical activities which are engaged with virtually, such as video games of sports, televised sporting events, or activities embedded into social networks, e.g. Twitter, or music sharing sites.

Geographical funds: I propose that geographical funds (villages, countries, territories) have been reshaped by the increased ability to access the world remotely, or at a distance. It is now possible to find out about countries and environments without having to visit them. We can learn about different ecosystems via television, news or the internet. We are urged to change our habits to protect environments which are hundreds of miles away from us.

Easily categorising a reference for a television programme about environmental damage and its impact on the wildlife or social existence of humans in Africa might fall into multiple fund types; activity (watching television), activity (environmental protection), geographical (ecosystem, country, environment), or even cultural (ways of being in the world).

Cultural funds: Esteban-Guitart (2012) includes artefacts such as religious symbols, national flags and anthems or social categories including race, introversion and age. Some of these might be considered to be associated with traditions and habits, those which Archer (2012) suggests are less influential in modern societies. While Giddens (1991) argues for their continuing existence through humans beings need for ontological security, Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p. 44) have written that these fund types become so embedded they are invisible, so "naturalised that one may not think to include it in their self-portrait", while Hedges (2018, in press) writes;

> "Families may not recognise these embedded and tacit cultural practices as significant, nor the role both people and practices play in stimulating, sustaining, and encouraging children's interests. Therefore they may just accept these as part of their everyday lives and not mention them as significant to teachers in order to connect interests across settings"

I suggest that the cultural fund type may be one of the hardest funds to identify within the narratives gathered as part of this project. They will be expanded to include symbols which represent socio-cultural practices situated in social groups, for example school clubs or sports teams. They will also include socio-cultural practices and values, developed within the home and other social communities, the sites where we begin to test and evolve our sense of personal identity.

Institutional funds: have been defined as “any social institution, such as family, marriage or the Catholic Church” (Esteban-Guitart, 2012, p. 177). I suggest that these are collective spaces in which individuals, perhaps identified through social groups are represented. In this way, a teacher may be identified as a member of the social fund, but the larger school ecosystem will be categorised as a social institution. Esteban-Guitart has not included school as a social institution in the funds, but given that this research piece is focused on learning, it should be expected to appear in narratives.

As with cultural funds, I might expect some of these institutions to have become invisible in the children’s narratives. These institutions, however, create a sense of belonging, and carry with them rules, norms, sets of behaviours and can be seen to shape identity.

Research in context

Literature presents evidence of ways in which the siloed learning worlds of *inside* and *outside* the classroom can be connected (Zipin, 2009, Siraj-Blatchford, 2010, Subero et al., 2016), making in-class-room learning more accessible through alignment with lifeworld examples. This alignment is a means of increasing engagement with formal learning.

<u>The location of learning</u>

Just as the creation and testing of identity and agency takes place as part of a social interaction, so does learning. I also argue that the experience of learning is integral to the development of self-identity of effective self.

Learning is an “integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 31); a “dialogue between the more experienced and the less experienced” (Bruner, 1972, p. 107), a sharing of “material and semantic artefacts” (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000, p. 228). During the act of learning, as we assimilate new knowledge so it can shift our perspective on the world, inform new ‘ultimate concerns’ influence how we understand ourselves and how we wish to be understood.

Learning takes place across and through a range of socially formed environments. “Schools are, indeed, one important method of the transmission which forms the

dispositions of the immature" (Dewey, 1916, p 4), but they are also organisations built on established understandings of "disciplinary power", with "physical borders" cut off from "day to day interaction outside" (Giddens, 1984, p. 135). The expectation of school attendance is one social structure which informs our childhood, one part of a set of rules which inform the development of the child. Young children may enter the school space pre-institutionalised, perhaps through childcare (Smith and Barker, 2000), and are inducted into social structures designed to 'civilise' in preparation for adulthood (Mayall, 2010).

Bonnett (2009) suggests that the stark difference between the social environment of the home and the school may, in fact, be so great that there is an "unselving" that takes place when children enter this formal learning environment. Not only does this challenge the sense of selfhood, or identity developed pre-school, it destabilises the developing learning scaffold, making it difficult to assimilate and synthesise what is being taught. There is an assumption that the structural constraints of school rooms render the child submissive to the only feasible option; compliance (Giddens, 1984, Gagen, 2000).

There is also an expectation that the learning delivered, and the pedagogical means of delivery will ultimately create motivated, qualified work-space entrants. Curricula are historically designed, aligned to age related standards of development (Hargreaves, 2010). Literature suggests that these kinds of curricula "can be important in the (re)production of intersecting axes of social differences" (Holloway and Jöns, 2012); perhaps fuelling awareness of lifeworld limiters and future limitations (Hirsch, 2007). Pedagogical movements such as *Learning without Limits* (Hart and Drummond, 2014) urge schools to move away from traditional approaches of streaming according to ability, using peer learning and co-learning to motivate learning, recognising that ability is not static.

The school room, however, is just one location for learning activity. Dewey (1916), Nespor (1997), and Willis (1996) all urge exploration beyond the school room to really understand education. The importance of pedagogies which support children in connecting the learning that happens inside and outside of school is increasingly well understood. Yet in 2016, Subero et al. (2016) still question the (lack) of value placed on out-of-school learning, through hobbies and community-

based interactions, given that the amount of time spent outside of school is considerably greater than that spent inside.

In early years education, the importance of play and learning through play is recognised (Dahlberg, 2009, David, 2012, Tinbergen, 1976). Vygotsky et al. (1978) present play as a way in which the child begins to learn and explore agency, negotiating imaginary worlds, real world rules, risk, and how they then could consequently act. As children's leisure time becomes increasingly constrained and sanitised due to concerns about safety, and initiatives to push parents out to work; the time children have for unstructured play is lost (Gagen, 2000, Smith and Barker, 2000, Hartley-Brewer, 2010). The ability to test efficacy and develop an effective self in this unstructured environment is gone too.

Identity as learner

At the heart of the learning process is learner identity, that is, identity within the learning community; as newcomer or old-timer (Lave and Wenger, 1991), identity as located on the scale of expected (academic) ability and performance, and identity within the dialectic of control in the school environment (Giddens, 1984).

The importance of enabling pedagogies as opportunities to construct positive self-images as learners is recognised:

> "a pedagogical framework which is sensitive to cultural issues and difference, and which recognises the capacity of students to engage in decisions about their own learning can enable students to mediate depowering educational experiences and construct a positive self-image as a learner."

Any understanding of what constitutes an *engaged* learner identity is, according to the literature, "tangled semantically as well as conceptually" (Axelson and Flick, 2010, p. 41). There is considerable literature available discussing the construct of engagement with learning for children aged fourteen years and upwards, and particular engagement with HE learning. Yet, despite the warning of Finn (1989, p. 231) that, "it is essential that non-participation be recognised in the earliest grade possible … there is evidence that early school practices are related to behaviour problems in later years", there continues to be little research considering what

engaged learner at primary level might look like (see O'Toole and Due, 2015 for an example of a study on 6-7 year old children in a Catholic special education program in Australia).

A child's positive and successful identity as learner, the Final Report and Recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) tells us is one where they have a strong sense of self, with a positive outlook on life, able to build meaningful relationships with others. They will be enthusiastic, empowered and autonomous in their learning, with a thirst for exploration, creativity and responsibility. They will be able to make sense of their learning and ally skills to knowledge. These are characteristics synonymous with the discovery learning of Bruner (1961) and deep learning of Entwistle (2001). They are attributes and behaviours which supporting the 'new comer' in the learning community new comer to progress towards becoming 'old timer'; one able to motivate other to learn, sharing knowledge and experience through dialogue with those less experienced.

This identity should be developed through learning activity which stretches the child's development; learning which is oriented toward developmental levels that have already been reached is ineffective… it does not aim for a new stage of the developmental process but rather lags behind" (Vygotsky et al., 1978, p. 89).

Engaged learner

I suggest that if identity as learner is influenced by our previous experiences, understanding the behaviours we expect to see from engaged learners in tertiary education, might help us to develop insight into behaviours we need to develop through our earlier experiences of education. One definition of student engagement with HE, provided by Trowler (2010, p. 3) suggests it could be understood as the

> "interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution."

This definition glosses over what the 'other relevant resource' might be understood to be (Kahn, 2014). Literature on student engagement in secondary education and HE (Libbey, 2004, Furlong and Christenson, 2008, Kahu, 2013) offers models based on measures of academic and social behaviours, for example time spent on school work, attendance and participation, cognitive perception of the relevance of the learning, the interest, effort and motivation to learn it, and affective, the positive relationships and aspects of school which are particularly enjoyable. These models appear to recognise the place of 'thick' relationships, highlighted in FOK, the wider bi-directional relationship of engagement and life satisfaction and positive well-being (Fredrickson, 2001, Heffner and Antaramian, 2016, Lewis et al., 2011).

Lawson and Lawson (2013) also review conceptualisations of student engagement, making recommendations for a multi-layered, "expansive, social-ecological engagement framework", which they argue calls for a "new generation of engagement -focussed research, practice and policy innovations because it emphasises the powerful peer, family, and community influences outside of school" (p. 465). Their model (p. 460), recognises that both Out of School Time and Extra Curricular Activity could be indicators of possible participation in school-based activities, resonating with the words of Alexander et al. (2010, p. 197) that a purpose of primary education is to induct children into a place "where they will be wholeheartedly engaged in all kinds of worthwhile activities…defined generously rather than narrowly." Importantly, it also illustrates how learners shape their identities at the confluence of formal knowledge and meaning making, home, school and peer-group socio-cultural influences and the relationships and interactions between them (Pollard and Filer, 2007).

Aspiration

Spohrer (2011, p. 60) concludes that "efforts to raise aspirations" could be seen to be "shifting both problems and solutions …to the individual", they become the "moral duty of the individual". The research reports of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions (2009), suggest that "it is the aspirations people have to better themselves, that drives social progress" (p. 6). There has been a slew of government initiatives aimed at helping people do just that, including the *Aimhigher* scheme (running 2004-2011), part of the New Labour's Third Way; an

envisaged collective responsibility approach (public, private and voluntary sectors) to solving social issues.

Schemes such as *Aimhigher* were established nationally to raise the awareness, aspirations and attainment of young people, particularly those identified as being in deprived areas. Government and local authority initiatives continue with the aim of helping all (Cameron, 2012). UK government policy targets particular groups of society, those deemed to be from poor(er) areas (Department for Education, 2017b, Social Exclusion Taskforce, 2008), including Suffolk. At the heart of the aspiration raising agenda is the presumption that students who live in poverty have low aspirations, and will not, therefore achieve academically or economically (St. Clair and Benjamin, 2011).

Shaping aspiration - identity, agency and structures

Government published statements such as "secondary schools could be doing more to support bright pupils; to encourage the brightest students to apply to prestigious universities; and to broaden the horizons of bright pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds" (Department for Education, 2016, p. 98) and "in far too many communities there is a deeply embedded culture of low aspiration that is strongly tied to long-term unemployment" (Department for Education, 2010, p. 4) provide deficiency arguments for a poverty of aspiration and places the burden of responsibility on the individual. This approach negates the impact of social structures and systems (Brown, 2011), the poverty of opportunity according to neighbourhood and the low expectations of identified groups held by others (Kintrea et al., 2015). St. Clair and Benjamin (2011) argue that "the problem may be not what people want, but rather what they are constrained or allowed to achieve. Outcomes may be far more strongly influenced by structures and opportunity than by aspiration or motivation" (p. 503).

In educational settings, discourses of ability establish learner identities and self-conceptualisations of potential (Boaler, 2005, Yarker, 2011). Understanding ability and intellectual potential as a fixed condition of birth may now be recognised as flawed (Hart et al., 2004). Pedagogic movements encourage more creative approaches to student-centred and student shaped learning experiences (Kerridge, 2017). Children, themselves, remain sensitive to any form of in-class grouping (Northen and Flutter, 2010) and teacher perception. Research

undertaken by Boaler et al. (2000) recounts student voices responding to and attempting to rationalise such perceptions: “they don’t think they have to bother with us. I know that sounds really mean and unrealistic, but they just think they don’t have to bother with us ‘cause we’re group 5” (p. 637). Later research by Boaler (2005) presents the damage caused through reproduced and social inequalities, concluding that these structures and systems create “psychological prisons” from which children may never escape.

Changes in pedagogic practice to value and encourage all within the classroom, may make voices, such as those reported by Boaler, voices of past generations. Yet these voices may well persist in home and social environments, conditioning attitudes of those around them, and maintaining the ontological security that comes with the status quo (Giddens, 1979). Where national agenda challenge individuals to aspire to lives and environments completely divorced from those they know, pursuing such aspirations may result in fears of being left behind or in a sense of being disloyal to your family group. Hartley-Brewer (2010, p. 80) contends, that the valuing of “parents ‘funds of knowledge’” and respecting their choices is key to “unblocking transmission of low aspiration”. Developed and accepted perceptions of some aspirations and lifeworlds as worthier, perpetuates the ‘problem’.

Defining aspiration

Quaglia and Cobb (1996) question the true meaning of aspiration. Is aspiration always good? Is it long term or short term? In an educational sense, they conclude, aspirations are “a student’s ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work toward those goals” (p. 130). More broadly, Appadurai (2004) tells us that aspirations are almost certainly linked to wants, preferences, calculations; economic drivers, but rather than these being individually driven, are “always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life” (p. 67).

The work of Zipin et al. (2015) explores a complex understanding of aspiration, considering the in-situ aspirations where real-life historic conditions warrant pessimism about future opportunities, and challenges the view that to overcome this people just need to raise their aspirations. They argue that to raise aspirations in this way is potentially destructive, raising hope where there may be none,

coaxing the young to leap into other subcultures and mainstream aspirations, "without knowing how to choreograph those leaps" (Zipin et al., 2015p. 242). Instead, they say, educators should enable school learners to "enact agentic capacities for creating new futures through the work of critically understanding and reimagining their cultural-historical present" (Zipin et al., 2012, p. 188). In doing so aspiration becomes the medium and outcome of agentic capacity; it becomes a civic responsibility, drawing on, reshaping and reproducing funds of knowledge.

Zipin's view is both sympathetic and challenging. Do the policies and rhetoric of desired aspirations give space for localised and contextual differences, or do they just create or sustain a deficit sub-culture of "left behinds" (Zipin et al., 2015)? A broader understanding of aspiration, one which resonates with a 'whole' person approach to education or lifeworld knowledge, such as that proposed by the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander et al., 2010) may be more helpful in supporting Zipin's approach. The research of Brown (2011) on the aspirations of working-class young people suggests that a more holistic understanding of aspiration may more accurately reflect their understanding and articulation of personal aspirations. Gorard et al. (2012, p. 73) suggest that society should consider that

> "…attainment and participation are important but they are only two possible educational outcomes. Others such as well-being, preparation for citizenship, resilience and happiness could be just as important"

Our measures of educational and life success could be further enhanced through explicit recognition of self-efficacy, strong sense of self, ongoing thirst for knowledge; life satisfaction (Lewis et al., 2011).

In summary: the research gap

In the presentation of the theoretical framework through which I will explore how the children in this project create their sense of identity, I have argued that the framework must recognise the historical socio-cultural environment in which we have developed as human beings, but also recognise the potential our ongoing learning and development has to inform structural change. I have argued that FOK and FOI enable self-discovery and, with a reconceptualisation of funds, will enable

the application of the framework to explore the impact of our life worlds on how we develop our own identity.

The FOK understanding of the construction and sharing of knowledge within those fund types levels the playing field of knowledge and learning, recognising that all individuals and communities have knowledge of *something*. Individuals within those communities are both discursively and practically conscious. FOK allows the child to demonstrate or articulate the expertise they have in their lives, and the potential they have for being able to make decisions and actively shape their learning.

The application to date of both FOI and FOK has been limited to understanding how the levels of engagement with formal education can be increased, by allowing some knowledge created in out-of-school life worlds into the classroom. This is understood to increase relevance, and accessibility of curriculum-learning, building bridges between school world and life world. Application has also been primarily in the areas with diverse communities where there has been increased numbers of immigrants, or in areas with marginalized communities excluded through policy or practice. Application in a large rural area with communities which are marginalized through low participation, higher levels of poverty or a perceived lack of aspiration is limited, and has not been undertaken in the UK.

Aspirations are predominantly understood to reflect economic -driven wants and desires for a future self. Drivers for increasing aspiration of those perceived as having low aspirations are shaped by this. Those identified as being lacking in the right knowledge and the right aspirations are predicted to be low achievers, this is reiterated in Government policies and schemes aimed at increasing them. There is a need to develop and adopt new ways of understanding children's own aspirations, and enable them to develop capacity as agents for change in their communities rather than simply striving for professions and life styles which may push them away from those they identify with. In accepting and valuing the knowledge of communities and individuals, together with an understanding of how this impacts a child's sense of agentic and knowledgeable self can boost confidence and self-belief. Empirical research demonstrating this would be a valuable addition to current understanding and practice.

Pollard and Filer (2007, p. 444) write that in order “to maximise the potential of young people, there must be appropriate understanding of them as people within their culture and societies and of how education fits into, and contributes to, their lives as a whole” It is this that this research sets out to do, stripped of discourses of class, gender and race, and value driven understandings of knowledge, and aspiration.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods

Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual and methodological framework adopted by this study, and the methods employed to hear the voices of children, as they present their lifeworlds and the types and places of learning within them.

The research paradigm calls for a 'bracketing' of preconceptions and assumptions so that I may come to understand the location of learning, and potential for engagement anew. Given the polyvocality (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008) of the research piece and the embedded descriptions presented, the role of researcher and management of voices is considered in depth within this chapter. Considerable attention is also given to the ethical implications of working with children, gaining informed consent, and remaining mindful of the balance between encouraging children as active agents, when their experience and access to agency in their life world may be rather more constrained (Scott et al., 1998, Veale, 2005).

How do school aged children portray their current and future worlds and themselves within it, where is learning located within their current and future worlds, what places are associated with learning, and how are they perceived? These are research questions which demand an initial consideration of the status of children as community members as well as participants in my research.

Conceptual and paradigmatic frameworks

'The Sociology of Childhood'

As a social construct, childhood is understood as a "particular cultural phrasing of the early part of the life course" (James and James, 2004, p. 13); one which is "institutionalised through family, education and the state" (Scott et al., 1998, p. 692). As such, children are often viewed as precious, in need of protection from the adult world and dependent on adults (Clark and Richards, 2017); they are subject to sets of expected behaviours, limited roles, policies and laws which keep children at a distance from the real grown up world. Yet, children are innately curious of what is going on around them. They are not the "passive output of child-rearing practices" (James and James, 2004, p. 23), but "active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live…agents of social change" (James and Prout, 1997, p. 8). They are competent, reasoned and significant (Qvortrup et al., 1994).

In the field of research, and specifically social science, recognising children as research participants in their own right was driven by the Sociology of Childhood (Moran-Ellis, 2010), itself perhaps triggered by the publishing of the United Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989). Article 12 of the UNCRC makes it clear that every child has the right to have an opinion, and importantly, to voice that view, and to be taken seriously. In the UK, their legal 'visibility' was established through the 1989 Children's Act. Murris (2013) explores what she terms the 'epistemic challenge' of hearing the child's voice, noting that, as researchers, we still find access to and the perceived credibility of children as 'knowers' challenging. She argues that by sheer virtue of age, children are systematically silenced, their credibility as co-creators of 'worthwhile knowledge' discounted.

Enabling agency

Within this research, the structures of childhood and learning would prove to be either constraining or enabling. Childhood, and 'child' as a cultural product would be both medium and outcome of the children's lives. Their being would be impacted by the replayed experiences of those around them, by the "socially constructed relation between an individuals' capabilities, aspirations, and perceived opportunities and limitations to take action with a given practice" (Hilppö et al., 2016, p 51).

In exploring learning, the impacts of traditional "setting" (Gillard, 2009), constructing the older adults in their life worlds as "successes or failures" (Boaler et al., 2000, p. 643) might colour the lens through which the children came to recognise learning. The adult-memory of childhood (Ali Norozi and Moen, 2016) might replay in parenting practice, shaping how the child viewed themselves as agent, and framing their social relationships.

In pursuit of my own creative methods, children needed to have the "autonomy to define, explain and shape their worlds" (Swauger et al., 2017, p. 3). The methodological framework should allow for agency and differences in its portrayal according to the context and nature of the situation (Alderson and Yoshida, 2016, p. 94):

> "agency may be seen as ambivalent, intended, inadvertent, rational or foolish, cautious or risky, compliant or resistant, individual or collective, partly autonomous and partly heteronomous, chosen yet constrained, effective and ineffective, creative and destructive, competent and incompetent."

Research design: the methodological framework

My research design is underpinned by a constructivist approach, committed to hearing the unhindered voices of children, recording their experiences, without interpretation or judgement. I want to understand 'anew' what childhood feels like, how childhood worlds are constructed, and how learning is for each of these children. For readers of this research (parents, teachers, education professionals) this new construction of the experience of learning should resonate. A phenomenological methodology was adopted to achieve this.

Phenomenology: the philosophy

The twentieth century philosophy of phenomenology was 'inaugurated' by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). It was seen as "reviving our living contact with reality…returning to lived human experience in all its richness" (Moran, 2000, p. 5). The term was found in earlier philosophical works of many, including Kant and Hegel, but it was Hegel's understanding of phenomenology as "knowledge as it appears to consciousness" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26) that provided the technical definition of phenomenology adopted by Husserl.

There are many branches to the philosophy of phenomenology, but it is Husserl's *transcendental phenomenology* that I applied here. Husserl's particular approach to phenomenology is focussed on coming to know through experience, and being able to describe (rather than interpret) this experience from the perspective of those living it (Derico, 2017). The constructivist lens (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, Creswell, 2013) of this research acknowledges the existence of multiple realities; accepting that as individuals we make sense of our experiences subjectively, creating what Husserl's phenomenology refers to as a "multiplicities of appearances" (Husserl, 1983, p. 362). Moustakas (1994, p. 95) tells us, "horizons [or layers of discovery] are unlimited. We can never exhaust completely our experience of things no matter how many times we reconsider them or view them". Through phenomenology, as methodology, these horizons are peeled back,

revealing the ‘eidos’ or true essence of the experience of *something*, in this case, the true essence of learning.

Phenomenology: application as methodology

In focussing on the personal experiences of a phenomenon, phenomenology lends itself to research projects where people and their lifeworlds are to be explored. Published literature on the use of phenomenology in educational research often focusses on the potential for such application (Davidsen, 2013, Nazir, 2016) with few providing empirical insight into its application (e.g. Creely, 2018, Derico, 2017). Dall’Alba (2009) provides an edited collection of papers illustrating the diverse applications of phenomenology in education. The following highlights, from within the collection, reinforce the choice of method in this research.

Barnacle (2009) asks us to consider the experience of learning as something beyond an intellectual pursuit. While the “tangibility of formal knowledge makes it amenable to quantification” (p. 25) we are urged to recognise the impact of learning on identity creation. Phenomenology helps us to do this by understanding the feeling of learning from within ourselves, developing “sensibilities” for what is being learnt, and less tangible qualities of openness and a commitment to seek the truth.

This view of learning as a whole person experience is explored further by Bonnett (2009) in understanding the experience of learning in particular contexts and environments. Bonnett talks of the “unselving” that takes place within formal school environments, the idea that the often stark differences between school and home environments can be “threatening and unhelpful to the development of selfhood” (p. 31). He goes on to argue that in-school learning is disconnected from the experienced self in that there is no time for enactment, or assimilation of learning; for the learning itself to be experienced rather than a rote-learning of the facts to meet standard assessment requirements.

The final paper (Ganeson and Ehrich, 2009) considers the experience of learning at the point of transition into high school, which concludes by reminding us of the “moral responsibility of educators to find out more about students’ experiences of phenomena in order to facilitate and better support their learning and development” (p. 81).

As a methodology, however, phenomenology, like other qualitative approaches, opens itself up to criticism from those seeking to be able to test the findings through the production of generalisable and replicable data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The underpinning ontological perspective, which apprehends the existence of multiple realities of experience, does not respond to measures of rigour typically used with more positivistic (one-reality) paradigms; validity, reliability and generalisability. Instead, the constructivist paradigm can be tested with such criteria for rigour trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), made explicit through rigorous data collection methods, data triangulation, the presentation of multiple realities, a recognised approach to research enquiry, reflexivity on the part of the researcher and a thorough awareness of ethical issues (Creswell, 2013).

Van Manen (2001) provides another way of measuring the credibility and validity of phenomenological research. He writes “human life needs knowledge, reflection and thought to make itself known to itself, including its complex and ultimately mysterious nature” (p. 17) and it is in its knowing that, the validity of the data is to be found. The “validating circle of inquiry” (p. 27) is achieved through the descriptions of experiences and the presented essence that is played back to the reader. In reading the finished text, a chord of familiarity should be struck (Danaher and Briod, 2005): “I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46).

The research process

Giorgi (1997) presents three stages in phenomenological research, (1) phenomenological reduction, (2) description and (3) search for essences. Creswell (2013), following the model used by Moustakas (1994), makes the individual stages more explicit, to include (1) an early ‘bracketing’ exercise by the researcher, (2) data collection, using methods appropriate for the research participants, (3) data analysis, (4) production of a textural description (5) structural description and (6) the synthesis of description to produce the essence of the phenomenon.

Moustakas (1994) writes that the typical phenomenological study involves a long interview as an informal and interactive process. Unlike some interview processes where there may be a disconnect between researcher and ‘researchee’, in a

phenomenological (and social constructionist) approach to research the two parties are co-researchers; a "partnership on a conversational researcher journey" (Crabtree, 1999, p. 89); "research that does not promote such participation is often seen as ethically dubious and less effective in achieving valid data" (Clark and Richards, 2017, p. 130).

When working with children it is important to see data collection as a generative process, rather than a process of extraction (Veale, 2005). Creative methods are employed as a first stage in generating data, but also as an important step in establishing the relationship between 'co-researchers', at the very least an equal partnership between researcher and participant, and positions children as experts in their lives.

Creative methods

Creative methods are used in research to facilitate the telling of self-stories, reflection and to stimulate "the articulation of multiple voices and positions" (Veale, 2005, p. 254). The production of "rich individual narratives" (Leitch, 2008, p. 37), is exactly what is needed to be able to produce the textural and structural descriptions demanded by phenomenological study. Any phenomenological research project seeks to find renewed understandings, and children, by virtue of their age and more limited range of experiences of a particular phenomenon, may have 'fresher' views and understandings than the more mature participant.

Flick (2002) writes that, increasingly, social research is drawing on oral methods to be able to understand how people construct knowledge and engage in 'world-making' in their own lives. Drawing is acknowledged as one way of engaging children in laying out those stories, encouraging them to become co-narrators and active subjects, with distinct perspectives on the issues and experiences of their lives.

Flexible techniques were required to ensure that all children who participated could do so equally, regardless of skill level or confidence (Crivello et al., 2009, Darbyshire et al., 2005).

My fieldwork was designed to take place over two separate events. The first gave a window into the 'now' world of each child and the second a focus on the future.

My goal in both was to work with each child to unfold and identify the funds of identity (FOI) that formed their 'now' and potential, future worlds. To do this, methods presented by Bagnoli (2004) and Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014), self-portraits and 'significant circles', were employed. In these activities, children were invited to use images, words, symbols of their choice, to represent those places, activities, people, of significance to them, for their current self and envisaged future self. To prompt the drawings, I provided some ideas from the FOI concept, making sure to include examples from each of the five funds (Esteban-Guitart, 2012, p. 177) to try and avoid influencing the choices made, or unconsciously influencing the children to see one fund as more significant to the portrait than any other.

Veale (2005) and Leitch (2008) both comment on the power of the image in researching with children. Young children are able to make use of drawings as a way of telling their stories, and in doing so become increasingly articulate; signs and symbols within drawings are themselves an articulation (Vygotsky et al., 1978), and show not just what is important, but what is not, through exclusion.

I encouraged the children in this study to draw the self-portrait, and reassured them that the drawing of themselves could be a whole body, or just a head; a stick man or a detailed figure. This made the navigation of the activity easier to manage. In this way the drawing became part of the evolution of their narratives. The children explained why they were taking a particular approach, and started to make links between their depictions and the funds they presented around them.

Role of the researcher

As well as the ethical considerations of working with children, I needed to consider the nature of my relationship with the children. Clark (2010) specifically addresses the role of the researcher in participatory research with children, and presents options including *Authentic Novice*. This term, "implies that the researcher is not pretending not to know what are the children's experiences… but is genuinely hoping to learn from the children more about how they perceive." (p. 120). This approach was particularly appealing to me, in calling for researcher to "relinquish the need to know all the answers" (p. 120), it encouraged my reflexivity as researcher, helping me to balance voices, perspectives and be aware of my own bias.

Clark and Richards (2017) draw attention to the ways in which children enact their 'social agency' to make choices about participation, how they respond to questions, and, themselves, shape the roles the researcher plays. Maybin (2007) writes that narratives are ways of interpreting and evaluating experience, of expressing relationships with others, that they will include expressions of individual experience and reflection as well as representation and evaluation of other voices. While the nature of the research project required interaction with the participants, as far as possible in a symmetrical, equal relationship, this needed to be counter-balanced with distance, to avoid "going native" or potentially 'contaminating' the results (Gergen, 2003). My methods of data analysis needed to be attuned for this risk and support the unpicking of voices by way of further mitigation, increasing rigour and credibility.

Interviewing

I undertook individual, semi-structured interviews while the self-portrait and significant circles were being drawn, with the children taking the lead on the direction the interview took, and placed as experts in the activity. I asked questions during the drawing to maximise the opportunity to hear responses as they appeared to the children's consciousness rather than after considered reflection, and hopefully revealed their authentic feelings and reactions to themes and experiences at the heart of the project.

The interview as a site of knowledge generation (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008), between both parties, is "literally an *inter view* , an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2). My use of language (Parr, 2011) and active listening had to leave space for each child to verbalise their drawing and to freely express themselves.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) provide an interviewer with a framework of twelve aspects or considerations when undertaking a phenomenological interview. I used these in the development of a focussed, sensitive, non-directive approach as researcher, generation of descriptive and specific events and situations, awareness of contradiction and ambiguity in analysis and impact of the activity on each individual participant.

The pilot study

The early design for this study was quasi-longitudinal. I had hoped to understand how children developed their perception of current and future selves as they grew up as individuals and learners between the ages of five and eleven. The children in this older age group would be teetering on the edge of puberty, when, as Maybin (2007) suggests they would be seeking to explore new relationships with adults and with each other.

While phenomenology is location and context agnostic, the impact of the location of the interviews was important when deciding where to undertake the project. Would locating the research in a school force a focus on learning in a formal environment? How would the location impact on the relationship between researcher and participant?

The one essential criteria for each participant was that they had experience of the phenomenon being explored (Moustakas, 1994). On the advice of Polkinghorne (1989) I looked to work with between five and twenty five children. In an attempt to create a wide lens on learning experiences, I deliberately chose not to locate the research in a formal school environment, or recruit children via schools themselves.

I conducted a very small pilot study to test the feasibility of a quasi-longitudinal design. The children, male and female, were engaged in the community group, Beavers. I made contact with a local group and was invited to attend a couple of evening events. I met parents, explained the research project, and handed out information and consent packs (Appendix 2, 3). The parents were very receptive, and promised to return packs to the leader the following week; but only one completed pack came back, for a brother and sister both attending the group. I scheduled the interviews for the following week.

The following week's activity was a game of rounders at the local park. I held the interviews sitting on one of the benches, after a long 'crocodile procession' from the village hall. I removed Chloe and Tom from the group, one at a time, to conduct the drawings and interviews. While interviewing Chloe, some of her other friends chose to leave the game and play on the swings, close by. The following is an extract from my interview with Chloe, aged six.

Ellen:	Do you like drawing? [Chloe nods] What do you like to draw?
Chloe:	Hmmmm I don't really know.
Ellen	Do you do lots of drawing at home?
Chloe:	I sometimes draw my bedroom and all the bedrooms I have in my house and downstairs
Ellen:	And do you draw the things that are in your bedroom?
Chloe:	Hmmm there is my clothes drawer what has loads of Lego in it…. yep, and my bed what has loads of toys under it and I cleared it all up yesterday on my own.
Ellen:	How long did that take?
Chloe:	55 hours, and the whole the bedroom…...a 165 hours.

Chloe goes on to tell me about how she took her mother's car to the local McDonalds, and onto the beach for swimming.

Part way through the interview Chloe's friends came over to see what she was doing. They had not signed up to be part of the research activities, and so could not be directly included, although they did join in with and contribute to Chloe's drawing. This further distracted Chloe and highlighted the difficult position this put Chloe in. The choice to stay drawing became harder as the interview progressed.

The second child in this pilot was Chloe's brother. Tom was seven years old, and while Chloe was bubbly, Tom was much quieter, able to articulate answers to questions on his likes and dislikes, drawing them into his pictures. His answers are rooted in the world he knows,

Tom:	I'm not normally happy so much
Ellen:	Why are you not always happy so much?
Tom:	Because I get left out of games at school
Ellen:	What do you like doing?
Tom:	Um, I like rugby, cos my Dad's a rugby player, he used to be.
Ellen:	Who did your Dad play for?

Tom: Hmmmm, Finchingstone.

Ellen: Do you play rugby a lot?

Tom: Umm, no, only in the back garden, the only place I get to play it much.

In this short extract Tom has already referenced his father, who he goes on to draw in his fireman uniform. Tom goes on to tell me that he would like to be a fireman like his father. In terms of the conceptual framework of FOI, Tom's father would sit within the social fund, as a positive force, becoming one of the funds of knowledge (FOK) that Tom would draw on for some of his learning. School is presented as a negative place because of the impact it has on Tom socially. In the early stages of the interview, it is hopeful that Tom will be able to provide some rich insights into his world, but again his friends and the activities around him prove too great a distraction, and he goes off to play.

Reflections

I look at the two drawings I am left with and consider the data I had been able to gather.

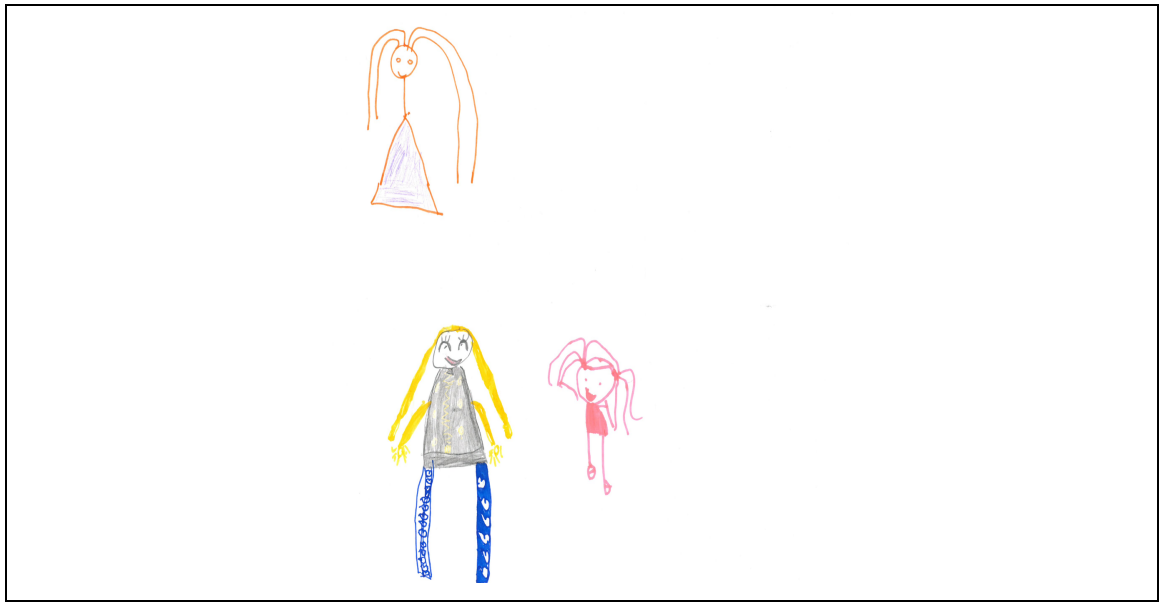


Figure 1: Chloe's self-portrait

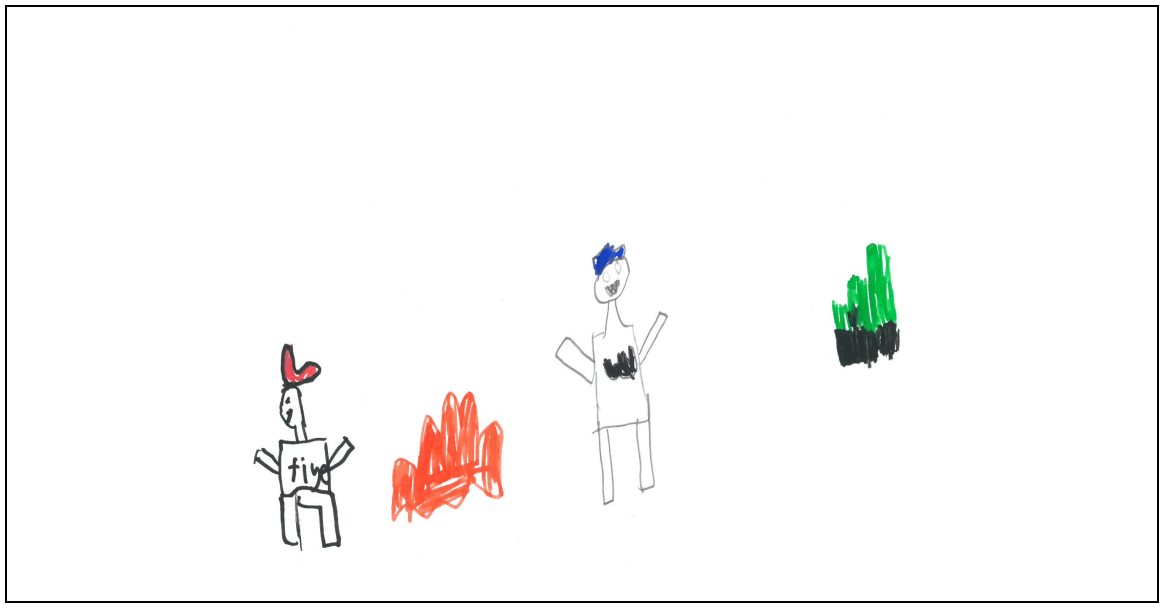


Figure 2: Tom's self-portrait

I had not anticipated that I might find myself in an outdoor environment, and while I knew that my research design would necessitate removing children from a given activity to be able to speak to them individually, I struggled to keep these young children, focussed on the activity. Other children were curious and wanted to join in. The research activity was distracting for those not involved, while those involved were distracted by those around them. This made the typing up of interview transcripts very difficult, which voice should I be typing up? Where was the line between the reality of the story being told, and the fantasy world that the children quickly veered into? Had Chloe been to the beach for swimming recently? Had she spent time in the car with her mother and pretended to drive the car as many children do?

The pictures were undoubtedly self-portraits, but they hadn't given me the data I had hoped for in terms of the wider FOI. Tom's had started to give me images of some of the people and activities that he enjoyed, the black and green shape on the right of his picture being a games console, but there was no geography within the picture – no scaling of closer-to and further away according to impact and importance.

This small pilot, indicated that working with younger children would be more challenging than anticipated, not least because only one parent had returned forms and I had no other point of access to children of this age group. I also found, in the case of these particular children, that there were considerable differences in

their visual and verbal abilities. I was concerned that given the timeframes and opportunities for access, pursuing this line of enquiry would not prove fruitful, and so decided to refocus on working with children at the older end of the age spectrum.

Conducting the research

The following provides a graphical representation of the methods used to gather and analyse the data, before detailed description is provided in the following pages, based on Creswell's adapted model for phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013).

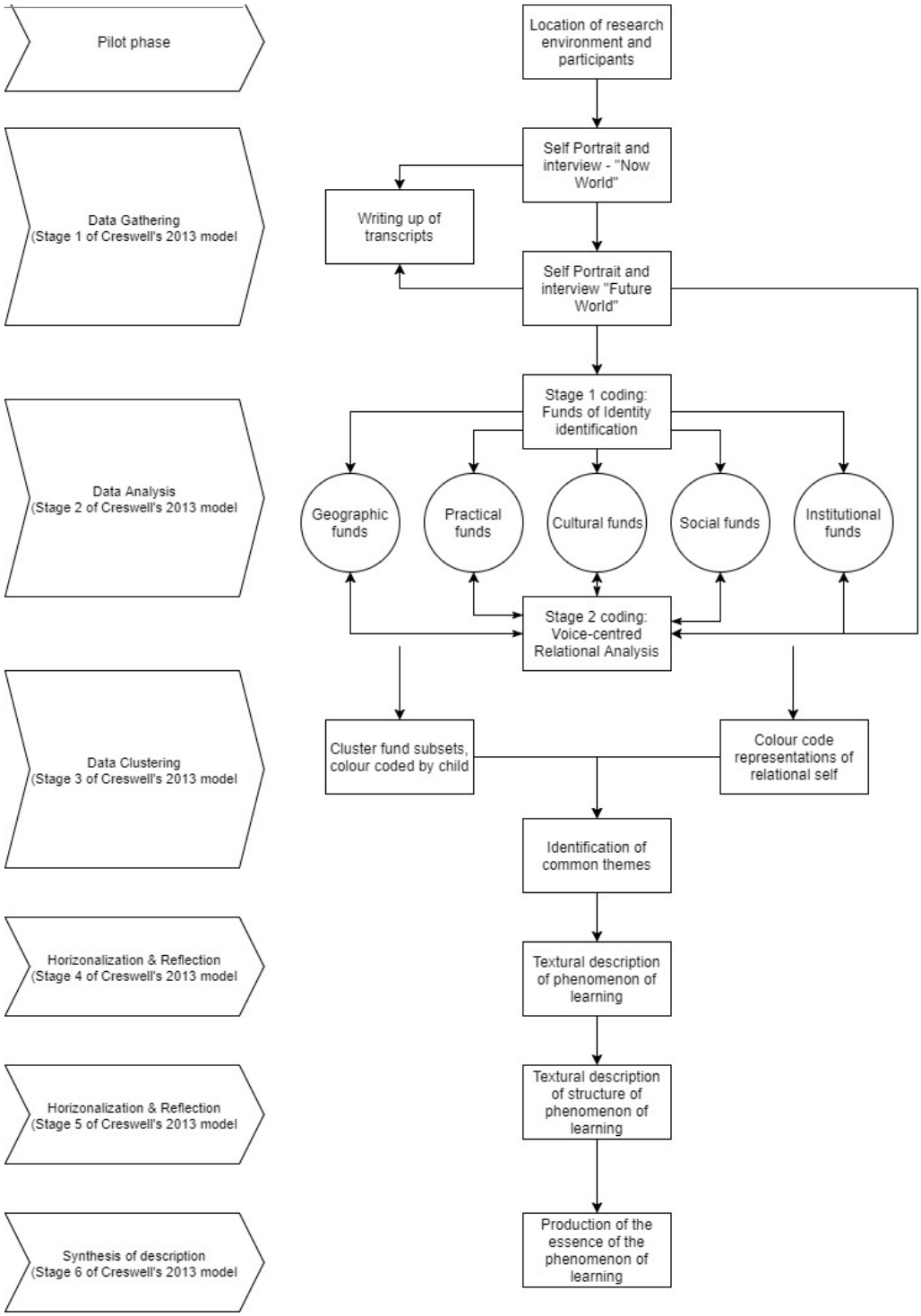


Figure 3: Graphical representation of research design

Redesigning and recruiting the children

Following the pilot, the initial proposal of a quasi-longitudinal study was abandoned. I decided to focus on the experiences of children as they approached the end of the primary schooling, a time of social and physiological change.

A youth project in the same town as the pilot study was approached. With the support of project leaders, I attended an open evening where children in year six would come to try the club. I spoke with children and parents, handing out my information packs and asked them to return them to the club the following week. I would also be there. Max was the only child to return his pack, and, reflecting back I remembered that he was also one of the only children who visited the club, exploring with his parent. Other parents had been chatting amongst themselves while their children played separately.

I needed a second avenue for recruitment and so turned to a colleague who I knew had a child of the right age. I had met her daughter previously, and had developed a relationship of sorts with the child. Mother, and daughter, agreed to approach some of Lucy's friends, giving me access to a small network of six children who all attended the same school; a convenience sample. I considered the appropriateness of this sampling technique. I did not seek to make generalisations as an output of this research; I would however be able to develop a series of small case studies for analysis (Cohen et al., 2011).

Research activity and environment

I made use of creative methods and a free-flowing interview. Children were each invited to two diarised events. The first event would look to build a picture, verbal and illustrative, of the 'current world' for each child. The second would focus on their envisaged 'future world'. The conversation in each would overlap, and so would also provide an opportunity to validate some of the previous conversation.

In practice, this was difficult to achieve; 'current world' conversations were held with all seven children, but it was only possible to complete 'future world'

interviews with five, due to other commitments on their part. Transcripts and drawing still provided rich insights.

It was important to reduce variables between conversation instances as far as possible. Steps taken included designing the conversation toolkit to include a pad of A3 drawing paper, a set of coloured pencils and pens, rubbers and the voice recorder. Each child had been given the same information sheet as part of the recruitment process (Appendix 3). The individual meetings began with a reminder of the task ahead, and a re-check that they were happy to be recorded.

Max was interviewed at the after-school project. The interview took place in a small office room. I arrived before Max and watched as he rushed into the club and started to play table football with his friends. I felt uncomfortable pulling Max away from the game he was enjoying, and was conscious of the ongoing activity around us as we began to converse. The time allowed was forty-five minutes, the conversation lasted for forty, after which Max when back to his friends. Max was only interviewed once.

The ‘current world’ conversations for the six non-youth club children took place during a half term holiday. I arranged for the children to come to my place of work, and while three came on the same day, accompanied by two adults, three other children attended on a different day. I had booked a small meeting room and walked each child to and from the room personally, taking the opportunity to try to make the children feel welcome and comfortable. I learned that each child had visited the location before on school trips. I considered what this might mean for the activity I had planned. While the room was located within a formal learning environment, a university, and therefore one that could perhaps “unselve” or constrain the conversation, the location itself was not one in which the children had previously experienced formal learning, classroom-style. Instead, the children had been to the University as ‘explorers’, playing in the spaces with technologies and equipment. They seemed excited to be back in the space. The ‘future world’ interviews for the five children able to participate, again took place at my

place of work in a pre-booked room, just as the children began the summer holidays.

Each of the children confirmed they had read the information sheets before coming along, and before signing the consent forms. Each of these interviews followed the same process as Max's, producing a self-portrait with mapped activities, people, places, the subsets of the FOI, embedded within a conversation about the drawing and themselves. Each had up to forty-five minutes allocated. While I had themes I wanted to explore with each child, I was mindful of the advice provided by Mukherji and Albon (2010) allowing the children to set the direction and pace, and allowing them to emerge naturally. I wanted to understand, not explain.

Children's memory

The second conversation was an opportunity to validate, and triangulate some of the data gathered through the first. The accuracy of their recall was dependent on whether children's memory allow this to happen authentically, or if the children would try to 'falsely' reshape the conversation to try and satisfy me; as the adult in the room.

Goodman and Quas (2008) explore repeat interviews and interviewer bias in forensic settings, concluding that young children's memory is malleable under a variety of conditions including the use of misleading questions, presentation of false memory and susceptibility to social pressure. Hayne et al (2011) explore the ability of young children to mentally time travel, through episodic memory, or memories which relate to events in the past, and to events which could potentially happen in the future, informed perhaps by prior experiences. Although looking at pre-school children (aged three and five years), the research indicates that the "seeds of episodic memory and episodic foresight have been firmly planted by a child's third birthday" (Hayne et al., 2011p. 353) and that children are able to accurately recall events which took place months earlier.

While both studies are focussed on children younger than those in this project, ongoing child development should mean that children would continue

to develop their ability to recall with accuracy. To reduce the risk of inaccuracies or shaping through interviewer bias or peer pressure, care was taken when presenting the future world task not to remind the children of what they have written or drawn previously, nor was there any sharing of other children's drawing.

Managing the voices in phenomenological research

The primary challenge for undertaking phenomenological research is the very starting point that Husserl demands; the setting aside of previous knowledge and assumptions, through epoche or bracketing. For successors of Husserl, true objectivism could not be achieved (Davidsen, 2013). Schutz (1962, p. 59) writes "the constructs of the social sciences, are…constructs of the second degree, that is, constructs of the constructs made by actors on the social scene".

The first step in a bracketing exercise is to set out one's own assumptions and experiences of the phenomenon through the telling of the self-story. By engaging in phenomenology as a research method, there is active choice, as researcher, to explore a phenomenon that is personally important, and important enough to undertake doctoral research. Mauthner and Doucet (2003), in writing of their own experiences say that their doctoral research was a product of academic and personal biographies, influencing the choice of texts to be read, and ways of seeing, hearing and analysing.

<u>Reflexive practice</u>

Reflexivity is a strategy used to reinforce the rigour, honesty and transparency of qualitative research (Carter et al., 2014, Berger, 2015). It calls for self-introspection and awareness of visceral, emotional and intellectual responses to the experiences encountered in the research field, which needs to be conducted in addition to the management of my own assumptions on the phenomenon being explored. It frees the researcher to "handle and present the data better, and consider its complex meanings and contribution to the understanding of social phenomena" (Berger, 2015, p. 221).

As already noted, Husserl calls for complete bracketing of self and own-experience in the hearing and understanding of the experiences of others. Recognising the difficulty in achieving true objectivism, Jackson (2003), Ellett (2011) and Carter et al. (2014) have made use of an alternative technique, 'bridling'. This approach enables the researcher to put reins on the reactions and experiences, acknowledging, exploring and tethering along the way. Methods for doing this include the use of reflexive journals. Berger (2015) advocates the use of a '3-part-log' for the analysis of already collected interview transcripts, through which a researcher will record, and transcribe the interview, interpret meaning, and examine their own reaction to it. A few weeks later the same transcript is reflected upon again with a fresh lens, and fresh interpretation.

I documented my reactions to the interview immediately after it finished, after the completion of each interview transcription and upon coding each transcript as part of the analysis. An example is given below:

As Daniel started to draw he was very quiet, he didn't chatter, hum or sing as the other children have done, and this made me anxious that perhaps he was feeling uncomfortable, or anxious. I resisted the urge to interrupt his drawing, to check if he was ok. I hoped he would relax, if that's what he needed to do as we carried on. As he began to talk about the picture he was drawing I was surprised at how aware he was of the emotions and reactions of people around him, and at his own presence within relationships. He spoke carefully and with what appeared to be great consideration. Perhaps he was actually just trying to give me the right answer?

The pace of the interview was very different from some of the others, Emma had talked constantly, quickly, making herself the protagonist of each rapid tale. I wasn't trying to compare thee children, I wanted to hear them as individuals. Listening back to Daniel's stories, particularly alongside those of Emma, I wonder whether I would have had the same self-awareness and braveness as Daniel, if it was braveness that I was

hearing. BRAVE. He hadn't said it was brave, or that he was being brave, that was my word. He had said "it doesn't matter. I just ignore them really." Not only was it my word, it was my reaction. It was my reaction to events I recalled form my own childhood, where I had been different, often alone with myself, on the end of what had felt like spiteful words and behaviours.

Managing my voice

Phenomenology is about coming to understand something anew. The need to manage voices, and position myself within these discussions is critical to rigour, validity and trust. My own voice will be woven throughout the discussions within this thesis as I hear and respond to the words of the children, and come to understand anew my own agentic self-child and how I understood my own future.

Research design: methods of data analysis

All interviews were fully transcribed. Before making the transcriptions (myself) I needed to make decisions about how much I wanted to record in the transcription. Did I want to record every pause, contemplative noise, or just the words? Given that I wanted to understand the perception and experience of the phenomenon I opted to record all the detail, and include transcript notes, relating to the physical and emotional reactions experienced by both the child, and me, to each as an appendix.

Immediately after the initial transcription, I completed a literal reading of the text to ask who was talking, was I listening to a child repeat the words of a parent or other adult or my own words repeated back to me, or to the thoughts and experiences of the child themselves? I also considered my own reactions. These were annotated into the reflexive journal maintained along the way and used to capture snapshots of the interview events themselves. This enabled me to understand the voices in the transcript before beginning on reduction and synthesising in line with the phenomenological method.

Methods of analysis

As a new researcher in phenomenological method, I adopted a six-stage data analysis (Creswell, 2013), beginning with the first stage: reflecting upon my own experiences of developing my sense of self identity; my own FOI, and upon my experiences of learning.

The second stage, asked me to develop a list of significant statements of the 'what' and 'how' of the experience. This process, 'horizonalization' (Creswell, 2013, Moustakas, 1994), is the unlayering of experiences for each of the conversations. To do this I coded each transcript and portrait through two processes. Firstly, I aligned each reference to a fund subset (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) to see which funds were included, how they were represented and how the children positioned them in relation to themselves. The second process, drew on the voice-centred relational (VCR) method of analysis (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003, Byrne et al., 2009).

VCR was developed by Brown and Gilligan (1991) as a way of being able to explore the narratives of lived experiences whilst recognising the situation of the voices and experiences within the wider social structures and relationships of the context they were in (Fairtlough, 2007). As a method of analysis it gives power and presence to the voices of the children; Gilligan (1993, p. xvi) writes "to have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act". How easily the children found it to talk could give me insight into how common it was for them to express an opinion and be heard. The importance of being heard is reiterated by the children in the ethnographic works of Willis (1977) and Corrigan (1979).

The process of analysis itself was presented by Brown and Gilligan (1991) as a 'Listening Guide' and adapted for use by Mauthner and Doucet (1998, 2003). Their adaption guides the researcher through at least four readings of the transcripts. The first reading is also a reflexive exercise for the researcher. Questions to be answered included, who is talking, how am I reacting to the story being told, and how am I positioning myself in reaction to the story? It was also the first opportunity to identify themes, language and

tone. The second reading focussed on the child telling the story; how did they refer to themselves, see themselves socially and agentically? What was the sense of self that they were creating? Thirdly, how did they relate themselves to others, what were those relationships like, were they positive? What sorts of people were becoming a part of their FOI and sense of self? Finally, how did this perception of self and relational -self differ in different contexts and institutions? To ensure I was able to identify the different ways in which children might articulate their agency, I looked for examples of the 'six modalities of agency' or discursive tools presented by Hilppö et al. (2016). These modalities would include action-based phrases; (1) *to want* - to want to do something, (2) *to know* - to know the 'how to do' or 'about' of a particular something, (3) *to be able* - the physical ability or otherwise in relation to doing something, (4) *to have to* – a must, (5) *to feel, experience, appreciate* – the ability to be able to feel, appreciate, experience and (6) *to have the possibility* – the possibility or chance to do something in a particular situation.

Byrne et al. (2009) consider the use of VCR as a method of analysis in collaboration with research participants, and highlight its use in seeking meaningful data for social transformation. In using this method, the researcher is "compelled to confront own difference from and identification with the narrator as the story is told" (p. 68), supporting the management of voices, as well as "offering the possibility of participatory meaning-making that emphasised the voices and interests of research participants" (p. 70), as they emerge through the drawing and articulations of children's FOI. While Byrne et al. (2009) have trained their participants to code transcripts alongside the academic researchers, providing opportunity for triangulation of interpretation, I have adapted the method in its application. Rather than explicitly asking the children to join in the process of data analysis after the collection has been completed, the children have undertaken the drawing of a self-portrait and then interpreted it and replayed it to me through their narratives. In this way, their conversation is both data in its own right, and interpretation of their lifeworlds.

After coding each transcript and portrait, a table (Appendix 4) was produced to show VCR and modalities of agency across current and future worlds. Where these were found to be specific to only one of the worlds of the individual children these were colour-coded. Where it was common to both the statements were left without colour highlighting.

Having competed the individual coding, I was able to move to stage three of Creswell's method, the clustering of data to create units and themes. References to people, places, etc. were clustered and aligned to the FOI as presented by Esteban-Guitart (2012). These were colour-coded by child. I then combined these with the VCR analysis to understand both the social and personal relationships and structures the children presented themselves within, and how they presented and responded to those environments.

The completion of the fourth and fifth stages of Creswell's model is completed here through the discussion of the findings, in relation to the research questions, in subsequent chapters of this thesis. This allows for the completion of the final sixth stage, the synthesising of the two descriptions, producing the final passage, of the essence (eidos) of the experience being explored.

Finding 'eidos'

The goal of phenomenological inquiry is to find the eidos, or true essence of the experience of the 'thing' being researched, achieved through the process of phenomenological reduction and horizonalisation as indicated above, and the ability to "attend, recognise and describe with clarity" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 93). The conclusions for this thesis will present these as an understanding of learning and its place within the lives and identities of the children.

Ethical considerations and role of the researcher

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) identify two dimensions to research ethics, those which are procedural and those which can be understood as "ethics in practice" (p. 262). As a researcher I knew I had to gain procedural approval from the UEA Research Ethics Committee. As novice researcher with no experience of working with children I needed further support in understanding

ethics in practice. I turned to ethical frameworks of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (British Educational Research Association, 2011), UNICEF guidelines (Graham et al., 2013) as well as literature focussing on application to practice and the discussion of whether and when children could give informed consent (Canosa et al., 2018, Davies, 2008, Dockett and Perry, 2011, Kellett, 2005, Mayne et al., 2016, Parsons et al., 2016, Phelan and Kinsella, 2013, Richards et al., 2015).

Procedural ethics

I began by obtaining approval from the University's Ethics Committee. As part of this I wanted to demonstrate that I had understood the principles of BERA (British Educational Research Association, 2011, p. 4) that:

> "all educational research should be conducted within an *ethic* of respect for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research; and academic freedom. *Trust* is a further essential element within the relationship between researcher and researched, as is the expectation that researchers will accept responsibility for their actions".

To do this, I needed to provide copies of information packs and consent forms (Appendix 2, 3) which provided context, rationale and detail for the project; how it would be conducted and what I would do with the data gathered, including how I would store it. I also undertook a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check, and committed to submit this to any 'gatekeeper' who requested to see the original or retain a copy.

Each of the interviews was conducted at the University in a pre-booked room, using a digital voice recorder. Before beginning each interview, I offered the participant the opportunity to 'play' with the recorder, to be sure that they understood what the device was doing, and that they were happy for it to be used. If the child was not happy for it to be used, but was still happy to participate I would need to be able to make notes during the conversation, take time and care to carefully transcribe phrases where possible, but was aware that this would not enable me to gather the same

amount of detail or produce actual quotations through my thesis. While this was not the level of data I wanted to be able to gather, I was fully aware that each child needed to be able to make their own choice, freely.

After each interview the recording was loaded onto a personal laptop and deleted from the voice recorder. The files were saved to individual folders for each participant, using the undisclosed pseudonyms I had selected for each child. The laptop itself was password protected and in accordance with UEA data management policy, data will be held for a maximum of 10 years, and then destroyed securely.

Gaining access

Research with children is typically undertaken in school environments or in the child's home (Richards et al., 2015). I had deliberately chosen not to set my research within a school environment; I wanted to create some distance from school-based learning particularly, to reduce the influence of a space where social systems and structures reinforce and reproduce the institution of childhood. This decision meant that I did not work through schools to recruit children. I hoped, like Canosa et al. (2018), that this would disassociate me from the authority role typical of adult-child relationships in such environments, and that in working with community based organisations, such as the youth project that this would help to mitigate any feeling of obligation to participate.

I also chose not to visit children in their own homes. These are also spaces where there is an established relationship between adult and child, it is also a space that I would find it hard to manage. I wanted my conversations with the children to be confidential. I wanted my relationship with them to be trust-based, and independent of another adult. I was not sure that I would be able to achieve this in an environment I was unfamiliar with, and in which I would been viewed as an invited guest (Richards et al., 2015).

I gained access to the children who became participants in this project through two routes. Firstly, I visited a youth project twice, prior to recruitment activity, introduced myself, and attended a staff meeting. I presented my

work, answered questions and listened to concerns in relation to the number of children I may be able to recruit. In practice I was only able to recruit one child. I met with the child's parent as part of the recruitment activity, and they had access to my contact details and the Project Manager if they wished to discuss the work further.

My second route was via a work-based colleague. My colleague approached some of her daughter's friends and their parents. Information packs were shared, and all parents were able to contact me at any time before, during and after the project. I did meet with three of the parents, but none were present in the room when the interviews took place.

Anonymity and confidentiality

All data gathered and reproduced in this thesis has been presented in ways which protect the privacy of participants, their families and wider social networks, their community and any institutions referenced in their narratives and self-portraits, now and in the future.

The size of my research group was small, and for those included in the study they might, upon reading this text, be able to recognise each other from some of the details included. This might also be true for parents, teachers and other members of a social network. I have taken every possible step to protect the identity of the children and their parents, and friends throughout the thesis. I have changed the names of all individuals named. Where additional pieces of information might lead to the identification of an individual, these have also been changed, for example the naming of a location for extended family, a geographical location of importance and even types of pet.

To protect the identity of institutions named, I have either referred to these using a generic name – such as Beavers, Sea Scouts or Football Club, or changed the name of the institution. Schools referred to have had their names changed, and checked before use through a web search. It is this changed name which is presented in these pages. Schools are located in an

urban area, one which has been identified as being of low socio-economic status, by established criteria (Appendix 1).

Ethics in Practice: “ethically important moments”

In qualitative research, context matters. There is always an element of risk, but in designing my research activities, I worked to mitigate these as far as possible, with careful consideration of my interview venue.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) discuss the challenges in research practice of what they term “ethically important moments…the difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations which arise in the practice of doing research” (p. 262). They also emphasise that “the moment of response is an ethically important moment for there is the possibility that a wrong could be done” (p. 265). While through my choices of interview venue I had taken active steps to try and reduce the impact of particular authority relationships, I also removed the protection afforded by the school safeguarding policy; the established process through which I could report any disclosure, manage a need to breach confidentiality, and ensure the protection of the child. While working in the youth project, I had access to a network of professional staff qualified to manage such moments as these. The project has its own safeguarding priorities and works in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. In shifting recruitment from a community organisation to an informal friendship network, I did not have a policy to draw on, I had created an ethical risk.

I looked to my own place of work for a solution. The University has a safeguarding policy (University of Suffolk, 2019), the scope of which covers any staff who may be working with a number of vulnerable groups, including children and young people aged under 18 years. These are activities which fall within the University’s normal business as part of teaching, research and outreach activities. The policy provided access to Designated Safeguarding Officers who would seek the advice of the Local Authority Designated Officer, if needed. Additionally, for my own support, I had access to a number of colleagues with considerable professional practice as children’s nurses, social workers, counsellors and early years practitioners.

Gaining assent, consent or dissent?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), places the rights of a child to be heard at the heart of childhood research. Following its publication, and its ratification into law, there has been an "ontological repositioning of the child" (Cocks, 2006) resulting in a "discursive shift within childhood studies from viewing children as objects of research towards a view which stresses their competency and agency, often as co-participants in the research process" (Heath et al., 2007). There is, however, ongoing debate in literature about the competence of the child's voice; its capacity to provide informed consent, and whether young children can only ever provide informed assent.

Obtaining consent, is the "cornerstone of the research relationship" (British Educational Research Association, 2011, p. 56) The three key principles of informed consent are that the participant has adequate knowledge of what it is they are being asked to do, that consent has been given voluntarily – both at the start of the work, but also, crucially, is revisited throughout the course of the research, that it is given freely, without coercion, and that the participant giving consent has the competence to be able to do so (Cocks, 2006, Richards et al., 2015).

The question of competency is where the debate lies. Legally, young children may not be able to provide consent (Dockett and Perry, 2011), yet the guidance provided by the Economic and Social Research Council (Economic and Social Research Council, 2019) urges researchers not to consider capacity solely as a question of age, but to "consider the children's competencies and vulnerabilities based on the purpose and context of the research". Richards et al. (2015, p. 31) warn that

> "the positioning of children as vulnerable subjects, incapable of providing full consent to take full ownership of their voices or to comment on particular areas of social life or their own experiences, reinforces the labels of 'adult' and 'child' within wider society"

This, they conclude denies children the “ability to represent themselves as they would want to be seen” (p. 31), and is a standpoint echoed elsewhere in the literature (Mayne et al., 2016).

The children’s representation of self lies at the heart of my research, and it was important to me that I asked both parents / carers and children if they wished to take part in this study. While Parsons et al. (2016) acknowledge the limited guidance on supporting children to effectively consent, I wanted to be sure that I had done as much as I could. The principles of informed consent state that the participant must have adequate information on the aims of the research, how data will be used and protected, how the findings will be shared (Kellett, 2005). Information provided must be understandable (Cocks, 2006). I ensured that each child had an information pack that looked the same as that provided to the parents, contained the same information using simplified language, and included a visual example of what the research was asking them to do (Appendix 3). They were each asked to sign a consent form, in the same way that their parents were, indicating a willingness to participate.

Acknowledging the need for ongoing consent, and to be sure that the children truly understood the exercise, this form could not be relied on alone. As part of the activity I needed to invest time in satisfying myself that they did understand the project, and build a relationship of trust (Mayne et al., 2016). I considered how I would present myself to the children, my language and clothing would also impact on how closely I was associated with adult authority-figure, and the distribution of power in our relationship (Phelan and Kinsella, 2013). On interview days I dressed casually. Before each interview I spoke with each individual child, I asked if they could tell me what we were going to do and if they were happy to do so. I reminded them that at any time they could tell me that they wanted to stop.

Despite my best effort to mitigate imbalances of power, and to reassure myself that the children participated voluntarily, I acknowledge that it is impossible to separate myself from the children’s understanding and experiences of the power and authority child-adult world (Davies, 2008). My

reading of Phelan and Kinsella (2013) urged me to be alert of changes in body language, non-verbal signs of duress or discomfort. There were occasions during the interviews when I was concerned that a child felt uncomfortable, or anxious about an ability to undertake the task set. At these moments I checked in the children, spoke to them about their drawing, prompted conversation about something they particularly enjoyed. I also asked if they would like to stop.

In relation to the immediate activity, I am confident that the children gave their informed consent. It is harder to reach the same level of confidence when considering the ongoing life span of the work – it's presence in a public space. One of the key findings of this work is that children are unable to articulate a sense of future self which is disconnected from the current. Should I reasonably expect them to fully understand that their narratives, opinions and reflections would last beyond our current conversations? How might they feel reading their presentations of relationships or experiences as older selves? How might they feel about others reading their words?

This is my dilemma in relation to whether participation in my social research project was underpinned by consent or assent. Positioning children as capable of *assent* rather than *consent* feels contrary to my conceptualisation of children as capable, agentic, experts in their lives. My findings have positioned agency as contextual, rather than universal, and so I suggest that informed consent for the current is positioned with informed assent for the future. Assent requires the same principles to be followed as for consent (Mayne et al., 2016), but while I could revisit the participation during the course of the research activities, I cannot do this once the findings are published. As Richards et al. (2015, p. 154) write, "research is messy, it is fractured and it is imperfect". In my endeavours to protect my participants from harm now and in the future, I have designed my approach, and developed my reflexivity as researcher to respect their autonomy, dignity, privacy and agency. I have enabled them to take ownership of their voices, and taken steps to protect them long after the research is complete.

Withdrawal from the study

My information packs clearly stated that the children could withdraw from the study at any time. In reality there was a time after which it would be harder to remove their data from the study, as analysis of it would inform my thesis findings. I explained to both parents and children that if withdrawal was prior to data analysis I would remove all data. If it took place post analysis, I would need to retain commentary on the impact of their data on my findings but would have removed the detail which supported my claims.

A silent voice for the school

As previously noted this study was deliberately set outside of school, and I did not work through schools to gain access to the children. I also did not approach the schools to gain their consent for the research to take place. This has meant that the schools attended, and referenced have no recourse for reply, and cannot triangulate the children's accounts.

I have considered this through an ethical lens, and concluded that it would be naïve to expect any child to be entirely positive about school experiences; to censure their voices would be contrary to my own commitment to include their voices without judgement.

Nespor and Groenke (2009) alert researchers to the nature of the ripple effect; the impact of participation on the self, the participant, and those around them. Steps taken to protect the privacy of the schools by locating them in an urban environment of low socio-economic status, and changing names of school, teacher and child, will I believe given any school the opportunity to reflect on their own practices and the potential impacts and experiences of their students. Conducted well, this project had the capacity to be an enriching experience for all involved, offering new insights and the potential for new opportunities and focus.

Conclusions

This chapter set out to outline the way in which an appropriate methodology was developed to facilitate the hearing of children's experiences of being them, through life world experience and understanding their FOI.

The chapter began by establishing the concepts of childhood and agency, as they underpin the project, before presenting my own epistemological and ontological views. After a discussion on the need for both a critical and reflective lens on the social world we inhabit, phenomenology was introduced as both a philosophy and methodology.

In using bridling, rather than Husserl's bracketing, I have acknowledged the difficulty in ever truly being the invisible or neutral researcher, while staying true to the ideal of seeking the essence of the phenomena being explored. In gathering multiple voices, and using a multi-layered approach to analysing them reflexively and methodically, I have created a method of transcendental or phenomenological reduction leading the way clear to the construction of thick description, textural and structural accounts and the revealing of the eidos of learning for these children. In finding a new way of understanding learning for children growing up in an area such as they are, with the life worlds that they experience it is hoped that it will be possible to achieve a greater understanding of how these children can be encouraged to engage with learning and so achieve the future selves they have identified as wanting to be.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

Having gathered research data, as discussed in the previous chapter, I analysed the information that the children have given me through their self-portraits, significant circles and surrounding conversations.

Organisation of the chapter

The chapter begins with seven participant vignettes. I present the children's self-portraits and brief biographical information taken from our conversations by way of introduction. I have included some short selected extracts, which are used here to illustrate my findings on how children are understanding and positioning themselves and their funds within their lives. These snapshots are intended to help the reader feel the essence of their stories.

The second part of the chapter presents the data coding process. This was done in two stages, firstly using the FOI framework, and secondly using VCR analysis. These two stages, when combined provided an analytical framework through which I could understand the positioning of each of the FOI as identified within the world of each child, and how for the children, individually and collectively, these funds come together as rich 'knowledge deposits.'

Meeting the children: participant narratives and portraits

Max

Max settled in to the conversation quickly and easily. He was confident in his voice, happy to draw and discuss his now and future worlds. Throughout he talked about his ability in, and his enjoyment of, the things he presented. This includes his ability to support others and help them learn.

Max lives with both his parents and his younger brother. His life is full of activities both inside and outside of school, undertaken with both friends and family members. He has listed some of these activities in his self-portrait but tells me of other activities such as camping and hiking with his family locally and in the Lake and Peak District, as well as playing the guitar, sometimes performing with a band.

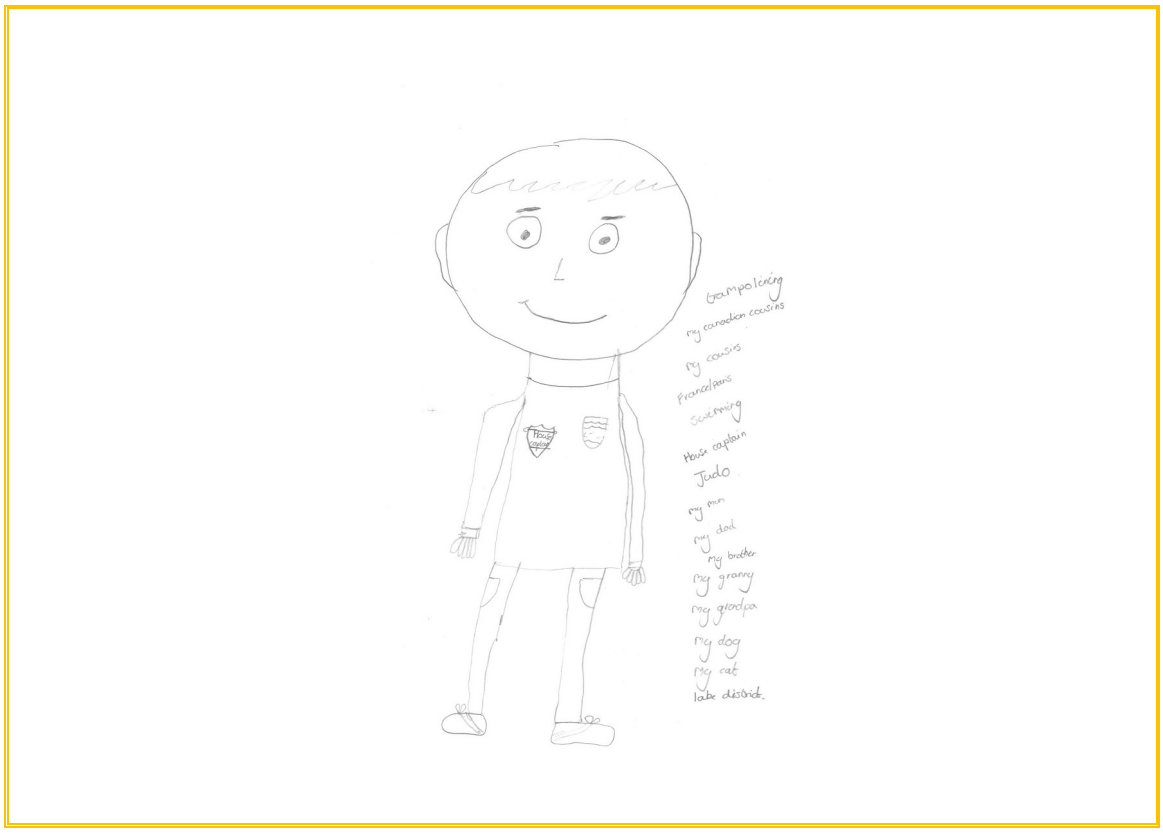


Figure 4: Max's self-portrait (current)

Max spends a lot of time with his Mum, and commented that he thinks his Dad might be going to change his job or go part time, “which is good…I will get to spend more time with him”. Family is clearly important to him as he tells me stories of his Grandparents, cousins, Godmother, Uncle and pets. He also has a strong wider circle of friends, some of whom will go to the

same new school as him, some of whom do the same activities as him and some of whom he holidays with.

His family supports his interest of designing and making models in his "tinking shed", with notebooks provided by his grandmother, and lessons from his Mum and Uncle. He also finds out about historical events from his Grandparents, how they experienced wars.

Lucy

Lucy is the only child I have met before the conversations take place, and I reminded myself that I could only listen to her words now, and not make connections with or to anything else I know about her from conversations held either with her or her Mum.

Lucy lives with her Mum and several family pets. She is adopted, and has recently received a new pet as a present. As soon as Lucy starts to draw her picture she asks me to start speaking to her so that it isn't too quiet. Lucy's drawing both start with her putting herself inside a box. This she told me is because that way things can be tidy, so she knows where they are.

Figure 5: Lucy's self-portraits (current - future)

Lucy's conversation is peppered with references to family, close and extended; her Mum and sister, Grandad, cousin, Godmother. Her pets are also given human qualities as she talks about his likes, dislikes, her fears for him, and shared characteristics. Her family and having a sense of belonging, as well as ownership (and control) are clearly important to her.

Lucy's interests have a common theme; they are all reality based. Reality and authenticity are central to her 'current world' and her 'future world'. This extends to what she enjoys learning about. Favourites include, nature and David Attenborough documentaries, Jacqueline Wilson books because she "writes about real things", Michael Morpurgo books because "it just teaches me stuff about what happened then". Her Mum is another source of learning, explaining current events and issues, such as the concert bombing in Manchester, and Donald Trump. She also watches a lot of news on her phone.

Lucy and I spoke more about emotions; how they impact her, how they can be managed and what she can do about them. She told me that it comes down to experience. Experiencing death and sadness will help you deal with it next time, experience is how you learn. Reality, and authenticity should govern what you learn about.

<u>Emma</u>

Emma presents as a very precise young lady, with a bottomless pot of energy. She started to talk as soon as we said goodbye to her Mum, and kept going until we said goodbye at the end of our conversations. Her conversation flitted quickly from one thought to another. Her drawings were the same.

Emma lives with her brother, her Mum and her Dad. Through both conversations Emma seemed to be one step ahead as she answered quickly and without thinking, often pausing half way through a sentence just to make sure her answers fitted the question.

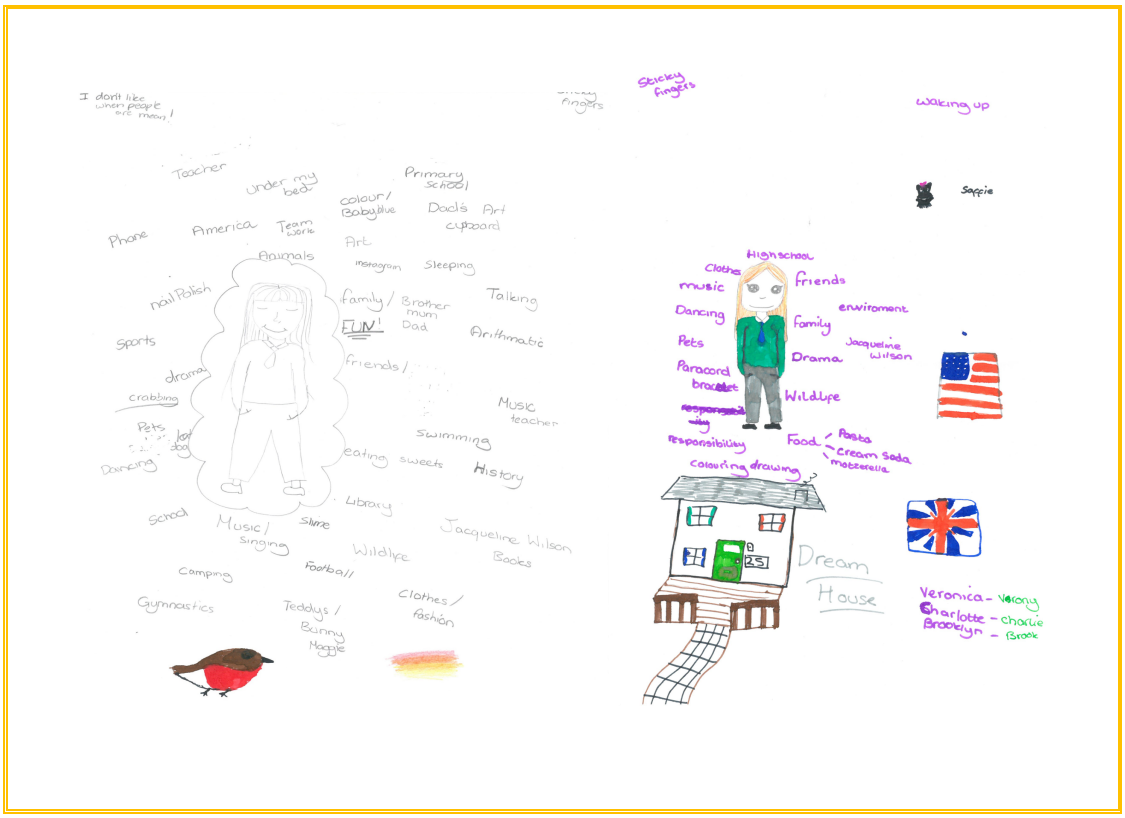


Figure 6: Emma's self-portraits (current - future)

Emma's conversation with me was full of recounted "funny stories" or "fun facts" about herself; "Oh…I've got a fun fact for you, did you know, when I was younger I hated milk!"; "Oh! I'll tell you a story, it was hilarious on holiday, it should have been recorded to go on You've Been Framed". Emma is the heroine in her story, and centre stage in her life, performance and recognition underpin both her 'current world' and her 'future world', she longs of medals and trophies as public symbols of her ability.

As she told her stories to me, so elements of her life occurred to her and she added them to her drawing. The majority of what she added are things she "loves"; swimming, doing her nails, art, talking, football; and even school, particularly music where she gets to perform in Eurovision-style competitions.

While many activities in her life are listed because they are fun, there is an undercurrent of need to prove her ability to others. Whatever Emma does, she wants to be seen and understand for how well she can do it. Proficiency is key.

James

James lives with his parents and his sister. He is very considered in his responses, taking more time to answer. He spent a lot of time in our conversation apologising for his drawing, rubbing out and redrawing, worrying about how long it is taking him, “I feel like I am taking too long on the head.” Both of James’ drawings only show his head.

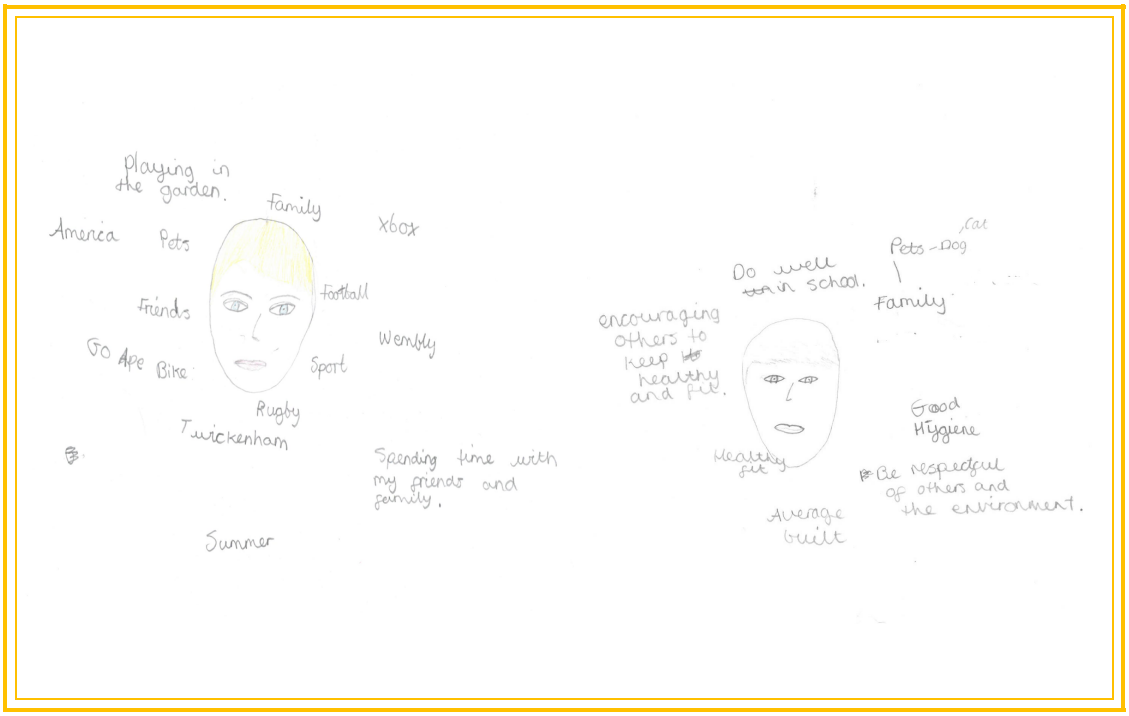


Figure 7: James' self-portraits (current - future)

There was a shift in how James approached the drawing of his future world, it was less about specifics and more about how he wants to be as a person; while he doesn’t yet know what he wants to do, he knows it will be something that “helps people in some kind of way, even if it’s not physically like a doctor”.

Being outside and ‘doing’ is important to James now and in his future world. He enjoys playing football and rugby with his friends and his Dad, riding his bike and running through the prickly bushes on the heath, rather than sticking to the predefined pathways. When I asked why he runs through rather than round he replied “adventure, just finding different things out”. Football and rugby teach him about tactics and problem solving which he can take off the field and “use for working out different sums in maths”.

Daniel

Daniel lives with his Dad, Mum and younger brother. His wider family is important to him. When Daniel first came in and started to draw he was quiet and focussed on his drawing. He made no humming or singing noises, and, unlike the other participants, he didn't judge or comment on his self-perceived ability to draw. He was one of the only children to use colour in his picture for the 'current world'. I did not have the opportunity to meet with Daniel for a second conversation.

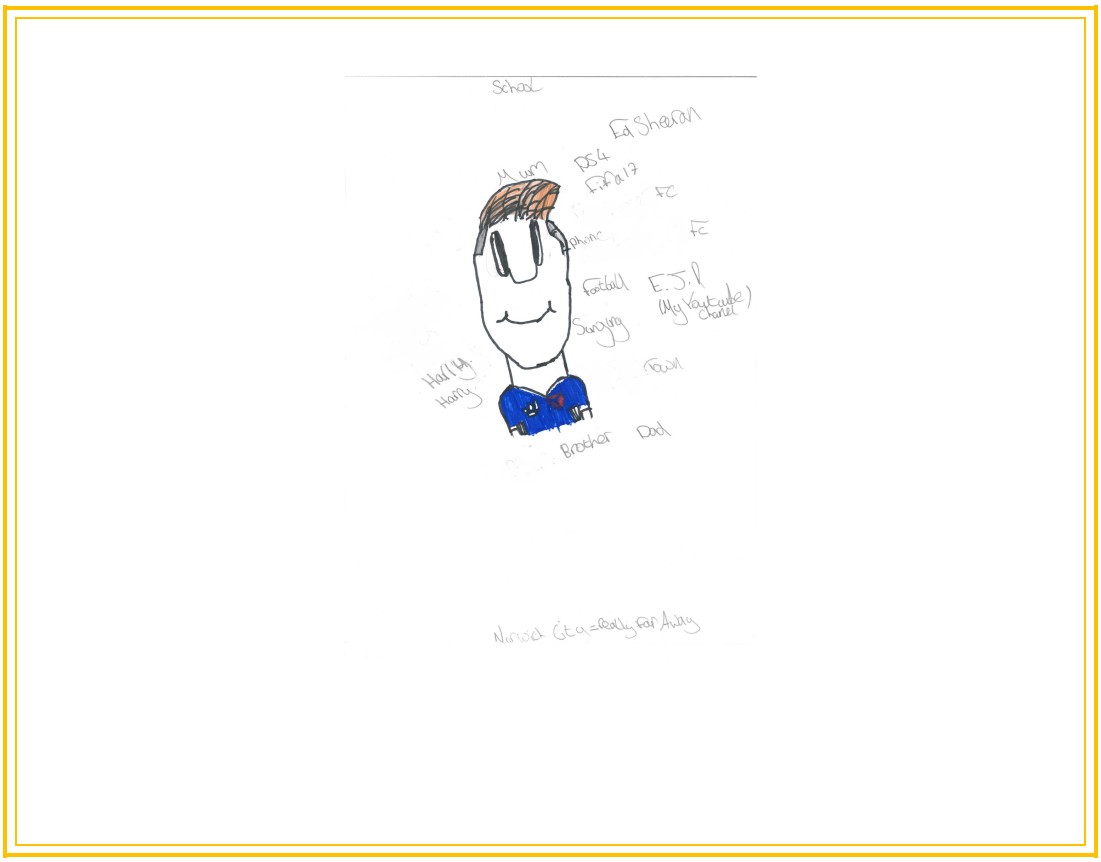


Figure 8: Daniel's self-portrait (current)

There are two key areas of interest for Daniel; football and technology. Supporting football teams, playing the game himself and playing it on his PS4 gaming platform are different ways in which he engages with the sport. However, Daniel also likes to share what he has found out about the games and to do so has set up his own YouTube channel, honing his skills as a presenter, and developing his own unique style of introduction and presentation.

Daniel doesn't just understand football as a game. He also told me stories of the impact of football on the world, and how he has learned from those lessons, as well as other more direct lessons he gets from playing. He has learned to be streetwise, how to manage challenges and bad behaviours, how to turn the other cheek.

Alice

Alice lives with her Mum and Dad, and her pets. She is an only child, which she told me she likes, as this means she gets the biggest room (for her drawing). When I met her in the Reception area she was with the other children, but was more reserved than the other girls in the group. We sat down to do the task and she took long, sweeping strokes with her pencil. Her picture was very considered and contained.

Figure 9: Alice's self-portraits (current - future)

Talking through her self-portrait and significant circles it became evident the 'real' world is important to Alice. The books she reads gives her insights into a real world that she has not directly experienced; she is currently reading about a foundling.

When drawing, Alice likes to draw the real world too, being particularly interested in drawing or recreating nature. She told me she likes drawing nature and people best, taking photographs of them on her phone and then either copying them, focussing on certain aspects or details or using them to recreate nature for herself. She has recently returned from a trip to Europe and is now recreating some of the tall houses from clay.

Alice is influenced in her drawing and engagement with art more generally by her parents, who both work in a creative environment, and have their own studio, as well as her Grandmother, who has given her lots of art books and attended art college herself.

In her second drawing, Alice redrew herself, and after a pause told me she is considering what clothes she should draw; “what an illustrator might wear”. Alice is the only child in the group to approach her drawing in this way. While others drew clothes or accessories they like, taking an approach based entirely on personal appearance, Alice set herself within the context of her envisaged future career, sat at her illustrator’s desk. I asked her what kinds of books she thought she might like to illustrate; “not fairy tales, but probably like the Tempest or something cos then I could draw the waves”. The type of scenes and surrounding scenery she will recreate will inform the kinds of projects she undertakes, she told me, rather than the subject or type of story itself.

<u>Jess</u>

Jess is the last of the children in the group. She told me that she lives with her sister and her Nanny. Jess told me repeatedly that she really “can’t draw”, and sighed at her picture as it came together. Throughout both of our conversations Jess’ punctuated her conversation with short, breathy pops of laughter, and she seemed to check with me that she could say the answers that she was about to give me.

Figure 10: Jess' self-portraits (current - future)

Jess' mobile phone is at the centre of her 'current world', when I asked her how she spent her time, her immediate response was "on my phone", using it to create and maintain physical and virtual social networks through a variety of apps and platforms including Instagram snapchat, twitter and music.ly[2], an app which enables you to make and share videos.

Making videos of her miming or singing along to songs and sharing them makes Jess happy, but they also seem to be a way of measuring popularity, rather than a way of practising or creating something she simply likes.

Regardless of where Jess is, or who she is with, she is using her phone, and in doing so is bringing her real and virtual friends together, because nearly all the kids in her class have phones. She uses it to arrange get-togethers and then they all sit on their phone and compare posts, photos and talk to other

[2] Now called TikTok

friends who aren't with them, "I'll text them and say do you want to meet in the library? We'll meet outside the library….and [then] I go on my phone and just talk to people I haven't seen in ages."

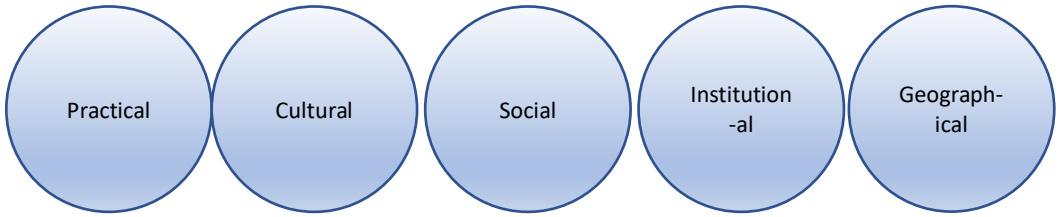
I asked Jess what else she enjoys, and once again it was reality-based, reality TV shows, real-life crime stories and police investigations and even a book she is enjoying, about the Nazis. Watching "random documentaries with her old family" she told me is how she does her out-of-school learning. I asked what she has found out, and she recounts how to be able to access a mobile phone which has a number lock on it in the event of an emergency. As she recounted the tale, the pops of laughter disappeared, and she took control, drawing and explaining in detail.

Data coding and findings

The coding of transcripts and portraits was completed as presented graphically below. This two-stage process was applied separately to current and futures portraits and narratives.

Coding stage 1:

Identify *Funds of Identity*



Coding stage 2: voice-centred relational research analysis

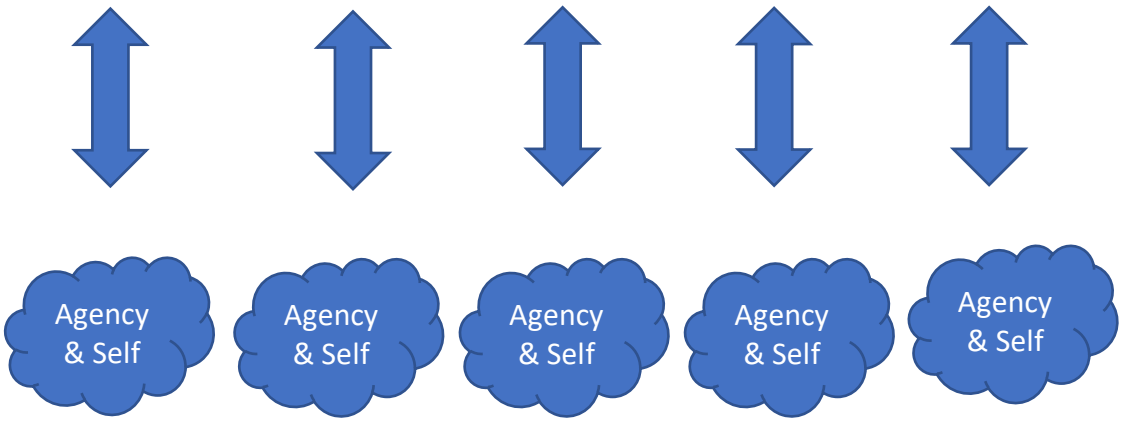


Figure 11: Graphical representation of the two stage coding process

Having collated the transcriptions narratives and portraits for each child, the first coding stage required a reading of each transcript and portrait to identify funds or elements in each life, which I then tried to fit within the predefined five-type FOI framework.

The second coding stage was to look at how the children described, viewed, perceived themselves in relation to and within each of the elements; how they described their capacity to act in relation to or within each of the elements, as represented through the 'clouds' above. Using VCR method (Byrne et al., 2009, Mauthner and Doucet, 2003), I listened to the language used by each unique voice, and for the modalities of agency (Hilppö et al., 2016). Whose words was I hearing (Maybin, 2007)? Was the language positive or negative? Did this change in different environments or with different people? Was the enactment of agency constructive, in line with expected behaviours, or a 'breach' of those expected behaviours, mindful of the types of behaviours and choices made in ethnographic studies of Willis (1977) and Wexler (2005). I also wanted to test whether the responses would support my own appreciation of Giddens' Structuration Theory and Dialectic of Control, succinctly presented by Parker (2000, p. 60) "that all agents, whatever their position in distributive hierarchies, have irreducible powers of agency…that even the most severely subordinated interpret their situation and can influence how it impinges on them."

Phase 1: Identifying the presence of funds

I used my expanded definitions (Chapter 2) of the funds identified by Esteban-Guitart (2012) as I coded each transcript; and added words, items, places under each of the fund 'types' colour coded by participant. In the course of this activity, it quickly became clear that my theory that an activity might need to be categorised under multiple fund types was correct. For example, walking in the Lake District with family was categorised as geographical, social and practical. This initial coding stage was conducted for each of the portraits and transcripts relating to the children's 'now' and 'future' worlds. It enabled me to see quickly and visually which funds appeared to be most easily identifiable in the identities of the children as individuals, but also over the group of children collectively.

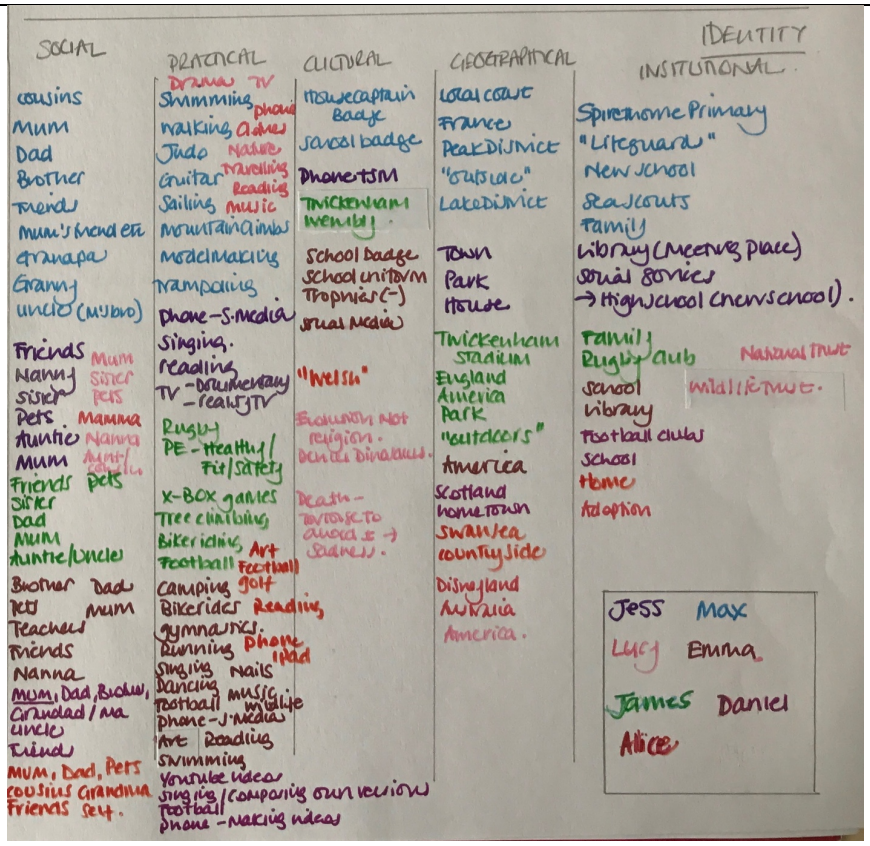


Figure 12: Phase 1 identification of funds (current world)

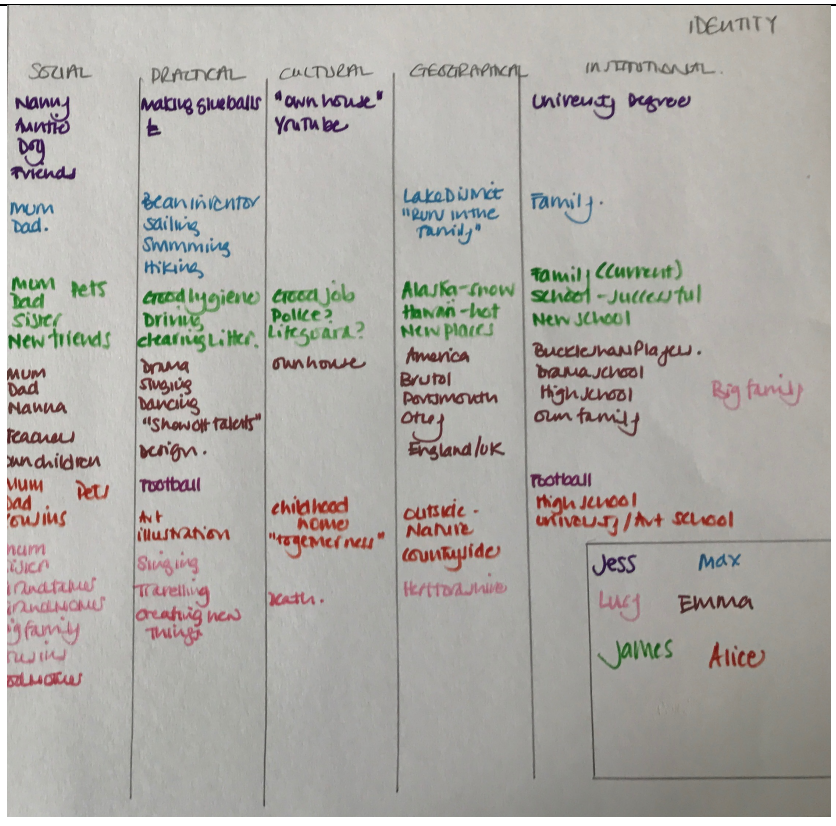


Figure 13: Phase 1 identification of funds (future world)

It was immediately apparent that the current-world narratives of all children contained many more identifiable funds than the future worlds. There was

also a significant amount of repetition across these two worlds. I wondered what this was telling me about the way in which the children thought about their futures. Did they believe that what they had now would always be with them? Were those funds reappearing in the future those which were most impactful or just those more immediately called to mind? Were the children able to envisage a full life world in the future? How far away was that future? My own time-defined sense of future, may in fact, be very different from theirs.

The following exploration of the FOI presented by the children draws on the narratives from both the current and future worlds.

Funds, the relationship between them and their impact

Through the analysis I considered the relationship between the funds and their impact on the lifeworlds of the children. I began by looking at the social and practical funds.

Social

The social funds included family, with a stronger than anticipated presence of grandparents and cousins (Max, Jess, Daniel, Alice), and friends and the importance of popularity (Lucy, Emma, Jess, James, Daniel). Through all of the narratives, references to siblings were noticeably absent. Max mentioned his brother as an afterthought, Emma and James referenced their siblings in relation to potentially meeting them at school, and what this would mean for friendship groups. This was interesting and resonated with Alice's view that being a single child meant she did not have to "share time" [or space] with a sibling.

The people these children identify as important can also be unrelated and personally unknown to them, but are still impactful as role models for their own behaviours. Daniel talks of his own practices as he runs on to the football pitch, and how he has learned them from professional footballers he admires.

Pets were just as important as other family members in the worlds the children presented. Lucy identified strongly with her pets, wondering about their behaviours, and humanising them in the language she used when talking about them, “I like Monty. And then me and Monty have a love hate relationship, so do me and Lionel, but I never ever doubted Simon, even when he’s bitten me”. It occurs to me, that perhaps the value and strength of this particular type of relationship is because of the opportunity it affords each child to step back from juggling masks, behaviours and ultimately identities (Forrester, 2002).

Practical

The practical funds included a range of hobbies and activities in which these children are involved; football, singing, art, reading and use of a mobile phone and other technologies. I found it interesting that for many of the activities both boys and girls expressed pleasure in undertaking them; the activities did not appear to be gender-defined in their participation. Singing and performance were popular group-based and individual activities, with songs being recorded and sent to sick grandparents (Daniel), recorded and uploaded to social media (Jess) and performed as part of mock Eurovision Song Contests (Emma, Lucy, Daniel). External activities and pursuits; camping, hiking, wildlife, sport and BMX riding were equally popular with both boys and girls (Alice, Emma, Max, James, Lucy, Daniel) and ways of testing and developing skills and competence, and responsibility.

Social media and technology were ways of interacting with their interests and demonstrating competence for some of the children. Daniel uses YouTube to post his own self-made video providing reviews of computer games, while Jess records and uploads clips of herself singing through a range of social media channels, and sees the ‘likes’ as a measure of success and popularity. Indeed, as I talk to Jess it becomes evident that her phone is a member of her social circle in its own right. She uses it to chat with friends, while she is with friends, and this initially surprises me; chatting on phones seems to me to be an isolating activity. Esteban-Guitart (2016, p. 15) tells us that “in our pockets, we take our family, friends and connections and we can connect and disconnect with them just as we can with our work: anywhere, anytime”.

It is natural to Jess to cross physical and virtual social networks to maintain her friendships, and to test people's reactions to her.

These examples indicate a clear relationship between these two prolific fund types. Practical activities for these children are not just passing interests and hobbies but ways of interacting socially, and establishing who they are within social communities; ranking popularity. The children also use them to demonstrate ability, and develop that ability, akin to the development and progression of individuals within Wenger's learning communities (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Geographical

Geographical funds, while not featuring highly in conversation did vary considerably. For Alice, Daniel and Max there were strong familial associations with place. Both Alice and Daniel have parents from places outside of the local area, and for Daniel, particularly, the home country of his mother featured in his portrait, narrative and associations. For some children, this subcategory was filled with places they had visited and enjoyed, places with which they associated particular activities, but not places that had family connection or traditions associated with them. Massey (1994) discusses the constructs of place and space. An established understanding of place as bounded, fixed in space and time is countered by an understanding of place which stretches beyond its locality. She writes "the particular mix of social relations which are thus part of what defines the uniqueness of any place is by no means all included within that space itself." (Massey, 1994, p. 5). Places no longer have to be experienced by being in them, the children can come to know them through television and media (including their mobile phones), this is how Lucy experiences and forms opinions about the lives of those in Africa.

At the same time, artefacts of a place, can be found outside of their geographical place. Alice rebuilds places she has visited in her craft studio, recreating and reshaping through her own lens. Daniel's mother is an artefact of where she was born and grew up. His understanding and attachment to this place is not because it exists as a place in its own right, or because of

his experience of it, but because of what it represents in his mother and her personality as fun and talkative. In this way we can see the individuality of what are shared places, how spaces which are shared and known globally may be understood, experienced and recreated uniquely.

Institutional

The children identified a range of social institutions as collective groups; sea scouts, sports clubs, school (current and future high schools), being adopted and social services. The social institutions represented were not always explicitly referenced by the children, but were embedded into their identity and experience of their lifeworlds. The experiences and relationships which took place within them were particularly impactful as positive or negative, as was evidenced in discussions around school.

School was met with both positive and negative reaction. Max, acknowledges the practices which going to school has helped him to develop and establish. Daniel recognises that it helps him to be a better person. Emma, equally, loves school, because of her teacher who she names as important. At the other end of the reaction scale we find Jess, bored by school and the lessons which are deemed to be useless, and other children who articulate an apathy towards the importance of what is being taught in class. As will be considered in later discussions, it appears that the relationships developed, the creativity possible in the lesson, and the explicit rationale for the learning could be informing the response to this institution.

Cultural

Max and Daniel, both have strong allegiances to sports clubs and school houses. The brand or identity, the cultural symbol representing the social institution, appeared frequently. Indeed, Max drew himself in his school uniform and began by talking to me about his school badge, and role as House Captain; Daniel drew himself in his strip of the football club he supports. As young people, clubs and societies may be the points of initiation into socio-cultural settings outside of the home, and spaces where they begin to understand who they are or can be in different social groups.

In our conversations, thoughts about future-self turned more to defining sets of desirable attitudes and behaviours, being generous, kind, thoughtful, a better person, loving, supportive. I have aligned these with the cultural funds (Chapter 2), developed through relationships and activities at home or in other community groups, and through curriculum-based learning at school. Identified here as funds of identity, these behaviours and attributes have been learned. As they are learned, they form part of the children's funds of knowledge, as they are embodied they become a part of the children's identity.

Funds of the now and the future

In their depiction of a future world, each child was clearly influenced by their current situation, and while it appeared to me that their envisaged older selves (barely beyond the early twenties) didn't seem especially older, for the children these ten years ahead were difficult to comprehend.

The research methodology had been designed to help me understand the children's view of the current and future worlds, the presence, or indeed absence of funds in the future-gazing narratives would, I thought, provide the vehicle. However, the data indicates that for these children any identified future world is explicitly linked to their current, shaped and influenced by direct reaction to the funds identified. Social and practical funds continue to be those which are most easily identified; they are factual, distinct, while cultural and institutional funds appear to be more deeply embedded and invisible. As we will see through the next phase of analysis, social relationships are the constant connection between their worlds.

Phase 2: Voice-centred relational analysis

The stages of VCR analysis require me as researcher to ask 'who is talking, how am I reacting?', 'how does the child refer to themselves, and position themselves agentically?' 'how does the child position themselves socially, how does this differ in different contexts?'(Byrne et al., 2009). The ability to identify voice, and bridle my own voice and responses, is key not just to VCR but is also central to the process of phenomenological reduction, protecting against bias and imposed meaning, in the ultimate pursuit of the essence of

learning. I report my questions and thoughts through the analysis that follows.

Agency and the relational positioning of each child were underpinning concepts to this study (Giddens, 1984, James and Prout, 1997, Moran-Ellis, 2010). I looked for the language of agency (Hilppö et al., 2016) while coding the transcripts in phase 2 of data analysis. My assumed position was that children have the same potential to enact agency as any adult, that their voice can be heard just as loudly, and that they too have different masks and voices in different social relationship and environments. Would the data support my view?

The FOI analysis explicitly demonstrated the explicit presence of the social funds within the current and future worlds of each of the children, leading them to draw on a range of relationships to inform who they are and what they do. In conversations with each child I heard stories relating to the family unit, to friendships and to the presence of 'external others.' How these manifested differed between the children and seemed to be both born out of the relationships and reaffirming the nature of the relationships.

Having coded using the model presented by Byrne, Canavan et al (2009), I drew the data into a table presenting VCR and modalities of agency across current and future worlds (Appendix 4). This was completed across both current and future worlds, and colour attributed where the coding related specifically to current or future worlds being discussed. Where no colour is attributed it is a theme, location or state which weaves through both worlds.

The use of colour to highlight specific different world-views indicates that the children's future worlds are strikingly similar to their current worlds. The themes identified in current worlds, be that loss, separation and a need to belong, drawing on social funds, or technology, activity, creativity or a value of experience, drawing on practical funds, reappear in the telling of in their future worlds. This, as previously noted, was also true of the FOI analysis. Once again, I questioned whether future worlds really do evolve from and build on the current, or whether future worlds are too far away to

comprehend. I wondered what this might mean for our adult understanding and judgement of a child's aspirations, academic or otherwise, and the assumption that children have a well-founded ability to visualise the future.

What is different is the social positioning and capacity for agency they envisage for themselves when they are older. As Jess and Emma both immediately flag, being older will mean more responsibility, more authority, independence. Emma, suggests this means "taking care of stuff, your appearance, other people". Jess understands this as "living by myself" with no one to keep "going Noooooo". Emma's interpretations can be seen to relate to her evident focus on self, Jess' from her need to challenge. In noting this difference, I do not suggest that these children feel disempowered in their current worlds. For some of these children their ability to make choice and influence is understood as positive, in that it supports the social structure in which the activity is set. Max is clearly empowered through his role as House Captain, in which he is able to help people. For others, the choice could be understood as being negative, it is made in direct challenge of the status quo and normative behaviours in particular environments. Jess consciously challenges age-related limitations, pretending to be older than she is to be able to do what she wants to do. James, Daniel and Lucy see their future agency as a responsibility of what we might call good citizenship; Daniel calls it "being a better person". Each of these children see being older as an opportunity to make a difference.

Efficacy and interrelationship of the stages of coding

Coding and mapping the conversations and self-portraits to the FOI framework does allow the resources each of these children draw upon to be neatly subcategorised into the five fund types. Throughout conversations, however, children all present sense of self built upon what I have categorised as culturally acquired values or attributes. These fall outside of the original definitions provided by Esteban-Guitart (2012), but represent the highly individualised appropriation of socially developed, acceptable ways of being. They are associated with good citizenship, and are particularly explicit in conversations about future self.

The analytical framework for this project combines FOI and VCR as lenses through which identity is created, and, as a combined framework, I believe they provide opportunity to see the resources these children draw upon and the impact they have on the children as individuals interacting within socio-cultural spaces. If I had used one of the frameworks at the exclusion of the other a whole-person view would not have been possible.

The funds, and the reactions children receive in them, influences the child's sense of self, ability, and perceived capacity to enact agency. There is a recycling of this, as response informs reaction, and reaction informs response. The children use the funds to negotiate the reactions and understand them for themselves; Lucy turns to books to understand emotions and complex relationships that she is experiencing as a "peculiar" "adopted" child, while Jess creates her own range of imagined personas through which she enacts make-believe stories.

As noted in Chapter 2, capacity to enact agency should be understood as a potential which is tested in situ, measured through the response of others participating in the social interaction. The data seems to indicate that, in the same way as an appropriation of place can be achieved without direct experience of that place, so children can test agency and identity as a response to events and experiences experienced through media, literature and technology. The responses of the children "formulated discursively" (Giddens, 1984, p. 281) are recognisable through phrases of "have to", "want to" and "feel" (Hilppö et al., 2016), but they are also to be found in the skilful application of practical consciousness, tacit knowledge, as agency through membership, transformational change and resistance (Rainio, 2008). We see this in the children's life worlds and activities, including membership of social groups and sports teams; a desire to encourage others to be themselves rather than trying to be cool, and an impulse to disrupt classroom activity.

Finding funds of knowledge

The social and practical FOI are most explicit in the children's conversations. From the analysis, it has been possible to see that there are other funds, cultural and institutional, which appear largely hidden to the children. It is

interesting to consider this might mean in relation to the learning in school and how children consider the importance of it.

Taking the definition of Funds of Knowledge (FOK) provided by Moll and colleagues (1992) as being the historically accumulated knowledge (skills, abilities, ideas and practices) essential to the successful functioning and wellbeing of the individual child in their own unique family and household, data analysis indicated how these two FOI fund types came together to create the children's FOK.

Learning theory recognises the need for creative, practical, relevant and hands-on learning (e.g. Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky), while literature acknowledges the value of learning outside the classroom (Dewey, 1916, Nespor, 1997, Subero et al., 2016). In this research, we hear the children reflecting, and coming to recognise, for themselves the potential learning they gain through their activities, and the relationships or connectivity of the learning in its different environments. Through computer game playing, tree climbing, football and rugby they are able to practice problem solving, planning strategy and tactics, and different ways to approach "sums in maths". You can also learn about rules and regulations, which according to Emma is "like a board game, but real life". Alice, James and Daniel suggest it is also a way of learning how to just "get one with it" not retaliating or rising to incidents on the pitch. In dancing and doing nails, the girls are developing confidence, coordination, and their eye for design. In going to the park, climbing mountains and doing 'rooky lifeguards', opportunities are presented to keep yourself and others safe.

These are all valuable learning, and connections can be made to future employment. The explicit link of these activities to formal, in school learning is not always evident to the children. These activities help the children to understand and be able to articulate the need to be able to do things and for Emma particularly, the need to be able to do them well – and evidence that ability. They also help the children to be able to talk about things, wars, emotion, other communities. In their narratives this kind of learning appears to be much more closely aligned with out-of-school learning and rather than

'in'. For example, while James talks about football and rugby, he does not mention PE lessons. He acknowledged that in these activities he is finding things out, which could also be applied to in-school learning. The same is true for Alice and Lucy, who are both influenced by the real world. They find these things out for the media, their social groups, reading and family-based trips; they could also find these things out from biology, geography or history in school but these lessons are invisible in their narratives. The relevance of the academic curriculum is not explicit or understood.

Conclusions

The narratives and data presented and coded to the FOI framework and the review of self through VCR identified the following findings.

Firstly, social relationships and figures, as well as practical experiences, have most explicit presence in the worlds these children have constructed. The funds that the children appropriate as their own, in the development of a sense of identity, may be associated with close or wider family, as well as external role models through whom children explore their own values and the importance of behaviours on the world around them. These are experienced through a host of activities, including technology, which for these children appears to be an extension of their social network or gateway to information and the global community.

Secondly, these children articulate an appreciation of the experience of learning as something which is practical, even active. Moreover, the "pedagogical validation of household knowledge with which students come to school" (Gonzalez, 2005, p. 40) should be used not just as a way of making school-based learning accessible through contextualised familiarity. For learning to be useful, the purpose of it needs to be explicitly relevant. The relevance of in-school learning is largely lost to this group, but learning in similar subject areas gleaned through out of school activity is valued.

Thirdly, these children understand learning as being an enabler. It helps you find out how to do things, enables the presentation of a successful self through socially recognised symbols such as trophies and medals. Learning

which takes place in different places enables different things. Out-of-school learning for James is about adventure and exploration, for Daniel it's about real life. I wonder, if year 6 schooling and SATS has had any influence in the way children understand school-based learning.

Fourth, where is the future? This data appears to show a need to question whether children at this age can actually visualise a future, and one that is distinct form the world they live in now. What does this mean for their ability to envisage and articulate a future self and aspirations?

Finally, all of these children have a sense of self which includes the ability to make choices, take control, to enact agency. The narratives present how these children achieve this in different ways; and the values and attributes which will help them. The take opportunities to share knowledge and support others in their learning, by inspiring and wanting others to succeed. Equally, we have seen how for Jess, an active choice to break rules, to challenge expected behaviours is her way of not being impinged by her situation.

The five findings identified through the data in this chapter, will be unpacked and discussed in the following chapters. Chapter 5 will explore how the children construct and present themselves within their social interactions as well as the practical activities they participate in. This will facilitate an understanding of how they develop a sense of themselves as both capable individuals (agents) and members of a larger socio-cultural community. Chapter 6 will progress our understanding of the children as active agents in learning environments. It will consider how the different learning they identify in their current and future worlds informs their identity as learners and young people, and shapes future aspirations.

Chapter 5: Beings and becomings

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to address the first of the research questions driving this thesis; 'how do school aged children portray their current and future worlds and themselves within them?'

Organisation of the chapter

Throughout this chapter current and future self will be placed side-by-side, helping to highlight the degree of future-ness the children are able to articulate, and to enable consideration of how the children understand the relationship between their current and future selves. In exploring their funds through a lens of agency, it is possible to understand the contextuality of agency for these children (Adams, 2014, Alderson and Yoshida, 2016, Biesta and Tedder, 2007, Bjerke, 2011).

The discussion will focus on the most explicit fund types; social and practical, before moving on to the other fund types of geographical (places in the immediate locality and those stretching beyond), institutional (e.g. school, clubs) and cultural (beliefs, badges or systems e.g. uniforms, trophies.) I will consider the interactions and interconnections between people, activity and place, and how these limit or enable the children as agents, and influence the willingness, or active choice, to engage.

To begin, I return to the social worlds of the children and how the children sense themselves to be both knowledgeable and competent within them. I will listen to the children's voices articulating how they feel in their relationships with their parents, other children and other adults, as well as how the contexts of the relationships limit or enable the children as agents. I will consider what I hear, and what I don't, reflecting on my own expectations, reactions and experiences.

A discussion of the social funds: the social world of the child

Childhood as a social construct sees the "complex interweaving of social structures" (James and James, 2004, p. 14); family, education and state. These are the lived, multi-cultural systems, of shared beliefs and aspirations,

communicated and evolved through language and symbols (Dewey, 1916, Gonzalez, 2005). Within them, children begin to develop a sense of self-identity (Mead and Morris, 1934) and build social networks for themselves. The explicit presence of the social funds in the life worlds of the children is, therefore, not surprising. This discussion provides greater insight into the ways in which children respond to these relationships as they come to know and construct their own identities in response. The first relationship dynamic to be explored is the relationship between 'the child' and 'the adult'.

The Child and the Adult: relationships of authority

In each of the social worlds of the children, multiple adults are referenced; parents, wider family, parents of friends or representatives of other institutions. As parents are encouraged back into work, children spend increasing amounts of time in school and school-based spaces, e.g. breakfast and after-school clubs (Smith and Barker, 2000, Mayall, 2010). The result is that more and more child-focussed spaces become controlled by adults. How does this impact upon children's capacity to enact agency within these environments and relationships?

Giddens (1979) tells us that in any relationship where human agency is exercised, there is a dialectic of control. Power, enacted intentionally through challenge, compliance or conflict is bi-directional, and positions the actors in reproduced relations of autonomy and dependence. As the social worlds of the children in my project are home to a number of adult roles existing across their constructed FOI, I reflected upon how I might expect the dialectic of control in those relationships to be presented. I anticipated that the interactions would reflect the authority-bearing roles held by those adults, and that relations of autonomy and dependence would position the child as subject to the social rules of the structures in which they were located. My analysis, however, suggested otherwise. The children knowledgeably articulated how they were able to negotiate within relationships of authority, retaining some autonomy and asserting some agency. Their ability to do this was dependent upon the who and the where of the interaction.

Differing relationships of authority

Daniel makes and presents short films and uploads them to a YouTube channel. His father is gatekeeper, enabling Daniel to participate in the activity, “as long as you don’t like, if someone sends you a message then you do not reply”. Emma speaks of her Instagram account, which is “private, and my Mum has it on her phone so she can check what I do. It’s all about being safe really”. Carrington (2008, p. 155) writes that “the internet, like mobile phone technologies, is a key avenue to important forms of social interaction and identity formation for young people”. In the construction of identity and reflexive self-narrative in this online space, the children do not acquire the technical literacies and skills of successful existence from adults. Instead, we hear the adults stepping into these online worlds to protect the child, in an online space of risk and “stranger danger” (p. 157). The duality of power in this space does not reside with the adult positioned as expert. Instead, the children know the what and how of the activity and so are recognised as technological expert, negotiating access on the basis of trust.

In the social world of the school, however, a different relationship of authority exists. There is an established social order, which “incorporates modes of conduct and normative expectations that are broadly spread across different sectors of the society” (Giddens, 1984, p. 298) . These norms allow for the creation of the social identity of teacher-as -gatekeeper to knowledge. The community (school) is distinctly boundaried in time and space, apart from the social world outside of its walls. In this bounded school space, Daniel, presents a relationship where he experiences a lack of understanding and trust.

> “I don’t like my teacher, Miss Clarke. She’s just like, she’s nice to the parents, and they all think she’s nice, and then she’s nice to all the girls, and to some of the boys. But it’s like a group of lads, that’s like me, Martin, Oliver and Paul and this boy called Kevin who I don’t really like, and we always get the blame for, like, we haven’t done anything. It’s Kevin that’s done it. Not really us…. But like being the teacher that she is, she just like we still get told off for it.”

Daniel's words express a perceived, reciprocal lack of trust with Miss Clarke. He sees her manipulating relationships, "they all think she's nice". To Daniel, she lacks authenticity. Conversely, Mr Martin is able to develop a different relationship in the classroom,

> "And then we have Mr Martin. But like, when you're being silly with Mr Martin, he'll just calmly talk to you, he won't shout at you really. So, I like Mr Martin, just because he doesn't really shout".

The importance of a reciprocal relationship between pupil and teacher is well documented in literature on engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004, Furlong and Christenson, 2008, Lawson and Lawson, 2013), and FOK (Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg, 1992, Moll et al., 1992). The children in this project distinguish between good and bad teachers, based on a sense of fairness and supportiveness. Lucy values the teacher "if they helped me do it". Emma responds to Miss Morris who "supports me a lot. And 'cos I'm a very emotional person I just get emotional for no reason and then she calms me down and she just really support me". Daniel respects the fairness in behaviour management displayed by Mr Martin and not the bias of Miss Clarke.

Daniel's awareness and feelings of being subject to the school-based authority-bearing role of the teacher were not in isolation. Max and Alice both recognised them in their own experiences, but respond differently. While Daniel appears to want to reject and challenge the rules, Max uses them to influence his own authority-bearing roles in the school (as House Captain). Alice observing the different levels of behaviour management in the schools she visits as part of her high school selection processes, tells me that when visiting one in particular she "didn't really like the look of it, because all the kids were naughty".

Giddens (1984) discussion of structural constraints explains that the presumption of compliance and willing subjection to established power and authority is affected by the motives of those moving within the structures and interactions. Applied to a school environment, the narratives of the children

support this, but also illustrate the duality of the motivations and the power within them. For some, the motivation of the authority-figure (teacher), understood as a position of control, provoked rejection of the relationship and a challenging of the rules. For others the motivation acted as a learning opportunity in itself. Where the motivation of the teacher was understood to be one of support, nurturing and fairness, children responded positively, accepting the relationship and their position within the school space.

The supportiveness and fairness of teachers are, of course, just two qualities any teacher might possess. It is interesting that the attributes they focus on also align to those they aspire for in themselves. The children do not talk about their teachers in terms of how well they communicate the learning, or the grades obtained by the students through the learning delivered. Their focus is limited to the relationships they feel able to develop, and how these impacts on their ability to be themselves. Relationships, and the potential to develop “thick” and multi-stranded (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133) relationships are an important influence on engagement. Better classroom behaviour, managed through fairness and support is recognised, by these children as a motivation for active and willing engagement.

This discussion has highlighted the impact of positive, and mutually respectful relationships between adults and children. It has also highlighted the ability of children to identify the differences in how adults relate to them, and their ability to respond, and negotiate for themselves the kind of access or level of engagement they want to have, based on their own motivations within their interactions.

The relationships explored above, are based on a one-to-one interaction, presented as the relationship between one child and one adult, albeit within the wider social structure of the school. Next, I move on to explore how the children develop social networks, and how they develop their sense of position and belonging within these more populated social groups.

Social membership and the need to belong

Membership of a family unit is, typically, the first social network a child experiences, and belonging to a family unit was important to all of the children. They each included parents, siblings and wider family relationships of uncles, cousins, and close family friends within their significant circles. The family units presented by Lucy, Jess and Alice were different from those of the other children. Their childhood experiences of adoption, changing families or of being a single child provided opportunity for insight into the impact of being in a 'less traditional' family unit.

Lucy, is an adopted child. She described her current family as "quite small" but she imagined her future family would "be big". She presented an active gathering of new family members; her Grandfather's new wife, the wife's son (her Uncle), she laid claim to a family pet, "I don't want to leave him with my sister. 'Cos she kind of thinks that he's hers [whispers] but he's not. He's the whole family's, but sometimes I kind of think he's mine". She even tried to stake claim to me, "I'm your favourite though, we all know that. You have known me longest".

Her need to belong and reliance on a family unit produced noticeable emotional responses to my questions. At times she presented a nurturing and reassuring relationship, her sister "picks most of my clothes, I wouldn't look good if she wasn't here", but loss and separation were also recurrent themes in both her current and future worlds (Appendix 4.) In the second, future-focussed interview, she said, "I don't like grown up 'cos then people go. Then they come and then they go, and then they come and they just leave. Some stay, but it's rare."

Lucy's lens of separation was also applied to others in her social world. She articulated her agency through her understanding and appreciation of the experiences of loss and separation for other families. She experienced these through her choice of reading which sometimes "focuss(ed) on people who are in foster homes, people who have mums and dads that aren't there, people whose dad's hit their mums… I just find out how bad the world can be," and through the Sky News app on her phone. Through this she learned

of the bombing of a pop concert in Manchester, of wars and death, “I hate death so much, yeah. Death isn’t a good thing, I also don’t like how people fight a lot. It’s not good, I don’t like wars, wars aren’t good. War makes me sad.”

Lucy’s intense response to, and, appreciation of separation and sadness was balanced by an equal compulsion for happiness. She aspires to be a part of a “happy world;

Ellen So what is the most important thing?

Lucy Being happy. Thoughtful. Kind. Loving. Hardworking. Everything in life is hard. That’s why you have to keep trying. You don’t need like cannabis and *cro-caine*. You just need to try and then you’ll be happy. Even if you’re not happy at the start. You’re not happy the way you are and when you are trying. You will get there, when you have tried enough.

It was only Lucy’s voice which focussed on emotion so vividly. I wondered if she has constructed this emotion-driven lens as a response to her own exploration of her identity as an adopted child, and of being separated from her birth family. Her response to these experiences manifested itself in her future-focussed world as a statement of action, a call for others to enact their agency. Lucy does and will continue to help others in achieving happiness. She posts inspirational quotes on her Instagram account, it “makes [people] feel happy. Makes them feel like they can do anything.”

Unlike Lucy who expressed a need to grow her family, with a husband and children in her future world, Alice didn’t “really want to grow up and leave things behind”. While she was the only child to draw herself in her future world as an older professional (Figure 10), her desk was located in her current house, in her current bedroom.

Alice presents her family unit as a small artistic community. In this community, she articulates different kinds of relationships with the people in it. She is biological daughter, but also, and perhaps more importantly, artist.

Her mother and father are both her parents and her fellow artists. Her Grandmother is also her mentor and inspiration. These are, perhaps, instances of the “thick and multi-stranded” relationships recognised in FOK, as relationships which support the child as learner, and enable the child to take agency in their learning.

As an equal member in this artistic community, Alice’s agency is articulated through her ability to ‘do’ and consider ‘how to’ recreate a model in clay with ease and confidence.

Alice I’ve recently been to Belgium and Amsterdam and the tall houses I have been making out of clay.

Ellen Have you? Can you tell me how you make the models out of clay?

Alice I draw it first on a piece of paper, and then I make it. You have to make a cuboid and see where the windows are in the picture, and then see what shape the roof is and then try to mould. So, what I did for the roof, was I had to get 2 cylinders and then one cube in the middle and then just kind of push it up.

Her family unit and artistic community provides her personal and ‘professional’ development and growth, for Alice-as-artist now, and Alice-as-artist-to-be. There is an ontological security here, it is familiar, it supports existing habits and socio-cultural practices. As a result, does Alice need to envisage a different kind of future life world?

As the only child without siblings among the participants, Alice appears to use this absence of sibling as an opportunity to reframe her role as ‘child’ to one of simply being in her artistic community. I wonder if the role of the ‘elders’ in the community is also reframed as expert-artist (old-timers) able to nurture and support the new-comer, rather than recognising a purely generational, age-related hierarchy. This reframing supports her rooting her ongoing self in her current world. As she progresses in her artistic ability, she will also develop physically and get older, but again, her focus is not on an

age related, time-based sense of future self. Her focus and articulation of future is in relation to her becoming an accomplished illustrator within her family-based artistic community.

Jess' current world is presented as one which already has a time and space-based continuum, a 'before' and 'after' family unit. She has consciously experienced what it is like to leave one family space "my old family" and move into another, with her Nanny and sister. While her story shares similarities with Lucy's, Jess doesn't actively gather family. She appears less certain of her family, and her permission to be happy within it. When I ask her "what's your favourite thing to do in the whole world?" she replies, "Hmmmm, spend time with Nanny?"

Jess' family remains part of her future world, but they will "live somewhere else". I wonder if this is her way of keeping them at a distance, perhaps in an attempt to manage the impact of being separated from them again. Our ongoing conversation quickly illustrates that for Jess, the future is about empowerment. As a prospective sole-agent, she likes the opportunity to have her own space, where she can make her own decisions, where there will be "no one to boss me around", rather than living subject to the life-impacting decisions of others in authority-bearing roles.

Being subject to the decisions and rules of others is stifling for Jess. Rather than comply, she regularly tests her agency by consciously challenging expected norms of activities and behaviours in adult-owned spaces,

Ellen	So what do you do when you're at the library?
Jess	Well, I don't go to the library to read … we'll meet outside the library and go into the year 7s and over bit. I'll just pretend I'm year 7…. I go to the library but I don't have a library card [she laughs].
Ellen	Do you want a library card?
Jess	No, I don't want to take any books out.

Through the discussion in this section of the chapter, it has been possible to gain insight into the different ways in which these three children experience belonging to a family unit, and how the interaction in these experiences impacts on a sense of current and future self, and acceptance of position in a dialectic of control. While Alice is content and at ease, positioning her future self within the same social and geographical spaces, Lucy's experiences and search for happiness makes her sensitive to the emotional needs of others, keen to bring people together to build happiness, enacting agency as 'happiness creator' to do so. Conversely, Jess' uncertainty is articulated as a need to create her own space, keeping her family a short distance away so that she can be responsible for herself. In their own ways, each of these particular children has demonstrated their ability to enact agency, and to be able to manipulate and influence the duality of power in these contexts.

Having focussed on the relationships between the children and adults on individual basis and within wider family groups, I now move onto the exploration of friend-based relationships. In this section, I want to understand how the children maintain and perhaps challenge expectations, in a series of relationships which might be presumed to be more equal in terms of attributed authority-roles.

Friendship

The end of the previous section highlighted Jess' challenging of adult-power and her desire for independence from adults. Throughout her narratives, while she did talk about her family, the majority of her stories were about her friends. It is immediately clear that in these interactions the activities undertaken are done together, in an equal partnership. Jess does not articulate the same need to be left to do things on her own. She talks of time spent in the local park;

> "I'll take my phone with me and I'll go to – there's a spider web there you can climb up an there's a basket thing at the top which I go in with my friend, and we go on and check Instagram and show each other posts of people that we follow"

and the local library;

> "we'll meet outside the library and put all our bikes and scooters away and then go into the year 7's and over bit and I'll just pretend I'm in year 7…it's got a computer and it's got chairs and it's got free WIFI in that bit. I go on my phone and just talk to people I haven't seen for ages."

The friend-based relationships she presents in both of these extracts include friends with a physical presence and those who are present online through an online social network; resonating with the recommended extension of the digital in social groups (Esteban-Guitart, 2016, Poole, 2017a). Mindful that I had previously considered her need to keep her family at a distance as a possible action of self-protection, I wonder if she is tentatively bringing people around her, and then 'hiding' in her mobile-based social network. Is she interacting, but at a distance? If Jess is sharing posts and comments made by those she follows is she is able to avoid sharing her own life?

Carrington (2012) suggests otherwise in her exploration of *Roxie's* mobile phone-based world. In Roxie's story, her phone was her way of keeping friends and family with her at all times, through communication technology. This echoes Esteban-Guitart (2016).

Jess did not make explicit statements about her phone as a kind of security blanket, enabling her to keep others with her, albeit virtually. She was, however aware of how the phone could keep her safe in the event of emergency, recalling a crime-based documentary watched with her "old family". She drew an image of an iPhone and explained how to unlock it, if needed, using a particular combination of keys. While her initial retelling was slow and unsure, she gained in confidence as she drew. I let her draw and explain, and observed her establishing her agency as expert in knowing how to do this. In a space where she was able to recall and be expert, unchallenged by the adult-in-the-room, Jess once again seemed to seek permission to enjoy this status. I told her I had learned something from her. She giggled, nervously.

Jess' phone also enabled her to test her popularity, identity and agency through her use of social networks. On the video social network 'Musical.ly', she uploads recordings of herself miming songs and repeating "funny little catchphrases". She does "loads of different ones, and then if I don't get any likes on there, I'll just take it down so it looks like I have loads of likes". Through these, Jess is testing her own performance, benchmarked against others, measured through intentional 'likes'. She can manipulate how her virtual self is perceived. Daniel also uses online networks. Through experimentation of different voices and catchphrases he develops and tests his identity as effective communicator and 'Youtuber'. He creates and uploads short videos and then tests the impact and popularity of his online self, waiting for comments from his eleven followers. He does this "because it kind of like inspires me to do my own thing and like it just makes me express myself in a way because like at school I'm not like the favourite person."

This awareness of self, "creates potential for change" (Giddens, 1991, p. 71), something which can be easily achieved for the virtual identities created by Daniel and Jess, as well as Alice (Instagram sharing art) and Lucy (Instagram sharing inspirational quotes).

In the work *Becoming somebody: toward a social psychology of school,* Wexler et al. (2005, p. 7) write

> "when I tried to encapsulate what students were doing in these high schools, their words summed it up best: becoming somebody…they wanted to be somebody, a real and presentable self, and one anchored in the verifying eyes of the friends whom they came to school to meet"

These words resonate with the narratives I am hearing from the children in my project. In their online interactions, which replace the school yards of Wexler, the children are trying to become somebody, someone who has been approved, rated, liked by the others they went online to meet. Many of those online, however, and as articulated by Jess, are also those known in the physical world. The digital self she creates needs to mirror the physical,

or perhaps the physical needs to mirror the digital, so that she can move between the two, while still being and developing Jess. The digital self is not separate, instead it is an extension of the 'real', physical individual.

In the offline physical friendships drawn and described by the children, social worlds included wider family friends and parents of their own friends. To understand the differences in how these relationships can be established and enacted, it is interesting to look specifically at the worlds of Max and James. The wider social groups they present participate in collective activities which include the boys. The ways in which the boys position themselves as participants is, however, markedly different.

James

> We used to go before Luke's Dad errr died. We used to always go there together and it was really fun 'cos John used to do all these crazy things and we would all laugh. It was really funny."

Max

Ellen	So you go to Europe with all your friends?
Max	Yeah, and Mum and Dad.
Ellen	And what do you do when you're there?
Max	Ahh, I like walking round with my friend's younger sister. But she's like really nice to have around, 'cos you know, umm, and it's just nice to be and I can talk with people ummm, and just go where I want really.
Ellen	Do you speak the language there? Can you ask for an ice cream?
Max	No. Usually my Mum's friend's husband. He's not from there.

In these extracts both children refer to the parents of their friends. James presents 'John' as if he was one of his own friends, an equal, using his first name, and an inclusive pronoun 'we' when talking about the fun times they shared. He doesn't articulate an adult: child authority-based relationship, an unequal relationship, or see himself as excluded from the adult society around him.

Conversely, in Max's presentation, the 'husband' is referenced in relation to his own Mum; it is Mum's friend's husband. The man is the father of Max's friend, but this relationship is not acknowledged in Max's labelling. Max maintains the established adult: child relationship, he doesn't present a direct, equal friendship or camaraderie with the 'husband', as we heard in James' extract. Max's lifeworld is peppered with references to different adults; his godmother's boyfriend, his uncle, his grandparents and other friends of his mother. All the relationships are situated as positive interactions. In each he is knowledgeable and able; "so I go to him, go to his band and I play with them a lot", "I play with him a lot … and he taught me how to wire things up and build things". Yet, in each reference Max is self-positioned as dependent in the relationship; there is a recognised and observed hierarchy.

In other friendship-based examples in his narrative, Max expresses his regard for hierarchy and order. He acknowledges the opportunity these structures afford him to shift the power dynamic and take authority in his relationship with others, and even develop his skills as a current authority-role holder. As House Captain he "just love(s) being in charge…you help others if they're stuck", this is mirrored in his role as lifeguard at the local pool. Max appreciates and responds to his ability to lead his peers, while at the same time accepting the role as child in his relationship with adults.

As these children describe their social worlds we see that making and managing friendships is complex. At age eleven, the children in this project are on the cusp of a new stage in their lives, new schools, new friends and adolescence. It is a life-stage where children are confronted by who they are, and who they want to be; identity versus role confusion (Erikson, 1963), yet social categorisations of identity e.g. gender, are not highlighted by the children. They are "invisible funds" (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014) embedded to social practices, but still in operation, see, for example, Daniels' observations on Miss Clarke's response to groups of boys and girls class room behaviour. In my reflections on the invisibility of these funds, I am also mindful that my questioning and analysis did not focus on trying to understand the impacts of these categorisations on the children's lives and

identities. I had actively chosen to look beyond the labels commonly associated with potential disadvantage, and position the children on equal footings. Perhaps this is why I heard the children's focus on the physical and behavioural attributes they would like to demonstrate as current and future good citizens more loudly.

The discussion thus far has focussed on the development, experience and negotiation of power-based relationships and the impact on the position of self in social groups. I am now interested in understanding how the children protect their authentic selves in all of these contexts.

Authentic (individual) self

The data collection method, of creating self-portraits, not only acted as a gateway to the children's narratives, it was also a method prompting self-reflection as they considered how they wanted to be seen. The children demonstrated their self-awareness as the drawing process began, keen to make sure that they got the activity right, and that their drawing was a reasonable likeness, despite how competent they perceived themselves to be as 'artists'.

Max "Shall I draw my body as well?

Jess "I really can't draw…I could do it like this?"

James "Can I just draw a circle and then my head?"

Lucy "Remember, I'm really bad at drawing"

Adams (2014) worked with children to understand their perceptions of what constituted a child. Adams' research found, through analysis of descriptors, that 41% were physical e.g. hair, weight, eyebrows, 28% were lifestyle based e.g. how the children play and have fun, as well as 25% behavioural e.g. kind, pretty, popular. Relating this to my own findings, I consider aligning the lifestyle descriptors with the practical and social funds of the FOI framework. The prevalence of these, along with the physical and behavioural attributes presented by my participants, resonates with Adams' findings. James spends

some time trying to get the colour of his hair right, blending yellow, brown and orange, Daniel corrects his eyes, Jess rubs the paper so hard to remove a part of her that didn't go to plan that she makes a hole in it. The need to draw a true reflection is a part of the children's need for authenticity.

It is interesting to observe the children's focus on creating accurate depictions of themselves in their drawings. On reflection, I consider how the children have been able to massage or manipulate their presented virtual self on their social media. These platforms provide the children with easily accessible images of celebrity online, and so may cause a heightened awareness of physical image. They are also very aware that they are unable to alter their physical self, and can't create an image beyond their capabilities to draw. So, they struggle, rub out and edit their drawings, trying to make them as realistic as they can be. Is this 'rubbing out' replicated in their real-life experiences?

Daniel recounts school encounters when his true-self has been challenged by his peers. His way of managing this is to not react, but to carry on,

> "but like I get talked behind quite a lot by the girls and some people, other boys and stuff, but like it doesn't bother me because it happens to everybody so, but like some people say like I'm rubbish at football for example, but I'm in the school football team and they're not. So that's something and then when they say stuff it doesn't matter and I just ignore them really."

> "But I don't have stage fright or anything like that it's just like, it's just cos there those people who are like "oh you were terrible "and like that's just a bit upsetting that people are like that really."

He regulates his thoughts and actions through self-reactive influence, an ability which is "one of the core properties of human agency" (Caprara et al., 2008, p. 525). His ability to do this, reflect upon it and present it to me in our conversation impresses me. I later learn that he has learned how to do this

with coaching from his mother. He expressed concerns that his new school was in a “rough area”, and discussed with his Mum how this might impact on his existing friendships. Would his friends (or their parents) perceive him differently? Did they share his awareness of social preferences, spaces and cultures? He says, “other like parents have stayed away from Ransomes Academy because they don’t want their kids to be like at that school, but my Mum said to me, like, she said ‘”I was from a rougher part and people were still friends with me”.

Daniel’s mother coaches him to accept who he is, and reassures him that people will still be friends with him. His sense of self, and protecting that self is informed by his mother’s practices and experiences. In both Jess’ and Lucy’s narratives, however, the need for authenticity and even uniqueness appears to be self-motivated. Lucy’s demand for authenticity is explicit in current and future world conversations and manifests itself in her use of Instagram to find inspirational quotes. She also applies the expectations she places on herself onto her peers, and reacts to the behaviour of one of her classmates, Paul. “Paul is trying to be a cool person, but he’s not cool. He should just be his weird self.” Jess’ understanding of authenticity also focusses on being herself, “I want to be different, I want to be unique.” When asked what will make her unique she responds, “being myself”. It seems that while she has shared social practices with those in her physical and social networks, she continues to place herself apart.

Through these examples, the children demonstrate self as a “reflexive project” constructed and reconstructed through a “process of connecting personal and social change” (Giddens, 1991, pp. 32-33). They also demonstrate that their self is not static, but even in their current worlds is in flux, presented and tested against reaction, and in response to dualities of power and motivations for action. As the children develop their sense of self in particular contexts and environments, so they learn about how that self is received. This is an ongoing, iterative process in fluid social space. In this way, we can understand the creation of identity as a practice in self-learning. We see the current “Me” in its temporal state, already shifting to become the “you-to-be” as suggested by Archer (2013).

In this section of the chapter, the exploration of children's social worlds has shown how the children relate to people identified in their portraits and significant circles. It has also considered how they develop, test and try to manage their true selves within them. The discussions show that the children are able to enact agency and negotiate the duality of power found in social interactions. The extracts presented, from the narratives of James, Jess, Alice and Max, especially, also illustrate how the children respond differently to the structures and rules they encounter, and reposition and renegotiate relationships contextually.

Each of the social interactions presented by the children includes some kind of action or activity. Exploring how the children are motivated to engage in these activities, or practical funds will begin to pave the way for discussion on engagement with learning in Chapter 6. It will also help to understand how the children develop their sense of identity as (competent) learner, and how through the process of learning, they shape their FOI, their sense of self, and create their identity.

The practical funds: vehicles for agency

This discussion explores the actions and activities the children engage in through partnership with, or under the guidance of, those presented in their social worlds. It considers the opportunities provided for the children to enact their agency, mindful of unintended consequences (Giddens, 1984), compliance or resistance (Alderson and Yoshida, 2016), through the activities they undertake.

<u>Agents in action</u>

In order to understand the children as agents in action, I returned to their articulations and descriptions of activities. I want to understand how they position themselves as capable and knowledgeable, how they express awareness and rationale for what they do, and how they do it; their discursive capability and practical consciousness (Giddens, 1979).

In Daniel's narrative of his 'Youtuber' activities, he ably articulates the duality of structure as enabler and limiter. Through his own knowledge and

negotiated permissions he makes and uploads videos; understanding the reasons for limits imposed by his father which aim to protect him in an online space. He accepts the authority of his father, complying with his requests and in doing so creates the chance to develop his online personality and identity through practice, “my friend’s say I’m like the most confident one in front of the camera…I did a couple of like intro things and now my thing is ‘hello you people!’”

Emma’s stories are replete with examples of what she wants to do, is able to do, knows how to do, and loves to do. The identity she constructed and presented was one of confidence and competence. Emma’s perception of her opportunities and capabilities appear to be limitless (Hilppö et al., 2016) and she creates situations where she can position herself centre stage, motivated to make activities and relationships which highlight and positively reinforce her ability and position.

Singing

> “I like singing… I love love singing, dancing to music. We’re doing this thing at school, you know, the Eurovision? Me and Lucy, we’re going to do a solo each. All the classes, they pick one person from each class to go against each other, to see who’s the best. It’s going to be fun, it’s going to be exciting…. Everyone was like ‘come on Emma you can do this’, that gave me courage, and I can.”

Drama

> “I do drama club. I do dance, and then I do, in high School there’s this club that’s like called a choir. Dancing and singing, ‘cos you can use those in your acting skills. I like performing, showing off my talents.”

Emma’s explicit and seemingly limitless confidence is unique among the children. She is independent in her ability, emphasising her own practices and self-tuition. Conversely, while Max is also confident in his abilities, he

places his ability contextually with those who have helped him to develop them.

Max ‘s story has already shown him to be an enthusiastic leader (House Captain) and authority figure (lifeguard), motivated by the opportunity to be in charge and to help others, through guidance from teachers. The language he uses and the examples he presents are positive and enabling. All the things he “enjoys” and in fact he is “good at” are achieved through positive interactions with the people and places named within his social network. He articulates behaviours which are rational and compliant, creative and competent. He is able to balance a need to do something with the perceived benefits of doing so, “I’ve seen it (a new school) and it looks really exciting… although you have to wake up early. I did say that if I get in, I will practice sleeping early, going to bed early and waking up. “

Through a range of activities, Max’s agency is seen to be self-changing and, in his role as House Captain, positions him as a “responsible and intentional member of a learning group and therefore society” (Rainio, 2008, p. 117). In these contexts of authority-bearer Max could ‘do other’ but he knows he cannot “like boss them about” and complies with this expectation. In this role he acts as leader, but also as advice seeker. To support his peers, he finds he too needs support and guidance from the adults in the environment. In balancing and shifting his position within the school environment, Max demonstrates the different roles he can take within a social structure, the multi-stranded relationships he goes on to create, and his competence as knowledgeable and reflexive actor.

The multi-stranded relationships within Alice’*s* family unit -cum- small artistic community were discussed earlier in this chapter. Art threads, as an activity, throughout her story and her lifeworlds. It takes place in multiple locations, and enables her to take cultural artefacts and reshape them through recreation, using her agency to transform the object of the activity,

> “my favourite like lesson is art. We learn about how to sketch, focus on part of a picture and then draw it. I normally take loads of pictures at Lakely Park and then I just take it home and draw it and post it [to

> Instagram] ….I like to draw trees…and houses and I like to draw people too – I like to just make up a random people.
>
> It puts your mind to work, like that's that [indicating the original natural form] and that's the finished, and you have to put it all together to make one piece. It feels calming 'cos you're kind of relaxed and you just keep going until you think I's finished. When you go 'I don't know what to do next'.

In posting her (re)creations in her Instagram account, she shares her experiences and new knowledge (cultural capital) with her followers.

Cultural, geographical and institutional funds

Initial data analysis found that these funds, as defined by Esteban-Guitart (2012), were less prominent for all of the children. Having considered the social and practical funds in more depth, I wonder if this is really true. I want to understand if the cultural, geographical and institutional funds are still present but, deeply entwined and embedded into the dynamic and active social and practical funds that the children highlight. In my own extension of the fund, I have acknowledged the shared values or beliefs that the children develop, social practices or ways of being.

<u>Cultural funds</u>

The presence of gender in the children's worlds is evident, not only in Daniel's previously cited observations of Miss Clarke, but also in some of the practical activities. Jess, Alice and Emma talk about painting their nails, James talks about running through bushes and climbing trees. Yet, at various points in their narratives, the boys and girls both talk about participating in sports such as BMX-ing, playing football, and going to the skate park. Emma tells me her experiences of playing football, and how she doesn't like the fact that the "boys never pass to the girls". She goes on, "I scored against the boys, I scored twice once, but when the boys win they go 'ooohhhh, yeah!', but when the girls score they're like "nooooo, that didn't count!".

While gender impacts on how the boys or girls may be perceived in certain interactions, it is not a defining characteristic which surfaces in the children's narratives in its own right. Instead, we hear about the impact of gender as it is embedded into the practical activities and social interactions through which it is encountered. Is the same true for the other types of cultural fund identified?

Daniel is born and raised in Suffolk, yet he identifies with aspects of what he understands to be the culture from where his mother is born, drawing on characteristics he sees in his Mum's personality and behaviours. The same is true of his identification with aspects of being English, because of characteristics he sees in his Dad's personality and behaviours.

> "My Mum's like, being from 'there' the funny one, and my Dad, like being English is the sensible but more stricter one. So, it's kind of like the two different sides of each parent which I like in a way because it can make to different sides of me but like two good sides… But also, I like talking because it's just like in my blood really, my Mum being 'from there'".

Daniel doesn't include the national flags, anthems, or flowers of either country. Instead he identifies social values and behavioural attributes which can be understood as cultural funds, manifesting in the social funds, and relationships he identifies in his world. His love of football also makes space for both national teams.

Age as a hierarchical or time-based concept is also present, but again, not an explicitly defining characteristic. The children do not tell me their ages at any point in the conversation, and only reference age when I ask them about their futures in our second meeting. The task asked the children to consider themselves when they were older. Jess' immediate response was to be fourteen, just three years older than she is now; although she eventually settled on twenty-three. Lucy and Alice both chose ages which they connected with family members, sister and aunt. James told me he was not really old enough to think about being older.

For several of the children, age is an inherent part of who they are, but on a day-to-day basis has little importance or impact on their conduct. James, who is not old enough to have a future plan, positions himself as equal in a relationship with his friend's father John. Alice primarily positions herself as newcomer to the family-based artistic community amongst the old-time parents and Grandmother. They do recognise, however, that being conceptually 'older' means hard work, independence and responsibility.

Geographical funds

The funds identified by the children are types of space or places which are associated with practical and social funds.

Max and James reference woods, lakes, mountains as spaces for holidays, walking, climbing and exploring. They do not identify with the location they find the trees, woods or mountains in. Lucy references a particular county as the home of her cousins; reflecting her need to belong to a wide (social) family group. She references Australia as home to "cute animals", supporting her practical interest and engagement with David Attenborough programmes and the natural world. Alice's references to Wales relates to her family based there. As children all born and still living within the county of Suffolk, none of the geographical representations of the county are included in the portraits.

In James' future world locations, Alaska and Hawaii are both identified as being places where he could actively explore further; places known for and identified because of their "outdoors" environments. This aligns to his future world attributes of being "fit and healthy". This way of life is important to James and we discuss it at various points through our conversations; through sports, PE and general outdoor activity. In these spaces, James in his current world, is also able to test his appreciation of accepted or expected behaviours, negotiate for greater agency and form opinions about the behaviours or social practices of others,

> "At the moment I still go down to the park, Marton Park, quite a lot. I used to go to Lakely, but something happened to my friend, so I don't go there anymore. 'Cos it's just not that good-a community. "The

people in it, it's not like a wasteland, but the people aren't nice. Quite rude, they swear a lot. Litter. Not the best. "

These spaces are included as ways of him being able to describe how he tests agency, and comes to understand the behaviours of others in these spaces. The locations themselves are, quite literally, neither here, nor there. Through this experience his developing interest in environmental responsibility begins to influence a sense of who he is not. He chooses elements of personal identity to reject, perhaps as suggested by Oyserman and Fryberg (2005, p. 21) "individuals learn not only who people like them can become, but also who people not like them can become".

Geographical funds are representations of a world which, in terms of ease of accessibility, is getting smaller. This is evident in Lucy's reference to Australia. She has never visited the country in reality, but has experienced it through television. This is also how she forms her opinions of the lives and experiences of those in Africa. Earlier in the chapter, I questioned the low prominence of socio-cultural characteristics and how they may have been superseded by influences from further afield, via the media and social networks. I wonder if the same may be true for the geographical funds. Television, and even augmented reality, make it easier for all of us to experience other places without having to travel there.

I would also posit consideration of the online worlds the children inhabit as geographical funds. Discussions have illustrated how the children create and test identity in this environment. They even bring virtual and physical friends together in the park and in the Library. Perhaps to truly understand the impact of geographical funds they need to be redefined to encompass a more remote and yet increasingly accessible world.

Institutional funds

All of the children reference the importance of their current family unit, or the institution of family in their current worlds. It is the social setting and gateway for many of their social and practical funds. Exploring the institutional funds of marriage and family through a future-focussed lens, however, prompted

mixed reactions. Emma takes it as an opportunity to talk about the kind of house she will design and decorate, based on her current interests and skills. She names future children, selecting names she likes and those which could be shortened; “Charlotte so I can call it Charlie, Veronica so I can call it Vronny, or I’d have Brooklyn so I could call it Brook.” Her use of “it” suggests that these children are not understood as real people, they are disconnected labels or accessories for her future self. When James is asked if he would like his own family, or “little James”, he laughs and almost recoils; “I have no clue at this moment, no. Just thinking about that, it’s really weird”. Alice has a similar reaction.

In his narrative, Max identifies as a Lifeguard and a Sea Scout as well as a House Captain. Understanding these as social institutions, they have established practices and values which as a new comer to their institution Max must learn. In previous discussion we have heard how Max recognises social hierarchy and authority. Participation in these social institutions support his sense of self as authority figure with his peers. Similar connections can be seen between Emma’s love of drama, her attendance at drama clubs, and her presentation of self as an act of performance, the influence of football on Daniel. With Dewey’s understanding of community (Dewey, 1916) in mind, I wonder if children are shaped by these institutions, or if they choose these institutions to be part of their life worlds because they echo they’re potentially subconscious values?

Schools are another institution presented by the children. The ‘School’ is a society-based institution, yet it is often behind walls, fences or gates, separated from the community it serves. Once inside the walls, familiar experiences and values are replaced by structural conditions and value-standards, legitimised through “normative prescription” (Giddens, 1979, p. 102) created by people who may have no social connection to the community or the children in attendance.

The children understand the place of school in their lives, and, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, have a clear understanding of its purpose in providing their learning. It is interesting that while the children understand the role of

school in preparing them for their future, the enduring and reproduced social practices which they experience in the classroom are in existence to reinforce the expected rules and position for the child; to maintain the status quo. For children such as Max, Daniel and James the structural conditions of school prompt varying degrees of acceptance and compliance or at least questioning challenge. “I don’t like it when they tell you to sit in a certain space, yeah, I don’t know…but why can’t you just sit wherever you want?” For other children though, including Jess, the social system of the school provokes agency manifesting as resistance and transgression. She tells me how she disrupts classroom learning;

Jess	In class and stuff, I’ll do weird stuff for no reason. Like, I’ll go “bladullbladullbladullbladullblaaaaaa”
Ellen	Do you know you’re going to do that before you do it?
Jess	Yeah. I’ll plan it. And then I’ll go “Guys. I can hear something “bladullbladullbladullbladullblaaaaaa””

As well as legitimised value-standards being factual features of an institutional environment, I wonder if institutions themselves may also be understood as factual features of a lifeworld landscape. Giddens (1979) argues that “institutions may be regarded as practices which are deeply sedimented in time-space…they are widespread among members of a community or society” (p. 80). Taking this understanding of institution, what does this mean for the presence of the deeply sedimented practices wide spread in the children’s community?

As children growing up in social communities, the practice of being a child, and soon-to-be-teenager creates its own ways of being, with rules and social norms. Reflecting on the narratives the children present, I am struck by the differences between their own experiences and mine. I wonder if the institution of childhood has itself changed, renewing its institutional identity in a morphogenetic society (Archer, 1995)

Agents of the future?

In the concluding statements of Chapter 4, I questioned the children's ability to understand the future in relation to their current worlds and selves. When I spoke with James, I asked him how old he though 'older was'. He replied, "I don't know, I never thought about that." When asked why not, he explained:

> "It's scary. And Exciting. It's exciting like driving a car. But things like getting a job and that is a bit scary. Yeah. I think it's a bit of both. It's a weird when you say what your future's gonna be like 'cos you wouldn't generally think of it and the age I am now. You'd think more think about it in year 10 or year 11. When you're a bit older".

With the exception of James' identification of the ability to drive, and so travel, and Alice's presentation of self as an accomplished, professional illustrator, the children did not identify any of the perhaps expected cultural practices and milestones which are associated with becoming an adult (e.g. gaining the right to vote). Instead, futures presented were focussed on experiences, feelings, attributes associated with growing up; it will be "hard", it will come with increased "responsibility" and it will come with "independence".

The differences between current and future world for these children are slight. Current pursuits and interests govern those represented in the future; the future is an extension of their current being. The extent to which the children's futures are grounded in the present is surprising to me. On reflection, I wonder if the fact that the funds are so intertwined, and reliant on the same people in the same activities, makes the future too far-a-leap forward. The children have strong identities in their current worlds, identities that they are about to begin testing again as they move into new high schools. This is their focus, and for now this is their future.

I wonder then, if we could consider the 'future' an institution in its own right. In this institution-future, the children will encounter new social-cultural practices and environments. These practices are sedimented into a time the children have not yet reached, and into spaces which may be entered in very

different ways from the ones they experience now. How will ongoing evolutions in the cultural, geographical and institutional funds impact on the children's futures?

Conclusions

In this chapter I have explored the funds the children have identified and presented to me in their portraits and narratives in an attempt to come to know the children as knowledgeable agents and experts in their own worlds. I have explored where there may be differences in how they envisage their current and future worlds, through the exploration of their identified funds.

As agents, the children have demonstrated their ability to appreciate, do, negotiate, manipulate and make decisions. They have demonstrated their discursive capability and through their narratives I have heard their practical consciousness. Each child has their own way of doing this. There are clear differences between them, James present as reflective, curious, considerate, while Emma has constructed a world in which she is quite literally the star performer. Two of the children, both disconnected from birth families, now respond to significant others quite differently, with Lucy earnestly gathering more around her, and Jess looking forward to being alone.

The children develop and maintain different kinds of relationships, joining online and physical worlds seamlessly, shifting between position as equal, to position as child, drawing on experiences to inform their own practices in hierarchies and social roles with associated prerogatives.

In recognising the child as expert in their own lives, I have been able, through analysis, to capture the uniqueness of each child. Discussion of their agency and ability has provided ways to understand their narratives through different lenses.

The future worlds of the children are firmly rooted in the current. In the current and future worlds social funds and practical funds are the most prominent. These are where the activities, interactions and relationships provide the children with opportunities to test and understand the bounds of

their agency, negotiating access to online spaces, illustrating self-belief and competence, articulating fears in belonging or not getting own space. The geographical, institutional and cultural funds present can be traced, along blurred lines, through the social and practical activities the children make space for in their lives. There is also potential to create new understanding of geographical funds by acknowledging the changing ways of engaging with a global geography.

The period of adolescence is a time of considerable change for the children, as they negotiate new environments, social groups and cultural practices. It is also a time where children will begin to encounter conversations about their futures, (Caprara et al., 2008). Universities will begin outreach programmes targeting potential students. The Social Mobility Ipswich plan (Department for Education, 2017a) states it will ensure

> "every child leaves primary school inspired by the 'world of work' and the wealth of career opportunities available to their future selves. We will create a 'world of work' offer specifically for primary-aged pupils whereby every primary school is supported to provide inspiring encounters of the world of work, further education and higher education."

Given the evidence and discussion presented in this chapter, it is difficult to understand how successful such a policy can be. The 'future' that the policy wants the children to be inspired for is not yet envisaged. It is a time-space based institution that is not a fact of their current lifeworld landscapes.

Chapter 6: Locating learning and its purpose

Introduction

With an understanding of the different ways in which children enact agency through social interactions and practical activities in place, I now move to consider how the children position themselves as active agents within learning environments and how they construct identities through their learning experiences as young people and as confident and effective learners.

The purpose of this chapter is to find answers to the second and third research questions driving this thesis; 'where is learning located within their current and future worlds?' and 'what places are associated with learning, and how are they perceived?' I will also build on my theory that the identity we develop comes from the learning experiences we have.

Organisation of the chapter

This chapter will focus on findings from the data analysis that learning should be practical and relatable, that there is a clear distinction between the kind of learning the children encounter in different spaces, and the understood purpose of these different types of learning. The children's voices will provide insight into how children perceive the diversity of experiences, and how they respond affectively and behaviourally; how this impacts on the children's willingness and ability to engage with learning.

I begin by describing the types of learning, and pedagogical approaches to learning that stimulate and motivate the children to engage. The final part of the chapter will consider what these findings mean for the construction of learner identities. How does perceived ability or inability affect their confidence as learner in the different environments? How does this relate to concepts such as the 'locus of control' (Gorard et al., 2012), the factors identified as affecting perceived self-efficacy (Klassen, 2010) and aspirations as learners in their transitionary present and visualised futures (Bandura et al., 1996, 2001)?

The Art of learning: make it practical, make it relevant …

As James started to draw his picture, he asked "if you have something like sport, can you put different sports?" I respond that he can put anything and as he started to list football, rugby, BMX-ing, playing on swing ropes, he spoke about these activities, the fun he has, the people he does them with. When asked why he enjoys them he replied,

> "keeping fit and healthy. Learning different things to do with it, like umm, I don't know how to explain it…. like different ways of playing, tactics, different ways of getting better at it."

I ask him to explain to me about tactics and why knowing different approaches is important. He tells me "ways of working out different things". He takes the same stance on his adventures playing outside with his friend, Luke. Rather than walking round the woods along the path, James likes to "go straight through all the things. Adventure, finding different things out, getting different obstacles to find a way through." James told me he "loves it outdoors", playing, climbing trees all day, working out how to solve problems and see different ways of doing things.

In these few words, James has spoken about a self-identified learning activity which he "loves" and to which he can attribute relevance, being able to solve problems, taking agency. The learning activity itself is experiential, and active, he learns as he does it and through doing it. The words "adventure" and "finding things" out suggest that James is also driven by curiosity. For Dewey (1910), curiosity was vital. He described it as "an expression of abundant organic energy…[that] leads a child to be 'into everything'…and [it] becomes intellectual in the degree in which it is transformed into interest in problems provoked by the observation of things and the accumulation of material" (pp. 30-33).

This insight into James' curiosity is particularly enjoyable. His exploration of the why and how of things connects with Dewey's words "'Why?' become[s] the unfailing sign of a child's presence" (1910, p. 32). It resonates loudly with the 'why' in my own childhood, and I think about what happened when I

asked ‘why’, what response did I get? Inevitably I was referred onto a reference book; perhaps an encyclopaedia to try to find the answer for myself. I wonder if this set the pattern for learning and curiosity that I have continued to practice, and have supported others in doing through my career as Librarian.

While James and I have immediately identified a shared experience of the fun that can be had in learning, Jess’ gut reaction to learning is that it is all “boring”. This seems to be based on her immediate association of learning with school, as “school is boring” “learning is boring.” Why?

> “Because half the stuff they teach you, you don’t even use. It’s like they say, they tell you like, in school, they tell you how to make like how to fix lamps. Like you’re ever going to use that, and well. There’s bits like something you would use, like safety and that but they tell you most of that in year six and like other stuff that is just useless”.

When I asked what she thinks she should be learning about, she repeats her previous statement, “just things you need to know,” it needs to be relevant. I want to challenge Jess on her idea that learning is boring – and that learning just happens at school. I asked her about what she learns when she’s not in school, and she looks at me, puzzled. “Not in school? [long pause]. Hmm. Like when I’m watching random documentaries with my old family?”

Eventually, Jess talks about a documentary she watched just the night before. As she talked through how she learned how to get into a locked mobile phone in the case of an emergency, she draws it onto her portrait (Figure 11). When she has finished her drawing, I tell her I have learned something from her today, and she is once again unsure of herself; “I’m not sure that it’s the same, if that’s the right thing to do, if you need to do something else instead”. The previous chapter highlighted how a mobile phone is a central part of Jess’ social world, used to bring her physical and virtual friends into one space. It’s interesting, therefore, that she has provided a learning example based on the same piece of technology, something which is highly relevant to her. As we talk she seems to unconsciously react to

being put in the role of teacher as I tell her I have learned from her, and immediately questions her recollections, and perhaps her eligibility to be in this role.

Other children tell me about a shared learning experience at school, a science lesson where they had to make a lamp. I am interested to hear how their stories differ, how they react to the lesson and activity differently. The 'story of the lamp' featured in Jess' story, but also Lucy's, James' and Alice's.

Lucy found that science could sometimes be interesting, but, on this occasion, that wasn't the case,

> "Science can be interesting. Can be not interesting. Can be not relevant at all. Like, I'm not really gonna have to make a circuit [for the lamp] if I'm gonna make [bridal] dresses"

Alice focussed on the resources they were given to make the lamp. She worked as part of a group, and took a creative approach to the exercise, using sticks she had to make a lamp that resembled a "volcano nest". In the previous chapter, Alice's artistic funds focussed on the (re)creation of the natural world, and explains her response, why the activity piqued her interest. It demonstrates how Alice drew on her creative abilities and shaped the learning activity agentically to turn it into something more interesting and enjoyable. The same was not true for James. The lamp "didn't really give much light…it wouldn't have changed anything, it was just there for decoration I think, didn't give out much light at all". The lamp had failed in its practical purpose to give light.

The making of the lamp was designed to be a practical learning activity, through which the children would learn about circuits and electricity. It can also be understood as a relatable activity, based on making something which would have been in their homes. While it was relatable, the lamp had no practical relevance, no purpose in how they constructed their worlds. For James it would make no impact, no difference, not even to the level of light. For Lucy it wouldn't help her to make people happy.

Making and creating things outside of a classroom led activity could be interesting for Jess, as illustrated in our future-focussed second conversation. Jess talked about a recent “invention”. She laughed and became animated, putting down her pencils and recreating her “invention” in the air. As I watched Jess change in her mannerisms and language, I became excited to hear what is making her so enthusiastic. It involved glue sticks.

> “Well, what you do. This is how to make it. So, you would get like a table, and it would be a work table, otherwise it will be ruined. Then you would get a glue stick, and put it out a bit, and then, you just do ‘that’ (and imitates rubbing the glue sticking back and forth on the table) that much.
>
> Then you would leave it for 5 minutes and then you would get one of those spatulas. No, not a spatula, first you would get something…a tooth pick is best, and you would do ‘this’ and roll it about it bit and then after get it on your fingers and roll it about a bit, and after it turns into a ball of like slime you can do this (and stretches her imaginary glue between her hands).
>
> But it doesn’t stick to you when you make it. But it does dry out after about 3 days you would need to make it again. Or keep it in a container. An air tight container, that would work. I’ve made like a massive ball. Like that much. It dried out really quickly, dried out by the end of the school day. Keeping it in a pot would be nice”.

The conversation took an unexpected turn,

Jess	My Nanny wants me to get a degree. I want to be a Master of it. I don’t think I’m smart enough to be a Doctor, but I know I am for a Master…What would I do [for a degree] if my career was wanting to practically make slime?
Ellen	You could do science, chemistry, I don’t know, may be something biological or with creative arts?

Jess Yeah, I could. That would be the one. But not on the arty side. It's more on the technical side, and like, more on the science side 'cos I want to like explain to people how it reacts and makes it into the slime"

As highlighted in the previous chapter, Jess had seen the future as one of autonomy and the ability to make self-directed decisions. This extract highlights the need for the same autonomy and decision making in her learning. When she was able to create her own 'invention' and consider how best to create the right texture and preserve the right consistency, her interest, motivation and excitement was heightened.

This passage from Jess' narrative seems to me to be an example of the kind of learning activity or opportunity that resonates with Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). For Vygotsky, the ZPD was "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky et al., 1978, p. 86). It strikes me here, that Jess' actual developmental level had enabled her to establish how she could turn glue into slime, what tools would help her to create the right consistency to be able to achieve the stretchy tackiness she was looking for in the end result. She had even considered how she could keep the end product malleable for longer. What she didn't yet understand was the "technical side" or "the science side" behind the reactions and changes in consistency. Yet her motivation and interest had taken her learning beyond a kind of superficial or surface learning on the stickiness of the glue to a deeper level of learning where she considered and analysed and was able to reproduce some of her thoughts. A group science project, with other interested peers and input from a science teacher, could have helped Jess, and her fellow learners, begin to work towards this understanding and promote an interest in science, through practical, active and relevant learning.

This approach to a project-based learning activity would give Jess the opportunity to shape her learning, but would have needed the adult to accept

Jess -as-expert (in herself and her interests), and to accept a learning activity which might be “outside the boundaries of what is accepted as ‘quality’” (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002, p. 3). This would provide Jess with confidence in her ability to learn, and her identity as able learner.

Max’s narrative also provides an example of ZPD framed within a collaborative adult-guided activity. He already has a clear idea that he wants to be an “inventor” when he is older. He already does ‘inventing’, and speaks about his current “tinking workshop”, the workshop he will have when he is older, a design notebook from his Gran, a high tech “mountain goat” rescue vehicle he made as well as a walking gingerbread house.

> “yeah, I was bored, so I made a walking ginger bread house… it’s got legs, yeah, they move. I put little people in there, and electrics inside as well. It’s really cool. My Mum’s brother, who lives in London, when he comes over, I umm, play with him a lot, and he taught me how to wire things up. Mum also teached me. She has a painting and decorating job, which means she does wood work.”

Max has brought different elements of his social and practical funds together to create an activity for himself which has enabled him to achieve a level of learning on his own, proficiently, and progress that learning through the support of those in his lifeworld. He has taken agency.

While Max is happy to turn to those around him to support his learning, Emma directly challenges the limits that she perceives the gym teachers put on her learning; her words suggest a stifling of ability and authority in that learning space.

> “I love doing gymnastics. Like I used to go to gymnastics, but then, well they always shouted at me when they told you to do something, but then I stopped and I’ve just been teaching myself to do quite a few things. I’m actually really proud of myself for doing that.”

Emma's favourite activities, singing, gymnastics and drama shape her approach to learning. These are practical self-regulated activities which she "loves" to do, and feels exceedingly confident and able in doing; "I like performing, showing off my talents". Returning to the language of her narrative, it is full of her sense of her talents and "charm". This self-reliance in her learning of gym, as well as drama, music and singing underpins her thoughts of a future self, as "actress" and one who can "show people like cartwheels and stuff, like my backbends … I generally like performing to people".

This discussion has illustrated the children's expressed preference for learning that is driven by activity. It has also touched on the need to make learning relevant to their lifeworlds. As the future lifeworlds for the children are enmeshed in their current worlds, the learning of 'now' supports the learning of the future. This is seen explicitly in the examples from Jess, Max and Emma.

The section has also highlighted the collaborative nature of learning for the children. While many cite the presence of others in the act of leaning, Emma positions the role of others as admirers of her learning. Through their responses she tests the effectiveness of her preference for self-tuition.

<u>… make it collaborative: relationships and learning</u>

Given the prevalence of social funds and the interconnection of these with the preferred practical activities, perhaps it is not surprising that the children should express a preference for social and collaborative learning. I recognise the value of social learning in my own work and professional practice, exploring the use of peer learning to further support those who are earlier in the learning journeys.

Daniel's social world and interactions had an online presence in his use of YouTube to create and upload videos about different things that interested him. His initial interest in YouTubing had come through watching online videos produced by other gamers, and learning from how they themselves presented and shared their ideas, hints and tips. He then started exploring

technologies and software with his friends Martin and Paul. When I asked how he had learned to do these things, he said, “from other YouTubers. I just watched them, and decided I wanted to do it.” He talked to his friend Martin about how he could film because he “couldn’t do it on his PS4”, and seeks feedback from his friends. This illustrates how Daniel draws on his friends to share knowledge and experiences in relation to particular skills, but also as a way of measuring his own ability and his place in the socio-cultural experience he is creating. In turn, he feeds something back into the online learning community he has accessed by uploading his own videos on his “Harry Potter Theory” and how to progress through video games.

Through this collaborative learning experience, Daniel and his friends learn to self-regulate their activities. Daniel says,

> “in my SATS, the people who had a YouTube channel like us, we decided not to upload any videos in the last, in the three weeks that we had when everyone was revising and revising and revising. So, and we didn’t upload in the SATs week.”

This ability to reflect on what was happening at a particular point in his life and make decisions knowledgeably and capably about how different activities might impact on others, is a way of Daniel demonstrating his agency. Technology is important to Daniel as a way of learning, and of constructing his identity. It is a key theme in his narrative, as identified through the data analysis, and he actively takes steps to protect it as an activity that he can own.

As Daniel works with others to create resources, and then draws on their feedback to improve, Alice has developed an alternative approach to collaborative learning, at least in learning outside of the classroom. Alice has presented as very self-reliant; she is an only child, happy in her own company and space. While she has written “friends” and “family” on her portrait, she has also written “alone time”, which she spends reading or drawing.

In her own drawing and art work, Alice returns to her preferred way of working on her own, but she positions herself in shared artist-based spaces, with her parents, and in their commercial art studio. While Alice says she "works things out" for herself, and "you just keep going until you think it's finished" she is still surrounded by others in her 'community' who she can turn to for advice and guidance if or when she needs to. Vygotsky states "if a child can do such-and-such independently, it means that the functions for such-and-such have matured in her…the zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation" (Vygotsky et al., 1978, p. 86).

In school Alice expresses a preference for group learning. She explains the benefit of table-based or group working, and the differences in the way tables have been organised.

> "In year five, we used to do it in levels, the lowest, the middle and then the high, but now it's better, it's all a mixture, so it's all even like that way. I probably prefer it, 'cos you get to help people, and you get to learn from people at the same time. Instead of having everyone at your level and you can't learn from everyone else.
>
> If you've got people that don't really care about helping then you're kind of 'ohhh, I don't know what to do next and then if you've got people who do care then you're like 'oh, ok, I understand that now".

In the group learning dynamic, Alice has positioned herself as one able to support others in their learning. She enjoys the supportive nature of it. She also appreciates that you can learn from being a part of such a learning experience in itself. This resonates with her self-positioning as equal artist in her family-cum-artist community. She is both learner and educator.

As Alice demonstrates a consistency in how she positions herself within learning communities, so Emma is consistent in her self-focus. She starts by talking about team work, she says it is "like a big thing 'cos everyone has to work as a team 'cos if you don't …it's kind of like being selfish", yet this

statement seems to sit outside of the rest of her conversation. In the previous part of the chapter Emma's rejection of learning with others in the gym hall was highlighted. This structured, supported way of learning challenged her own position and pace of development, and this rejection is echoed in our conversation where she has to pause to check a fact or a spelling, only to brush it aside quickly and move on with her tales;

Emma	Yes, he is black because nero means black in America, Japan?
Ellen	Italian
Emma	Its summink like that. Bailey my dog, she's a cocker spaniel

Emma	When I was younger I hated milk…I would scream and shout every time I saw milk. It's why I've got little white spots under my fingers.
Ellen	Do you like broccoli?
Emma	Yes, I like broccoli
Ellen	That's good for calcium
Emma	Is it? I love cheese, ohhh, I could eat cheese all day although it's bad for you."

On reflection, it seems that through Emma's drawing of self, and conversation with me, she is relearning about herself*,* and all she does, enjoys and can do. This is her approach to collaborative learning; learning through, not with others; learning through her exploration of self. So many of the sentences she uttered are interrupted as she recalled something else she "loves" and must include in her busy portrait. This process is so intense for her, so personal and 'inside her own self' that she sometimes fails to hear a question, or has already moved on and forgotten what she said. An example of this is in her future world conversation when I respond to Emma telling me that she likes "showing off" her talents by asking her if she has a favourite one. "Pardon?" she asked. I repeated the question; "do you have a favourite one?" "What?" she replied. "Talent, favourite talent". She finally responds. "Favourite talent? I haven't thought about that."

James provides the final example in this section on collaborative learning. James does express enjoyment at working and learning with others. James has already spoken about learning from and with friends out in the parks and woods, and of learning who he does not want to be. Now he talks me through a learning exercise at school. It is a practical maths lesson, a problem-solving mini-project, an activity type he has told me he enjoys. Much of the conversation with the children has highlighted where learning could be personalised to encourage and motivate engagement, and increase its relevance. The example James provides here, it occurs to me, should be both accessible and relevant to him as he has just returned from a family trip overseas.

James explains the project in great detail. Working in small groups, over three lessons he and his colleagues had had to research and plan a family holiday, within a specified budget. They had to include a specific location, period of time, hotels, meals and all activities. James had begun our second interview by telling me about his holiday to see extended family, but when asked what he thought he learned from this project, he did not connect the learning or purpose of the activity with any activities which his parents may have undertaken for his trip, or even see it as an activity that might do himself when traveling to Hawaii or Alaska. James only told me that the activity was “really tough”, but that they had worked through the meal costs together. While this initially surprised me, I began to wonder if the fact that the activity had been labelled as a maths exercise had disconnected the activity from real life. It was a make-believe budget, it wasn’t going to be a real trip, with real meals and outings. How effectively James budgeted wasn’t going to make a difference, no more than the light he made in the science lab was going to make a difference to lighting levels.

In this section, I have shown the children’s preference for and responses to practical, active and relevant learning. While some of the children have naturally been more self-reliant, they have still seen the benefit of working with others and being able to share the experience of learning to come to understand things. Uniquely, Emma plays lip service to the idea of team

work. As the star of her own life-show, she struggles to make space for this in her life.

The children have drawn on activities and events inside and outside of school to explain their experiences of learning. Some of these examples have also highlighted how well-placed intentions to make the learning more active and relevant has failed to engage and motivate learners as perhaps was expected. There is a need to make the purpose of learning explicit, and explain the relationship between what is being learned and what it will enable 'you' as learner to be able to do. This would also support those designing activities to understand the relationship of the children to that activity, and where relationships become disconnected. Corrigan (1979) noted the low level of boys' engagement with what school defined as 'leisure activities' in his own empirical research. He found that for the boys, the activities had been organised in such a way that they no longer felt at home with them. This disconnection with their familiarity, had shifted the power of the activity from the boys to the teachers, and in doing so had impacted their desire to participate.

The exploration of learning for these children, so far supports the view that where children are empowered in their learning, they are enthusiastic. Where there is autonomy in activity design they develop a thirst for creativity and responsibility. The discussion has, however, shown the differences in how children respond to activities. Good learning, which resonates with all children present, may be challenging to design.

The diversity of learning

As I look to understand how the children recognise and value good learning in all of its settings, I recall the definition of the necessary elements of learning provided by Alexander et al. (2010, p. 199), "the necessary elements in a coherent view of what it takes to become an educated person".

In my conversations with the children about learning, the word 'school' was not used unless first referenced by the children. I did not suppose, however, that school could be ignored as a place for learning, and so in the coming

pages it will be considered alongside the other locations identified by the children.

The 'where' and 'why' of learning: inside and outside of school

The examples presented in this section illustrate where learning takes place according to the children. These include preparation and experience, reality and real life, reward and recognition and concludes with a discussion of the pleasure of learning.

Preparation and experience

Alice tells me that she does most of her learning in school, but does do some learning outside too. Her narratives illustrate how she perceives a difference in the kind of learning she does in each type of environment,

In school

> "it teaches you, like when you're doing English, like, what is an adjective or adverb and there's lots of different like a noun, there's a pronoun and a normal noun and then there's something else with a noun…the list goes on.
>
> I think they're like trying to get you ready for high school. Just to get you ready so that when they ask you a question at high school you're like, 'yes I know that because of primary school.'"

and outside of school

> "Probably how to, like when you're walking in a park and you look at a tree and you say 'that tree's called that' and you're walking through and being able to treat nature well."

These passages highlight several understood differences. Firstly, in school-based learning, the lesson is sedentary, structured and perhaps formulaic. It is about the structure of English language, and her words "the list goes on", suggests a tedium and resigned acceptance of the checklist of things that

have to be learned in order to be ready for high school. While she might not enjoy it, she does appreciate and respond to the developmental and cumulative purpose of schooling and the preparation required to become a student in a different phase of education.

Conversely, in her example of learning outside of school, she is not in a building, but in the open, she is not being taught something, but is instead enquiring and recalling what something is called. The example and the language of inside versus outside shifts from a more didactic way of learning to one that is more agentic, liberating, and focussed on her particular interests.

While Alice highlights art-related GCSEs, and a possible design technology degree, her career choice as illustrator draws primarily on the learning and skills development she undertakes in her own bedroom and in her Mum's art studio. GCSEs and degrees are an accepted factual feature of the formal learning environment, which will enable her to progress her personal interests professionally.

Like Alice, Max makes the connection between primary and high school, and the fact that his primary school, Spirethorne*,* is preparation. He makes a connection between learning, knowledge and future ability:

> "This is my last year at Spirethorne. It's great that school is so important to me because that really got me started and then I'm going to a new school".

Max explains to me why we learn. He says,

> "Is about like, knowledge. So the knowledge will help you a lot and I think that is what learning is for. You need to learn otherwise you won't be good at anything. You need to know how to do it and when, and why."

His future aspirations for career are driven by home-based learning ("tinking"). Max's confidence in his abilities at school, and at home, underpinned by his role as House Captain, and his excitement at the "enrichment" afternoons he will have in his new school, suggest ease and confidence in both kinds of learning environment.

Daniel also considers that learning is preparation. However, his focus is on the preparation for life that he obtains outside of the classroom. Daniel is being prepared to be a "better person really". He says, "like when you're out and about you still need to think 'this is like a class really'", making the whole 'outside' world a classroom. Throughout Daniel's conversation there are examples of how he creates his lifeworld-classroom through the activities he is undertaking and following; especially football,

> "I think I learn just how to be more streetwise really, 'cos there's gonna be people who are more streetwise than others…. like last season I caught the boy with my metal studs and he went on the ground crying and stuff and so, then his Mum starting swearing at me and stuff…so [it teaches you to] like just get on with it really."

> "I think it teaches you like how to be a better person in a way, because you like meet different people"

Daniel explains the way in which playing for different clubs helped him settle into new groups of people, something which he will also need to do in his new school. In this new environment he will also have to be with kids more 'streetwise' than he is, "I'm going to Ransomes Academy, and that's like in a rough area and so that's gonna be like me and other more street wise kids again, so that should get me ready for real life. "

It is clear that Daniel values the preparation for life that learning gives him especially in relation to being a better and more streetwise person. He articulates a very clear distinction between school-learning and real-life learning. For Daniel, school is purely academic, and subject based; "I learn

life skills outside of school and when I learn my maths, English, science and so on its inside of school. That's what school is for". Academic achievement, "like more clever" is his back-up plan because, "if being a football player doesn't work out you need to be like you always need to have something there ready".

In these examples it can be seen how the children place different learning types, activities and purposes in different environments and contexts. It is the real-world, real life learning, in the park, street and tinking shed, which is fuelling their interests, connecting their current and future worlds.
The discussion in Chapter 5 showed how the children constructed their identities and understood relationships with others. There was an evident need for authenticity and real-ness. This need was also evident in practical activities, playing outdoors, recreating nature, loving 'cute animals', reading books about foster families, challenging relationships. It could also be seen in the ways in which the children preferred to learn.

Reality and real life

Reality and real life, experiences, relationships and the natural world underpin Lucy's understanding of the social world, her social and practical funds. She tells me that she learns at "school, and at home and on my phone and on Sky News".

> "I have sky news cos it helps me know what is going on in the world. Even though it might be scary you still need to know because then something could happen near you and it can be like that. So you need to be able to know how other peoples handled it.

I ask her where the most interesting place to learn is and she answers without hesitation;

> "David Attenborough. I could watch him for like days on end. He mostly talks about nature things. And I love nature. We're part of the RSPB, Wildlife Trust and National Trust".

In considering the purpose of learning through real life, Lucy starts to find out "what different people in the world are going through" so that you can "help someone" if you see them going through something similar. Learning these things will empower Lucy to affect change, and to support others in making those changes too.

Max's practical activities and learning preferences are also underpinned by the real world. He learns about historic real-life events and experiences from his Granny and Grandpa. He told me that he is "really interested in his Granny's father who was in the Navy and he fought in the war." He also said that his family has always climbed mountains and that "my Granny taught my Mum, and my Mum taught my Dad and she taught us". The activity of walking and the places that go with them, such as the Lakes, are places that are important to Max, but they are also places and activities that inform his "tinking." In testing his skills in his workshop, he is trying to recreate some of the technology that fits within the space of the Lake District mountains; the Mountain Goat.

Daniel also provides examples of how he draws on real-life football events to inform own behaviours. He clearly admires football and what he sees it represents through the stories and information he has learned, and embodied;

> "Like football can stop like actual like wars, because when Pele was playing in Africa, there was actually a civil war going on in Africa, and he stopped that playing …he stopped the whole civil war. That's why I believe it's the beautiful game.
>
> Like some people got killed at football matches and stuff. But there's also mistakes like from police and stewards like the Hillsborough disaster was a mistake from police and stuff. It's just like football knowledge because like we always do a moment of silence for the Hillsborough Disaster.

> There's so many things like happening at once in football because like it can also bring like miracles as well, because Leicester last season won the league without like nobody really thought they were going to.
>
> And like, but like, like Lionel Messi does his kiss up to his Grandma and I do like my kiss up to my Grandad. "

The facts he shared about Pele and Leicester's miracle demonstrate how he draws on his learning to find hope in the world. These public displays of family, peace, responsibility and loss shape how Daniel views the world, and positions himself within it to be a better person.

The examples of learning presented so far illustrate a personal connection to the real world for each of the children. The rewards for these connections are betterment, through personal and civic engagement. Lucy wants to use experience to help others, Max's mountain goat would rescue climbers, the rewards are not financial, economic or tangible.

While James and Emma both relate their learning to reality and real life, there is a difference between their responses and those of the other children in that they directly associate activity and learning with some kind of tangible reward. How they present this differs.

Reward and recognition

For James, the purpose of learning is the reward of getting the job you deserve, a causal, or transaction-based relationship of investment in and reward out. James is the first and only child to make this connection.

> "you get the job you deserve in a way, like if you got really bad, if you didn't do very well in school, and you got like, let's say a bin – what's it called? [bin man?] yes, that's not the best job, but then if you did really well and got like I don't know what you could get if you did really well. Could you be a teacher?"

As he named jobs (good and bad) above, I ask what he wants to do; if he knows and has reflected on his own performance, perhaps he will know what career he might deserve. He responded, “I don’t really think of a job, but I say something that helps people in some kind of way, even if it’s not physically like a doctor”. His response suggests that he is only focussed on the kind of person he wants to be rather than what he deserves to be through engagement with learning and consequent achievement. I consider if this answers my earlier question. Underneath words of a deserved career and rewards for hard work at school, his focus is actually on a set of attributes, which is much more aligned to other parts of our conversations. His interest in being kind and healthy and fit motivates his identified type of work, a role which would also enable him to helps others to be the same.

Emma, however, suggests the reward for learning is personal recognition for her “talents”, and preservation of appearance. Emma has worked hard to create a world where she feels that she is able, and recognisably competent on a public stage. She wants to be recognised for her abilities now. She tells me, “what I’m sad about is that I have never actually won a trophy in my life…I’ve never won a medal either other than those plastic ones from parties.” Perhaps her future actress self, with her myriad of talents, will secure her the awards and public acknowledgement she aspires for.

It is interesting that while Emma has linked her learning to reward and public recognition, she has lost sight of the pleasure she found in the activities. She has stopped talking about all the things she ‘loves’ to do. Does her drive for future recognition, and fear of failure, strip the activities of pleasure?

The pleasure in learning

Literature on early years education encourages the use of play in learning (Nutbrown, 1999, Dahlberg, 2009, Tinbergen, 1976, Tizard and Hughes, 2002). Nutbrown (1999, p. 7) urged “to learn truly, children need the freedom to play”, with play “generally considered the educational context par excellence of the pre-school years” (Tizard and Hughes, 2002, p. 25). As Donaldson (1997) highlights, however, the excitement and spontaneity of

learning, play and pleasure, in early years schooling has been replaced by anxiety and fear of failure as children progress.

I wonder if in the transition from play-based learning to formal education the pleasure and spontaneity of learning is lost or at least tarnished for some of these children. In conversations about out-of-school learning, Jess, Max and James express pleasure in their practical learning experiences, and sometimes refer to the learning activities as “play”, for example, Max talks about “playing” while he is “tinking”. This language is not repeated when they talk about formal learning experiences.

The impact of assessment and children’s recognition of the need to succeed, or risk of failure could indeed be factors in the reactions of the children in this project. In the last year of primary education these children all undertake Standard Attainment Tests (SATs), which would be fresh in their minds when we first meet. Certainly, SATs were mentioned by many of the children, with Emma, Daniel and Lucy all referencing their need for additional support in Maths, outside of school. Jess also mentioned SATs, and her own scores, recognising that “I didn’t do really well in my SATs scores…I don’t think I worked as hard as I could have”. I don’t know how these SATs would have been presented in terms of an assessment activity to these children. There is an understanding of the need for assessment (Daniel – “I do see why we do [assessment] but I just don’t like them because you’re under so much pressure”) and I wonder if the children had been told, in school and possibly at home, that these assessment practices would begin the lead up to GCSE and possibly beyond. Daniel had said, “It’s not really over, because like you have to do some sort of assessment again”.

Daniel is right when he acknowledges that from this point forward education in school will be shaped by assessment of ability, the weights and measures of the school system. The children understand how there is a kind of classification within the classroom, Alice and Lucy have both spoken about progressing to different tables in class as they achieve more, and how some activities were delivered to ‘mixed tables’ to foster peer learning.

In the Cambridge Review, Harlen (2010), considered the use of assessment and testing practices in the English Education system, noting that children in England are assessed more than anywhere else, and challenged “what’s it all for?” (p. 314). Oswell (2013) recognised that schools are structures which seek to standardise the structure of childhood, and the use of tests, to measure children against expected levels of attainment is one such way. Formal education has shifted from historical ‘setting’ and fixed ability practices (Gillard, 2009), to ones, such as *Learning without Limits*, which advocate “transformability” and “learning capacity” (Hart and Drummond, 2014, Kerridge, 2017). As Harlen (2010) concluded, the stress that SATs put children, as well as teachers, under does more harm than good, disadvantaging pupils who are unable to access private tutors, restricting the curriculum, and “subverting the goal of learning for its own sake” (p. 318).

In this section of the chapter I have entered into and explored the learning worlds of the children in more depth, looking at the where of learning activities and what the children are seeing as the drivers for the learning they undertake. In looking at these through themes, of preparation, reality and real life, I have illustrated that the children are categorising their learning and the places it takes place in. Daniel’s words that “school isn’t for life skills, it’s for learning English and Maths”, illustrates this point particularly well. There is a disconnect between the real-world and the school-world, as was shown through our discussion on ‘reality and real life’ above.

This disconnect is recognised in literature looking at how the worlds of learning can or could be “bridged” (Subero et al., 2016) and which underpins the Funds of Knowledge (FOK) way of working (Gonzalez et al., 2005, Zipin, 2009). Part of this may be driven by the role and position of the child in each of the learning locations and the impact on relationships between themselves, significant others and ‘others’ within those worlds. It is this that I will consider in the final part of this chapter.

What we have also learned is that children are connecting learning with future goals and ideas for careers as far as they have them at this point, e.g. illustrator, inventor, footballer, but very few of the children are making these

career choices based on enjoyment of formal education. This is particularly interesting when they are clearly making a connection between primary school as preparation for high school, and high school as a preparation for jobs. Yet, they recognise the importance of SATS, modifying behaviours, and perhaps responding to the value placed on school-based learning by others in their social spaces.

We have heard that Daniel is seeing school as a backup plan, and that Jess and Alice are seeing it as a possible vehicle for achievement, but their pleasure in learning and motivation for learning is not impacted by school as a space, or through its relationships. The narratives of the children here, seem to suggest that for them the increasing disconnect between learning inside and outside of school is further impacting on their pleasure of learning and the understanding of its purpose in its broadest sense. I wonder, if, as children in their final year of primary education, the focus on exams has 'hijacked' more social, active and enjoyable learning.

This final section of this chapter, will consider this and how the experience of learning presented by the children affects their constructed identity as learner.

"Learner": identity, ability, potential and aspiration

We have heard the children express preferences for practical and active learning and describe differences in the learning that takes place inside and outside of school. They are saying that there is more pleasure for them in learning which takes place outside, and that while learning in both kinds of experience allows them to prepare for their futures, they perceive that in-school learning focusses on their cleverness, while outside-of-school develops life skills. Their current interests inform their future selves, and motivate engagement with activities, and provide platforms on which they can build and test a range of attributes and characteristics used to define themselves as individual beings.

In this final discussion, I will explore how the differing learning spaces identified, limit or enable interaction and agency as learner, and how this informs the identities the children develop.

Roles, practices and agency in learning systems

Giddens (1979) explains that within social systems people (actors) occupy particular positions in relation to each other, and with these particular roles come accepted identities, obligations and prerogatives which are both dictated by the system and reinforced by the actors and actions within it. Application of this concept to learning environments, illustrates that in each there is an accepted role for the child, parent, teacher, club leader and so on. While there is a move to recognise the agency of children within these spaces, and recognise them as experts in their own cultures, the spaces within which children can truly do this are becoming fewer, with more of their time becoming 'scholarised' as schools extend their reach through breakfast clubs, after school homework clubs and a host of organised holiday activities (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002, Mayall, 2010).

In response, the children are trying to carve new spaces for themselves, in bedrooms (Jess, Alice, Lucy, Emma) and online (Daniel, Jess, Lucy and Alice) in order to be able to be themselves.

In the classrooms themselves, approaches such as *Learning without Limits* increasingly encourage children to reflect upon learning achievement, (Bragg, 2016, Hart and Drummond, 2014), and to shape their learning (Kerridge, 2017). There has been evidence of some of these practices in the stories recounted by the children in this project, including James' travel-budget maths project. The narratives also highlight how attempts to make learning practical and relatable may be misplaced, and opportunities to make learning less "boring" through self-direction and creative activities, may be lost.

Esser (2016, p. 59) tells us that children "act on the basis of possibilities, wishes, aims and cultural practices". Agency takes place through a host of dynamic interactions, between people (specifically in this writing, children)

and objects, institutions and regulations; human and non-human entities (Hutchby et al., 1998). The perceived success of these dynamic interactions, measured through the reactions of others in the activity, directly informs the confidence of the children. Through these they develop their sense of self belief and self-efficacy as competent and able. This is their learner identity.

Identity as learners and aspirational selves

In this chapter we have seen how these children identify as learners. In some arenas they demonstrate confidence, while in others they challenge or disengage with the learning opportunities they have. The data I have gathered and explored through these chapters has shown that children see purposes to learning, and enjoy elements and activities resulting in learning.

In learning spaces, their identities are muddled, as they shift between child questioning rules and instructions, to children complying with expectations, frustrated by the need to do things that are based on legitimised “normative prescriptions” (Giddens, 1979, p. 102) that they do not share or understand.

There is considerable literature discussing the interconnection of identity and education, exploring resistance, engagement, anxiety, achievement and creation (Lucey and Reay, 2000, Bottrell, 2007, Jeffrey, 2008, Hand and Gresalfi, 2015). Esteban-Guitart (2016, p. 107) states “we are the result of our participation in educational practices … Identity involves conceiving the learner not only as a cognitive agent but also as an experiential, emotional, intellectual agent”.

As national and local policies urge further engagement with learning to increase aspiration and success, the development of a confident and competent learner identity must, therefore, be critical to the development of *raised* aspirations, if we conclude that low aspirations exist.

Aspiration is often related to the educational and occupational outcomes that children may or may not achieve. There is much research and debate (Baker et al., 2014, Spohrer, 2011) and a number of UK government policies and strategies aimed at raising what are often perceived to be low levels of aspiration in particular groups of society – namely those situated poor(er),

areas (Department for Education, 2017b, Social Exclusion Taskforce, 2008). These policies focus on a perceived vicious circle between low aspiration, low educational attainment, lower occupational status' spiralling through families and generations.

Literature on the concept of aspiration, broadly, and with regard to academic achievement talks about a child's need for agency, motivation, a sense of mastery and a view of self through eyes of others (peers, teachers, family) and self-efficacy (Klassen, 2010, Bandura et al., 1996, Gorard et al., 2012). In each of the child participants here, we see that they have the ability to enact agency in a learning environment, although it may not always be in the way that would meet expected behaviours. Intentional learning and action is motivated by a personal interest in the subject.

Max, Emma, James, Daniel and Alice have developed and articulated positive images as learners and as future young people. The language used (Appendix 4) shows them using phrases such as "popular", "in charge", "charming", "funny", healthy", "fit", street wise", "creative"; all words which resonate with definitions of confidence suggested by Tett and Maclachlan (2007).

For Lucy and Jess there is a difference in the 'I' they see now and the 'I' they want to become. The language of current world self-descriptions is fearful, emotional, anxious, but the worlds they see for themselves in the future, define them as "not a quitter", "inspirer", "unique" and with a career.

The discussion in this section has explored how the children's sense of identity, and confidence as learner differs according to the type of activity and space in which the activity, the social interaction takes place. Just as agency and childhood, concepts which weave throughout this thesis cannot be understood as universal phenomena, the same is true for identity as learner, and identity as individual child. It is interesting to consider how the focus on aspirational self draws primarily on the performance and engagement of the children in informal learning, which itself is influenced by the identity formed though the practices and experiences of formal learning. The children in this

study have expressed differing and nuanced identities in the formal learning environments reflected, does this mean that they have lower aspirations?

I don't think so. The evidence presented in this discussion indicates that they do have aspirations, to be nice, pretty, better, inventors, illustrators, 'slime makers', but these activities are not explicitly associated with the formal learning environment, activities, or people located within them. Would these children necessarily articulate these as aspirations for their futures? Perhaps not, they are what they want to do now, the future is yet to come.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have worked through the narratives of the children in an attempt to come to know them as learners. I have explored the places of learning, what this learning means to them now, and as a potential future self.

I have learned that the children acknowledge that they encounter learning in different spaces. Some of these spaces; home, "tinking sheds", sports pitches and the outdoors, support them as engaged learner. They are able to take ownership in the learning; self-directing projects, solving problems, stretching their capacity and understanding. In other locations, primarily the school classroom, the children say that they are subject to rules which make no sense to them, learning activities which serve no obvious purpose, and assessments which just add pressure. As this is year 6 in their schooling, fresh memories of SATS may be adding emphasis of this for them. It is their perception.

The children also understand differences in the purpose of learning. Good learning is learning which they can relate to, they understand why they need to know it, and what the knowledge can be used for. They need to be able to relate to it (it aligns to personal interests and chosen activities), and for it to have explicit relevance and impact in the lives. These are the activities which shape their current view of their future selves. Where the learning encountered has these attributes, children engage and are able to shape learning to further connect with their interests, and are motivated to learn and

find out more. However, I suggest that as Taylor (1992) notes about identity, we need to know where we have come from to be able to know ourselves now – and in the future, so we need to ensure we acquire our educational foundations to support later learning and progression. We must ensure we make the cumulative or progressive nature of learning and curriculum more explicit in our emphasising this in education delivery.

Funds of Knowledge as a theoretical framework highlights the importance and value of social and practical fund types. It also highlighted the importance of context, relationships and the potential to own, shape and stretch learning. These aspects have been evidenced as core to the children's understanding and perception of learning, and their identification of preferred pedagogies and experiences.

Rogoff (1994) acknowledges that much informal learning activity (i.e. that outside of the classroom) is inherently valuable, but concludes that this activity is valuable because it prepares the children for adulthood. The children in this project value these activities for the opportunities they provide now, allowing to explore their 'being' rather than their 'becoming'.

In the concluding chapter I will consider how the findings of this project could reshape some of our understandings, and help us to understand how learning and education shape the lives of at least this group of children. Having already worked through the rich descriptions provided by the children I will define the essence of learning as these children have experienced it, in line with the principles of the phenomenological approach. I will then consider what this means for me in my role as educational professional working in environment of widening participation, attainment and engagement rhetoric.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Introduction

This study was undertaken in response to my personal and professional concerns about the rhetoric of low aspiration in disadvantaged communities, the promotion of higher education (HE) as part of the solution to raise aspirations, and the absence of children's voice in discussions of aspirations and learning. To answer these concerns the research project addressed the following three questions: (1) how do school children portray their current and future worlds and themselves within it, (2) where is learning located within their current and future worlds and (3) what places are associated with learning and how are they perceived?

The study was situated in a theoretical framework of Funds of Identity (FOI) (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) and Funds of Knowledge (FOK) (Gonzalez et al., 2005, Moll et al., 1992). These frameworks supported an understanding of learning beyond that obtained in school, and recognised the role of social and cultural capitals in the development of self-identity.

In-depth analysis and discussions of the children's development of identity, prevalence of funds, and location of learning, led to the following key findings.

1. The children in this study, aged 11, populate their life worlds predominantly from the social and practical funds as defined by Esteban-Guitart (2012). The cultural, geographical and institutional funds in the children's lives are often embedded in the social and practical funds. These provide opportunity for action and social interaction, supported through positive and nurturing relationships. These relationships also provide the children with the vehicles to test and demonstrate their agency. They were knowledgeable about their life worlds, able to articulate conditions and contexts and reflect upon their own behaviours and reactions to it.

2. When focussing on the learning in their lives, they placed more value on practical and relevant learning experiences, underpinned by positive and supportive relationships. The social and practical funds which supported agency drove engagement with learning. This was true for the different types of learning the children identified, and the different spaces the learning took place in.

3. Future selves and life worlds were too far away. The future, and its associated aspirations were not constant companions shaping behaviours or actions, particularly when thinking about what they might hope to achieve as successful adults. The children recognised (perhaps through the responses of others) the importance of academic schooling as preparation for a job, and managed behaviours accordingly. Yet, overall, the future appeared as an institution that they would gain access to as they finished the 'being' of their 'now'.

In this concluding chapter I will discuss what each of the findings means for the key constructs of this research project, namely aspiration and learning. I will reflect upon what new understandings might mean for agendas such as Widening Participation (WP) and the raising of limited aspirations. Returning to the phenomenological underpinning of the research methodology, I will present the eidos of learning as understood and experienced by the research participants, before reflecting on how the findings could be extended and tested further. The thesis will conclude with a moment of reflection, understanding what the experience of conducting the research has been for me, and the lasting personal impact of my work.

I will begin with a reflection on the limitations and strengths of the study.

Strengths and limitations of the research: a critical review

As a novice researcher, particularly, understanding the strengths and limitations of the research methods used to enable voices to be heard is critical for my own practice. It is also critical to lay these bare when considering the weight of any claim I wish to make to the creation of new knowledge.

This study was designed to give a small group of children unadulterated voice. Listening to the unadulterated voice of children as research participants in phenomenological enquiry is an opportunity to understand what it is like to be learning in the world, as a child (Danaher and Briod, 2005). Grover (2004, p. 84) writes

> "when children are permitted in those rare cases to become active participants telling their own story in their own way, the research experience is often personally moving, meaningful and the data provided is rich and complex. "

The focus of the study was not on learning within a formal education environment, nor was it a focus to relate this discourse to sets of socio-economic attributes. The study was located in an urban area, defined as being of low socio-economic status, one where children had been defined as having low aspirations and opportunities, and one which could be considered to be within a catchment area for my own University.

A discussion of limitations

The influence of the friendship group

Six of the seven children in this research project were part of a friendship group. There were known to each other, and on the basis of this, I need to carefully reflect on whether this was a limitation to the study. Did the friendship group mean that children would have opportunity to share stories which could influence the individual discourses collected?

While the children can be understood as a group of friends, recruiting a group of friends was not a recruitment strategy, this was not designed as a group research piece, I worked with each of the children as individuals. Working through the transcripts, I can see that the children responded as individuals. They did not reference each other in their narratives, they did not ask about the other children's interviews, they did not check to see if what they were telling me had been told to me before. The interviews also reveal the children to be a part of multiple and extended physical and virtual

friendship groups, the relationships here are just one proportion of a larger network.

It is true that there were similar stories within the narratives, but these related to activities undertaken, the children expressed different reactions and responses to shared learning experiences. The children also spoke of experiences and activities in which they had no connection with each other. There was no evidence of pre-planned answers or, 'secret cooperation'.

Research participants: representation

A small research group, in this case only seven participants means that this data cannot claim to be widely representative of the experience of all children at the same age. While six of the children could be defined as being a part of a friendship group, it would be wrong to try to understand this group of children as a distinct and socially isolated friendship group, or to assume that as friends they are all from the same socio-economic background.

It would be naïve to expect that the experiences of children growing up in the same area to be markedly different from each other. While there is a commonality in childhood as a life stage, within a similar social landscape, these voices express the uniqueness and diversity of their experiences of being and acting.

While working with a larger group of children would have provided more individual data sets, these too would have been from the same areas. These individual children represent themselves. Their diversity, and sameness reflects and represents the diversity and sameness across their wider social network, and in attendance of their different schools.

Year 6 study

The Year 6 curriculum in both schools references the curriculum for Personal Social and Health Education, and a focus on looking to the future, coping with change, working with a team, citizen behaviours and wellbeing. All of these are reflected, differently, in the children's narratives presented here. Can I say that this directly influenced the children's conversations or can I

understand the presence of this in narratives as being a true reflection of the individual children's "ultimate concerns" (Archer, 2012), or of what is important to them (Taylor, 1992)?

This is a school year in which the children's learning may have been increasingly focussed on preparation and successful passing of exams. It is likely, that as Daniel notes, this means that their lives have been paused while they study, and so I might expect that the data I have here on perception of school, and in school learning has been influenced by this. However, this work deliberately adopted a wider lens on learning. Children looked through that lens, and were able to describe engaging learning, and to make connections across learning spaces and activities. I believe that this is the important finding in this work.

A discussion of strengths

Authentic discourses

Hearing the unadulterated voice of children was an underlying principle to this work. I designed my methods and venue to ensure that this could happen, using a location which while known, was outside of spaces in which these children regularly encountered adults, i.e. their homes or schools.

I acknowledge that I was also an adult in the room, and that as written by Becker (1996, p. 61), "whenever a social scientist is present, the situation is not just what it would have been without the social scientist", but I took deliberate steps to settle the children, responding to their questions, dressing neutrally, and enabling them to work at their pace.

I have been able to hear the voices of seven children, who were fully engaged with the interviews and tasks in front of them, who considered their responses, and enabled me to see into their worlds. The children shaped the starting points and directions of travel for the conversations, through research methods which prompted self-reflection. The narratives were collected away from other children, and other adults, in an empty room, a blank canvas for their expression. The resulting data, reported here directly from the transcripts, provides readers with the opportunity to experience the

worlds of the children for themselves, responding emotionally and viscerally as I have in my own work.

This is how I have been able to hear that they have agency, understand and can negotiate in their life worlds, and do not have low aspirations, rather aspirations which at the moment, do not align with those policy makers wish them to have.

Revisiting the constructs: new understandings?

Learning

Through the high appropriation of social and practical funds, the children have shown; that they live in worlds which enable them to draw on resources through a range of media, are not constrained by location. They challenge a more traditional view of the where, how and what of learning.

The children understand school-based learning as subject (curriculum) driven, it serves to ensure that they learn particular things, with progression and achievement assessed against age-related and standardised frameworks. Daniel and Jess both reference SATS, and several allude to the use of tutors to improve their ability in maths. The children's narratives indicate that, often, the purpose of what was being learned was lost, perhaps despite a teacher's best efforts to make the learning recognisable and activity driven, and despite an awareness of the role of SATs, and other academic qualifications in preparation for a future career. The purpose and connection to real life was not explicit.

While the children were able to identify learning taking place in a range of environments, activities and interactions e.g. parks, forests, mountains, pools, reading, nature, television, phone etc., there is an explicit difference articulated between learning to achieve qualifications and exams, and that which provides them with a framework for being the best person they can be; streetwise, environmentally conscious and inspirational. Von Kotze (2002) draws our attention to society defined values for learning, development and knowledge. Those associated with gaining better employment opportunities having more "cash value" while those associated with daily life and living

having more “life value”. The children also recognised this difference, and articulated an increased value for, and motivation to learn “life value” knowledge. Through this knowledge, they had increased agency and autonomy, and were able to stretch their learning both independently and through collaboration with others.

For these children, the kind of knowledge and learning which mostly strongly informed their learner identity was positioned firmly outside of the school environment.

Learner identity

Constructions of learner identity recognise confidence, self-regulation and motivation as key elements for successful learner engagement (Bandura et al., 1996). Autonomy, respect, exploring and fostering skill are acknowledged as part of a cohesive and successful educated person (Hartley-Brewer, 2010). The participants in this project embody these attributes and values, but while Bandura et al. (1996) focus on the connection between self-efficacy and academic functioning, the children here, illustrate the connection between self-efficacy and knowledge gained in all contexts and communities of practice. If the child is confident and able to self-direct learning outside of school, they can apply these same skills inside. The difference in performance becomes evident if the learning is less ‘connected’ to their lives, or their life worlds.

The challenge for schools, or perhaps communities more widely, is how the real-worlds experiences can be captured and brought together with formal education to reconnect learning environments (Zipin, 2009, Zipin et al., 2012).

In summary

Learning which can be connected to the real life worlds is perceived as more 'ownable', valuable, relevant and relatable.

Learning which can be connected to real life, or personal interests, motivates. It is stretching. Learners can go on to make further connections through exploration and creative action.

A sense of self as competent and effective learner, developed in -situ influences identity in other spaces, and the sense of capacity to be able to achieve and the .

Aspiration

This important 'take-away' point paves the way to the consideration of the construct of aspiration. This research has shown that the children's future is firmly rooted in the present, when asked to present their envisaged future self and future life world, there was little to distinguish between the two.

Current self versus Future self

The children's self-portraits showed that their future selves were difficult to disentangle from how they see themselves now. Taylor (1992, p. 34) wrote "we are selves only in that certain issues matter for us. What I am as self, my identity, is essentially defined by the ways things have significance for me", and, Elliott (2014, p. 31) tells us that we "fashion our own selfhood through engagement with other selves", both authors suggesting that our sense of being as individuals within society is shaped by who and what is known now. So, if we don't know who and what will shape our lives in the future, how can we define future selves?

In his conversation with me, James articulated the challenge of seeing the future, it was not yet something he considered. Other children, when considering the future, used language with negative connotations; 'scary', or

‘leaving things behind’. This suggested that these children were not ready to consider a world separate to the one they lived in now, where things, people, places that were still very much a part of their everyday lives would, potentially, be absent. These familiar people, places, cultures, artefacts that the children redrew in their second future-gazing portraits are part of their cultural capital. I question if their continued presence should be understood as the sign of limited vision and horizons or as a kind of security blanket or system (Giddens, 1979), the familiar; a “deep seated ontological security” (Shilling, 1992, p. 83). To assume the former negates the children’s potential as active and knowledgeable agents. The evidence presented in this thesis shows them to be very active and very knowledgeable.

Aspiration for …

While the construct of aspiration in our society may relate to lifestyle, role, career or job role (Brown, 2011), government policy and rhetoric place the focus of aspiration on further (higher) education, and an economically successful prospective career. In research literature, causal links between family background, disadvantage, low educational outcomes and limited horizons and opportunities are argued and challenged (Baker et al., 2014, Brown, 2011, Gorard et al., 2012, Kintrea et al., 2015).

In this project though, situated in a geographical area cited as producing children at risk of limited horizons (Department for Education, 2017a, p. 8), I did not hear the voices of children who were disengaged with a future self, or even uninterested. I heard voices of children who were still establishing their current selves, and looking for ways in which they could be “better people”, more supportive to family and friends, more civically aware, better citizens. These are attributes they desired for themselves now, and for their future selves, as well as being attributes they looked for in the interactions with the individuals and role-representations they connected with now.

I had assumed that these children might have ‘fanciful’ aspirations, ones which may have been experienced only through media, disconnected from their real lives. In reality, aspirations for their future worlds largely reflected their current experiences. I saw the same people, activities and places

reappearing, and it became evident that thinking about a time and place far removed from their 'todays' was not something they spent time doing. Nevertheless, this information is useful in understanding a construct of aspiration which sees the future as much more of an extension of current self, and current world, rather than a limited vista based on opportunity.

For these children, the sense of self that they had and were continuing to develop was the result of the interactions they experienced, the impact of the relationships and activities of their current world lives. The consequence and influence of these experiences can be seen in how the children looked at the world around them. It seems to me that rather than being fixed, limited, disengaged, the children are searching for positive selves; selves which are shaped through interactions with others. Their current self is both developed and developing in response to these relationships and interconnections, interactions which would in turn be shaped by the responses of others, now and tomorrow.

This desire to be situated within a community of positive selves resonates with the work of Fredrickson (2001) and Lewis (2011, p. 260), that joy, creativity, positive behaviours and attitudes "facilitate the development of individuals who become lifelong learners". Rather than place the burden of this solely on the shoulders of the child, each person in the social group must take responsibility and develop and maintain their own joy, creativity and supportive approach to the learning relationship.

In summary

Aspiration is more than just a desire for social progression, the right career, and monetary reward.

Civic values; good citizenship are valued ways of being, and becoming. Lifeworld, learning and thick, multi-stranded relationships support the achievement of these kinds of aspiration.

While the future is embedded in the current through familiar landscapes, activities and relationships, as space-time concept, 'the future', it can be understood as an institution which is separate and boundaried, one that has not yet been entered.

The impact for widening participation: a personal and professional reflection

In the introduction to this thesis I positioned myself as education professional working in the context of widening participation (WP). As I have progressed through this project I have begun to reflect more upon our institutional approach to increasing social mobility through increased access to and participation in HE. My own professional progression affords me increased opportunity to shape our work.

While this study does not focus specifically on the ideology, success or otherwise of the WP agenda, the findings of this research project do suggest that the driving assumption that those from disadvantaged backgrounds have low aspirations, may, at least be flawed. The following pages present recommendations for ongoing WP work, at a macro level (policy based on assumption for aspiration) and micro level (local initiatives to work with young children.)

Policy and aspiration

The research findings, presented here, that these children do not have a poverty of aspiration is congruent with the empirical studies of Baker et al. (2014) and Archer et al. (2014). Both found that the children participating were able to articulate possible career choices, and look towards university participation. Being aspirational, therefore, does not appear to be an attribute limited to those of elite, or higher social classes. So, where is the evidence that aspiration is class-limiting, or that it impacts levels of educational attainment and social progression?

The work of both Cummings et al. (2012) and Gorard and See (2013) found that there is insufficient evidence to support a causal link between raised aspirations and raised educational attainment. Indeed, the findings of my own project indicate how the children recognise a need to improve their maths scores, to meet the demands of the credentialist educational system, and they are aware of this while articulating aspirations which are valuable and will impact their future self and the lives of those around them. The focus for their future lives, however, is on being a 'better person', not necessarily on a progression to being in a professional, white collar career.

The lack of evidence, causal link and a different perception of aspiration suggests that the WP agenda needs to adopt a different lens. I suggest that policy pledges that "future generations should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in HE, and to achieve successful and rewarding careers" (Office for Students, 2018, p. 3), must be challenged to really make a difference to social inequality. Within this debate, I wonder if the choice not to go to University has become lost or perhaps even stigmatised; if you choose not to go to University are you failing to maximise your economic potential and reducing your contribution to society and social transformation? Kahn (2017, p. 129) argues that "emancipation occurs when needs are identified by individuals or groups on their own behalf, rather than when they are determined for them by others". Is policy and Access and Participation moving to make that choice on everyone's behalf?

To truly improve social inequality, through education, I believe we need to think differently. Rather than encourage people to move away from their socio-demographic roots, we should encourage them to "honour their cultural-historical lives" (Zipin et al., 2012, p. 181), and so work to reverse the view that the non-elite all need saving.

Widening participation needs to become more than a policy, and step back from being an exercise in recruitment. Indeed, the recent Augar Report, the most recent review into post-18 education and funding in the UK notes, simply "increasing the sheer volume of tertiary education does not necessarily translate into social, economic and personal good" (Augar et al., 2019, p.25). Instead, WP needs to be a pedagogy in its own right (Elliott, 2018), supporting complex lives and supporting diversity of needs and dispositions. I argue that this is not a pedagogy for tertiary education, but one which needs to be embedded into curricula from primary years, so that as children develop their identity through their learning experiences, and learn through the development of their identity, the self they develop is confident, resilient, effective and able to grow personally and intellectually. For universities, this means embracing their positions as "major players in the expansion of imaginations" (Zeldin, 2009, xii) and working with communities to ensure graduates of both secondary and tertiary education have the imagination and critical skills to change social structures, effect change and build their future worlds.

Transforming inequality for all

Universities have increasing demands placed upon them to demonstrate improved learning and teaching, excellent student experience, impact of WP. The plethora of metrics and league tables across all levels of education has resulted in 'quick fixes', marginalising "the importance of moral judgment and professional responsibility" (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009, p. 31). Austerity demands that money received through access and participation plans is used efficiently, and maximises value for money. The target group of WP, then, becomes narrower, creating layers, or hierarches of disadvantage.

The articulation of future selves as morally responsible global citizens, articulated by James, Lucy and Daniel, allows us to understand aspiration through a lens of civic responsibility; a foundation stone of social transformation. Social transformation encourages communities to work collectively, to create better lives for everyone within them, rather than some. I believe that it recognises the potential in everyone, echoing the FOK premise that everyone has knowledge, and that this sustains communities and households.

The current WP focus on aspiration for HE has, I suggest, muddled access and recruitment. To redress this, UOS should be bold, take a step back and refocus. Everybody has aspirations. Everybody has a right to be supported in achieving them. We have a key role to play in improving access to a better way of being and living for all in their community.

Steps towards change: informing local practice

Making changes to policy at a macro level is far from being an easy task, however, I believe there are steps I can take at a micro level which will enable the University of Suffolk (UOS) to widen its impact, to reach all within its communities, not just those who choose to enter HE. In adopting the principles of Access and Participation, which demand an evidenced narrative of how and why a change is expected to happen in a particular context, it would be possible to make this wider impact explicit.

Know our communities

As my project has shown, when considering future selves, the children located themselves in socio-cultural spaces which reflected their current worlds. There was a need for authenticity, and fidelity to self. This 'self' was largely informed by, and in response to those in their family and increasingly through online, potentially global networks. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the confidence and expectations of key 'stakeholders' in these spaces impacts on what the children feel able, and permitted to do (St. Clair and Benjamin, 2011, Harrison and Waller, 2018). UOS is a community-focussed university, and aspires to have "a clear, measurable and positive impact on the economic, cultural and educational lives of our communities

and of our students" (University of Suffolk, 2018a, p. 5), to "create agile graduates who will be ambassadors for education in their own communities, with the confidence and experience to be successful in their career of choice" (p. 6).

To succeed, I believe we must do more to bring stakeholders, communities and their realities into our curricula. While programmes encourage the application of theory to practice, they must also be designed to permit the application of practice (including the practice of living in a particular social community) to theory.

The 2017 report by the Higher Education Policy Institute and Brightside (Hillman, 2017), notes that the principle behind outreach is to dispel the idea that "HE is not for the likes of me" (Clarke, 2017, p. 19) (see also Archer et al. (2007) and Reay et al. (2010).) This principle is established on the basis that the dispositions of those from disadvantaged backgrounds are at odds with those dominant in HE. This may be true, but FOK, and the work of Zipin (2009) show the potential of what could be achieved if universities were to become more inclusive in their acknowledgement of their student's diverse lifeworlds and experiences.

Support the development of future selves

My project has shown that at an age where children and young people become the target of outreach activities, their strong sense of current self informs their future self. Any other self else is still a distant entity. Considered together with a scarcity of evidence for low aspirations, I wonder how we work with children to strategically develop a sense of future self with opportunities and potential, which may or may not include university participation.

The work of Harrison (2018) helps us to understand what could be achieved if WP activities supported children to develop clearer understandings of their potentials. A dominant theme in the empirical work of Oyserman et al. (2007), Oyserman et al. (2006), Oyserman et al. (2002) is how enabling young people to build on their current worlds, connecting "present and future

at their own pace" (Oyserman et al., 2002, p. 323) and importantly strategising how to achieve these goals can motivate greater engagement with learning, and promote achievement and success.

Through understanding our communities, and being mindful of our graduate destinations and the reality of the environments in which our students live (St Clair et al., 2013, Zipin et al., 2015) we can support children in developing tools and strategies to be effective, resilient and confident from a young age, and to build pathways via which they can progress to achieve their future selves.

As the newly appointed Director of Learning and Teaching, for UOS, I have a key role to play in developing our Access and Participation Plan. As part of this work I will work with colleagues to understand WP through a new lens, one which sees opportunity for positive impact outside of HE participation. While government funded activities must focus on increasing participation in HE, we should expand activities to increase engagement with learning more broadly, and support achievement of multiple potentials.

I will explore how we position our university, through further research and collaboration. I will encourage the development of relationships with primary and early years providers, asking how we can work across communities to support children in developing a sense of possible self, drawing on their funds of identity and expanding their funds of knowledge. This should be done through play, informal and formal learning, building connections across learning opportunities, to facilitate the development of strategies for success. I will work with our Students' Union to explore how we can create opportunities for our students to become agents of change in our local communities and more widely.

As a University we will help our communities to define success individually and collectively in our current and future geographies.

Finding eidos

Before concluding thesis, I must return to the phenomenological underpinnings and the search for the essence or eidos of learning as understood and experienced by James, Alice, Daniel, Max, Jess, Lucy and Emma. In reaching this eidos, the tangled constructs of engagement, learning and aspiration as experienced by these children have been explored, untangled and reconnected to enable to me to suggest the following description,

Learning is a fluid, social and active practice. It fosters agency and empowerment, curiosity and betterment. It is betterment of the whole, for the whole. It is betterment that must be rooted in the present if it is to be successful and ongoing into the future.

The children have shown me that learning is everywhere, some of it is underpinned by a need to acquire society-approved credentials, some of it leads to being a more engaged local, national or even global citizen, even if global resides in our pockets.

Learning is not just the preserve of those who choose to enter the world of HE, to seek higher cash-value jobs, but as Von Kotze (2002) tells us, learning is for living.

Further areas of research

The experience gained from undertaking this research has demonstrated the ability young children, on the cusp of adolescence have to express themselves agentically, to manage and participate in a range of interactions and to differentiate between types of learning experiences and their perceived purpose.

Through the use of phenomenological reduction, voice-centred relational analysis and reflexive bracketing I have endeavoured to hear the different voices, but appropriation of language and opinion, particularly in an attempt to give the right answer can be hard to dis-entangle and so further detailed

examination of the development and evolution of the children's voices would be useful.

In first considering this project I had hoped to be able to follow this development of voice with a quasi-longitudinal study. There are educational and life-cycle milestones in children's lives as they begin to identify with others, and it would be beneficial to gain greater understanding of influence and impact on learning preferences and assimilation of funds through a longitudinal study, helping to design better practices and intervention of informal and formal education.

Finally, we have heard the differences in identity through this project, from a small group of participants. The opportunity to hear more voices, and understand more identities may give even greater understanding of the children in this area, and well as those in other identified 'Social Mobility and Opportunity Areas[3]' for WP and aspirational improvement.

A moment of reflection

My study was born from a professional perspective on learning and educational attainment and a personal experience as a child who would now be defined as coming from a widening participation background. My life journey is considerably different from others in my immediate family and the social network I grew up in. However, I did not plan this, this was not my aspiration, it is something that happened, one day.

As a professional I have sat in committee meetings listening to academics explain WP to our students at the same table, in essence attempting to describing them, to them. This has increased my discomfort, and motivated me to think differently, to find another way of knowing and understanding. I have become increasingly aware that the policies set nationally drive our local work, but it's often one-directional, how often does our, perhaps better placed, understanding of application in-situ inform the policies?

[3] See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-and-opportunity-areas

I have found this process of research both challenging and rewarding, not least in my own development academically to achieve this goal, but also in managing reactions and developing my own voice in this environment, and being 'brave' enough to share my findings and my thoughts with those around me. Burnard et al. (2018, p. 41) write that "opening one's self to new ways of thinking and ways of being is profoundly challenging and unsettling", I have found this to be true in several ways. Through this study, not only have I challenged myself academically, and navigated a kind of imposter syndrome, I have found myself struggling to bring others from my 'out-of-work' life along with me, and wondered at my right to question institutional purpose and agenda.

As I move towards the final pages, I reflect upon the journey and can see how far I have developed professionally and recognise the immense value in being able to contextualise my practices, and the ways in which this project's findings are already influencing my sense of professional purpose, and my professional voice. As I continue to evolve as education professional, I am already identifying ways in which the opportunities this work has provided me to learn can be applied to other challenges, perhaps the attainment differential, or even challenging cultural attitudes and approaches to pedagogical practice.

I will take from this a new sense of purpose, one where I work with colleagues to shape a new experience for our students, and work with parties outside of HE to motivate and inspire young people to achieve to their best of their ability to find their right path. I have learned from these children that the future is tomorrow, and my task, like theirs is to be a better person, and to support others around me to be better too. Today.

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Appendix 1: Socio-economic Suffolk

The HESA return for 2018 (University of Suffolk, 2018c) indicates that the majority of student's joining the University of Suffolk (UOS) are consistently recruited from the Ipswich and the wider Ipswich postcode area.

Post code	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Cambridge (CB)	2.6	2.86	2.88	2.82	3.19
Chelmsford (CM)	1.75	1.72	1.83	1.65	1.45
Colchester (CO)	11.87	12.26	11.87	11.16	10.08
Ipswich (IP)	52.58	55.75	55.86	54.69	51.11
Norwich (NR)	18.69	16.44	16.06	17.79	18.04
Peterborough (PE)	0.79	0.96	1.02	1.17	1.79
Southend (SS)	0.63	0.45	0.52	0.50	0.50
Other	11.03	9.55	9.97	10.22	13.84

As a county, Suffolk has and average Lower layer Super Output Area[4] (LSOA) score which places it in the second *least* deprived quintile of upper tier local authorities in England, however it has also become more deprived, when compared to other local authority areas in England, since 2010 (Suffolk County Council, 2019).

Index of Multiple Deprivation

Across all of the IMD domains, Ipswich has 32.9% of LSOAs in the first (lowest) and second decile, with only 2.4 % in the highest. The lowest deciles for the domains of income, employment and education account for 22.4%, 23.5% and 44.7% of LSOAs respectively.

This is the socio-cultural and economic environment for the University, and many of its students, 26.5% of UOS entrants are from areas of low participation (University of Suffolk, 2018a). OFS data (Office for Students,

[4] LSOAs are a geographical hierarchy used to provide statistical information for small areas of England and Wales.

2019) tells us that 20.9% of UOS full-time undergraduates are eligible for free school meals, a key indicator of poverty.

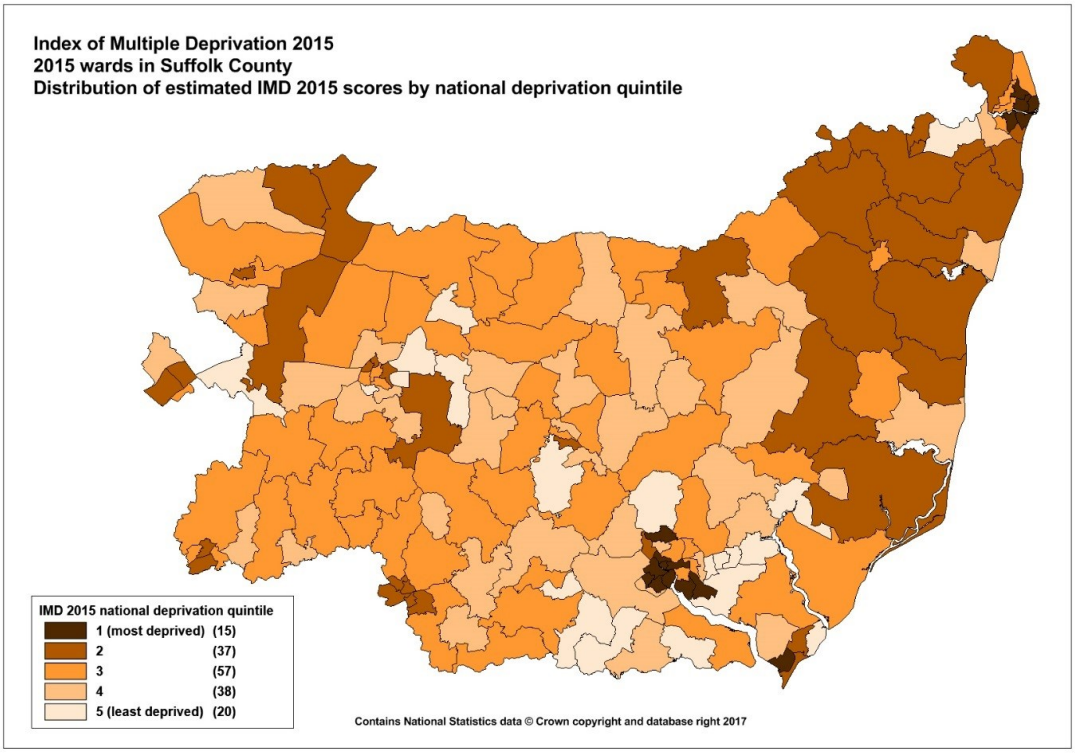


Figure 14: Wards in Suffolk: Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (Suffolk County Council, 2019)

<u>The environments and populations for the educational institutions in this project</u>

The children in the project attended two primary schools. I shall refer to them as Spirethorne (attended by Max) and Elliott Row (attended by Lucy, James, Daniel, Alice, Jess and Emma).

	UOS	Spirethorne	Elliott Row
IMD 2015 median decile	2	9	5
Education and Skills decile	2	6	3
Polar 4 young participation	3	4	3
Adult HE qualification	4	3	4
IDACI[5]	1	8	5

[5] IDACI is Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index 2015

Appendix 2: Information sheet and consent: parent / carer

Ellen Buck
Post Graduate Research Student
20th February 2017

Faculty of Social Sciences
School of Education and Lifelong Learning

University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom

Email:e.buck@uea.ac.uk
Web:www.uea.ac.uk

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

A conversation with children and young people: hearing what they think and feel about learning, and where it fits into their worlds.

What is this study about?

Your child is invited to take part in a research study about learning, what children understand it to mean, and what place it holds in their current lives and identities and the lives and identities they hope to have in their futures.

Your child has been invited to participate in this study because they attend this club. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to let your child take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.

- ✓ Agree for your child to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your child's personal information as described.

Who is running the study?

Ellen Buck is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Doctorate in Education at The University of East Anglia. This will take place under the supervision of Yann Lebeau, Senior Lecturer in educational research and Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research

What will the study involve?

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked meet with me on 2 – 3 occasions. These meetings will take place at the children's club, and I expect each meeting to last up to 40 minutes.

At the first meeting I will ask you child to draw me a self-portrait which presents how they see themselves, at their current age. I will then ask them to map around themselves the people, places, activities and pastimes that they do and do not enjoy. The ones that are most enjoyable, valued or important will be plotted closest to them, the ones farthest away will be less enjoyable or important.

Once they have finished the drawing, which will be mine to take away, I will ask your child to explain what they have drawn and why they have plotted things as they are. I may ask your child why they enjoy certain activities over others, and what they think they achieve through each of these activities. A copy of the drawing will be made available to your child should they request it.

At the end of this conversation I will ask your child to start thinking about what they would like to achieve as they get older, what they would like their family to be like, where they might like to live, what sort of activities they might like to do, what they think will be important to them, and what they might need to do to do all of these things.

I would like your permission to record this conversation.

At the second meeting I will ask your child to complete the same drawing activity, but this time the self-portrait and circles will be of how they would like to see themselves as they get older. The age they chose to draw themselves at will be up to them. Again the drawing will be mine to take away, and I will also talk to them again about what they have drawn and why.

I would like your permission to record this conversation.

If the conversations we have take longer than 40 minutes I would like the opportunity to meet with your child a third time, to ensure that they have all the time they need to tell me their own stories. If your child would like a copy of their drawings I will ensure I make a copy for them.

An example portrait, with circles is in the attached information sheet.

How much of my time will the study take?
Each meeting will last up to 40 minutes, depending on how your child feels and how much they want to say to me. I do not envisage needing more than 1.5 hours of time with your child in total.

Does my child have to be in the study? Can they withdraw from the study once they've started?
Being in this study is completely voluntary and your child does not have to take part. Your decision whether to let them participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia, or the Club.

If you decide to let your child take part in the study and then change your mind later (or they no longer wish to take part), they are free to withdraw, at any point until I have completed analysis and am ready to submit my final thesis. You can do this by emailing me directly on the email address e.buck@uea.ac.uk giving the name of your child. You do not have to explain the reasons behind your decision. I will reply by email, acknowledging your wish to withdraw, and you will receive no further communication from me.

The interviews

Your child is free to stop the interview at any time. Any recordings will be erased and the information your child has provided will not be included in the study results. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions that they do not wish to answer during the interview.

If you decide to withdraw your child from the study following the interviews, and before the completion of analysis, (or they no longer wish to take part) their information will be removed from my study records and will not be included in the study results or the submitted dissertation. I will not collect any more information from them. After this point, any information that I have already collected, will be kept in my study records and may be included in publications, including the dissertation submitted for assessment.

Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up time, I do not expect that there will be any costs associated with taking part in this study for your child.

There is a possibility that your child may feel some discomfort talking about themselves, their lives, likes and dislikes or their hopes for their futures. Advice and guidance will be taken from the Club and Project leaders before this project begins and support will be available to you child from the leaders throughout the project and afterwards.

Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

In participating in this study, I hope that your child will develop an increased sense of identity, self-worth and confidence in the things they enjoy, and the ability to talk about them. I hope also that the conversations will help your child to realise that it is 'ok' for them to enjoy the activities they enjoy, even if they are different from another person in the youth club.

In terms of the wider community, it is hoped that this project will help those working with children and young adults to understand how learning is valued and the place it holds for different people. This, I hope, will help educators to shape learning in a way that encourages all young people to take full

advantage of whatever level of learning is right for them, enabling them to reach their full potential.

What will happen to information that is collected during the study?
During this study I will collect drawings and conversations from your child. The conversations will be recorded, and stored on a personal computer. After the conversation has taken place I will type up the conversation, ensuring that your child, and any individuals they refer to in the conversations and drawings are given pseudonyms so that they cannot be identified by anyone other than me.

No one other than me will have access to this un-transcribed information.

The information your child provides during the course of the conversation will be entirely confidential. In the event that your child begins to disclose information which could be harmful or illegal in nature I will stop the conversation and make it clear to them that if they continue I may need to tell someone what they are telling me. At that point any notes or recordings may be shared.

During the study all paper files will be locked into a filing cabinet and electronic records will be kept in password protected files on a personal computer. The findings from this data will be used in submitted dissertation, and may be reproduced in articles or posters for publication or at events at my place of work or study. If this is the case, the data will be stored securely for 10 years, and then destroyed safely.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to me collecting personal information about your child for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 1998 Data Protection Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2013).

What if we would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, **Ellen Buck** will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Yann Lebeau, Senior Lecturer in educational research and Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research, Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk, 01603 592754.

Will I be told the results of the study?

You and your child have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of summary of the findings from the research project. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

What if we have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in UK is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:

Ellen Buck
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
e.buck@uea.c.uk

If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor: Yann Lebeau, Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk, 01603 592754.

If you (or your child) are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from

the study, please contact please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Dr Nalini Boodhoo, at n.boodhoo@uea.ac.uk.

OK, I'm happy for my child to take part – what do I do next?

You need to fill in one copy of the consent form and return it to the clearly marked consent forms box at the Club that your child attends. Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT PARENT'S/CARER'S NAME], consent to my child ……[PRINT CHILD'S NAME] participating in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what my child will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓ I have read the Information Statement and have been able to discuss my child's involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and my child does not have to take part. My decision whether to let them take part in the study will not affect our relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia, Club now or in the future.

✓ I understand that my child can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓ I understand that my child may stop the interview at any time if they do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that my child may refuse to answer any questions they don't wish to answer.

✓ I understand that personal information about my child that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about my

child will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my child's name or any identifiable information about my child.

I consent to:

Audio-recording of my child YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal:

_____

__

☐ Email: _____

Signature and print name .....

.....

Date .....

INFORMATION

A conversation with children and young people: hearing what they think and feel about learning, and where it fits into their worlds.

July 2016

About this project

This research project is being conducted by Ellen Buck in order to complete a Doctorate in Education. The project is intended to provide children with the opportunity to talk about themselves, the things, people, places and activities that are important to them in their lives, now and as envisaged in the future in an attempt to understand where learning might fit into their lives and how it may or may not be important to them.

"Whatever we learn becomes a part of who we are"

Learning is often presented as something which takes place inside a classroom or other school related activity. Being able to get good marks in an exam becomes the measure of how well a child can learn. Yet learning is so much more than this. Every time we speak to each other, we learn something, the same is true each time we read a book, watch a film, learn or practice a new skill or visit a new place. Learning does not have to just be about school and exams. Each time we learn, what we have learned becomes a part of who we are, and who we can become.

But how do children understand learning?

In this information sheet

Ellen Buck

About the researcher

This is me, Ellen Buck, Librarian, dreamer, collector of shoes. I grew up, along with my younger sister in Hampshire, daughters of a carpenter and housewife. I was the first in my family to go to university.

I don't remember when I chose to go to university, I know it was something my school actively encouraged me to do. I do know that I really wanted to dance, and if I couldn't do that then I was going to move to Italy and teach English. I didn't quite do either.

So, while I did get to university, I did live in Italy for 6 months, and I even did a spot of English language teaching, it didn't feel entirely right, it wasn't part of who I was becoming.

Through a voluntary holiday job in my local library I found that the shelves full of fiction were also shelves full of insights into other people's lives and imaginations. Watching children and young adults lose themselves in the content of those shelves, fiction or fact, was fascinating, helping them to find the things that ignited their imaginations was starting to feel like it might be for me. Fast forward a decade, or two, and I find myself managing the Learning Services provision in an East Anglian Higher Education Institution. My team works with our students to help them develop a whole range of skills which make them strong, confident students as well as great future employees. Being a part of their journey is great, in essence I get to use my potential to help our students find theirs.

Image by Mike CC-BY ND 2.0 available from Flickr

There are still questions that I need to find answers for though. While the number of students going to university from Suffolk is increasing, educational attainment across the county is still low, and participation in HE is still low when compared against national figures. So, do children here not want to go to university? If they don't, and there is nothing to say that all children should aspire for HE, what do we, as educators or as a wider society, need to understand about how children think about learning?

My self portrait and significant circles

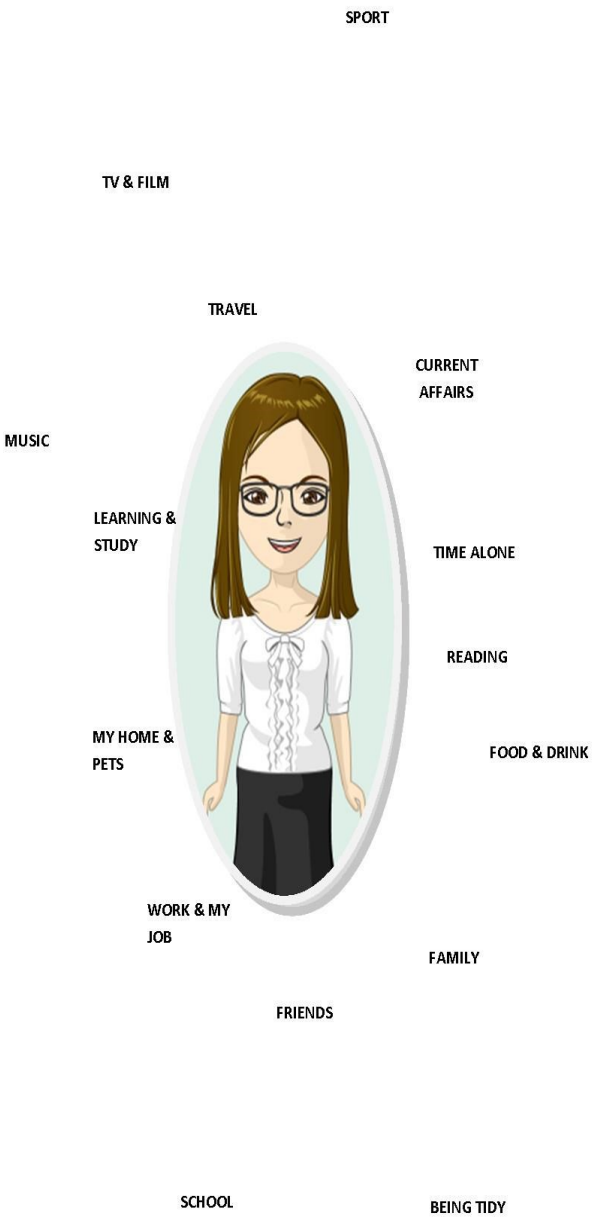
In this project I want to work with children and young teenagers to find out how they see themselves, and what it people, places, activities and skills are important to them today.

I also want to find out from the what they think their futures might be like. While I am interested in possible jobs and careers, I also want to know about the places and people that they would like to be a part of their lives and individual worlds, and how they would like the world to see them.

I want to find this out using two tools, **self portraits** and **significant circles**.

Significant circles enable an individual to plot all the things that are important – or unimportant to them around themselves. The closer something is to the individual, the more important or valued it is.

Here is how mine might look.



Locating the project

I have deliberately chosen not to locate this project within a formal school environment, I don't want the formal structure of the school to shape any of the responses provided.

The children's story

This project is about children, and hearing their stories, their voices. Participating in this story will give the children involved the chance to think about what is important to them and why. There are no right or wrong answers. I would like to be able to record the conversation.

I hope it will be an enjoyable experience for all the children involved, although sometimes it may make them remember things that once upset them—or things that really excite them.

Principles of the project

1. All the stories the children tell will be confidential. I will only breach that confidence if they talk to me about something harmful or illegal.
2. All recorded conversations will be fully transcribed. Data will be stored securely for at least 10 years, in line with the UEA Research Data Management Policy, and then securely destroyed.
3. The children and people they name will be anonymized. It is important that the identity of the child and their family and friends is protected.
4. The information provided to me will only be accessible to me, and only be used by me in the completion of this research project, for my Doctorate degree. I may report subsequent findings in other arenas such as conferences or articles.
5. You can withdraw your child at any time, and they can decide they no longer wish to participate. Any data relating to your child will be removed from the final thesis up to the point where analysis is complete and the thesis ready for of submission.

Contact Us

To find out more about my project you can email me at

e.buck@uea.ac.uk

If you have any concerns you can also contact my supervisor,

Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk

The research findings

Once this project is complete a summary of the findings will be available.

You can request a copy when you complete the participants opt-in sheet. Alternatively, you can email me:

e.buck@uea.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Information sheet and consent: child participants

Ellen Buck
Post Graduate Research Student
20th February 2017

University of East Anglia

Faculty of Social Sciences
School of Education and Lifelong Learning

University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom

Email:e.buck@uea.ac.uk
Web:www.uea.ac.uk

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

A conversation with children and young people: listening to you to find out what you think about learning, and where it fits into your world.

What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about things you like to do, how they teach you different things, and how these things may or may not be part of what you want to do as you get older.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you attend the [insert name of organisation]. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

Who is running the study?

Ellen Buck is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Doctorate in Education at The University of East Anglia. This will take place under the supervision of Yann Lebeau, Senior Lecturer in educational research and Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research

What will the study involve for me?

As a participant in my study, I will ask you to spend time with me while you are at the [insert name of organisation] These meetings will last for up to 40 minutes, and we may need to meet 2 or 3 times.

During the first meeting, I will ask you to draw a picture of yourself. Then, around the picture of yourself I will ask you to draw things, people, activities, and places that you like and are important to you, as well as the things, people, activities and places that you don't like as much, or at all. When you have finished the drawing, I will talk to you about what you have drawn, asking you for some details and stories that explain what you have included in your picture. This part is called an interview.

The second time we meet I will ask you to do the same thing, but this time I will ask you to draw the picture of yourself as you would like to be when you are older. We will talk about this picture in the same way.

During the interview you can ask me questions too, and it is important that you understand that whatever you tell me will be 'in confidence' which means that I won't be telling anyone else what you say to me, unless there is something which is harmful to you. I would like to be able to record these conversations to help me remember what you have spoken to me about.

I will take the pictures you draw home with me. If you would like a copy of the pictures I can make copies for you. I will also type up the conversations we

have, and in these I will give you another name so that no one will know that it was you who said the things you did. If you want to read what I type you can ask me to see you again to read the document.

I have included an example drawing so you can see what I will be asking you to do

How much of my time will the study take?
Each meeting will last for up to 30 minutes. The maximum time we will spend will be 1.5 hours. If you want to talk to me for longer you can ask me to do so.

Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?
Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia, the Eden Project or the Epic Youth Club.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, or decide you don't want to take part any more, you are free to withdraw at any point until I have completed analysis and am ready to submit my final thesis. If you withdraw before this point any information relating to you, our conversations or your drawing will be removed from my thesis. You can do this by emailing me directly on the email address e.buck@uea.ac.uk giving your name. You do not have to explain the reasons behind your decision. I will reply by email, acknowledging your wish to withdraw, and you will receive no further communication from me.

The interviews
You are free to stop the interview at any time. Any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?
Taking part in this interview will not cost any money, and everyone that comes to the [insert name of club] will be asked if they would like to participate in this study.

There is a chance that sometimes answering the questions will be difficult, or you might find them upsetting. You can ask me to stop the recording, or tell me that you don't want to answer the question. The leaders of the youth club will be available to provide you with any support you might need.

Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?
Participating in this study will give you the chance to be able to talk about the places, activities, things and people that are important to you and why these things are more important than other things. It will also give you the chance to think about how these things might stay the same, or change as you get older.

Doing these things can help you to make decisions about you and your life, and give you confidence in what you do and want to do.

What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?
During this project you will draw some pictures for me and talk to me about these pictures. These will be used in the final document I produce for my project. I will store the documents and files on my computer, and no one will have access to them other than me. The data I collect from you through drawings and interviews will be held securely for at least 10 years following publication of my final thesis. After this point data will be destroyed securely. This is in line with the Research Data Management Policy of the University of East Anglia.

When I write up the conversations and the final document, I will give you, and any people you talk about different names, this helps to make sure that whatever you tell me stays confidential, and no one will be able to identify that it was you in the conversation.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to me collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 1998 Data Protection Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2013).

What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Ellen Buck will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Yann Lebeau, Senior Lecturer in educational research and Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research, Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk, 01603 592754.

Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of summary of the findings from the research project. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in UK is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:

Ellen Buck
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
e.buck@uea.c.uk

If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor: Yann Lebeau, Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk, 01603 592754.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Dr Nalini Boodhoo, at n.boodhoo@uea.ac.uk.

OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

You need to fill in one copy of the consent form and return it to the clearly marked consent forms box at the Eden Project or Epic youth Club that your child attends. Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia, [insert name of club] now or in the future.

✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

Audio-recording YES ☐ NO ☐

Reviewing written copies of the interviews YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: _____

_____

☐ Email: _____

.....

Signature

.....

PRINT name

.....

Date

INFORMATION

A conversation with children and young people: hearing what they think and feel about learning, and where it fits into their worlds.

July 2016

About this project

This research project is being conducted by Ellen Buck in order to complete a Doctorate in Education. Through this project I want to find out more about what you like to do, what is important to you, and how anything in your life might be shaped or influenced by what you learn.

Learning

When you think about learning, how do you feel? Is it something that sounds really dull, or very exciting? Where do you learn? Is it something you just do at school?

I don't think so! I think we learn every time we talk to someone, read a book, watch a film, or TV programme, listen to music or learn a new skill.

"Whatever we learn becomes a part of who we are"

But what do you think about learning?

Image by Pimthida CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 available from Flickr

In this information sheet

- About the researcher
- Participating in the project
- Examples of the activities
- Finding out more

Ellen Buck

About the researcher

This is me, Ellen Buck, Librarian, dreamer, collector of shoes. I grew up, along with my younger sister in Hampshire, daughters of a carpenter and housewife. I was the first in my family to go to university.

I don't remember when I chose to go to university, I know it was something we were encouraged to do at school. I do know that I really wanted to dance, and if I couldn't do that then I was going to move to Italy and teach English. I didn't quite do either.

So, while I did get to university, I did live in Italy for 6 months, and I even did a spot of English language teaching, it didn't feel entirely right, it wasn't what I felt I needed to do.

I went back to thinking about what I liked to do, where I liked to spend time, and what I believed in.

Image by Mike CC-BY ND 2.0 available from Flickr

I like reading, bookshops and libraries. I did some unpaid voluntary work in my local library, and found myself a job there over the next few months. I really enjoyed being in that place. I enjoyed talking to people about what they were up to, what their plans were, what they were enjoying reading at that time. The Library was important for a lot of older people who came in, they could meet friends, or just sit and read a paper.

So, I decided to be a Librarian, I had to go back to school and learn the skills I needed to be able to do my job, but more importantly the skills I needed to feel like I could odder people the chance to achieve what they wanted or themselves, and to learn about the things important to them.

Now I work at a university, running the library. I still get to help people, learn skills and get information they need. Each person is different though, and I would like to know more people's stories about their lives, what is important, and how they feel about learning.

This is why I want to talk to you.

My self portrait and significant circles

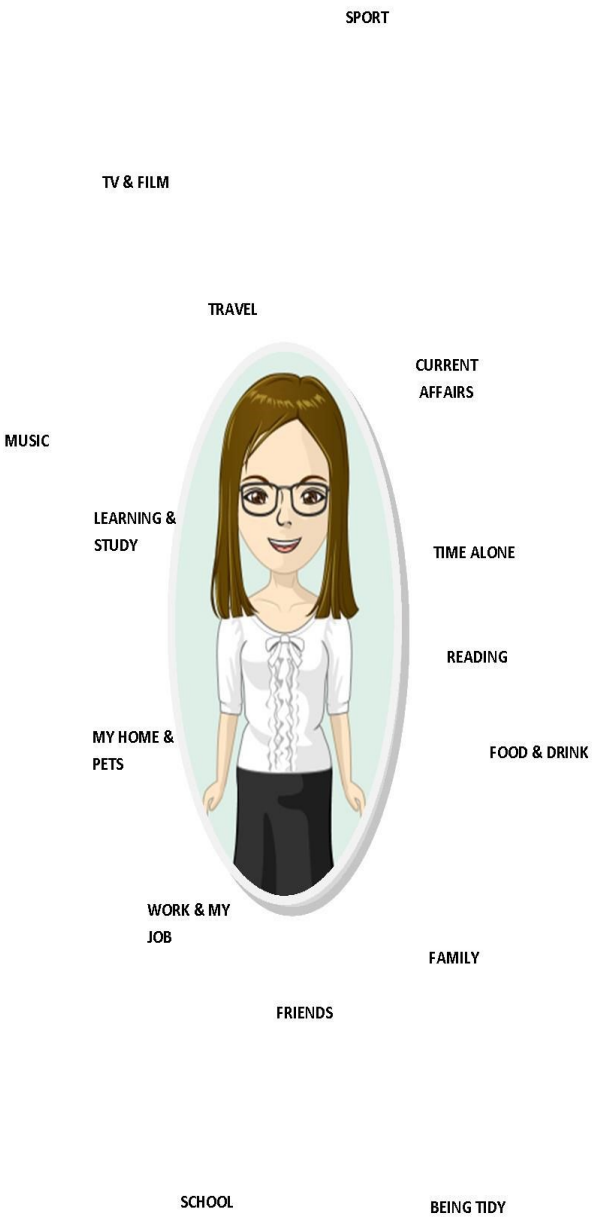
In this project I want to work with children and young teenagers to find out how they see themselves, and what it people, places, activities and skills are important to them today.

I also want to find out from the what they think their futures might be like. While I am interested in possible jobs and careers, I also want to know about the places and people that they would like to be a part of their lives and individual worlds, and how they would like the world to see them.

I want to find this out using two tools, **self portraits** and **significant circles**.

Significant circles enable an individual to plot all the things that are important – or unimportant to them around themselves. The closer something is to the individual, the more important or valued it is.

Here is how mine might look.



Locating the project

I have deliberately chosen to do this at [insert name] Because this project is not about school or how much you like or dislike school, nor is it about how well you do in school exams. .

Your story

This project is about you, and hearing your stories, your voices. Participating in this will give you the chance to think about what is important to you and why. There are no right or wrong answers. I would like to be able to record the conversation.

I hope it will be an enjoyable experience for you, although sometimes it may make you remember things that once upset you – as well as things that really excite you.

Principles of the project

6. All the stories you tell will be confidential. I will only breach that confidence if you talk to me about something harmful or illegal.
7. All recorded conversations will be fully transcribed. Data will be stored securely for at least 10 years, after this it will be securely destroyed.
8. You and people you name will be anonymized. It is important that the identity of you and your family and friends is protected.
9. The information you provide me will only be accessible to me, and only be used by me in the completion of this research project, for my Doctorate degree. I may report subsequent findings in other places such as conferences or articles.
10. You can withdraw at any time, if you decide you no longer wish to participate. If this is before the completion of data analysis anything you say will be removed from my dissertation. After this point information may still be included

Contact Us

To find out more about my project you can email me at

e.buck@uea.ac.uk

If you have any concerns you can also contact my supervisor,

Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk

The research findings

Once this project is complete a summary of the findings will be available.

You can request a copy when you complete the participants opt-in sheet. Alternatively, you can email me:

e.buck@uea.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Table presenting VCR and modalities of agency across current and future worlds
Current World indicator, Future World indicator

	Max	Lucy	Emma	James	Daniel	Alice	Jess
Who is in the story?	Max Mother Father Cousins Grandparents Godmother Uncles Brother Friends School colleagues	Lucy Sister Mother “Mumma” Grandmother Grandfather Aunt Cousin Step Uncle Friends Pets Teachers	Emma Mother Father Brother Nanna Grandad Teachers Pets Mum’s friends	James Mother Father Auntie Uncle Friends Family of friends Coaches Pets	Mother Father Brother Friends Uncle Role models Teachers	Alice Mum Dad Cousins Grandma Friends Pets	Jess Mum Nanny Sister Auntie Friends Pets

Key themes	Responsibility Authority Support Togetherness Active Family Development Learning Creativity Natural world Practical Experience of	Separation Loss Death War Control Tidiness Appearance Reality Real world Need to be happy Experience of Experiencing Authenticity Life is hard Helping people	Self "My" activity "My" travels "My" successes Competitive Responsibility Taking care: • Stuff • Appearance • people	Active life – sport Being active, fit Healthy Experience Practical Independence	Technology Family Support Experience "streetwise" Good citizen – "a better person" Life skills	Real life Natural world Experience Active - sport Collaboration Creativity	Social media Television Boredom Inability "old life" "new life" Responsibility Authority Appearance "A career" Independence

Emotions and emotional responses to narrative	Positive Happy Anticipation Humour	Happiness (as a concept, not a state of actively being happy) Sadness Anxiety Fear Self-conscious	"I'm a very emotional person"	Sympathetic Humour Anxiety / Worry	Empathy Humour	Anticipation	Bravado Anxiety Insecurity
Representat-ion of self Social Structures Modalities of Agency	'Can do' High achiever Popular House Captain 'In charge' Supported becomes supporter Trusted Home School	Adopted Peculiar Persistent "not a quitter" Brave Inspirer Home School Aware of world	Capable Talented Popular Busy Funny / Fun "Charming" Determined Performer Self-assured In Emma's own world	Self-aware Reflective / contemplative Curious Considerate Stifled by school rules Supportive Helpful	Self-aware Resilient Self-reliant Astute Home School Sport YouTube	Self-reliant Contemplative Only child Kinship with Wales Home School – social experience Studio Park	Different Unique Challenges rules – library, school, TV programmes Nanny's house School Old house

	Clubs		Home School Clubs	Home School Sport			Library Park
Relationships with others Consequence of relationships	Positive Strong bond with mother Supportive Connected family	Fractured relationships = loss? Need to belong Mother / Sister = role models	Encouraged and motivated by praise of others reinforces sense of self-worth Adopts personas	Aware of those around him and what is happening to them, retells stories, displays sympathy	Strong family relationships, aware of how both parents "make him" who he is.	Strong family relationship Getting older = leaving things and people behind	Strong bond with Nanny. Disconnected form others – "old life". Creates a buffer: Make believe friends, adopted make-believe personas

							Hides in social media, apps?
Modalities of agency	“get to be” “can help” “what I (really) wanted to do” “I love being… “I prefer” “it’s a privilege” “need to know how” “I felt…”	I love” “I will …” “I’m going to feel” “I can relate to” “to find out how” “won’t know what to do” “inspire them to do” “I can get better”	“I like / love doing” “I want to be able to…” “I can do it” “You can do loads of things” “I won’t eat ‘em…I 100% won’t” “I find it enjoyable”	“I felt bad” “We’re older now, so we are allowed…” “If I had the choice, I wouldn’t” “(problem solving) I do a lot of that…” “I love it” “I see why you have to”	“I like to” “I wanted to” “inspires me to do” “It makes me” “We decided not to” “I was really sad” “You still need to”	“I like” “being able to have” “how to take control” “It might be hard for some people” “I know that” “to be able to” “cos then I could” “I love”	“I just do” “If I want them to” “I don’t” “I will” “You need to know” “She tells us what to think about” “She made me” “Maybe I will”

		“I can succeed” “It shows what some people’s worlds are like”	“Take more responsibility” “I will need to be able to”	“I want to” “can’t not have” “to be respectful” “Have to do well”	“we chose like a certain thing we had to do” “I always want to do”	“you need to know” “I was really upset” “I knew that I wanted to”	“I think I might” “I could” “I hope I could be” “you don’t get as much chance”