

**Children and the Transformation of Schools:
Enabling Participation through Intergenerational Work**

by

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Abstract

This study places children's participation at the core of school practice, challenging narrow interpretations of participation and education. Previous research, reinforced by the UNCRC (1989), indicates that schools must be more ready to listen and involve children, highlighting the benefits of voice but in practice limiting it to consultation. There is scarce research that considers children's participation in schools as essential to education itself or as integral to democracy. Yet children flourish in schools with good relationships where teachers value what they say.

This research in two English primary schools used group inquiry and intergenerational work to build children's participation. During Phase 1 children interviewed adults and worked in intergenerational focus groups to consider the purpose of schools. Overwhelmingly, good relationships dominated school purpose, experience and hopes for the future. Phase 2 extended this through a series of workshops that integrated participation and education through National Curriculum inspired inquiry.

The findings suggest that intergenerational work is a catalyst for children's agency, repositioning children so they can shape classroom spaces for richer, more trusting relationships. In turn, through recognition of their selves in relation to, and with others, understanding of their situation and possibilities, children were able to work together, and with adults, to co-construct knowledge which takes account of temporal frames of reference and is more meaningful. This change in space and purpose also gave new meaning to the teacher's roles, moving away from policy controlled authoritarianism, to facilitators of educational space and mentors, repositioning them as 'Wise Teachers.'

The study shifts focus away from preconceived outcomes, to the process of participation itself, providing significant insight into how rights based education can be made to work in schools. Education and participation are reunited through opportunity to engage with intersubjective experience and interaction to construct knowledge and intergenerational understanding.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This study sets out to explore how children can participate in transforming what happens in their school lessons and how intergenerational work might support this. The objective is to build opportunity for *children's participation* (see Section 2.3.3 and Chapter 3), in primary school classroom settings, and explore the challenges and benefits involved. This will extend theory about children's participation in UK state school systems, which are currently lacking serious attempts to advance children's rights. It will also ensure this is located in plausible practice that takes meaningful account of school communities' lived experience and perspectives.

The research is framed by *complexity informed participatory action research* (see Chapters 4 and 5), through two phases of empirical research, with children in Year 6 primary school classes in northern England. Policy mentioned is generally for England, or England and Wales, but much of the theory and practice is applicable to the wider UK and other minority or western world practices, relating to dominant ideas rather than those specific to locations, and should be read as such.

The researcher is an experienced teacher and parent, having worked with children and families in a variety of settings, which informed the approach. Both 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives influenced the planning and design, as well as providing the inspiration for such a challenge. I use the phrase 'the researcher' throughout the thesis to denote that role and distinguish my motives and actions from the other participants. However, as someone who has been involved in education in its broadest sense through other experiences such as designing digital applications to help children manage their lives, and one to one tutoring when systems let them down, it is almost impossible to distinguish knowledge and practice about research, education and action as separate entities when each is part of an ongoing concern for change and more equitable society.

Further to this, the study emphasises and tries to capture children's agency through their interactions and those of teachers and the researcher, thus my own positioning and experience are an integral part of the process itself. Children can, and do, shape lives and social systems, but their categorisation as children foremost, belies an entrenched

societal proclivity to compare and structure everyone around the idea that there is a superior male identity that has its foundations in monotheist teachings. Such ubiquity continues to influence research so that those who are categorised and often oppressed by patriarchal hierarchy, such as women and children, are portrayed by their differences, hiding their actual strengths and capabilities so that this influence is reinforced (Bhavnani, 1993). Categories or classes can be useful so that oppression is recognised but individuals are not bound by these; they live within and across most, as part of a wider category that embraces us all – human beings.

My own experience in locations such as rural communities, early years' settings and schools is that these are extremely gendered and this is a driving force for change; however, instead of adding more to the already huge body of literature that considers such stratification, the intention with this work was to think differently about power and the human propensity to cooperate. This does not mean that the ways that difference affects relationships and systems have not been considered – there were major differences between the schools involved that are particularly associated with gender and class – but instead that this thesis tries to reveal children's agency *despite* these problems.

This has undoubtedly shaped how the research was conducted and is presented. I draw on theories relevant to my understanding, including feminist theory where it is relevant to the positioning of children, agency and how the oppressed are portrayed (such as Atkinson, 2013; Bhavnani, 1993), but also other approaches to recognition, including education, especially Freire (1992; 1978; 1970) and Dewey (1938; 1916; 1909) and those inspired by them.

These standpoints also inform my own critical view of the English state education system and how it currently undermines children's rights to an education that is about:

“The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.” (UNCRC, 1989, Article 29)

Broader education is essential to enable children to exercise the participation rights that the UK agreed to be necessary to uphold freedom, justice and peace when it ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (UNCRC) in 1991. I am not alone in hoping for significant change in schools and this work will contribute to a growing body of research that considers how more equitable and democratic schooling

for the 21st Century might be developed, which meets all children's needs and shapes society for the better, as we move further into a technological era. Schools and society are symbiotic (Proudford and Baker, 1995) in that each will always reflect and affect the other. Schools are a mirror of society, reflecting back human creativity and potential to learn, but also profound injustice and inequity. 'Society' is used throughout the thesis to describe the broad UK populace and dominant trends with the understanding that this is by no means one coherent or closed structure that acts as a body within the confines of the UK, but instead is the many individuals and groups whose inter-relationships are colourful and various and extend beyond the geography of the UK, occasionally revealing patterns of behaviour and knowledge that can help us to understand ourselves and how to work for change. Thus, the work is primarily about relationships and how complexity and emergence may further our understanding of what is happening in complicated systems, such as schools.

The study did not start out as a piece of research about children's rights; these were never mentioned in my own training and experience as a teacher. Design and community education practice instead brought me to children's participation because it seemed an instinctively fair thing to do to involve children and their families in learning about their lives, what affects them and how to take more control of their everyday decisions to stay healthy so they would not miss out on social life. A project to develop a CD-Rom to help children self-manage difficult Asthma in 1999 was the first time I had engaged with the idea of children's rights at an academic level, but even within a large multidisciplinary, mostly medical team, much of the reasoning behind children's participation was about compliance to improve health and thus well-being, rather than their well-being and right to participate per se (see McPherson, et al. 2006).

Children's rights, particularly participation rights (see Chapter 3), remain contentious in schools. Political pressures to involve children in shaping systems and matters that affect them have arisen as a consequence of concerns about low political participation and societal breakdown as well as the UNCRC. Policy does not in itself change how children's rights are exercised; knowledge, interactions, attitudes and thus relationships all contribute to how people treat each other and whether rights are respected or even recognised. As discussed in Chapter 2, society is disclosed through its problems and processes (Oswell, 2013, p.27); by changing adults' relationships with children to ensure all have greater voice, many of society's problems may be uncomfortably revealed, requiring time and resources to put right.

1.2 Intergenerational Relationships and Complexity

The underlying problem for children's participation appears to be one of intergenerational relationships. Adults' concern about children and childhood is visible across all areas of life. From control of their present and future through schooling, control of their public visibility through lack of tolerance in locations other than those specified for children (Alderson, 1999; Cockburn, 1998; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998) and blame for societal breakdown (Giroux, 2008), children appear to have become the focus of growing societal unease. At the same time governments on all sides have shaped UK systems around a neoliberal obsession with the economy which has served to deepen national inequities despite the UK's wealth. Economic failure is blamed on the most disadvantaged, and on systems such as schooling, sending ordinary people a very clear message that success is measured on potential to generate the economy and little else, sidelining many citizens including children. This and growing unrest across a world which technology has made visible, may be placing people in a state of uncertainty and even fear about what will come next. It is a human compulsion to address this by attempting to bring order to such chaos and struggle to maintain some sort of control over the uncontrollable.

Complexity theory (discussed in Chapter 4) offers a fresh lens through which to understand change and how humans deal with such uncertainty. It recognises the inter-relatedness of people and their systems and the effects of control, whilst proposing that as complex systems are complex, patterns and order of some sort will always occur. Transformation occurs when there is creative opportunity within this that enables the emergent properties of complex systems to evolve, novelty to appear, and patterns to adapt (Prigogine, 1997). Overly simplistic, enforced order, through system processes and individual abuse of power, may change a system to a point, but how people inter-relate within that system, and how the system itself inter-relates with other systems, is impossible to predict and thus defies linear thinking (Glouberman and Zimmerman, 2002; Burton, 2002). Instead, by acknowledging this, research can recognise the roles of people and their relationships. Participation, where there are opportunities to consider knowledge and practice, and engage in human creativity, may itself provide chances for positive emergence.

This thesis considers schools to be complex adaptive systems (Merry, 1995; Morrison, 2008a) where both children and adults shape the system and its processes. Further to

this, how they interact and work with processes, within the system, is shaped by their own complexity, especially their frames of reference or interplay between temporal perspectives and context and how these inform subjective understanding. This thesis proposes that this sort of understanding, and indeed the knowledge that may be articulated or shared through it, is important to children's participation because how involved they can be in matters that affect them depends not just on how much, or little, others constrain this, but on how they relate to each other. In other words intersubjectivity, or the psychological relationships between people, affect how they shape both the physical and mental places through which they participate and thus how knowledge is constructed.

Transforming relationships in schools, where hierarchical structures dominate and children are expected to be subservient to teachers, is a challenge that may threaten adult status. However, this thesis proposes that by bringing other adults into classrooms, to improve children's participation in developing their activities and involvement in educational decisions, teachers have space to consider their own relationships and practice. This might include more equitable ways of managing classrooms to enable children's agency.

1.3 Children's Participation and Pupil Voice

The enduring consequence of adults' control of children is lack of opportunity for them to utilise their agency. Increasingly children are banned from public spaces, mainly under the auspices of protection; nevertheless this appears to be taking an increasingly negative and obligatory turn (see Chapter 2) as their actions and behaviours are criticised by adults. This means children's opportunities to meet together and form their own social structures or shape existing systems are fewer, effectively reducing their agency in decisions that affect their daily lives both physically and mentally. Lack of chances to interact and meet with others, especially people of different ages, reduces opportunities for social learning. This then downplays children's capacities and leaves them potentially more vulnerable to adults who wish to exploit this.

The problem with such constraints on children's agency is that they are then placed in difficult positions when adults seek their views or ask them to participate in structures with which they are unfamiliar. Hence adult structures are deemed inappropriate places for children to participate because they do not have the experience to act confidently

within them. Instead adults may find ‘child friendly’ ways to collect their views, which can lead to tokenistic claims on their time, informing adult decision making but providing little if any opportunities to improve children’s own abilities to participate. Rather than addressing this, research about children’s participation often uses the idea of degrees or levels of participation to indicate authenticity by how much or at what level children are really involved. Thus the highest form of participation is where children identify their own issues and actively research and make decisions about what can be changed and seek to find ways to implement this. In reality this is usually instigated by adults working with specially chosen groups because children do not have free access to locations and resources, to support their own work or ideas, and are therefore limited by having to meet adults’ approval.

Whilst this is a great way of involving children in decision making and action for change, resources tend to be limited to those available for adults’ research, youth councils or other privileged bodies meaning that numbers of children who have access to such opportunities are very limited. The general populace of children have little opportunity for participation, even though changes may be positive for them.

Involvement of children in larger numbers tends to be through more traditional data collection, such as closed questionnaires, where they have no opportunity to identify their own issues or be more directly involved in decision making. This sort of consultation can easily become a way of identifying the most popular view rather than providing any real insight in to why problems arise or the relationships involved in making change.

Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989) is often used in isolation, without considering how it relates with other articles and more importantly the values underlying the UNCRC (1989) as a whole.

“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.” (UNCRC, 1989, Article 12.1)

This can reinforce the idea that participation is about adults allowing children to give a view. Arguments about tokenism and adults’ lack of action when they hear children’s views, or even whether they really listen at all, follow. Yet this is not just a phenomenon associated with children. Low turnout by adults for public elections and lack of support

for community projects, including those in schools, indicates that many adults too feel disillusioned with the participatory systems open to them and lack of opportunity to make a difference. If those with the power to do so (such as Government) can simply overturn local decision making (as in the case of fracking which will directly affect those involved in this study) then people will obviously become distrustful of the system and less likely to comply.

Similarly in schools, neither children nor their families, have any means of redress where schooling does not serve their needs or enable them to reach their full potential, unless this is the case for all children in the school. Even then, accountability is not to individuals or families but to government bodies. Schools may seek children's views and even allow them to raise their own issues through structures such as school councils or suggestion boxes, but there is no requirement for school teachers or managers to take account of these or work with children to improve their situations. Where parents raise concerns they can be ignored to the detriment of children; where relationships break down entirely there may be no other option but to move children to another school.

This appears to be where schools are most at odds with children's rights. Schooling is not about the best interests of each child but about managing a staged developmental process of them en masse, towards adulthood, at which point they must be capable of participating in the workplace and are allowed to vote. This reinforces the idea that they are in preparation for adulthood, becoming, rather than being, allowing adults to undermine their agency.

At this point it is important to clarify that democracy is about social equality and what this actually means. If all human beings are born equal, then this status should continue throughout life. To have such status is to have equal opportunity to shape and be part of society and its systems. This may be more difficult for some because of individual differences. Social equality cannot be achieved through equal sharing of resources but instead by ensuring that those who need most to participate are provided with most (Rawls, 1993). This is not the case in the UK where those who accumulate wealth have more opportunity to participate and thus influence people's lives. This is mirrored in schools, making children's participation a contentious issue.

1.4 Participation and Education

Intersubjectivity is an essential factor in how knowledge is created. How human beings learn is a widely contested subject (outside the scope of this thesis). However, interaction with others is clearly important for constructing knowledge, especially about human systems because they would not exist unless we had a need to relate to each other. Biesta suggests that whilst we may be taught skills and learn about culturally important knowledge from others or available resources, deeper meaning and understanding come through “subjectification” (2012a, p.583); views are shaped by understanding constructed through interaction with others. This may be positive or negative but is more meaningful within closer relationships, such as family or friendships, where others’ views are respected and valued.

By treating knowledge as a commodity, schools reduce opportunity for meaningful education (Fielding and Moss, 2011). I suggest that calls for broader education where subjectification is valued, through areas such as philosophy, the arts and humanities, are really calls for greater children’s participation. Not in the consultative sense which this thesis rejects, but in an interactive sense where opportunities to relate and form views are just as important to how these views can then be used to shape systems. A model of **interactive participation** adapted for this study is discussed in Section 3.5 and used to inform the design of the participatory action research (PAR) (see Chapter 5).

Connections between children’s participation and education were essential to Dewey’s (1916) philosophy about education for democracy, which has regained interest through calls for more democratic schools (such as Fielding and Moss, 2011). This relationship is also central to Freire’s (1970) concept of participation but additionally he suggests that participation is about raising consciousness of the self in relation to others and learning from each other in order to empower groups to find ways out of their marginalisation. This struggle for power and emancipation has been widely used as a lens for children’s participation; in the UK there are many examples about empowering marginalised children. However, this struggle for power is also commonly misunderstood and I suggest this may be why schools, and teachers in particular, find the idea of children’s participation such a challenge.

UK schools, since their conception, have operated through a system of constraints, where teachers are allowed to dominate children. Whilst many of the nastier practices

such as corporal punishment have been discontinued, others such as silencing and social exclusion continue (see Chapters 2 and 3). They are not democratic because they do not yet serve democracy; instead they continue to reproduce a social order based on paternalism and inequity (see Chapter 2). Widespread public and political engagement with children's rights is essential, so that as a nation we can understand just how far we have yet to travel, to achieve true democracy that extends beyond the right to vote. The Government's offhand replies to questions from the UN Committee for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), about how well children's rights are being embedded in Law and policy, illustrate just how little progress has been made in 25 years (CRC, 2016b; 2016c). How we continue to subjugate children, and justify this, is a further challenge. In schools, children's participation confuses the concept of the expert teacher imparting knowledge upon children; it requires teachers to recognise that children may have insight in to their own lives, that can inform the sort of education they may need to be able to participate in wider society, and to be able to flourish, as well as how this education may be accessed. This requires time that teachers will struggle to find in a system where processes are being micro-managed to ensure specified outcomes.

If power, like knowledge, is considered a commodity that can be taken from one to benefit another, then empowering one group may mean disempowering another, which is the unsettling stuff of wars and domination. In a democracy we are supposed to share the belief that all humans are born equal and thus all should have equal power and agency; it is abuse of power, where it is used to limit the agency of some, in favour of others, or when those with most capability do not use their power to increase the agency of those with little, that results in marginalisation or exclusion. Therefore power is not something that is taken away but rather something that is constrained by others. Viewed in this way, it is possible to consider that even where inequities already exist, people can use their power more effectively by building richer relationships.

This is important because such relationships enable co-construction of knowledge and, with the addition of more creative opportunities, the potential for emergence and change. In schools, if teachers and children can be encouraged to build more positive relationships, these will potentially enable increased children's participation and shift teachers' concerns away from the threat of loss of power, to empowerment of all through inclusion. In other words the approach must be one of relationship building and togetherness, where education is for the benefit of all, rather than to meet limited end attainment targets.

The current system places most value on children who can achieve the highest attainment targets, regardless of individual circumstances, as these are used to measure school effectiveness and children’s success. Hence the curriculum is outcome driven and pedagogy the means of doing this rather, than part of education itself. This study places more emphasis on educational process by regarding children’s participation as a means to access education as well as shape schools.

1.5 Purpose

The study has five main aims that were explored through two phases:

Aim	Phase 1
1	To construct knowledge and understanding about what schools are for through a literature review and research with children and adults about their discerned purposes of schooling, education and views on participation.
2	To explore the influence of frames of reference – the interplay between temporal perspectives and context – on the process of transforming schools through children’s participation.
3	To change relationships in schools to enable children’s participation through Intergenerational work.
4	To provide opportunity for children’s participation in primary school classroom settings.
	Phase 2
5	To apply the main findings to the design of a second group of workshops where children participate through group and intergenerational work, whilst learning about a National Curriculum subject.

Through these aims, the study attempts to answer questions about why children’s rights are not routinely exercised in UK schools. It seeks to encourage schools and local communities to challenge assumptions about the purpose of schools and in doing so illustrates divergence between political intent and education philosophy, in both practice and literature. As PAR, it provides opportunities for children and teachers to change what happens in their classrooms, learning about their own lives, at the same time as the researcher investigates these to further theory and practice. The findings should

encourage wider public participation to look to more sustainable purposes for schools and subsequent transformation of the state maintained system to accomplish this. Given the current political climate, which is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, attention will need to be given to how this, and other work towards positive education for democracy, is disseminated.

1.6 Originality

The study will make a contribution to knowledge in the fields of childhood and education specifically through areas such as participation, school practice and children's rights in education. Participation itself has many contended definitions and the early parts of this study are intended to establish a more useful way of defining children's participation that is helpful for change in schools and other important settings in children's lives. This challenges the concept of participation as a staged or layered process, suggesting instead that there are two types of participation – passive or active. The first is really consultation, and whilst children may be involved, they do not learn about their agency and potential to participate from the experience. The second is about children being involved by using their agency to shape their lives in conjunction with others. This is *interactive participation* because it enables learning, action and understanding through intersubjectivity, by building relationships and working positively with others. The aim is to establish the right to such interactive participation, as something that can be embedded in school classroom practice so that it becomes part of school ethos.

The methods used are themselves original in that whilst they are participatory, they also seek to embed such practice within the education process itself, combining both participatory and educational methods to form a process that achieves both the aims of the study and the requirements of the current school system. This is explained in detail in Chapter 5. Interlaced through this are data collection techniques that are devised to enable frames of reference to be understood as well as enabling the construction of new knowledge for all involved (see table 6a).

Relationships are a central theme; reading and discussion is directed towards their importance in children's participation and education, embracing cooperative learning knowledge and practice such as *social interdependence theory* (see Chapter 5). Other areas such as *recognition theory* are also important in understanding why the theories,

brought together through this thesis, work with each other to build new thinking. Hence, the study is interdisciplinary with the underlying significance of relationships in all these areas providing both the link, and means, to bring together sometimes divergent areas.

This research is relevant and timely. The schooling system is in crisis and is failing to meet the needs of many children and yet it is governments' aim that all young people should stay in compulsory education and training until age 18. The UK was criticised, for its lack of provision and progress on participation in schools, by the CRC (2008) but more recent submissions to them suggest that apart from a very positive rise in numbers of school councils to improve participation, opportunities remain stubbornly concerned with adult defined ideas of children's concerns (Wyse, 2001). More recently Mannion, Sowerby and L'Anson (2015) suggest that a culture of participation through positive pupil teacher relationships is a positive vehicle for education and achievement. This research sets out to explore how that culture can be built through classroom practice.

1.7 Overview

Chapter 2 considers children's position in society and how this affects their rights. How this impacts on their education and participation is discussed in Chapter 3 where interactive participation is also introduced. Chapter 4 provides the methodological background through discussion of complexity and how it can promote understanding of schools and change. This is developed through the methodology in Chapter 5 where a PAR approach adapted for the purposes of this study is also described.

Chapter 6 describes the two phase approach, ethical issues encountered and how these are particularly relevant to research about intergenerational relationships and the transformation of schools. Phase 1 involved a class of Year 6 children in intergenerational inquiry and a mini-conference around the question 'What are schools for?' The Phase 1 findings are described in Chapter 7 as well as how these inform Phase 2. This is followed in Chapter 8 by a synthesis of evidence from Phase 2 where children conducted group inquiry about the Tudors and chose to make educational games to share learning and understanding with adult volunteers.

Chapters 9–11 discuss the relevance and implications of the findings about children's participation, which are introduced in Chapter 9. Specific themes about rich

relationships, promoting agency through intergenerational work, and the role of the 'Wise Teacher' are taken up in the following three chapters. The conclusions offered in Chapter 12 draw on these to describe what was learned through the study, how this contributes to knowledge and how this may be developed for future work.

2 CHILDREN, CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLS

2.1 Overview

At the start of the Century Wyness suggested that:

“...childhood is in crisis because children no longer know or accept their place”
(2000, p.6).

The notion of childhood is contested at the social and sociological levels; competing understandings that try to encapsulate children as a category present a problem. Interest in children’s rights has grown over the last thirty years; not necessarily because of children’s position but because their position reveals society through processes and problems of people (Oswell, 2013) and their continuing propensity to use power to abuse, despite promises to live more peacefully pledged through rights conventions. As neoliberalism continues to grow and fail, through obsession with economic growth as both the function and measure of human success, I suggest it is adults who no longer know their place. This chapter outlines some of the main contentions of childhood studies and what these tell us about adult-child relationships as we moved into the 21st Century. It considers how schools serve to construct and reinforce social structures and how these have changed through education and childcare reforms over the last four decades. Pertinent to these are the ways in which children’s agency - or lack of it - are viewed and inform understanding of children’s participation rights, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Chapters 2 and 3 both draw attention to the values and concepts that come in to play as children and adults draw on different frames of reference - the interplay between temporal perspectives and context - during their interactions with each other. They culminate with a proposal that tries to reconcile children’s participation with current thinking about children’s agency and the ongoing crisis in education (Section 3.5).

2.2 Intergenerational Relationships

2.2.1 Making Adults

Childhood, apart from a period of rapid biological human growth, is a socially constructed phenomenon that is “neither a natural or universal feature of human groups” (Prout and James, 2015, p.7). Descriptions of childhood are really descriptions of the childhoods of particular societies or cultures, therefore both independently and mutually constructed (Qvortrup, 1994a); hence there are many childhoods (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998, p.34). In the UK these are class and aged based, with many older children actually in full-time paid employment at the time of Postman’s (1982) passionate work about the disappearance of childhood. Concern that children’s lives no longer benefit from the spontaneity of play, as adult control increases in intensity, highlight the steadfastness of the middle class idealistic nuclear family, with its carefree, well-behaved children, the new measure of childhood used to judge those less fortunate.

Corsaro (2005, p.234) suggests play is necessary for children to create subcultures and cultural groups, where they employ their tacit knowledge through imaginative activities, using turn-taking and physical action to realise their own social space. Autonomy and opportunity to understand both the physical and social world come through play but are overshadowed as adults try to protect and prepare children for the perceived harsher realities of adult life.

A new paradigm for the study of childhood has emerged, recognising the importance of children themselves for sociological research, reconstructing how children and childhood are viewed. There is no one definition of childhood that adults can use to distinguish it as a particular entity, although it appears as a permanent but variable feature in all societies (Qvortrup, 1994a; Oswell, 2013). The latter 20th Century saw a shift in emphasis from children as the passive creatures and objects of earlier developmental psychology, to understanding them as social beings, who take an active role in shaping their own lives.

Childhood constructions are justified by comparing children to adults, as not yet fully formed, sometimes inhabiting and creating their own social worlds. Like many of the dichotomies offered by social theory (discussed in James, Jenks and Prout, 1998), this tends to set child against adult, ignoring the inter-relationships between each - what is

common and symbiotic, or of mutual benefit rather than conflict. All of this contributes to social identity; to view children's and adults' worlds always separately is to ignore the inherent agency and contribution of both to the world that they share. Alanen (2001) suggests instead that childhood is a generational phenomenon, less well considered in research. More recently, Oswell suggests:

“The category childhood does not define a priori, a set of people who belong to it; rather, it constitutes a point of reference, mobilisation and contestation and is only mobilised in particular social situations.” (Oswell, 2013, p.16).

A psychological model of childhood considers development and progress toward adult 'completeness' (Qvortrup, 2005, p.5). Based mainly on the work of Piaget, this has dominated social systems, for over a century, particularly in relation to education (Qvortrup, 2005; Wyness, 2000). Its principle goal is to produce an epistemology of child development, explaining changes in children's thinking, from infancy onwards (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2004, p.22). By mapping social to physical growth, and ages to stages, adults in the Minority or Western World have produced a state of reinforced dependency for children (Woodhead, 2015, pp.66-67) that limits development of inert capacities to the whims of a staged socialisation, eventually rewarded with the status of a fully formed adult (Prout and James, 2015, p.11). Yet historical accounts of children and their status have revealed alternative childhoods. James, Jenks and Prout (1998, p.25) suggest that the 'pre-sociological child' of history has been replaced by the new 'sociological child,' whose striving for group membership motivates their social engagement. They criticise the use of acquisition as a basis for development (acquiring language or behaviours to meet individual needs) and the materialism implied.

Predefined development also masks the possibility that children's reasoning and cognitive function are greater than they are often assumed to be. Donaldson (1978; cited in Oswell, 2013) showed that Piaget's original experiments made extra cognitive demands on children by taking them out of the situations with which they were more familiar; this masked the reasoning processes that the experiments were designed to test (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2004, p.24). Despite this, ages and stages continue to dominate child rearing, with standardised functioning tests, educative and behavioural management strategies used to demote variability to deficiency and disorder.

“Like a totalitarian regime of control, this model of socialization maintained the theoretical stability of functionalist accounts of society and indeed contributed

to the production of the stasis of the functionalist worldview. In doing so it generated a new series of problems related to the supposed failure of socialization in the everyday practices of some children.” (Prout and James, 2015, p.11)

Prout and James (2015) suggest that the continued dominance of such theory is based on adults’ interests in reproducing the social order, with childhood simply a rehearsal for the established adult life. For families and schools, this creates a mismatch between theory and practice, as those entrusted with the care of children try to celebrate their uniqueness, whilst at the same time maintain order and social norms. In terms of systems, rather than modelling these to the broad variations of childhood, standardised functioning can be used to manage children and their lives and intervene where so called deviance occurs (Woodhead, 2015).

Structuring children’s experience chronologically presents anomalies, where life issues affect progress, so children may be classed as abnormal or having developmental delay (James, 2005). Even where systems are child centred or emphasise the individual child, the use of developmental milestones to compare children to narrow ‘normal’ criteria can mean those at the boundaries through disability, SEN or illness are labelled as deficient (Rasmussen, 2010, p.18) and have more problems with relationships and social life than others (Wyness, 2000, p.91). James argues that children’s social and psychological development is “situated and context specific” (James, 2005, p.253). However, Corsaro argues that a complete break with developmentalism does little to forward concerns about children and childhood, as it draws attention away from the progress that has been made in improving lives (Corsaro, 2005, p.232).

James, Jenks and Prout (1998) suggest four constructs of the sociological child that have shaped understanding: The ‘socially constructed child,’ spontaneously developing as they create their own social worlds and meaning through interaction with others, rather than through natural or social forces; the ‘tribal child’ who inhabits their own real places, where their independence is celebrated (Mayall, 1994) and social action is structured in their own ways; the ‘minority group child,’ object of research, rescued by adults, challenging power relations, victimisation and stratification, but whose individual circumstances and characteristics are ignored; the ‘social structural child’ constantly forming an essential part of each societies structures, emerging from the constraints imposed, not in waiting but ever present as each generation moves on.

2.2.2 Power and Intergenerational Relationships

Childhood representations enable structures to be produced that serve to affect children (Qvortrup, 2005, p5). Positive moves to protect them easily become means of control in hierarchical relationships where children have little power:

“...protectionism and control has produced an inverse relationship: the more we talk about children, the less likely children themselves seem to be part of these dialogues” (Wyness, 2000, p.29).

Children’s rights (discussed in section 2.3.3 and Chapter 3) may herald transformation for children’s status, as the reasons for their lowliness are challenged, and widespread prejudice begins to disintegrate. All radical movements have shown that social relationships can be changed through various forms of political and social struggle, eventually influencing systems as policy shifts to acknowledge new ideas (for example gender equality), but this takes time. Unlike other social classes abused through subordination, childhood is intertwined with a reasonable propensity to protect children that may restrict some of their freedoms. Control is in some ways demanded because of perceived lack of responsibility, capability and competence, derived through comparison with adults’ social worlds (James et al., 2015; Devine, 2002; Mayall, 2002; Qvortrup, 1994a). This enables adults to use protection as an excuse when they do not want children to disturb these worlds, which Qvortrup describes as *“exactly the point at which protection threatens to slide into unwarranted dominance”* (2015, p.75).

Hence motivations behind protectionism, and its propensity to be tainted by power and abuse, must be considered in any reasonable discussion of childhood. Adults have many questions to answer about the ways they treat children and control their lives, including the ways in which research and practice also contribute to shape society and reproduce or even shape childhood. James and Prout’s seminal work (originally published in 1990) on constructing and reconstructing childhood, is still relevant today as it reminds the researcher that children’s lives and the ways in which adults structure their lives are complex; so too are the agency and contribution that children themselves make to society. Yet until recently, children have been absent from societies’ statistics, simply because they are children, rendering them invisible as societal components who affect systems and structures through their relationships (Qvortrup, 2015).

Whilst we may not be at the point of total child hostility (Qvortrup, 2005, p.6), in the UK there is a growing gulf between two extreme versions of childhood often represented by the media: sentimentalism that tends to depict images of sad, abused, or misplaced children; and childhood deviance portrayed as evil in ways rarely used to describe adults' corrupt behaviour. Children are increasingly prohibited from public space, or from displaying so called adult behaviours, until they reach 18 years of age; many adults rarely spend time with children shaping their views through secondary sources. Children, nevertheless, remain accountable for their actions at a much younger age and can be criminalised aged 10, which legislators somehow managed to assign as a suitable age where retribution and punishment are acceptable. This has been linked to growth in the idea that with increasing rights come increasing responsibilities, justifying restrictions on freedoms and controls on behaviour; this moves attention to correcting anti-social behaviour (particularly in the lower classes) before children mature and are allowed to have rights (Lavalette, 2005, p.155). The extreme response toward two 10 year old children, who killed the toddler in the 1993 Bulger case, reinforced harsh and punitive treatment after the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard, argued children should be treated as adults and go to prison if they act like adult criminals (Lavalette, 2005, p.155) illustrating the paradox that exists. This appears to have developed through changes in family and work patterns discussed in the next section.

2.2.3 Paternalism, Family and Children's Status

Children in the minority world are generally viewed as a private matter, with childbearing increasingly perceived as a lifestyle choice (Qvortrup, 2005, p.1). In the UK, children are mostly represented in policy as part of a family. However, this neglects their individual needs for resources, placing responsibility on parents, rather than society, to ensure these are met through a state of dependence, defined by the status of their family (Wyness, 2000). Children, like parent carers, are deemed non-contributors to the state, representing them as economic liabilities because of their comparative lack of earnings, ignoring the essential roles that they perform in schools, families and communities (Cunningham, 1995, p.157). Employment law also reduces children's potential participation and perceived contribution, reinforcing ideas of childhood innocence, dependence and lack of capacity (Wyness, 2006a, p.143). Hence the idea of the nuclear family is conceivable, as fewer children are perceived to be needed for income and care for family members, leaving plenty of time for education

and play. However, this middle class version of family life ignores the harsher realities of lower class life and the inability of low incomes to sustain such ideals.

Pre-industrial family units worked together, mainly on the land, so interdependencies were more explicit. Early industrialisation led to the separation of family and working lives and exploitation of children for capitalist interests. Even though many children continued to work alongside parents to help with their paid work as 'homeworkers' and domestic tasks, this was not valued as real work (Zelizer, 1994). As new types of industry emerged, profit was linked to more efficient use of workers. Wintersberger argues that placing children in schools was not just about protecting them from the dangers of industry but a new form of exploitation where they were made ready to make money for future employers (2005, p.203). Compulsory education made children's work schoolwork; alongside this came marginalisation and exclusion through distribution of resources and use of public space (Wintersberger, 2005).

Compulsory schooling for children in the UK was first introduced as an idea in the Education Act 1870 and began to be implemented ten years later for children aged 5 to 10. Whilst school age was raised to 14, with the 1918 Fisher Act, and then 15, following the Second World War in 1947, it was nearly a hundred years before all children aged 5 to 16 were expected to be in schools in 1972. The eventual shift to 18 was implemented between 2013 and 2015, with the first cohort having just completed their compulsory schooling, college or training, in 2016. Hence, it is only recently that the majority of 15-18 year olds stopped being able to significantly contribute financially to households. Younger children are also prevented from doing so by legislation that bans them from workplaces or limits part-time hours. The repercussions of this for lower class families, including rising numbers of workless family households, should not be underestimated and raises questions yet to be answered through childhood studies about the potential damage done to children and childhood through over-zealous controls of their lives.

At the same time family responsibility for children has grown as they become a private matter. Familialisation shifts responsibility for reproduction, children's growth, health, education and eventual participation in wider society to parents and families (Qvortrup, 2005). Whilst democracy has moved societies away from feudal systems, characteristics such as 'relationships of trust, duty, mutual responsibility and care' or belief in a 'social order' lingered on into modern paternalistic society where husband-wife, father-child and teacher-pupil relationships continue to mirror that of master-servant (Alderson,

1999, p.185). Whilst women continue to struggle for equality, less has been done to improve children's declining status.

Such paternalism leads to disproportionate poverty levels for children. The UK continues to operate an Anglo Saxon or liberal residual model of welfare which provides the least intervention:

“Social inequalities are accepted as long as minimum standards are met; only when persons or households fall below these standards are they entitled to assistance from society” (Wintersberger, 2005, p.212).

In the UK, children do not have a constitutional right to welfare. Families are considered as units who must ration their resources, rather than groups of individuals who all have an equal and necessary claim to resources. The welfare state is androcentric (Wintersberger, 2005, p.209); state help, if available, prioritises the main earner (still usually male) over other members of the family. Family benefits are reduced for the second or more children, there is lack of support for families with young people in further or higher education, or aged 16-18 and out of work or school, and people on low earnings or carers continue to receive less because their partner has an income, positioning them all as dependent on partners' or highest parental income. Parents' capacities are reduced as they provide for their children's and each others' needs (Bojer, 2005).

Lack of respect for children as human beings and their fair claim to resources means that parents have to choose whether to work or attend to their children, leaving many stuck between the two, and exhausted. Workers in the UK work the longest hours in Europe and frequently more than 48 hours per week because the UK opted out of the 1998 European Working Directive (Lavalette, 2005, p.154). At the same time a huge industry has grown around childcare, leisure and material provision for children that establishes children and families as significant producers and consumers. Thus, there is a huge gulf between children's actual contributions and adults' understandings of them as marginal, non-contributors (Wintersberger, 2005, p.209).

Historic reciprocal generational contracts, whereby parents looked after their young who then looked after them in old age, led to the establishment of old age pension insurance and provision (Qvortrup, 1994b). This does not guarantee income to families as it does those who are retired Hence society already benefits from children and their

contributions, as elderly populations continue to draw from old models of welfare, whilst investment in children remains the responsibility of families (Wintersberger, 2005, p.210) allowing some children to suffer. By recognising children as whole people needing resources, parents can continue to use their own capabilities more effectively (Bojer, 2005). States that recognise children require an income, as well as adults (removing some of the burden from families), such as the Nordic systems, have higher living standards and far less child poverty.

According to Bojer (2005), Rawls' theories of social justice did not include children but are well suited to their plight; some of his later work is useful as it draws attention to the idea of fair distribution over time from one generation to another, rather than for one at cost to another. His political conception of justice is based on the fundamental idea "*of society as a fair system of cooperation over time, from one generation to the next*" (Rawls, 1993, p.14) with citizens being 'free and equal persons' regulating society through their commitment to this. UK children are not classed as citizens and hence are not free and equal persons; limited understanding of capacities and concerns for their protection are used to justify this. However Rawls' suggests that a person is someone 'who can take part in' or 'play a role' in social life (1993, p.18) over a complete life from birth to death, challenging the idea that social agency is a mature adult skill. He suggests that a sense of positive justice, judgement, thought and inference are needed to a certain 'minimum degree' to be a person able to cooperate, but these are all inert human characteristics employed from birth to join the social world.

There has been a trend in the UK in recent years to blame families for their problems, especially poverty, rather than society's lack of fairness in distributing enough for all (Qvortrup, 2015, p.86). This has allowed paid employment to become the chief marker of success, masking the unique individual contributions that children and adults all make to society. Society's relationship with children, and their traditional regard as assets to both family and state, has been skewed toward their objectification as expensive possessions for the materially well off. Like the idealistic nuclear family, such choice is the preserve of the most wealthy who can measure the cost and value of children against their other possessions (Wyness, 2000, p.14). Government appears eager to promote this perception, by limiting how many children per family it will consider when calculating benefits, even though, as The Marmot Review (2010) revealed, poverty is rising and disproportionate for children, and government policy needs to change to tackle this.

It is very difficult to establish any argument as to why children should not benefit from a fair share of societal resources, if what is important is their human rights and potential to contribute to a fairer society, rather than their participation in an economic system that exploits so that some take a disproportionate share. However, whilst parents remain responsible for their children, this does not prevent the state scrutinising and tackling poor performance in every aspect of their lives, generally under the auspices of child protection. The Education Reform Act, 1998; Every Child Matters, 2003; and The Childcare Act, 2006, all heralded greater intervention and control of children's lives. Such state intervention prioritises parents' paid work and children's future worth as workers above their growth and well-being because they are not recognised as whole people (Bojer, 2005).

2.2.4 Children in Need of Liberation?

Others believe that children play a more active role in understanding and contributing to the social world, motivated by a need to get things done; this starts with family and extends as their social encounters grow (Dunn, 1988). In this way, learning is a social process that occurs through interaction with people in different contexts, where shared history and joint focus enable collaboration (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2004, p.26). Vygotsky (Rieber and Robinson, 2004) recognised that children are collaborative learners constructing knowledge through their interactions. Freire (1992) suggests that this follows a process of recognition where the learner understands that they are capable of cognition and thus agentic in their learning. However some pedagogy neglects the relationships that take place during these processes, reducing cognition to a scientific deposit or banking of knowledge from teacher to student (Freire, 1970; 1992).

More recent understandings of learning consider relationships and interactions involved in meaningful learning as conditions of intersubjectivity, where warm relationships like those that tend to exist between children and parents, or between siblings or friends, are important (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2004, p.27). Studies have shown that children in schools work better with friends than acquaintances and interpersonal relationships have a powerful effect on learning through collaboration (Faulkner and Miell, 1993, cited in Woodhead and Faulkner, 2004, p.28). Types of relationship are extremely important, not just in terms of identity and recognition but also how humans learn and form society.

When children are viewed as future citizens or workers, not yet quite whole, tensions affect decisions about their present lives (Qvortrup, 1994a). By keeping children in waiting for adulthood (Qvortrup, 2005) their capacities are played down as adults make sure they are looked after. This is not illiberal where children are provided with safe meeting places to socialise and learn about their worlds, but enforcement and overly controlled daily activities interfere with children's rights, liberties, freedoms and access to resources, the social primary goods that are the basis for self respect (Bojer, 2005, p.226).

Liberating children presents a difficult concept when their lives are so entangled with protection and reliance on parents for resources. Making distinctions between fair access to society's resources and protection is helpful. The UK limits resources to people if they cannot engage in paid work or have children. Neither of these is about having the agency to take part in society per se; yet they are a means of controlling who is and is not included.

Liberation is associated with freedom or emancipation. However, in modern terms, in democracy it is also about having the liberty to socialise, have equal access to societies systems and resources, and influence the state. The idea of children being social actors, shaping as well as being shaped by their circumstances (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998), has been described as a move toward their individualisation (Nasman, 1994, p.167), a status that has always been enjoyed by free men, more lately by women but not by children. Liberation of course challenges oppression; however, linking freedom to individualisation amplifies the idea that humans act independently of each other, and have less need for each other, in a modern age. Individuals, who influence without attention to others, disregarding their human worth, threaten freedom through lack of respect. Other versions of freedom are more relative, recognising that human progress comes through cooperation; disregard for others leads to growing needs for control and coercion, as happens with children in schools. Human developments are always collective with transitions shared by significant others (Corsaro, 2005, p.231).

Human rights are an attempt to collectively engage in understanding the conditions needed for freedom through respect; they do not eliminate poor human relations but instead reflect what is wrong with them. This is especially so for children whose rights are withheld by adults because of lack of equality as human beings (see section 2.2.3).

Whilst children's equality in some ways may be undesirable in order to protect children (Wyness, 2000), it should not preclude respect for their dignity and human rights.

Lack of equality does not stem from children's need for protection, or capacity to take part in social life, but from a deeply rooted sense of worth, based on wealth, that continues to segregate British Society today into classes of people, marked by income and assets, rather than individual contribution to societal progress. This idea of success subjugates children and families. Instead this study contends that all human beings should be considered successful contributors to their societies through individual difference. Then it is possible to see the huge contribution that children already make, from the day they are conceived – as those who will sustain society – as they grow – as loving members of families – as they mature by doing domestic tasks and caring for others - and as they are gradually able to contribute at the community level through friendships, social groups and to influence systems and the state. This means relationships must change, placing responsibility on adults to open avenues to do this, rather than liberating them from those they currently force them to take. Schools are important because they can provide countless intersecting avenues.

Currently schooling is shaped by hierarchical relationships and adults' needs. However, it is also possible to identify small areas of positive intergenerational engagement where learning is about building positive community. For example The Greenwich reading project (The Children's Society, 2009) brought fathers and sons together to read, not just in classrooms but through more imaginative use of school settings such as camps. By encouraging adults to participate in school activities with children, they not only get to experience schooling as it is now but also reflect on what frames their own ideas about education. Fielding and Moss (2011) suggest schools need to go through a transformative process toward more equitable spaces in which education becomes a form of collaboration, and joint creation, so that meaningful participation may become a reality.

2.3 Children's Agency

2.3.1 What is Children's Agency?

Children's agency is their capacity to make a difference in social systems. This suggests creativity and complex relational processes over time. According to Oswell (2013,

p.38), much of the work from the 1980s onwards about children's agency is based on Giddens's theories about the recursive nature of structures, and idea that people (agents) both shape and are shaped by systems. They are motivated or constrained by internal and external forces including capabilities. However, this does not fully explain change or novelty (see Chapter 4) or why some are restricted in how they shape systems. Other attempts have been made to model childhood in more reflexively interwoven ways, including James, Jenks and Prout (1998). Even so, these can tend towards oppositional elements, rather than shifting discourse toward more complex, inter-related arrangement of individuals and systems (Oswell, 2013, p.39). Social systems are formed through human agency and the structures formed place restrictions on that agency; when hierarchical systems suppress people, such as children, it is because individuals use their agency to do so, justifying this through their values and knowledge (see Chapter 3).

To understand children's agency and how it is suppressed, is to understand intergenerational relationships and how adults are able to use their power to silence children and render the impact they have on systems as relatively invisible. Self-determination theory suggests that relationships are important in fostering positive agency and that 'effort, agency and commitment' are 'normal characteristics of human nature' (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Lack of opportunity to build social competence, autonomy and relatedness result in suppression and passivity. Hence agency is more than just the act of individuals but their actions influenced by, and inter-related with, experience and frames of reference. Adults' controls interfere with children's autonomy and relationships and thus opportunities to build competence. Even so, children demonstrate agency through their own activities and play, without the need for formal plans, taking cues from each other and their imaginative engagement with the future (Corsaro, 2005, p.238).

Within play there is generally some element of conflict but this is a useful aspect of interactions:

"...it contributes to the social organisation of peer groups, the development and strengthening of friendship bonds, the reaffirmation of cultural values, and the individual development and display of self." (Corsaro, 2005, p.239).

Cooperative interactions, through rich relationships, enable children to use and develop their decision making, contextualising their social experience so that they can transform spaces and continue to learn (Dewey, 1916; 1938).

2.3.2 Why do Intergenerational Relationships Reduce Children's Agency and Opportunities to Develop Social Competence?

There are tensions between children's autonomy and self-determination, and ensuring that they are protected from harm (Woodhead, 2015, p.68). Children are generally excluded from mainstream society; thus confined to spaces such as home and schools (Alderson, 1999). Clearing children from public spaces, organisations and work, at the beginning of the 20th Century, brought new locations for children such as playgrounds and schools (Cockburn, 1998). This eventually extended from the cities to rural areas, in the late 1970s, as traditional farming families were finally decimated by government decisions to no longer support the production of home grown food, in preference to market economies. Childhood space and how adults control this, needs to be reconsidered (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998, p.40).

Views of children and childhood are also influenced by ideas about their indispensability. Their value as future workers is important as all societies need a continual feed of people to sustain themselves. Sentimental arguments also arise, such as closeness between parents and children, or children born to meet egotistical dreams and self-realisation of parents (Wintersberger, 2005, p.203). As children have become emotionally priceless assets, their hardship and suffering is regarded as adults' failure (Zelizer, 1994).

This is reinforced when children are considered the property of parents, rather than valued members and contributors to the state. They are out of place in settings not specifically designated for families. Adult spaces are able to emerge that do not consider the dangers they present to children, for example busy roads, drug and alcohol abuse and less vigilant housing communities. Liberalism breaks down close connections between community members so that laws and contracts are needed to ensure fairness, rather than trust or promise; children cannot legally enter in to such contracts so are less protected from adults who exploit (Alderson, 1999). Families are expected to keep their children away and are blamed if something bad happens. Inevitably, such privatisation

of family life and confinement of children leaves them vulnerable to adult abuse within such settings (Wyness, 2000).

Adults in Western or minority world societies do not accede to children's legitimate demands to use public spaces to meet for their own activities (Qvortrup, 2005) which at its extreme:

"...degrades children's ability to employ their capacity and competence and reinforces an incipient lack of confidence among adults in the abilities of children" (Qvortrup, 2005, p.6).

This appears to be taking a turn toward extreme prejudice in the UK. Adults reduce chances of unruly behaviour by banning children from shops and cafes, and enforcing curfews. If an individual child or young person does cause harm, reprimands are aimed at all children in the local area. Adults offer no reciprocity through their decisions; this may be the underlying reason why some find the idea of children's agency a threat. Children's entry to the adult world is becoming more abrupt as prohibitive legislation supersedes judgement and any societal responsibility to gradually bring children in to the cultures of public spaces. Changes in policy by public houses, clubs, restaurants, holiday accommodation (including youth hostels), work legislation and the age of compulsory education or training, have dissolved a gradual introduction to adult life. This presents a paradox as children, considered to possess growing capacities for participation, are routinely prevented from developing these in social spaces. Even their time with parents, their first educators, is limited by social structures that separate them for increasingly long periods of time through childcare, schooling, structured play and leisure activities. Thus the spaces of childhood become interwoven with the construct of childhood itself (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998) and serve to restrict children's agency.

Children's psychological space is also under threat as they mentally absorb what childhood means through its constraints and rigorous timetabling. Class, structure, capitalism and patriarchy are realised through control of relational spaces (Urry, 1995, p.13) - the subjective as well as material - through use or abuse of power. Schools restrict children's agency by providing an ordered, temporal passage from child to adult status (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998, p.41).

2.3.3 Children's Rights

Following the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK and in force from 1991, there was new interest in children's citizenship. The evolving concept of children's citizenship is increasingly relational and recognises interwoven networks of communities, rather than one simplistic notion of nation state (Walby, 2007; Osler and Starkey, 2002). The UK has been very slow to legislate for children's participation rights, thus, in schools there was more interest in the idea that children could be taught about community and deliberative democracy and that this might temper perceived antisocial behaviour and low turnout of young people at elections. The Crick *Report* (QCA, 1998) led to introduction of Citizenship as part of the National Curriculum.

Subordination and domination can no longer be justified if children are revealed as social actors themselves, through their developing citizenship (Cockburn, 1998); more conspicuous involvement in societal systems challenges children's structural positioning, and how this must change to enable their rights and improve status (Devine, 2002, p.303). The UK's problems with this (see Chapter 3) highlight how contentious rights can be, even in minority world societies. Others are suspicious of the UNCRC (1989) seeing it as grounded in capitalism, with welfarist provision inflicting idealised western childhood as the norm across different cultures (Wyness, 2000, p.135, citing Stephens, 1995). Thus, to propose children's rights as a cohesive criteria for childhood ignores the complex and disparate structures that prevail (Wyness, 2000). However, they do provide a starting point for change.

UK children have few opportunities to demonstrate their collective agency or voice.

“Hardly anyone raises the question of a child's right to adequate work and the value of children's work-like activities, such as school, which are not recognized as productive contributions to society.” (Wintersberger, 2005, p.218).

Yet children's obvious agency in shaping and using the Internet and its social networks may be where this is disputed. Children's rights, particularly those to participation (see Chapter 3) may be controversial, not because they are unrealisable but because children are already acting upon these for themselves in spaces less well controlled by adults. They are not passive users of virtual space but use this to build relationships and express their views in complex ways without adults' leadership or control. This represents a

‘temporally situated view of agency,’ with actions framed by past (iterative patterns of thought and action), present (practical and evaluative) and future (projective or imagined hopes, fears or desires) elements (Corsaro, 2005, p.233). This situates processes in time and space with the intersubjective aspects of agency, suggesting it as something relational and collective, rather than individual. Children use their present knowledge and contexts to make sense of, and interpret, past events (James, 2005, p.260). But their actions also demonstrate that they are future thinkers capable of imagining and hoping for their dreams.

2.4 How do Schools Structure Adult-Child Relationships?

2.4.1 How do Schools Reinforce Notions of Childhood?

Schools are spaces for adults and children but cannot be fully understood by setting one against the other; intergenerational relationships are part of the system itself and work to define as well as carry out its processes and thus shape society (Oswell, 2013; Prout, 2005). Schools marginalise children’s agency, preventing some of the spontaneity, creativity and productivity that are a consequence of more autonomous activity, limiting children’s opportunities to apply their social competence (Wyness, 2000, p.90).

Hierarchical and paternalistic accounts of children and teachers enable static roles and order, but this comes at a cost, as it also reduces the types of interaction and dialogue that occur; thus the current limits of such enculturation are controversial.

The single identity of childhood does not reveal the multitude of individual identities of children nor the complex agencies and structures that have created it:

“In this sense, categorical thinking has a tendency to focus on the outcome and not the process.” (Oswell, 2013, p.15).

Schools in the UK are organised by age groups, moving children through an established hierarchy toward adulthood, making it difficult to form relationships with those of other age groups. Even so, these carry a risk of children being expelled from the group because their attainment and behaviours fall outside the expected norm (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). Unlike families, where relations may be more dynamic, schools structure children and childhood as if they have a fixed position in the social hierarchy (Wyness, 2006, p.143).

This prevents more natural activities like play as they are channelled toward qualifications to mark their potential to grow the economy. In effect, schools have reduced children's access to resources by shifting emphasis to limited enculturation, based on neoliberal concern for the economy, sidelining broader educational aims as teachers become more accountable. Children have no statutory right of redress to lack of suitable education or if it falls short of enabling their rights; state scrutiny of schools is based on results of the general cohort not individuals.

Children have little opportunity to negotiate or control their education (Wyness, 2000, p.105). The 1986 Education Act dismissed children from representation on governing bodies with no educational rationale (Wyness, 2000, p.93).

Children are supposed to be included in decision making and reviews if they have Special Educational Needs (SEN) but they have no means to challenge lack of inclusion as it occurs. Indeed children can only access suitable provision if adults, other than their parents, have agreed to assess or diagnose their condition; even then provision is dependent on the school's discretion. Child centred teaching and approaches have been criticised as depriving children of knowledge (Alexander, Rose and Woodhead, 1992) , with a teacher led approach favoured so that children are exposed to a broad range of ideas and material (Wyness, 2000, p.99). Schools have tried and failed to standardise childhood (Oswell, 2013).

2.4.2 Conforming Children or Agents of Change?

Schools amplify children's lack of social status, as adults in the making "on route to something grander" (Wyness, 2000, p.89). Children's accounts of interactions with teachers are paternalistic and embedded in a discourse of subordination (Devine, 2002). As schools have become more adult oriented and bureaucratic, there may be a greater sense of exploitation through children's marginalisation, exclusion, control, sense of invisibility and lack of voice (Wyness, 2000, p.103). Continued use of structures based on developmental psychology maintain hierarchies and place (Walkerdine, 1985).

Nevertheless, examples of more innovative studies reveal children's active engagement with their everyday lives and how they affect them (Oswell, 2013). Even in the most structured and authoritarian classrooms, children demonstrate that they are more than passive recipients of teaching or victims of the social structure (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2005). Children resist control in different ways: covertly through their

subcultures and peer interactions as well as by measuring potential future benefits in exchange for their compliance. Those children who believe they have most to gain from the system, usually middle class, supplant their frustrations “*with long term goals of success and achievement*” (Devine, 2002, p.313). Conversely, deviance is regarded as subversive rather than as transformative action (Wyness, 2000, p.92).

Even though adults worry about losing control of children, their confidence in ordered structures may be deluded. Arguably children demonstrate their own dissent through truancy or anti-social behaviour but also through compliance by accepting schooling processes now for returns in the future (Smyth, 2006). Government figures in England suggest that unauthorised absence was much higher in 2012 than it was in 1997/98 (DfE, 2012; DfEE, 1999) when it was much easier to walk in and out of schools and take an hour or day out. In England the percentage of unauthorised missed half days across all schools was 0.7%, which had remained constant since 1994 but increased to 1.1% by 2012. Changes in recording and reporting make it extremely difficult to identify truancy figures, with unauthorised absence now meaning absence without school’s permission, placing onus on parents to explain all absence. The recently introduced ban on authorised absence, where families seek to take their children on holiday during term time, suggests disconnect between political understanding of family life and the constraints made by employers.

Children’s rejection of what is on offer in schools, whether demonstrated through anti-social behaviour or by truancy, can leave them and their families marginalised. Current policy seeks to rectify unsatisfactory behaviour – correcting non-compliance – rather than focusing on inclusion or indeed improving schools to meet the needs of more children and families. Children may not physically protest against their lack of respect and voice in schools, however there is evidence that they do want to be respected, are sceptical of the possibility of more democratic systems and are critical of those in place such as school councils because they have such limited power (Alderson, 1999).

Children’s subordination does not mean that children are at odds with, or have negative relationships with, adults per se as there are good examples of how well children and teachers relate (such as Devine, 2002, p.315). Adult intervention can lead to increases in autonomy. Where schools choose to implement children’s initiatives for tackling problems such as bullying, relationships change. Instead of the competition, mistrust

and rivalry that the curriculum engenders, energy is directed toward care and responsibility for each other in the school (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2004, p.28).

The relationship between the UK and what have been described as the 3Ps of children's rights: protection, provision and participation (Alderson, 2000; see Chapter 3) is useful to understand how far we have come, but also how much further we must go to recognise children as human beings, who thus should have equal rights and respect, whilst retaining adults' commitment to protection. Children are abused because some adults continue to use their power to abuse other human beings, who they perceive as having less worth than themselves, not because they are vulnerable per se. Education can change this but must include opportunities for better relationships to develop (Lansdown, 2005).

Schools are elemental to social change (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009). As understandings about children's agency have developed so have research methods. Whilst psychological research may continue to regard the child as object, through status accorded to scientific procedures which ignore power differentials between researcher and researched (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2004, p.30), newer methods such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) try to recognise more consistently children's own agency and thus capacity to shape and influence research and society. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. The next chapter considers how children's participation has developed and the affect schools have on its progress.

3 EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION

3.1 Overview

This literature review considers the background to children's participation in schools. It begins by establishing the difference between education and what is delivered by UK state schools. There are substantial differences in how policy has been developed through devolution; much of that mentioned will be as it pertains to schools in England although the issues are relevant across the UK. Children's rights, how these relate to education and the significance of children's agency in schools are considered before exploring children's participation and participation rights in more detail. This review cannot do justice to the huge body of literature that spans children's rights, education and childhood studies; instead it attempts to draw out some of the relational aspects between them to highlight the complexity of school systems and how these impact change. In doing so it raises some of the potential challenges for children's participation in schools and then presents a different way of thinking about participation in the evolving technological era.

3.2 What Are Schools For?

3.2.1 Education and Schools in Contention

Education and schooling are not the same. Education happens in and out of the home, informally and formally across generations. It is the:

"...conventions, values, attitudes, roles, competencies, and ways of perceiving the world that are shared by one's family, community, society, and culture"
(Johnson and Johnson, 2009, p.47).

It ensures social growth through the life-course as we learn to make sense of the world through interactions with others and cooperate to make things happen (Fielding and Moss, 2011; Dewey, 1916). In a democracy, education is essential for understanding how power is abused to limit the relative freedoms and rights that we enjoy; thus it is a form of prefigurative practice (Fielding, 2007a).

Schools role in passing on knowledge is obvious, especially where parents must attend to employment so cannot achieve this alone. Schools also provide locations where vast amounts of accumulated knowledge can be transmitted without distraction. A Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) has established a restrictive relationship between education and neoliberalism (Wrigley, 2015). In the UK, the knowledge passed to children, and the values that underpin policy and practice, are less influenced by democratic ideals than by elite decision makers whose actions may undermine them. Schooling has become a system of processes “done to children” legitimised by prioritising adults and future oriented needs above children’s present experience (Devine, 2002, p.312). As Gustafson suggests:

“...the ordinary inequality and deviation in schools reduces the complexity of the pedagogical processes and ensures the repetition of the knowledge hierarchy” (2010, p.93).

This demands a state of ignorance (Hendrick, 1997, p.47; Illich, 1971) which serves to marginalise children’s agency (Wyness, 2006a, p.141). Schools have a symbiotic relationship with society (Proudford and Baker, 1995), reflecting power issues and inequalities that exist, as well as serving to either maintain or overcome these. This is complex and so intertwined with other aspects of political choreography that schools and their control have become a political showground. There is so much to unlearn in order to move forward: difference as deficiency; attainment as intellect; competition and irrelevance to children’s lives (MacDonald, 1997).

Economic concerns have driven intervention in children’s lives to an all time high, whilst centralised control of the schooling system has led to a narrow focus on prescribed, measurable content and outcomes devoid of connection with educational philosophy (Fielding and Moss, 2011). The introduction of the National Curriculum meant that the political and social structures of schools, and the implications these have for the personal identity of those who make up the school community could be shaped to some extent by those with greater political power (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998, p.42). Intervention, through scientific accounts of pedagogy, produces a ‘disciplined system of control’ (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998, p.45). As a result, development of the whole young person and idea of human flourishing have been sidelined (Brighouse, 2007b) with potentially disastrous effects on well-being. James, Jenks and Prout (1998, p.46) describe how excessive school control led to an increase in suicides in Japan; lack

of similar research in the UK or clear statistics about children's poor mental health and lack of suitable treatment, is insufficient excuse to ignore a possible crisis occurring in the UK as families, schools and health professionals struggle to cope (Crook, 2014b). Children are losing their childhood by performing society's defined tasks (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998, p.47).

Concern about UK society's future well-being as a democracy has been expressed; notably through the extensive work of Fielding, Moss, Biesta, Osberg, Brighouse and Alexander, who have started to question the legitimacy and sustainability of policy and practice dominated by economic growth through a system that is undoubtedly failing to meet the needs of so many. Calls have been made to rethink schooling and provide broader education (Lawson and Spours (2011), Moss and Fielding (2011), Osberg and Biesta (2008). Fielding and Moss (2011) provide a serious attempt to challenge neo-liberalism in education and 'impoverished' views, offering a stark warning of the damage schools may be doing to the foundations of democracy itself. In doing so they make a case for improved children's participation, drawing from pioneering educationalists of the past, as well as encouraging re-engagement with philosophical debate about what education should be. Such ideas reject the dismal view of a future society simply wanting more of the same, whilst recognising that schools are elemental to change (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009).

Several large scale independent inquiries have also revealed a mismatch between policy and children's lives. These include research by Layard and Dunn (2009) which draws attention to the differences in media portrayal of childhood, increasing stress in children's lives, suggests SATs should go, and argues for better pay, status and facilities for those who work with children. The *Cambridge Primary Review* (Alexander and Armstrong, 2009) tries to provide a coherent vision of primary school, emphasising that standards and breadth of education are independent as good schools manage both, and that creative and humanities subjects that promote dialogue, understanding and enquiry are being lost to knowledge transmission. The work of the review continues through the ongoing *Cambridge Primary Review Trust* whose priorities include equity, global citizenship and fostering high quality classroom talk (CRPT, 2016). 'Education for the Good Society: The values and principles of a new comprehensive vision' (Lawson and Spours, 2011), a participatory project organised by Compass and supported by the NUT, envisages what is wrong with schooling and ways forward to more democratic schools.

The 'Crick Report' (QCA, 1998) recommended citizenship education as part of the compulsory National Curriculum to promote what it termed 'active citizenship.' Implementation was to take varying forms across the UK nations (Andrews and Mycock, 2007) but generally limited teaching to knowledge about citizenship and democracy rather than expecting schools to change their practices to actively promote democracy in the system. It fell short of recommending compulsory school councils or community involvement "*for fear of overburdening schools and teacher*" (QCA, 1998, p.25). It clearly considers children to be citizens in the making, with young people from age 16 having "*more access to the opportunities, rights and responsibilities of adult citizenship amid the world of work.*"(p.27). There is very little about children's own agency and recognition of how they already contribute to their communities, although this is a feature of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that Ofsted was required to inspect at the time. However, the report includes a table of essential elements including: values and dispositions, skills and aptitudes that are arguably those one might expect for democracy, which unfortunately featured very little in school practice and may be why citizenship eventually disappeared from the curriculum.

Policymakers appear to regard children and young people as the most likely suspects for breakdown of both the economy and democracy; a vision echoed in the United States and much described by Giroux (2008). There is little acknowledgement of the damage that may be done by policy itself as it tightens the confines of children's lives, intervening in their daily activity and representing so many children as failures or deficient in some way (Smyth, 2006). The language of schools has changed accordingly to reflect process (Biesta, 2012, p.583): pupils have become learners who must attain set criteria, thus they must be made ready to learn, with disadvantages (flaws) removed and behaviour modified where necessary; teachers are practitioners enabling learning objectives to take place and measuring progress; headteachers are managers or directors assisted by business managers to ensure value for money. A narrow set of academic goals is valued, whilst other contributions or personal qualities are ignored (Giroux, 2008; Smyth, 2006).

Biesta's 'Philosophy of Education for the Public Good' (2012a) suggests that whilst the acquisition of knowledge and skills and enculturation are important, a third essential aspect - "subjectification" (p583) - is being eliminated from education in schools. This is how individuals develop their own qualities, their uniqueness and character. Such identity forming goes beyond enculturation. It is the space within which to think, to

appreciate, to criticise, to develop opinions based as much on emotional response, as it is on knowledge shared, which Biesta (2012a, p583) describes as “the weakness” of education in that it cannot be measured, so is easily ignored.

School structures reflect children’s lack of social status and reduce their capacities to construct knowledge, positioning the expert teacher above the ignorant child (Alderson, 1999) and reducing knowledge gain to a transfer process (Freire, 1970). Fielding and Moss (2011) suggest that education is out of touch with new understandings of knowledge and that complexity theory (see Chapter 4) offers a new way to consider this, citing Biesta and Osberg’s (2007, p.47) concerns that knowledge “...is not conservative, but radically inventionalistic” (Fielding and Moss, 2011, p25). Knowledge making is inseparable from the knowledge produced (Chevalier and Buckles, 2008); oversimplification of learning processes leaves school interactions devoid of meaning. Knowledge is co-constructed (Freire, 1970) and understanding the frames of reference – past, present and future – that influence this requires opportunities to reflect, evaluate and interact with others. This is pertinent to children’s rights and participation and forms the context for this thesis.

3.2.2 Children’s Rights and Education

The 1948 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights states that everyone has inalienable rights to liberty and security as persons; yet how children in the UK are treated, particularly in schools, casts some doubt as to whether children are truly regarded as persons by society and its laws (see Chapter 2). Schools in the UK routinely deprive children of freedoms through detention, isolation, exclusion, drills for moving around, timetabling, punishments, confiscation of property, and lack of accountability by adults for their actions (Alderson, 1999). Behavioural expectations and policies ensure children are prevented from expressing their own opinions on the tasks set, how they are treated or the general running of the school. Parents are also expected to set punishments or reprimands for non-compliance at school. School is compulsory (once parents register a child with a school):

“...based on the assumption, or at least the implication, of mistrust: that children and teenagers are too ignorant, foolish and reckless to attend school voluntarily” (Alderson, 1999, p.190).

Article 29 of the UNCRC clearly links education to both socialisation and the development of the child and their personality to their full potential. As Harris (2005, p.935) suggests it is:

“...critical to the fullest enjoyment of citizenship as a social status, and so a right to education is important in reinforcing citizenship.”

In this way, education rights are also social rights. This presents a problem for schools in nations where children are treated very differently to adults and enjoy far fewer of the freedoms associated with human rights. Children remain locked in a “feudal time warp” (Alderson, 1999, p.186) where they must remain subservient, trusting in adults to do what is right and take decisions that are in their interests, but with little reciprocal trust or respect for their agency (Qvortrup, 2005). Thus Article 12, the right to a view in all matters that affect them, is important, but equally controversial.

The UK has incorporated very little of the UNCRC in law. In a reply to issues raised by the CRC in relation to the UK’s fifth periodic report (HM Government, 2014), the UK claims that in England:

“There are laws and procedures to seek redress if children’s rights are breached, e.g. Special Educational Needs tribunals.” (CRC, 2016c, p.3)

The reality is these remain very limited (this may in fact be the only one set in law). The whole reply demonstrates ambivalence toward children’s rights in general; it avoids answering questions about how these will be incorporated in a proposed new Bill of Rights that the current government plans to develop taking the stance that:

“The UK has a long tradition of respect for human rights and, in the UK Government’s view, the Human Rights Act opened the system to abuse” (CRC, 2016c, p.2).

The Government also failed to provide the detail asked for by the CRC, to demonstrate how children’s views and rights would be considered in both the design and implementation of the proposed bill. Clearly children’s rights, particularly participation, are not a priority.

Whilst many governments have recognised the importance of parents in educating children (Desforges and Abouchar, 2003), this also deflects responsibility away from the state making parents more accountable (Harris, 2005) and may be another reason

why education and participation rights (discussed in the next section) have received little attention. Parents must make decisions about which schools or nurseries children attend, how to implement home-school agreements, and how they meet teachers' expectations about work which must be done at home such as teaching children to read, basic numeracy and ICT. Some must help with trips, creative or sports activities so these are able to take place. Young (2002) suggests such involvement has been accompanied by "insider exclusion", where parents with the least status are marginalised. Parents' representation on governing bodies makes them accountable for the financial actions of schools, even though they have very little influence over their management; similarly, lack of involvement in the day to day occurrences and knowledge of schools prevents them from effectively representing children's interests so that democratic schools remain an exception and may face hostility (Trafford, 1997).

Cockburn (2005) and Alderson (2000) question whether it is possible for schools to have a role in developing children's rights because of the educational context. And yet others in Education have argued that schools offer an ideal opportunity for participation (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000) even though systems and policy present a challenge. Thus, it is important to understand why schools are able to stand apart (in the main) from childhood studies in the UK, and question the logic of research that does this when they influence children's lives so much.

Research suggests that children's voices are ignored or suppressed in schools (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006, p.224). School structures foster passive expectations because they do not allow challenge, either cognitively or behaviourally. Children's questioning may be directed to unfairness about being forced to believe a set of viewpoints or 'facts,' rather than evaluation of their merit in sociological terms (for example, Rudduck and Flutter, 2004a, p.102). Children are not passive from their own making but as a result of the processes and constraints placed upon them. Schools, like most social structures are created by adults to serve adults' purposes, which also distracts from the idea that schooling is children's work and that their agency can make a huge difference.

"Stressing protection and socialization measures at the cost of interpreting schooling as children's participation in the division of labour was therefore an irresistible temptation and interest, but nevertheless also a way of suppressing children's contributions" (Qvortrup, 2005, p.7).

Hence, it is the lack of opportunity for children to demonstrate agency and use their social and cognitive skills that enables adults to dismiss capacities, discriminate and disrespect them. Understanding of children's rights is limited among those working with children as well as children themselves (Lundy, et al. 2013), which augments this.

3.2.3 Why Agency Matters in Schools

Children are curious and motivated to find out about their world. As Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest, this is not unusual as the tendency that:

“...most people show considerable effort, agency, and commitment in their lives appears, in fact, to be more normative than exceptional, suggesting some very positive and persistent features of human nature.” (p.68)

Their self-determination theory suggests that competence, autonomy and relatedness are necessary to foster these positive processes, and lack of opportunity results in their suppression and passivity. Schools reduce children's opportunities for autonomy, using behavioural control to dampen capacities and reproduce inequitable relationships, preventing participation. Attempts to overturn this are a struggle for status (Qvortrup, 2015, p.74); children's agency is the “full social recognition of children in structural terms” (Wyness, 2000, p.26).

This does not mean pitting children against adults in a fight for control of space or elevating one's needs above the other, but better appreciation that relationships are important and can be located in broader theories of change (see Chapter 4). Schools are not the closed systems they sometimes appear to be, but complex and cohesive systems of countless interactions between people, the environment and processes, continuously influencing and shaping the whole as well as each other; this study embraces the idea that they are adaptive systems which are organic and dynamic, where new possibilities can emerge (Merry, 1995; Morrison, 2008a).

Devine suggests a new model of citizenship “which emphasizes connectedness, interdependence and community” (2002, p.303); children have an active role to play within this. Respect for this does not take responsibility away from adults but instead places new responsibilities on them to consider how they structure systems, locations, relationships and communication to ensure these reflect the varied understandings and

concerns that children have. By doing this more readily, they may enable children to participate more effectively.

The *Rights Respecting Schools Award*, established in 2004 as a means of supporting schools to embed the UNCRC in ethos and policies, is one intervention that challenges draconian school systems. Children's participation is a main focus of the award:

“There is recognition of the emerging capacities of children to play an increasingly informed and active role in the life of the school” (UNICEF, 2013).

An evaluation of children's well-being and achievement in schools undertaking the award (Sebba and Robinson, 2010) suggests that, as yet, rights are not fully embedded in the schools who take part. It also raises questions as to whether school communities genuinely share values underpinning children's rights, when reasons given for taking part included improved behaviour, meeting national targets and policies, or whether they already had the characteristics presented before taking part in the award. More promising was a similar study in Canada (Covell, 2010) that focused on student engagement and identifies participation as making the main difference in these schools:

“It is, in part, the extent of opportunities for meaningful participation that differentiate Rights-respecting schools from traditional schools” (Covell, 2010, p.40).

3.3 Understandings of Participation

3.3.1 How has Children's Participation Developed?

Children's participation is not something new or even new to schools. In its broadest sense it is about children being able to take part in, and thus influence, society and its systems. Hart (1992) uses 'participation':

“... to refer generally to the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.”(p.5)

White (1996) distinguishes four forms of participation: nominal, instrumental, representative and transformative. She reasons that each form has different functions,

and argues actors ‘at the top’ (more powerful) and ‘at the grass roots’ (less powerful) have different perceptions of, and interests in, each form, which may influence how participation reproduces inequalities. She suggests that transformative participation is where power holders are in solidarity with the less powerful, implying some sort of relationship exists; they may take part for different reasons but transformation occurs because they are able to improve lives.

There are problems with defining participation in terms of levels or degrees of involvement because these are measured in relation to the practices of those with most power, such as professionals or academics, and risk emphasising objectives and products, rather than how knowledge is influenced and created. Hart’s (1992) ladder of participation suggests how important adult-child relations are to process, as well as the influence of power. Shier’s (2001, 2009) *Pathways to Participation* (inspired by Treseder and Fajerman, 1997) illustrates the degree to which children may be influenced by adults and is useful for considering their role. However, this also indicates that participation is a linear process, where adults simply need to relinquish control so that children have more power. This does not challenge hierarchical relationships that contribute to children’s issues and leaves them at the mercy of unscrupulous adults who can decide to remove their support for whatever reason.

White (1996) describes participation organised by NGOs as a functional ‘process’ reducing the complex relationships that exist to simple hierarchies of power, reinforcing assumptions about the limited capacities of those involved and thus increasing the status of facilitators. The role of the facilitator and NGOs can be compared to that of the teacher and school – authoritarian and holding the power to uphold (or not) children’s rights. The problem with such a model is that the facilitator will always remain instrumental to processes, because they retain the power to enable or disable them. Even though children may go on to use their agency and cooperation for change more readily, their status remains unchallenged.

Freire (1970; 1992) recognised power differentials as constraints to participation but he also saw participation as an empowering and lasting educational process. He engaged mainly adults in education and dialogue to awaken their consciousness of agency and status and how one could be employed to improve the other. This suggests that issues of power, whilst engendered through unfair distribution of societal resources, are also grounded in the psychological (Groundwater-Smith and Downes, 1999), with individual

values and attitudes also contributing to the power differentials in systems. What is known, and how it is learned, is just as important to agency as the influence of others.

Where participation is more specifically used for research through PAR (see Chapter 5) Kesby, Kindon and Pain (2007, pp.23-25) suggest it is a “spatial practice” and that skills and knowledge developed are dependent on the local situation, making them difficult to transfer to others. However this ignores the complex relationships that are reproduced within and between systems and the importance these may have in overcoming such assumptions (see Chapter 4).

Models of participation in schools are also restricted by the use of steps or levels because these maintain the idea that facilitators are *allowing* children in to a complicated, higher status, adult world, which is carefully protected. Fielding and Moss’ (2011, p.78) model remains bound within an idea of children helping adults with their agendas; even their ideal 6th level of participation is a teacher enabled space (staff, students and museum staff plan a visit to the museum). It suggests that children may have a view and can decide which choice of school activities take place but fails to consider how children could make a valuable contribution to the design and underlying principles of the education that such activities are supposed to deliver.

Missing from most recent discussions of children’s participation is the idea that it is a learning process, engaging the subjective through frames of reference:

“If children are to achieve real benefits in their own lives and their communities, and create a better future, they can only do this by being active citizens, articulating their own values, perspectives, experiences and visions for the future, using these to inform and take action in their own right and, where necessary, contesting with those who have power over their lives.” (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010)

Inviting children to give a view to an adult is a consultation process that may be extremely useful for evaluating social services but does not necessarily seek to change relationships, which may have more lasting effect; consultation can also be damaging if views are heard and then perceived to be ignored by adults. Thus it is important to separate the idea of children’s participation - their active engagement for change which may involve working with adults – and consultation – conceived and performed on their behalf, regardless of other concerns that may be more pressing.

3.3.2 Participation Rights

Interpretations of children's participation vary and Article 12 of the UNCRC remains controversial (Wyness, 2000), particularly in England. Children's rights are sometimes categorised as those of provision, protection and participation or the 3 Ps (Alderson, 2000).

Protection and provision rights are perhaps most easily understood because we are increasingly confronted with media images of suffering children through malnutrition, disease, war, abuse, child labour and loss of family due to these. In the UK, rights to life without such deprivation may be established, but not insured because society does not distinguish children from family units (see Chapter 2). Participation rights are different because they challenge such invisibility and necessitate recognition of children's agency, and capacities to take part in society and its systems. Participation rights are about social inclusion and extend beyond Article 12, the right to a view. The UNCRC (1989) General Comment 12 states that:

“The concept of participation emphasizes that including children should not only be a momentary act, but the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all relevant contexts of children's lives” (paragraph 13).

“...simply listening to the child is insufficient; the views of the child have to be seriously considered” (Paragraph 28).

Meaningful, social deliberation and decision making require relationships where children and adults are free to express their views without fear, where they have the information necessary to identify problems and consider potential solutions, where others' beliefs are not enforced upon them. Thus articles 12 to 17 are all important and often referred to as the participation rights. Further to this is the freedom to take part and express ideas creatively, and through their culture and beliefs, as per Articles 30 and 31, which conflicts with overly prescriptive school curricula and activities. This study suggests the right to relevant education that enables children to flourish and develop their potential is actually paramount as it is through education that ignorance, illiteracy and their limitations can be challenged. Hence articles 28 and 29 bridge knowledge and social structures to foster the values and skills necessary for life in democratic society

for all children. This is particularly important in the UK because of the symbiosis between schools and society and the compulsory nature of schooling.

Participation rights are social rights, the prerequisites for inclusion. They are relational rights, needed for freedom, justice and peace; without these, cooperation between people is open to power abuse and relations of dominance. Fear of losing control over children prevents adults affording children's rights because hierarchies presume their lack of capacity and a need to take responsibility on children's behalf. This directly contradicts the UNCRC (1989) which clearly recognises children's agency and increasing capabilities.

3.3.3 Participation and Individualism

Adults' control of children restricts their agency in some locations but not others. Children create and participate with other children in the deliberative spaces of peer and friendship groups (Cleaver and Cockburn, 2009). Percy-Smyth and Thomas (2010) provide examples of how children participate in families and communities, demonstrating their agency. Sometimes this is referred to as 'social participation' to differentiate between this and representational forms of participation, adopted for governance and familiar in the UK electoral system. Distinctions between these are less about being active or passive participants, as it is possible to have very active involvement in local political systems, for example, as it is in family. However, distinctions between participation for individual gain, and cooperative endeavour toward solidarity and social change, are useful because they illustrate how representational forms of participation can emerge to serve individualism or positive societal process.

Individualism has risen through neoliberalism and an economic system that promotes consumerism and marketised politics and services. Consultation, like market research, is about responding to individual needs; those that occur most often, or shout loudest, tend to benefit most. Geographical communities may be strangers; thus representational systems lack connection with those they purport to represent. Low turnouts at UK elections may be far less to do with apathy than lack of opportunity for participation. If communities cannot come together to share their concerns, engage in debate about potential change and communicate these with politicians, then they can only represent those with the inclination and means to communicate their individual views; council,

party and parliamentary debates may be little more than a sum of politicians' own experiences and priorities, with less concern for the greater good or damage that may be inflicted on others through decisions.

The recent UK referendum on leaving the European Union is a good example, with the general populace expected to express a view without access to reliable information about what either choice could bring or their impact on society. Governments have continually criticised young people for a perceived apathy toward national politics and yet their obvious concerns about Brexit, expressed through a huge turnout who undeniably voted 'no' and a similarly huge protest by younger children prevented from taking part in the vote, have been ignored in favour of a marginal 'yes' vote from the ageing population. Lack of education about the European Union and its pros and cons, lack of access to anything but conflicting information, lack of well researched potential ways forward, lack of structure through which to debate freely at local level without hatred and abuse, and lack of respect for the children and young people who will ultimately live with the decisions made, illustrate just how important children's participation rights may be in preventing such a collapse of democracy in future.

Participation, in the sense represented by this thesis, is a social process that has existed for millennia as people come together to share and establish knowledge and solve problems in the interests of community and progress. Consultation, as a modern practice, is perhaps the newer phenomena, an extension of market research, where common problems are identified and solutions designed by stakeholders, after collecting opinions about what people might 'like' or 'enjoy.' At an individual level, this may be in pursuit of status or income; at a public service level, it may seek to reduce costs. Its essence and purpose is in the material and the economy, even if this leads to societal change. In schools, pupil voice follows this model, with consultation used for research and school improvement to inform the extensive school reforms that have taken place since the 1970s. Whilst *Educational Review* published a special issue on pupil voice in 1978, none of the papers suggested any commitment by schools to incorporate pupil voice or participation in school ethos (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006, p.221) and little appears to have changed since.

“The more voice is associated with choice, with the commodification of schooling, and with personalised / independent learning, the more important it will be for researchers to explore the communicative procedures embedded in

teaching and the pedagogic identities they create.” (Arnot and Reay, 2007, pp.323-324)

3.4 Children’s Participation in Schools

3.4.1 Education Policy and Participation

Discourse on children’s participation, is well established within children’s services (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010) but remains problematic in schools. There is little evidence that children in mainstream state schools are participating in decisions about the purpose, activities or direction of the schools they must attend. There is some limited evidence of their involvement in making choices about environment and activities associated with their traditional roles as children (Wyse, 2001) but this appears to deteriorate as they move through the school system. Whilst acceptance that schools must be more ready to listen to children was heralded by the work of Rudduck and Flutter (2000, 2004), it was soon adopted as a means of school improvement, placing control and outcome above the right of children to have a say (Arnot and Reay, 2007).

The 1989 Children Act made it a legal requirement for children and young people to be consulted on matters that affect them; the 2004 Children Act provides for the establishment of the Office of the Children’s Commissioner and requires local children’s services to reflect the needs of children and young people with local authorities and partners, encouraging good levels of their participation in design and delivery (Whitty and Wisby, 2007, p.12). The green paper *Schools Building on Success* (DfEE, 2001) stressed that pupils should be involved in decisions about their own learning and school life, including through school councils and consultation. However, children were banned from governing bodies through the Education Act 1986, section 15 and, even though there was a short reprieve in 1998, this was overturned. They currently have no representation or involvement in the management or governance of schools, thus no way to redress decisions made which affect their everyday school lives.

The 2002 Education Act gave the Government powers to prescribe regulations for school councils but in England this has never happened; in Wales, since December

2005, it has been compulsory for every primary, secondary and special school to have a school council. Political endorsement, however, does not mean that school councils are operated democratically; efforts to control them by teachers using typical initiation-response-evaluation patterns, that do not allow children to contribute for themselves, are likely to impede this (Thornberg, 2009). The subsequent guidance to local authorities and schools *Working Together: giving children and young people a say* (DfES, 2004), which had wide support during public consultation, considers how children can be more involved in decision making in schools and the many ways of doing this. Whilst its useful checklist mentions consulting pupils, it also gives examples of other participatory methods and how children can be more involved in conducting processes. For the first time pupil participation is described in detail as an active process, where children work in partnership with adults to make a difference, “engaging in dialogue, conflict resolution, negotiation and compromise” (p.2).

In 2005, Ofsted introduced a new framework for inspection which required schools to systematically seek the views of children, including teaching and learning (Whitty and Wisby, 2009). The 2005 White Paper, ‘Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: more choice for parents and pupils’ (DfES, 2005), suggests that schools should be shaped around parents wishes, that there should be a Schools Commissioner, renews commitment to academies and federations, and outlines more processes for accountability. Whilst it acknowledges and supports growing numbers of school councils, voice and participation are otherwise only mentioned in relation to parental views and involvement. There is also an emphasis on parents’ responsibilities for children’s behaviour and suggestions of sanctions to be used against children who do not comply with school behaviour policies. The paper does not, as was suggested by Whitty and Wisby (2007), demonstrate support for children’s participation.

Whitty and Wisby (2007) made several recommendations following their research about pupil councils and voice in England’s maintained schools: better communication between governing bodies and pupils, including pupils in the production of school development plans and staff appointments, involvement of school councils in all aspects of school life including teaching and learning and behaviour policies and providing a budget for school councils. However, whilst pupil voice appeared to have a revival in this period (Brighouse, 2006), in 2008 the UK was criticised by the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child because:

“...participation of children in all aspects of schooling is inadequate, since children have very few consultation rights...” (CRC, 2008:15)

In 2014 the UK returned its fifth report to the CRC stating that:

*“In England, over 99 per cent of schools have measures in place that enable pupils to have a say in the running of the school; and 95 per cent have a school council. Ofsted seeks the views of pupils as part of school inspection. In Scotland, the Pupil Inclusion Network Scotland (PINS) supports organisations working with vulnerable or excluded children and young people. Membership includes teachers, local authority staff, health professionals and Police. In Wales, since 2009 it has been a statutory requirement for all maintained schools in Wales to have a school council. Updated guidance *Listening to and involving young people* (April 2012) includes the text of article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has particular relevance to activities in schools to promote the pupil voice.”(HM Government, 2014, p. 187)*

There is no indication of how the figure for England was evidenced; a 2006 MORI teacher omnibus survey of 999 teachers produced the same first figure but a 2007 MORI survey of children indicated that only 85% have a school council one year later (Whitty and Wisby, 2007). It is assumed that having a say refers to the statutory requirement for OFSTED (since 2005) to consult children during their inspections.

3.4.2 Why is Children’s Participation a Challenge for Schools?

Presenting pupil voice as a school initiative objectifies the process, reducing it to something controllable by teachers using prescribed methods (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006), an intervention to achieve specific outputs through popular choice. In doing so, this adds another job to the process of schooling for teachers, as they try to find time and resources to meet further requirements. Whilst Rudduck and Fielding (2006) suggest there were antecedents for pupil voice in past examples of democratic traditions and participation in schools, the connection with what has emerged in schools is rather precarious. However, these traditions do represent more appreciative ways to consider participation in a rapidly developing technological era.

Pupil voice presents both a problem for children’s participation but also a means to better understand the difference between consultation and more active engagement in

matters that affect children. When consulting pupils, all that is heard is a message that has already been constructed, rather than the contexts and interactions that shaped this (Arnot and Reay, 2007). In schools, teachers shape the realisation of meaning, as well as controlling how this will be presented, by maintaining traditional roles and expectations. Without attention to the subjective, pupils' views become a list of objects that can be manipulated for adult use, limiting any meaningful engagement with children about the other countless matters that affect them in schools. Roles, behaviour and the code talk of the classroom (Arnot and Reay, 2007) reduce children and teachers' awareness of the subjective processes involved in education, the influence these have on interactions and the knowledge shared or produced.

Knowledge entitlement by age, through school, belies just how powerful knowledge is perceived to be as a means of control. If, as Biesta (2012) suggests, knowledge is produced because of subjectification, because humans are trying to understand their relationships with each other and the world, then it is not the nature of knowledge itself that is at issue but the emotive ways in which it can be shared or withheld from others. School systems uphold hierarchical notions of knowledge through inequitable dichotomies such as knowledgeable teacher and ignorant pupil (Ranciere, 2007), educated adults and uneducated children, or as Freire (1970) described - instructors and empty vessels. Citton's (2010) explanation of Ranciere's 'Ignorant Schoolmaster' (originally published 1987) suggests that the role of the school teacher or "master" is essential to the subordination of children and the continuing myth of unequal intelligence. By reminding children, repeatedly, that they are less capable and less knowing than superiors, they may assume this status for life; so hierarchies are maintained.

Where teaching favours certain children – because they conform or are considered more academically able, or have the privileged experiences on which the National Curriculum builds – others will always be marginalised in some way. This simple lack of inclusion is reinforced by adults who see children not only as lesser than themselves but also, in some cases, less deserving than their peers.

However, excluded children still learn; they may fail to meet requirements or progress at a rate deemed acceptable but they will always learn something from the interactions that take place, which may include what it is like to be excluded and how difficult it is to participate once this occurs. Such oppression is hardly the development of every

child's potential. Thus it is important to challenge the intergenerational relationships that enable such issues of power to occur.

As Radford suggests:

“The social technology of schooling is like a work of art, rich in interpretive possibilities, and the role of research is to offer tentative identification and critical analysis of these interpretations.” (Radford, 2008, p.148)

According to Rudduck and Fielding many schools have fostered a culture where children's capacities for participation are both appreciated and encouraged by:

“...the idea of the school as a community where students shared in its governance, to student autonomy and, importantly, to making spaces where students could develop their own identities and interests.” (2006, p.221)

Development of the whole person by recognising capacities through trusting relationships, tolerance and breadth of curriculum are recurring themes through their examples. Democracy is built through rich relationships that promote closeness, security and recognition of each others' unique value as human beings; in other words as beings *as well as* possible becomings. Alexander Bloom's work at St George-in-the-East state secondary school in the 1940s was seminal in that he structured the school through his belief in how human beings grow and flourish through friendship, security and esteem (Fielding, 2011b) and the principle of *“communally situated individuality as central to a democratic way of life”* (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006, p.222). Democracy is something learned through experiencing it at school (Dewey, 1916; Gutman, 1987; Thornberg, 2010).

Much education and childhood policy considers children as future potential workers; there is little emphasis on the cooperative agency needed to flourish in a genuinely democratic society (Ranson, 2000, p.263). Kjørholt's (2002) work on the interrelationship between children's participation and community in Norway suggests that participation cannot be isolated from constructs of childhood, rights and democracy. She acknowledges the role children play as resources for the future world—as workers, protectors of the environment and local citizens —yet this vision appears more dynamic than that in the UK, less dismally associated with capitalist constructs of success.

3.4.3 Inclusion

Inequalities are not only reflected by schools, they may also be shaped by them; teachers and pupils are segregated as those who know and those who seek to know (Ranciere, 2007). Children are routinely grouped, with work differentiated to ensure those most likely to do well do so. Children with additional needs, whatever the reason, are identified and often removed from work with their peers to inclusion rooms set aside for those whose needs are not met by the general class teaching; a contradiction in terms as they effectively exclude children from interaction with their more 'normal' peers. Segregation exaggerates differences between children, doing little to ensure all their unique talents and contributions are equally valued. Performance targets exacerbate this so that those in the centre are least likely to receive teacher attention or personalised teaching, rendering many children invisible in spaces where they must spend a great deal of their lives, silenced by teachers who have less interest in securing their cooperation.

Consultation reproduces such silencing, limiting whose voices are heard and certain children's capacities to engage (Harris, 2005). Representational participation assumes high levels of communication skill, with those acting as councillors or in focus groups for research purposes, expected to provide well spoken performances that communicate main points of contention (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). When asking for children's views in schools, adults assume these will be presented in a manner acceptable to teachers and school leaders or other adult bodies, which requires considerable communicative skills (Arnot and Reay, 2007, p.312). Anecdotal evidence suggests that even where children use electoral systems to choose representatives, teachers may criticise or manipulate their choices in favour of the most eloquent or high ability children.

Despite this, rather than considering pupil voice as a problem of communication, it may be more useful to consider it as a problem of adult-child relationships and unreasonable expectations. For teachers to enable pupil voice through anything other than their teacher led processes is to admit that children, like adults, are capable of insight and understanding their decision making and actions, and shaping knowledge through interaction with others. This does not fit so neatly in the timetabled order and precise processes of the modern classroom. Nor does it sit comfortably with processes that allow differentiation and exclusion of some children.

Promotion of fairness, equality and the cooperative relationships necessary for a decent society, with opportunities for children to develop their capacities for participation through participation, are suggested as ways to move forward. Inclusion is much more than making sure more voices are heard; it is about ensuring that everyone has opportunity to develop their capabilities and is valued for their unique part in society and its social systems, without comparison to the already socially elite.

3.4.4 Teachers vs. Children

Adults have strategic advantages over children in applying their power in schools; processes that concern children's decision making will be shaped by this (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998, p.144). There are tensions between the vocational elements of teaching, where committed teachers hope to develop children's potential through education, and policy induced practice that has to be performed in order to meet governments' rising demands for qualification (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). Teachers appear reluctant to encourage participation in classrooms and this is generally perceived to be about lack of resources (especially time), loss of power in traditionally hierarchical relationships and anxiety about what children may say. Rudduck and Fielding (2006, pp. 225-226) suggest that most children are constructive in their criticisms of school activities and harsher protests tend only to follow unfair treatment; they may also be anxious about what they are 'allowed' to say. McIntyre, et al. (2005) suggests that teachers may be avoiding some uncomfortable truths about their own behaviour and attitudes.

Teachers may have to confront some of these behaviours and attitudes in order to establish participation (Marchant and Kirby, 2004). Where children are expected to identify problems and produce recommendations, only to be disappointed when adults overrule decisions because of their own lack of agency in schools, or to prioritise their own needs, the process becomes tokenistic. Attempts to move beyond consultancy may be damaging in schools because they undermine trust. Similarly where populist decision making is also used, potentially serious problems (that could otherwise be addressed to prevent marginalisation) may be overlooked in favour of those that result in more limited benefits for the majority, confined to issues that children can easily engage with such as new playground equipment and break-time activity (Wyse, 2001; Sebba and Robinson, 2010).

The main problem appears to be a lack of attention to the subjective processes (that human beings use in cognition and decision making) and how social activity contributes to these. Whilst this thesis makes no attempt to provide a scientific understanding of the workings of the brain, it suggests there is enough evidence within educational research to understand, at least to some extent, the relational aspects of social activity and interaction and how these impact learning. Obvious power differentials (through misconceptions of capacity and protectionism, (see Chapter 1) are blamed for lack of participation, particularly in schools (Mayall, 1994); but they also reduce opportunities for higher functioning or thinking skills by reducing social interaction. Pupil voice or consultation adds to this, as adults assume children's participation in schools is within their possession to give, and thus also to take away, maintaining status.

Instead, participation as a relational practice means setting aside some of the constraints imposed (to maintain order and control outcomes) and accepting a certain level of ambiguity as people try to make meaning from their shared experiences. This may need adults, or other children who have experience of participation, to model this level of interaction, simply because it is not something that usually takes place in schools.

This needs schools that respect children's and adults' capacities to build trust and be trustworthy and work through their own problems. Participation in schools may have faltered not just because it challenges teachers' power, but because teachers have little opportunity to consider why it is important and, crucially, work out other ways of relating. Education policy and its processes in schools have become divorced from relationships; children and teachers are imagined to be mechanical components devoid of subjective understanding. Children's participation reconnects education with relationships and it is this that presents the real challenge.

3.5 Interactive Participation

3.5.1 A Different Way of looking at Children's Participation

Defining participation as a complex inter-relational process makes it necessary to consider how systems work as well as how these are influenced by constructs such as childhood and status, and the ways that people interact. New ways of thinking about such complexity are discussed in Chapter 4. However, it is useful to finish this literature

review with a description of participation that itself reflects such thinking, connecting education with participation and renewed potential for democratic schooling.

Pretty, et al. (1995) considers participation as either active or passive, a graded process. As previously mentioned, these maintain power relationships, with those in power providing opportunity for more active participation (for temporary periods) to those with less status such as children; this can result in tokenistic use of participatory methods. This has led to criticism of PAR (as discussed in Chapter 5) and misses the societal benefits of participation itself.

It is more useful to think of participation as a set of social processes that engage participants in the creation of knowledge, through trusting relationships, where they are able to express views and experiences - share and construct or reconstruct knowledge - and cooperate with others in solidarity to find ways forward. Thus participant involvement is **interactive** and there are significant educational opportunities that enable them to grow through social experience. In this way, power differentials are challenged because a culture of trust is necessary for **all** involved to be able to fully express their views and construct ideas. This also requires fair access to resources needed to be able to do this and create potential solutions or products of their endeavours. This is not just about individual access but fair access to enough of society's resources, so that communities can move forward for the common good.

Intergenerational participation reveals injustices through resource distribution (as teachers and other adults usually have the power to control these) as well as abuse of power (where different contributions are not equally valued). These are difficult to maintain if the purpose of participation is to work together **equitably** - to identify what works (or is just), what does not (or is unjust) and the means to improve communities - whether at the family, friendship, systems or state level. Consultation, pupil voice and any other types of participation where those with most power seek to enable views to be expressed, but constrain what can be said through prescribed outcomes, are generally asking people to participate for compliance. There is nothing wrong with this where the purpose is clear and the limits of potential outcomes are transparent; for example to justify funding, test new ideas or evaluate services. However, when participants are encouraged to present their personal views and ideas for change to those with power, without any real prospect of this involvement informing change, this is not participation but a bureaucratic means of maintaining power through unjust decision making.

Interactive participation can be applied to taking part in decision making in any group (including family, friendship group, school class, workplace or political group) and thus will involve formally organised activities, requiring some type of facilitation, as well as less formal or more natural communication processes, to varying extents. Rather than making a distinction between social participation, at the micro level, and representational, at the macro (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010), these are both inter-related components of social systems which are threatened by power abuse and lack of trust.

In the context of democracy and education, what is important is that relationships are rich enough to be able to engage with the subjective so that real understanding can be achieved. These must be respectful enough to ensure that all individuals' capacities to contribute and use their agency are enabled. This means that individuals recognise others as human beings, with equal rights, and their potential to work together for the good of the group and not just themselves. It may challenge those with most power, such as school managers and politicians, to consider the reciprocity of productive relationships and the roles they could play in building a better society as they begin to 're-see' other persons (Fielding and Moss, 2011, p.79).

3.5.2 Moving Forward

Participation will never be free from issues of power because knowledge, and how it is constructed, is a product of social interaction and therefore power; what counts is how this power is used. All human beings have some power to interact and thus influence others; rather than rendering power itself as problematic for participation, I suggest that it is more useful to consider how it is put to use, for whose benefit, and the sort of knowledge that is ultimately shaped by its processes. Table 3a indicates the differences between *Interactive Participation*, where children are able to use their agency for change, and other forms of consultation or passive participation, that are generally used to aid accountability and compliance.

Constructivist theory disputes a hierarchy of knowledge, the idea of theory over practice or that people must be taught so they can implement so called truths (Gergen, 1999, p.167). In schools such thinking has direct implications, not just for curriculum (as there is no reason to assume that sharing what has come to be known with other generations is a bad thing) but how this is accessed and how activities are structured.

Table 3-a Types of Participation

	Interactive Participation	Compliance
Type of group	Any group.	Group specifically convened for the purpose.
Purpose	To improve all participants situations by learning and acting together in solidarity.	To improve the situations of groups perceived to require intervention.
Questions	Established by participants (although this may be within broader aims identified by a researcher in a systems context).	Established by the Researcher (or commissioning body).
Facilitator Role	<p>To support the building and maintenance of good relationships promoting trust and respect.</p> <p>To suggest equitable ways of interacting that may be suitable to help people identify issues through their past, present and future frames of reference.</p> <p>To support people to consider more than just the most obvious or popular issue and understand why inquiry may be beneficial for the whole group.</p> <p>To support fair access and distribution of resources and identify constraints.</p>	<p>To convene groups of people who represent various aspects of a group or system.</p> <p>To organise how the group will work together and maintain order.</p> <p>To identify realistic solutions and constraints upon these.</p> <p>To inform participants of the objectives.</p>
How knowledge is constructed	Consider existing knowledge, where this has come from and construct or reconstruct new knowledge through social interaction with other participants.	Consider existing knowledge and compile this for analysis by an outside party.

Power	Approaches recognise imbalance of power in social structures and relations and actively seek to challenge these.	Approaches may recognise imbalance of power in social structures and relations but do not seek to challenge these.
Outcomes	<p>May provide emergent understandings of social problems and how these may be addressed.</p> <p>Participants learn about themselves and the social world.</p> <p>Participants decide what to do with this next which may include informing those who have power to act or producing their own solutions or products of their work.</p> <p>Growth of all involved through educational processes.</p>	<p>Reinforces or challenges assumptions made by the researcher (or commissioning body).</p> <p>May be used to validate interventions or funding.</p> <p>May be dismissed if the knowledge is not useful to those in power.</p> <p>Learning or enjoyment considered a bi-product.</p>
Politics	Bottom up, realistically egalitarian, and democratic concerns	Top down, hierarchical and neo-liberalist concerns

Gergen (1999, pp.181-184) suggests that constructivism favours three types of educational process: 1) Reflexive Deliberation where teachers demystify the curriculum by opening up debate through social bias such as gender or class so that students can explore alternate beliefs and culture; however learning may be compromised if one ideology is simply used to replace another. 2) Collaborative Classrooms where students are able to find relevance in subject matter through dialogue and consensus; this may also include real world projects. 3) Polyvocal Pedagogy, where students are asked to write from different standpoints in order to challenge the academic standard by which writing is usually measured; for example they may write as if something exists, criticise this and then deconstruct this before writing their own reflexive piece.

All of these methods require safe space where children are able to express their views without fear of reprisal so trust is paramount. Whilst teachers may have set objectives for learning, activities do not have to be limited to the prescribed curriculum or to pass

tests (although participatory methods are usually sidelined by more instrumental teaching to meet such requirements). Instead, opportunities for children to develop their capabilities for participation enable broader education, and teachers to understand children's growing contributions. Cooperative learning has close connections with children's participation (see Chapter 5).

According to Johnson (2015) cooperative group work awakens a sense of injustice and encourages children to recognise or place themselves in others' shoes. Like Freire's (1970) concept of social consciousness, it moves beyond competitive individualism, and cooperation for self-enhancement, to cooperation where everyone's views and contributions count because it is through exchange of these that positive values and learning can take place. This is difficult to put into practice in busy classroom environments, where teachers are under pressure to teach to the test and evidence their performance through prescribed outcomes and tasks. Even so, there is good evidence that the achievement, social support, self-esteem and reasoning of children encouraged to work in cooperative groups is higher than those using more competitive and individualised methods (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). Further to this, if teachers see and learn about democratic practices during their training, they are more likely to use these (Rainer and Guyton, 1999; Joliffe, 2015).

Joliffe (2015) suggests that teachers' reluctance to adapt such methods is to do with teacher values and the investment of time needed to implement such strategies. Without strong peer support, or opportunities to experience it for themselves, they may not adopt a cooperative learning approach, despite the evidence. Teachers tend to have higher confidence in strategies with a higher pedagogical foundation (Harris and Hanley, 2004, p.73) so are less likely to implement cooperative learning if they have not themselves learned the theoretical and practical implementation of this during their own training. The close connections between cooperative learning and participation suggest this may also be a factor in the reluctance of schools to embed children's participation rights. Thus an area to investigate and move forward. Why this could potentially work in complex systems such as schools is discussed in the next chapter.

As we move further into a technological era with its almost instantaneous, globalised communication, the thrust is towards working together cooperatively using multi-interacting trajectories to unleash the creative potential this brings. Despite individualism and the issues of power that accompany capitalist economies,

transformation will come through our capacity to work together and imagine the future. Children will continue to be part of this future. Part of adults' confusion about childhood may not necessarily be their perceived loss of innocence but fear at the contribution that children will make if they are allowed to do things differently.

4 UNDERSTANDINGS FROM COMPLEXITY THEORY

4.1 Overview

"Scarcely anything, material or established, which I was brought up to believe was permanent and vital, has lasted. Everything I was sure, or was taught to be sure, was impossible, has happened." (Winston Churchill cited in Arendt, 1965, p. 740)

Snyder (2013) suggests that Complexity Theory offers a way of addressing “the rapidly evolving and sprawling ecosystems that are modern educational systems” (p.6) and that through participation of more of the people involved, such systems may come to be understood. School reform (which seeks to order the complicated through linear intervention) fails to recognise how complexity in education systems and relationships between components will always produce unpredictable results that defy limited linear thinking (Glouberman and Zimmerman, 2002). Mathematics has revealed that even where there are proven rules, it is impossible to precisely predict outcomes of non-linear interactions (Burton, 2002). Positivist certainties can no longer be relied upon to understand the world and how it evolves.

According to Byrne (2009) complex systems are those that have emergent properties that cannot be predicted or specified simply by regard to their components or processes. complexity theory provides a way to understand the interconnectedness of such systems. Luhmann used this to develop a theory of society “as an emergent order that develops and changes itself in interplay with its environment” (Rasmussen, 2010, p.16). New ways of thinking about research and knowledge that move away from reductionist ‘truths’ to potential ‘possibilities’ consider this as resulting from human interaction and participation in the world (Osberg and Biesta, 2008). Complexity, as a theory still very much in the making, is beginning to provide a coherent alternative to dominant paradigms. Schools are complex and cohesive systems of countless interactions between components - people, environment, processes - that continuously influence and shape the whole as well as each other. This study embraces the idea that they are also adaptive systems which are organic and dynamic (Merry, 1995; Morrison, 2008a) and as such provide spaces for new possibilities as well as preset outcomes. In terms of education this is an exciting development as it engages researchers and society in a broader debate

about education and the purpose of schools. This challenges dominant policy and is more consistent with alternative ideas in both theory and practice (see Chapter 4) that could start to reconcile state education with the democracy it is supposed to serve.

Davis (2008) suggest that complexity theory can help educationists overcome the problems posed when education is stuck within “this-or-that debates” (p.47) by recognising interconnected and simultaneous action and phenomena. Whilst many interventions in schools may lead to unexpected as well as predicted outcomes, these are often overlooked because relationships are difficult to measure. Unexpected results, particularly where children are concerned, are blamed on perceived inadequacies or non-compliance, rather than limitations of the system itself. Overly simplistic interventions do very little to help children understand or improve their place or relationship with the world and other humans; they are more often used to keep them in their place and maintain the status quo.

Research concerned with exploring complexity and emergence by enabling school communities to participate to develop meaning and understanding, offers a more sustainable way of enabling schools to develop and shape society in positive ways. Burton (2002, p.12) suggests that “evolution depends on co-evolution” and that eco-systems only progress when organisms evolve and adapt together to bring balance in the system. Such evolution is also possible in human organisations. According to Alhadeff-Jones (2010) Morin’s paradigm of complexity in education challenged reductionism and its pursuit of perfect order and removal of variance; instead he suggests research should seek to challenge systems, to encourage emergence rather than to solve problems:

“The critical stake associated with it requires therefore being able to tolerate the continuous negotiation between order and disorder” (Alhadeff-Jones, 2010, p.27).

The UK education system currently increases or maintains the prosperity of some children whilst limiting this for others. Such ethical issues are ignored by policy that serves to control outcomes, emphasising the values of economic growth at the expense of those associated with human well-being, in direct conflict with democracy. Lack of challenge to this situation may reveal growing problems of recognition and, as Arendt (1965) suggests, a lack of willingness to address uncertainty and the basis for moral values, which appear to have changed very little over the last 60 years despite

continuing human atrocity. Complexity theory reveals human interconnectedness within and across systems and may provide a means to understand such injustice.

Thus, this chapter sets out some of the recent developments in complexity theory, why this is a useful starting point for research about children's participation and intergenerational relationships in schools, and how this methodology has influenced the subsequent approaches used for data collection and analysis. Byrne (2005, p. 96) argues that complexity theory provides a systematic approach to "dialogical social research as part of a programme of participatory politics." Incorporating this in to school practice is itself a complex process involving politics, at all levels, both in and outside schools, which is discussed in Chapter 5. This study proposes that this is essential to develop sustainable schools for the future.

4.2 What is Complexity Theory?

Cilliers (2005, p. 257) suggests that whilst there are many interpretations of complexity theory, two main views exist: a "hard" uncritical version used to compute relationships that can be so exacting that it extends positivist thinking; and a more "critical" and sometimes "skeptical" view of where it can take science and understanding. However, arguments about what does or does not constitute complexity theory distract from the reasons why it has developed and the problems that other theories fail to address. As a developing theory, concerned with dynamic rather than static systems, it is useful to consider the features that appear consistently and where these may lead. Burton's (2002) key features offer a comprehensive starting point:

Key features of a complex system

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- Complex systems consist of multiple components. Such systems are understood by observing the rich interaction of these components, not simply understanding the system's structure.
 - The interaction between components can produce unpredictable behaviour.
 - Complex systems have a history and are sensitive to initial conditions.
 - Complex systems interact with and are influenced by their environment.
 - The interactions between elements of the system are non-linear, that is to say that the result of any action depends on the state of the elements at the time as well as the size of the input. Small inputs may have large effects, and vice versa.

- The interactions generate new properties, called ‘emergent behaviours’ of the system, which cannot be explained through studying the elements of the system however much detail is known.
 - In complex systems such emergent behaviour cannot be predicted.
 - Complex systems are open systems: when observed, the observer becomes part of the system. (Burton, 2002, p.2)
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4.2.1 From Order to Interconnectedness

Complexity theory challenges simplistic ideas of order, advocating that all living matter, including human beings, is inter-connected through complex systems that evolve in response to change (Merry, 1995). Geyer and Rihani (2010) suggest that the dominant scientific understanding of the world - denoted by reductionism, determinism, order and predictability - lasted from the Enlightenment period well into the 20th Century, even though such thinking has been continually contested since the 1900s. Modernistic social science similarly embraced the idea that research could bring order so that:

“Over time, social scientists can discover the laws of the human realm and move societies from disorder to order, progressing them toward a final ultimate order.” (Geyer and Rihani, 2010, p.22).

Unfortunately, by considering humans and human systems as separate from the world, an illusion of safety is created which is tragically shattered each time a natural world event occurs. Merry (1995) suggests that as the myth of human separateness from the world grows, people seek to isolate themselves from its harsh realities:

“Social organizations are a line of defense against the uncertainty of the chaotic elements in the world. People use institutions to build walls around themselves and shelter from the uncertainty, unpredictability, and turbulence that is part of life.” (Merry, 1995, p.17).

As interest in systems grew in the 1980s, so did understanding of the ways that they may restrict the ability of people to recognise the inter-relationships they have with both manufactured and natural worlds. Hayles argues that the idea that humans know the world because they are separate from it is a “fundamental scientific error that has dominated for 300 years” (Luhmann et al., 2000, p.131) and that it is interaction with

what exists outside ourselves that can be known. Systems cannot be explained by simplistic linear modelling alone because relationships between components are complicated and interconnected with others. Any order that occurs is not static or limited to a particular system but more likely a matter of balance or co-existence with others, interacting and constantly adapting to co-evolve (Burton, 2002, p.11). Social systems are part of this co-evolving world and thus no matter how ordered or structured, their processes will always be affected by relationships and interactions between people and between people and their environment.

Prigogine (1997) suggests that concepts of humans as experiencing subjects have arisen that suggest our interconnectedness with each other and ideas. In this way, reflexivity is important as the creation of knowledge is as much about what is brought to an interaction, as it is about the exchange itself and power issues that may affect this. Thus, relationships necessary for rich interaction must not only overcome potential power issues but also enable people to reflect on, and evaluate, their frames of reference. These frames of reference - what is learned from past, present or future projected possible experiences through interaction with others and different contexts – influence the subjective and how ideas are shared, opening or closing spaces for new possibilities. If power is used to control interactions to the extent that these are limited to set processes, systems become less open to new possibilities and emergence.

Complexity theory challenges researchers to look at the world and beyond as a web of interconnected components whose relationships are important and exponential. If a key point of education is to enable spaces to exist, where rich relationships are important for participation and the construction of knowledge, then more resources need to be given to education, not just for children in schools, but for whole societies to develop. In other words, growing complexity requires more effective resources, to facilitate the interactions between systems and their components, from the family to the global scale, to contend over simplification and limited outcome.

“The hypothesis suggested here is that they need to match the quality of their relationship to the measure of their braidedness and interconnectedness.”

(Merry, 1995, p.79)

4.2.2 From Power to Emergence

Human disposition towards order may reflect the dominant political climate. Huge inequalities exist throughout the world because of a global economic system that enables some to have more than they need, at the expense of others, where states and market leaders maintain power through top down policy that defines economic productivity as success (Youngs, 2007). This promotes political systems that ignore human rights and justify inequalities by placing people's welfare secondary to economic growth. In the UK, progressive ideas are criticised as too radical or difficult to maintain because they reveal the problems and inequalities of systems. Government rhetoric emphasises the need to empower local communities whilst introducing cuts that potentially undermine their capacities (Hunjan and Keophilavong, 2010). The use of power, and paradoxes that arise, are discussed throughout this thesis. In the context of complexity theory, this is crucial to understanding why, as science has revealed the importance of interconnectedness and emergent possibility, those with most power continue to reject such understanding. Control of knowledge in particular is discussed further in section 5.3.

Growing concern at the impact of humans on the planet, lack of sustainability through global capitalism and its human cost (Fromm, 1976a) and lack of education for purposes other than to maintain this (Fielding and Moss, 2011), means some are beginning to re-acknowledge human interconnectedness for global change and the education systems that may be necessary to enable this. The development of technology serves as a reminder that human beings across the world have much in common, particularly a propensity to cooperate and strive for progress. However, this can be used for gain, at the expense of others, as well as for the benefit of humankind. Thus, how power is attained, and how it is utilised, is important in understanding how systems work and evolve (Youngs, 2007). Values, relationships and processes in complex social systems influence interaction to form the system itself. Merry (1995) suggests that it is the chaos presented by these inter-relationships and their complexity that works simultaneously to establish order and in doing so enables new possibilities to emerge.

Merry follows Prigogine's theory that order emerges from fluctuations in systems and that this is how they change and evolve; he demonstrated that many kinds of systems "operated at far-from-equilibrium conditions" (Merry, 1995, p31). Haggis (2008) suggests that emergence occurs through multiple interactions, rather than as a result of

deep causal structures. Thus, human social systems are always ‘becomings’ in that they are constantly in a flux of change. As they change, intricate relationships are developed between the components involved, adding more complexity to the system. As people within them try to manage such complexity, perhaps through more efficient processes, this accelerates change but it is impossible to predict in what ways this will occur or what will emerge. However, it may be possible to encourage the **process** of positive change by paying more attention to how components interact within a system, to resist or create spaces in which change can occur. When external factors seek to restrict change by micro-management of the interactions within systems, as is currently happening in schools, possibilities are restricted. Self-organisation is the partner of emergence and the antithesis of external control (Morrison, 2008a, p.18).

In social systems, spaces for emergent change are spaces that provide potential for human creativity. Where the status quo is maintained at the expense of creativity, there are likely to be fewer chances for progress. As Gribbin points out:

“A linear system is more or less equal to the sum of its parts; a non-linear system may be either much more, or much less than the sum of its parts” (2004, p.49, cited in Cox, 2008, p.21).

Those who manage to change the world do so despite systems not necessarily because of them; education systems could reverse this. Prigogine (1997) contends that determinism is no longer a viable scientific belief and that science needs to find a path somewhere between this and the dichotomous belief that everything is otherwise incomprehensible. Progress and discovery occur when space exists for the creativity that these demand, whereas determinism “leaves no place for novelty” (Prigogine, 1997, p.187). Yet most intervention undervalues creativity, reducing capacities to imagine and conceive other possibilities and invention.

The links between these concepts of complexity theory and education are obvious: arguments between the prescriptive transfer of knowledge, from adult to child, are pitted against those considered too progressive, where the children are free to learn for themselves. Whether in science, education or otherwise, such dichotomies overshadow what complexity reveals, the many more paths in between that are not so easy to predict, determine or quantify. Unhelpful dualisms also occur at the heart of research and education themselves through the ways that knowledge is considered to be

produced and described. In order to understand how complexity theory moves from 'truth' to embracing 'possibility,' cultural beliefs about knowledge must also be challenged.

This calls for a more considered approach to schooling and its long-term effects on children's social development. Education is about knowledge and education systems are political (Biesta and Osberg, 2010) because they are bound by the values and power that control both the production and sharing of this knowledge. As Cilliers points out:

“To hide the inevitable politics involved in all forms of education behind a pretence of neutrality and objectivity is an unacceptable form of violence, a violence partly responsible for the state the world is in.” (2010, p.viii)

4.3 Why is Knowledge Construction so Important?

4.3.1 Knowledge Construction and Commodification

Knowledge is not a set of symbolic objects that can be passed from one person to another. Understanding how it is constructed and the frames of reference that shape this cannot be separated from the multitude of interactions and contexts through which it occurs. Knowledge is as much about the subjective and relationships through which it is produced as the language or culture used to describe it. How much or how little education systems choose to value or ignore this may mean the difference between empowerment and emancipation; school curriculums have a long way to go before they embrace the latter (Biesta, 2012b).

According to Osberg and Biesta (2008) constructivism, pragmatism, other post-structuralist epistemologies and recently emergence from complexity theory, all reject representational notions of knowledge and its objectification as something that can simply be passed from one person to the next. Critics reject constructivism through extreme ideas that it reduces everything to non existence in contention with so called reality, even though all research and knowledge can be accused of reductionism in the way it seeks to explain the world (Cilliers, 2005, p.260). Positional arguments emphasise the delimiters of knowledge but these provide little value to human understandings and relationships; they mark the extent to which knowledge has been

formed about particular phenomena but not necessarily the interconnectedness that this has across and within systems. This may be more useful in understanding and applying what is learned; what happens within these delimiters may “enable” knowledge, as Cilliers (2005, p.264) suggests.

According to Gergen (1999) extreme relativism, where the idea of a real physical world is dismissed, is to misunderstand constructivism, which accepts that what exists, exists, but attempts to understand relationships through discourse and interaction with others (p. 222), not just individual observation of the world. Even where such discourse is with oneself, this is possible because of meaning created through social practice, that has led to the language and technologies for recording experience and meaning.

Complexity takes a further step by claiming that knowledge is always dynamic and incomplete - what is ‘known’ today may be understood in a different way tomorrow - as interaction with the world develops. This does not mean that “anything goes” (Cilliers, 2005, p.260) but a need to take greater responsibility for how knowledge is constructed and the inherent values which simultaneously evolve. The construction of knowledge and the western or minority world tendency to dichotomise what is known, as either absolute truth or falsity, allows those who believe they have power (by ‘knowing’ the truth) to shut down the capacity of others (particularly young people) to explore and construct knowledge for themselves. Commodification of knowledge serves to reinforce this as people accept or reject the mass of information available to them through developing technology, with little chance to evaluate how this was produced or the motives behind its production and dissemination. Gatekeepers of so called truths are able to exert power by extolling superior understanding which through its politicism also increases the ethical dimension which positivism tends to hide (Cilliers, 2005, p.256).

According to Damasio (2003) new understandings in brain science, particularly how feelings are developed and affect other bodily experiences such as emotion, suggest interconnections between such work and social science:

“the success or failure of humanity depends in large measure on how the public and the institutions charged with the governance of public life incorporate that revised view of human beings in principles and policies” (Damasio, 2003, p.8).

If knowledge or theory as a commodity is valued over what is learned through practice and participation – through intersubjectivity – it clearly ignores such developments. Knowledge transmitted to children in schools as so called facts, can only serve to reinforce this. However, constructivist thinking disputes hierarchies of knowledge, divorce between theory and practice and the idea that truths must be taught to those less knowing (Gergen, 1999, p.167). Instead Gergen suggests it favours participatory types of educational process (see Chapter 3). If complexity theory compels researchers to understand the relationships of all system components, including people and how interactions can lead to emergence of new possibilities, then participatory practice is more favourable to these conditions than that which limits interactions to a series of simplistic linear exchanges. Thus, in classrooms, the rules of engagement need to change (see Chapter 5).

4.3.2 Emergence

Knowledge and power are intrinsically linked but commodification of knowledge, and lack of connection with how it is constructed, masks the part it plays in inequitable relationships. Knowledge is constructed by human beings in relation (Freire, 1970). It can help describe what is perceived to exist but also shapes human systems through which social life exists. Human progress is made through the capacity to cooperate and the creation of knowledge which comes from this. However, the role participation plays in developing knowledge and human systems appears to have been almost forgotten by those who consider educational practice as simply the transmission of knowledge and those who perpetuate the idea that participation is simply a tool to bring about change in public political arenas (such as Carnegie UK Trust Democracy and Civil Society Programme, 2008).

Meaning is made through encounters with the world and by the way the ways those involved in an encounter both influence and are influenced. Rasmussen uses Luhmannian theories to explain this as being able to consider both knowledge and ‘non-knowledge’ (2010, p19) so that meaning is the difference between what is established and what could also be possible. Thus it “is a construction that depends on the observer” (Rasmussen, 2010, p.19) and new possibilities can only be conceptualised because the observer is conscious of what is not there as well as what is already experienced or known. In this way, there is a complex relationship between learning and context, how

each influences the other. As knowledge increases, so does consciousness of what else could be: learning itself is a continual process of construction and identification of possibility and is thus temporal. As such each time complexity is reduced through learning, it is also increased.

It can be argued that human beings are in an unsustainable period of existence. Emphasis on economic growth, through exploitation of the world's resources and people, threatens the future of new generations (Youngs, 2007). Failure to tackle such global problems may in part be due to lack of dialogue and knowledge about such complex issues. Linear understandings of the world produce limiting dichotomies even though in social systems, much decision making is value driven. In the UK it can be argued that school systems are controlled so that the most advantaged continue to thrive (see Chapter 2).

Burton (2002, p.13) describes how computer simulations have been used to show how it is possible for systems to evolve so that the fitness of all parts is raised; neuro-science demonstrates that "the behaviour of the system results from rich interaction of the constituent parts" (Burton, 2002, p.15). It is this rich interaction (rather than limited interaction through too much or too little intervention and control) that is essential to understand how complexity theory can inform research, and ultimately practice. Where relationships between components are regarded too simplistically (such as a teacher provides a task and a student learns) this says nothing about how they actually behave, or interact to learn, or indeed what else is learned through this process and how this contributes to the behaviours of the whole group or school. It is possible to observe the immediate results of such controlled interaction on an individual student at a given time but little else. Thus, research must move beyond individual observation and set outcomes, to incorporate the interactions and relationships formed in classrooms, to view the system as dynamic and continuously adapting to these. Burton suggests that:

"The idea that local interactions following simple rules can lead to the emergence of apparently complex behaviours of the whole group is fundamental to the study of complex systems. This highlights the importance of all the individual agents in a system. The system develops according to the way its members interact with each other and their environment" (Burton, 2002, p.15).

This is not the sum of individual interaction but the more complex result of how these are interwoven. Complexity theory enables research to be viewed optimistically as it seeks to create new and dynamic forms of knowledge, viewing this both as “provisional” (Cilliers, 2005, p.259) and infinite, requiring researchers to think beyond exacting ‘truths’ to what might, could or should be (Geyer and Rihani, 2010). Such research welcomes data collection through novel approaches, mixing of methods and inter-disciplinary dialogue as it seeks to investigate open and dynamic systems and the emergence of change through complexity itself, challenging the value of mechanistic worldviews and deterministic causality.

Thus, in the case of social systems the rules that apply may be those that are considered positive behaviours for democracy. In schools research does not necessarily have to begin with intervention to reinvent the curriculum or outcomes, but instead refocus processes and relationships to those that encourage spaces for creativity and potential emergence. This may involve a shift in how knowledge is perceived and constructed, shared and interpreted through schools (see Chapter 3) as is beginning to happen through theoretical debate (Biesta, 2102b). These are not new ideas; resonances can be found in the work of philosophers such as Dewey (1916; 1938) who considered the processes through which knowledge is constructed as education and essential to democracy.

Dewey directly relates democracy and education through cooperative inquiry. Hildebrand (2008) too suggests that if democracy is about community (rather than just a system of choosing government) then inquiry is complementary to this in that it is the tool through which people can investigate and solve problems that bring improvement to that community and that this is therefore a social not individual process. Similarly Biesta (2010a, p. 724) suggests that “real” participation is central as it has the potential for humans to create a “shared world” together; one that they can share in their “own unique way.”

4.4 How are Intergenerational Relationships Limiting Emergence?

4.4.1 School Spaces Limit Productive Agency

School systems privilege order, predictable processes and stable outcomes, and maintain homeostasis through policy and practice that “correct” deviant children and

teachers (Gough, 2010, p.51). Schools themselves seek to reduce complexity bringing learning under control through choice of who attends, environment, time management, curriculum and what is valued; they benefit societies through further reduction such as the production of a skilled workforce and obedient citizens (Osberg and Biesta, 2010, p.7) who will maintain the status quo (see Chapter 2).

This poses a dilemma for education. In a system that tirelessly encourages competition, control and domination of others, it is difficult to imagine that children and families have the energy to strive for something more than fatalistic compliance with industrialism and capitalism. However, there are those that reject this emphasis on stability and equilibrium “as evolutionary dead ends” (Gough, 2010, p.51). Political unease, growth of online social networks, as well as global concern for human rights, indicates concern for change that the UK’s political systems and lack of representation have so far been unable to address.

The rise of neo-liberalism heralded the stagnation of societal ambition in that it seeks to grow an infinite economy, which increases the gap between the richest and poorest members, whilst the health of the nation deteriorates (Crook, 2014b; The Marmot Review, 2010); this does not heed Dewey’s (1916) chilling warning that without continued effort toward renewal (transformation) of society, and the associated transmission of habits, societies will eventually revert to barbarism. Although he provided no evidence for this suggestion, it is clear that human beings are capable of forming societies that serve the selfish needs of a few whilst convincing others (through lack of sustenance and education) to provide this. Fromm (1976c, 1976d) also raised concern at the growing alienation of people’s inner self from their actions and the dangers inherent in governance that justifies this through the current global economic system.

Control of knowledge and belief in different levels of intelligence or ability helps maintain the UK class system (Simon, 1953, cited in Oswell, 2013, p. 117) and labels those who do not reflect system standards as deficient or less intelligent. This is being challenged by a return to what has been named a ‘Growth Mindset’ (Dweck, 2012) which recognises everyone as capable of learning throughout life, with a measure of how far a person has travelled along their own path. Outside classrooms, education is also changing through technology. As the World Wide Web has become capable of dynamic use, new participatory technologies have emerged through which powerful

learning communities are beginning to form that challenge ideas of limited intelligence (Davis, et al., 2010). These expand people's awareness of their situation or place in the world, revealing oppression and motivating action, not dissimilar to how Freire described conscientizacao (Davis, et al., 2010, p. 113; Freire, 1970).

Fromm (1976c,) made a distinction between 'productive activity' and activity which is alienated in the sense that it is a response to external forces. He recognised the human capacity to create or produce, and the joy that comes with experiencing oneself as the acting subject of such activity (rather than the object of some separable force). This resonates with more recent ideas about human agency, and power relations that affect this, but also clearly suggests that such agency is not within others' power to create (although it can be manipulated) but rather must come from individuals and their relationships with the social world (see Chapter 3).

Complexity theory may be helpful in understanding why hierarchical school structures continue to dominate and how to overturn these. Merry (1995, p.53) suggests most self-organisation takes the easiest path, keeping upheaval to a minimum. There is a good research base for alternate practice in schools such as cooperative learning (see chapter 5) but schools have not embraced this as a means of challenging the pressure exerted by dominant policy, even though such pedagogy could improve outcomes. The problem appears to be a lack of space in which to consider the purpose of schools or indeed alternate ideas. This may be reinforced by misconceptions about what is possible in schools and increasingly hierarchical systems that restrict decision making to a limited few such as head teachers. In complexity terms, this means that interactions between components – children, teachers, family, community and the many others who interconnect in schools (Morrison, 2008b) – are controlled so much that spaces in which to address these issues, or in effect enable the system to evolve, are very limited.

State schools' main purpose may wrongly be assumed to be education (see Chapters 2 and 3); whilst education does of course take place, it is toward very specific learning and enculturation. The current emphasis on preparing children to take their place in inequitable society undermines their rights but also society's potential to develop as a fairer democracy.

4.4.2 Schools Limit Learning

Rich relationships encourage cooperation, more awareness of the self, and others, and the affect that decisions can have at different scales. Schools are obvious places to start as they provide one of the few meeting places for intergenerational dialogue outside the family. The development of technology means that decisions and actions, made through tenuous online relationships, can have effects all over the world but enable people to ignore responsibility for this. Unfortunately, the UK has failed to address this, choosing instead to run before it can walk, enabling distribution of rapidly developing technology, that opens up communication with others on an unprecedented scale, without considering the shortfalls in society's ability to deal with this.

“We are at a point in history where human judgement and humanity's ability to deal with the consequences of its behavioural and social creations lag behind its ability to create behaviours and cultures to meet the needs of growing interdependence.” (Merry, 1995, p.110)

The reasons for this gap may be bound up in the relationships that adults currently have with children and childhood, and their lack of future thinking. Whilst systems are set up to supposedly protect children, according to Gough (2010), adults and social institutions also seem simultaneously “dedicated to their ruin” (Gough, 2010, p.40) through drugs, pornography, abuse, religion, and violence. Children are no longer seen as the future but as “symbols of contested futures” (Gough, 2010, p.43) on which adults project their own anxieties. Gough describes an example of how art portraying naked teenagers was taken out of context and re-classed as child pornography resulting in media frenzy. Such examples show how quickly judgements are made about children and their situation, lacking the inquiry and reflection that might instead encourage adults to rethink their values and prejudice. Adults appear to have problems perceiving children as equal human beings (see Chapter 2).

This, lack of understanding the complexity of human systems, tendency to strive for order without thinking, may be the legacy of the school system and what must be overcome to move forward. Nevertheless, children are not passive in the shaping and development of social systems, they are, like adults, vital components of the system, especially schools, and they interact with each other, with adults and with the environment in ways that shape spaces and what takes place. Their lack of conspicuous

participation in system processes is a result of imbalance of power in relationships and the lack of significance that adults place on their interactions, rather than a lack of contribution to the system itself. As discussed in Chapter 3, children affect how schools operate and evolve every day through their actions, including cooperation and repudiation (Smyth, 2006).

To challenge this imbalance requires more than an adjustment of power but a rethinking of the way knowledge is created and the role social systems adopt in constructing this knowledge, as these currently enable inequalities and allow the abuse of knowledge as a means of control. Simplistic notions of children's participation in schools emphasise this by providing the means to account for such systems using children's views to justify adult intervention rather than as a way of extending children's own agency.

In complexity theory terms, schools provide little space for the rich interactions that enable children and adults to work together to imagine a better future. Top down policy, centralised micromanagement and fear of imposed change have undoubtedly taken their toll. Staff shortages, highlighted by national advertisements for new staff to be fast-tracked in to the system, do not suggest a steady, committed workforce at ease with the current conditions. However, this uncertainty may also act as a catalyst for change, as governments eventually lose their grip on schools due to costs of maintaining control and lack of understanding about the system itself. Merry suggests that once constraints start to be removed from systems, they can start to learn again and restructure themselves:

“It means being poised in a dynamic balance with sufficient nonlinear freedom to enhance creativity, novelty, entrepreneurship, risk taking, experimentation, and discontinuous change while not drawing in totally chaotic confusion and uncertainty.” (1995, p.195)

Dewey (1916; 1938) regarded education as life itself. Learning is about changing structures within the psychic system; what is learnt affects consciousness (Davis, et al., 2010, p.111). This occurs through encounters with different contexts that alter expectation (Rasmussen, 2010, p.22) revealing further possibilities. Fullan suggests that “change equals learning” (1989, cited in Morrison, 2008b, p.22) and learning is thus central to both education and complexity theory.

Dewey (1938) was very critical of dichotomies and the idea of education as simply a means to an end. Complexity theory suggests that rather than taking some ideas to their extremes, thus subjugating others, balance needs to be found in schools through which to challenge expectations and perspectives and most importantly understand how relationships influence these. If new possibilities are not revealed then children's expectations will not change and what they gain from school systems will continue to fall short of actual education. Thus, complexity should compel researchers really concerned with children's participation and education to look much more closely at the spaces created by school systems: the environment, relationships and interactions that take place.

4.5 What Changes Are Necessary to Enable Rich Relationships in Schools?

Biesta (2010, p.6) suggests that emergence makes it possible to see how knowledge is created within education systems. In this way, education is understood as a participatory process that enables all individuals to contribute through their own experience and agency to co-construct knowledge (Freire, 1992). For participation to develop in schools, Fielding and Moss (2011) suggest schools needs to go through a transformative process toward more equitable spaces in which education becomes a form of collaboration and joint creation. Structures and practices need to be elastic enough for new meaning to emerge. Osberg and Biesta's broader account of knowledge is useful to distinguish this from knowledge as a commodity:

"...knowledge is neither a representation of something more 'real' than itself, nor an 'object' that can be transferred from one place to the next. Knowledge is understood, rather, to 'emerge' as we, as human beings, participate in the world. Knowledge, in other words, does not exist except in our participatory actions. With complexity, furthermore, we can understand every meaning that emerges as uniquely new, something which has not been in the world before, and which cannot be predicted from an assessment of the 'ground' from which it emerged...This marks a significant epistemological shift away from representational understandings of knowledge and meaning." (Osberg and Biesta, 2008, p.313)

Although too often knowledge is considered as words, these have no meaning without context and the intersubjective understanding that is formed through interaction with others. To enable broader education in schools they must move away from the pursuit of standardised limited outcomes and provide opportunity to develop this intersubjectivity. Children's participation, in the sense described by this thesis, is a move in this direction and there are three main reasons to take it forward in terms of complexity and knowledge construction. Firstly it enables participation rights and thus the information and opportunity to understand knowledge and develop and communicate views. Secondly it may enable children to both recognise and understand themselves, as well as others, and thus develop richer relationships (Thomas, 2012; Fielding and Moss, 2011). Thirdly it may enable them the agency and creativity necessary for emergent possibility. This needs opportunities to purposely perturb the system (Gough, 2010, p.52) as well as prepare societies to work with the revelations that come from this.

Invariably schools are what they are because of the people within them and the relationships they have with each other and the outside world. Adults involved in schools are not powerless or passive pawns of state controlled systems, they are active entities whose relationships affect others and how the systems work. Byrne, (2005), suggests a move from focus on causes (which limits outcomes) to focus on effects.

“As Vecchi puts it: ‘schools need to consciously take a position on which knowledge they intend to promote’ (Vecchi, 2010, p.28; original emphasis). They can pursue an idea of teaching that chooses to ‘transmit circumscribed “truths” in various “disciplines”’; or they can choose to ‘stand by children’s sides together constructing contexts in which they can explore their own ideas and hypotheses individually or in groups and discuss them with friends or teachers’ (ibid).” (Cited in Fielding and Moss, 2011, p.28)

Gustafson suggests Ranciere's theory of equal intelligence “as the strong emergence of a new pattern of participation” (2010, p.93) that challenges hierarchical school parameters that maintain ideas of inadequacy. He places emphasis on the “unanticipated” elements of classroom practice and what may emerge, rather than the “pre-conceptions of outcome” (2010, p.94), but also recognises that for more equitable practice to emerge, there has to be a belief in such a possibility. This necessitates “imagining a different pattern of interaction in the classroom” (Gustafson, 2010, p.97) in order to risk the unknown. The role of the teacher is significant in this practice as it

challenges the order asserted by having a 'master' figure and requires new coping mechanisms to deal with periods of less order. Gustafson proposes that this may shift the teacher's role to one of "shepherding" (2010, p.104) unless the focus on predictable outcomes is challenged too.

Educational spaces that are prescriptive reduce human growth but offer false security. To enable the evolution and complex growth that complexity theory describes may also require a focus on how human beings retain a sense of security through turbulent times. In schools this means having time to consider knowledge and how it emerges but also the purpose and values of interactions and how policy is interpreted through these. Mason suggests that complexity theory has been rejected in educational research because it:

"...is easily misunderstood as a prescriptive theory, silent on key issues of values and ethics that educational philosophy should embrace, of questionable internal consistency, and of limited 'added value' in educational philosophy." (2008, p.19)

Such conclusions can only be drawn when interactions are evaluated in simple terms, as processes that fulfil certain outcomes, missing instead their interconnectedness through frames of reference and intersubjective understanding. Relationships are how values are shaped and communicated and this is why theories about human relationships and agency must be included in any valid attempt to use complexity theory to understand human systems. Far from rejecting values and ethics, complexity theory reinforces their importance in social systems as it is these that are reproduced through control and opportunity in systems such as schools. Furthermore, such thinking re-engages with connections made between education and democracy by pragmatic education philosophers such as Dewey and Freire as well as those committed to social justice such as Rawls.

Participation, where all participants are first and foremost recognised as equal human beings, with the potential to learn and create knowledge together, is essential for positive democratic change. This study deliberately sets out to move away from research that reduces complexity, to research that embraces it (Trueit and Doll, 2010, p.135), to look at alternate ways of schooling that offer a dynamic, cooperative, creative and ultimately participatory curriculum, realised through participants recursivity (Doll,

1993). That is not to say that its results, and how these are explained, do not offer a reductionist account of what is learned as that is the nature of any document designed to disseminate such knowledge; instead, it recognises that this can be part of an ongoing cycle where by understanding a little generates more complexity, and more questions, about where to go next.

Morrison is troubled by the idea that complexity theory can offer a way to transform education suggesting it is a descriptive theory that “undermines its own power to guide behaviour with any certain future in mind” (2008b, p.29). Commitment to democracy, equality and children’s rights is of course value and ethically motivated. Openness to better futures not yet imagined, is not the same as being blind to the potential of possibility. None of this is inconsistent with complexity theory. As Cilliers points out:

“We cannot make purely objective and final claims about our complex world. We have to make choices and thus we cannot escape the normative or ethical domain.” (Cilliers, 2005, p.259).

Fear of complexity thinking in schools may be a relic of fear of relativism or anarchy, or what Morrison describes as a “covert form of scientism” (2008b, p.30). It could also simply be fear of admitting that the future cannot be determined (Prigogine, 1997, p.183), rendering values that enable children’s lives now to be ignored, in favour of their future roles as adults, illegitimate. This raises huge questions about intergenerational relationships and the untold damage that has already been done as a consequence of them.

Participation is the equitable means by which humans can achieve change through interactions that are concerned with positive societal transformation, the consequences of change on others and the subsequent ethical dilemmas that arise. Contrary to Morrison’s concern that complexity theory “under-theorises power” (2008b, p.32), participatory processes that directly set out to dispute inequitable practice and reconnect education and democracy through inquiry, dialogue and cooperation, and enable knowledge construction to be considered may contribute to new thinking about power.

As Heidegger (1953) suggests, being is always related to becoming and as such, research, when understood in complexity terms, is always a work in progress bringing with it the possibility of emergence. This suggests researchers look beyond simplistic notions of cause and effect to the structures that enable phenomena to occur (Bhaskar,

1998) whilst remembering that humans will never come to know everything that exists (Bhaskar and Lawson, 1998). By regarding knowledge as constructed through relationships and interactions, with children's participation an equitable and positive way to achieve and understand this, researchers may better understand the possibilities that schools offer.

5 COMPLEXITY INFORMED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

5.1 Overview

To understand children's participation in the complex system of schools, the study design must go beyond a process of just listening to children's views, to one where children, like researchers, are able to reflect on their situation and take action that enables them to make changes in the classroom:

“If children are to achieve real benefits in their own lives and their communities, and create a better future, they can only do this by being active citizens, articulating their own values, perspectives, experiences and visions for the future, using these to inform and take action in their own right and, where necessary, contesting with those who have power over their lives.” (Thomas and Percy-Smith, 2010, p.3)

Participatory research recognises and values insider knowledge and experience. It has the potential to engage children in the research process, recognising them as social actors who can “influence new knowledge production” (Cahill, 2007, p.309). But it is often a temporary means of participation, in that it is concerned with answering questions to inform policy but does little to change participants' current situations. Knowledge can also be considered social in origin, in that what is researched is contextually and temporally conceived (Bhavnani, 1993) and this is often forgotten in analysis of PAR. To embed participation is to recognise it as a more useful part of life, not just as a method for formal academic research. Thus, finding ways to work together that transcend temporary cooperative techniques, instead providing opportunities to build social skills, re-evaluate roles and attitudes, as well as explore and construct knowledge and meaning together, could impact social research by establishing context and temporal understanding essential for deeper meaning. This means building better relationships that potentially enable children and adults to shape and understand their systems so that they are better placed to inform policy. By understanding school systems as complex and adaptive, participants can:

“...strive for emergent participative decision-making and collaboration so that inquiry becomes cooperative.” (Hawkins, 2015, p.470)

The study design sets out to investigate whether this is possible in schools, and what can be instigated to embed children's participation.

The thesis proposes that relationships and frames of reference influence children and adults meaning making in schools. Indeed it is the 'capacious' and dynamic nature of schools and their communities (Manchester and Bragg, 2013) that challenges understandings of change; it may be through their complexity that better ways of interacting for change can be found (see Chapter 4). Most studies about matters that involve children do research with them, but rarely involve adults too. This thesis proposes that adult and child relationships must change (Marchant and Kirby, 2004) so seeks to build intergenerational understanding by children and adults working together to transform classrooms, challenging segregation of children's and adults' lives.

All research is about the search for knowledge. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is about the creation of knowledge itself, through collaboration with others, hence especially relevant to education. Feminist methodology particularly encourages research from an insider stance (through research with the same gender, ethnicity or age) and reflexivity to understand power in such research (Oakley, 1991); this does not in itself halt or change power issues. Using research to apportion blame for inequalities, takes concern away from the strengths and lives of those who may be categorised historically as oppressed, effectively silencing them further so their oppression is less understood (Bhavnani, 1993). It is important to address potential power differentials, but also to research the capabilities of oppressed groups to better represent how their own power and capabilities can work for change as well as inform others. If researchers continue to describe children as lacking capacity and agency, they may reinforce the notion. Support to develop locations where children publicly have the freedom to utilise their capacities would challenge such historically conceived prejudices more effectively.

This chapter explains why PAR is used as the main approach to the empirical study, framing this with complexity, as discussed in the previous chapter. Dewey (1916) and Freire (1970) both associate inquiry (investigation of a topic or problem as it relates to communities) with meaningful interaction with others; cooperative learning and group-work provide a contemporary means of working within the existing constraints of school classrooms and are thus discussed in more detail in the following sections. These along with surveys, observation and discussion are used to create an imaginative

research design that meets the aims of PAR but crucially enables the findings to be analysed within a temporal and relational model.

Two questions guide the research throughout: ‘*What are schools for?*’ and ‘*Can children participate in classroom decisions?*’ During the second phase of the two part empirical study, these were extended to ask: ‘*How can children learn the statutory National Curriculum and still authentically participate in Classroom Decisions?*’

5.2 What is PAR?

PAR is an ongoing process of action and reflection (Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007, p.15; Freire, 1970) that combines research, education and action to overcome the problems faced by social groups (Bernard, 2000; Hall, 2005; Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009). It is a research approach that emphasises participation through co-learning and organisational transformation (Greenwood, Whyte, and Harkavy, 1993).

Freire’s (1970) practical application provides a simple structure through which to develop PAR. This begins by participants having the opportunity to identify ‘the problem’ through the “words, ideas, conditions, and habits central to their experience” (Shor, 1987, p.31); this is reflected back to them as a problem to be worked on; the group research and draw upon their own experiences to understand this; they then take action on these understandings.

PAR usefully provides a means to contest practice and attitudes by considering relationships in the system (through processes, purpose, outcomes and sharing of knowledge and experience). Gaining popularity from the late 1960s onwards (Flores-Kastanis, 2009), theoretical agreement has been limited to notions of the interplay between institutionalisation and cultural constructs that may limit, modify or simply be deemed necessary to protect the institution; in other words issues of power. However, this does not promote understanding of the relationships involved between people that result in such power inequities. The aim, through this study, is to take this in to account. Wadsworth (2005) suggests that PAR has been conceived as either bureaucratic or democratic but even so each does not exclude the other given that, for example, what starts out as a means for management to bring about cost effective practice can lead to better relationships that may have emancipatory effects.

According to Groundwater-Smith and Downes (1999, p.1) there are three types of research involving children: “*knowing about* young people’s perspectives; *acting on* the behalf of young people; *working with* young people’s perspectives.” Children’s participation, as described in this thesis, moves forward to “*acting with* young people to improve and change their lifeworld conditions” (Groundwater-Smith and Downes, 1999, p.1). Kellett (2005a, section 3) claims that children’s research is a “potential new paradigm.” Yet PAR remains elusive in schools due to notions of childhood (see Chapters 2 and 3). This study proposes that this need not be the case if the educative value of participation is considered more deliberately, in ways that are difficult to discredit in a democracy.

Children’s participation and PAR are interrelated because they are both about understanding participants’ situations, involve interaction with others to reveal and find potential solutions to problems, and agency in constructing and applying knowledge for change. Research is always political in the sense that it purposely sets out to influence action and is bound by values and attitudes. PAR extends this as a way of both identifying and unsettling power issues (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009) within the relationships that construct these actions and the knowledge built through these.

Bernard describes participatory research as:

“...a process of critical and reflective inquiry, which holds scope for the marginalized; it gives voice to those who are usually silenced and empowers people to analyse their experience as a means of effecting change.” (2000, p.167)

In this way, it enables individuals to take action, which may motivate further action and change. In other words, learning occurs as there is change at the subconscious level. Hall (1993, section xiv; cited in Bernard, 2000, p.168) describes PAR as combining ‘research, education and action’ which is a useful way to view the approach developed for this study. Using the terms ‘action’ and ‘education’ in PAR is important because it implies more than taking part. Instead action leads to knowledge and understanding about issues and thus learning; in turn this may inform further action and so on as the process becomes more reflexive. Otherwise research maintains participants in a passive rather than active position and is thus generally consultative, rather than interactive, with less potential for social development. Through PAR it is possible for researchers

and participants to have different and various purposes but active participation benefits all through the common notions of solidarity, learning and commitment to change.

In this way PAR is a methodological innovation (Kindon et al., 2007) in that it does not restrain the researcher to a paradigm through which to safely justify motives but instead requires confidence in the experiential, creativity and adaptability of methods to ensure participants are able to access and be involved in the processes. Whilst it is constructivist through concern with knowledge as a social construction, it encourages temporal understandings of knowledge, rather than fixed positivist absolutes.

Kindon, Pain and Kesby (in Kindon et al., 2007, p.10) suggest PAR emerged in response to dissatisfaction with positivist paradigms and modernistic development interventions that grew out of colonialism and oppressive regimes. Other theories also bear similarities through their accounts of group solidarity, inclusion and cooperation toward social justice, rather than individualistic power; including *social interdependence theory* developed by Morton Deutsch in the 1940s to extend the 1930s work of Kurt Lewin (see Section 5.3.3).

The three aspects of PAR identified by Hall (1993): research, education and action, offer a useful way of exploring PAR that is relevant to this study.

5.2.1 Research

Research that enables communities to identify and find collaborative ways to overcome problems, and build resilience, provides a more accurate and authentic analysis of social reality (Hall, 2005, p.12). It closes the gap between traditional or local knowledge and expert knowledge systems, generating more rigorous data (Cahill, 2007). Byrne (2009, p.10) suggests that systems can be changed by the reflexive agency of human actors within them; if people understand their world they can then act together to change it. Thus participants and professional researchers can work together for mutual benefit.

Participant involvement and collaboration are distinctive elements of PAR; central to these is dialogue (Bernard, 2000, p.168). Dialogue is a multi-way process, involving more than speaking and listening, as those involved draw on subjective understanding, depending on power relations. These restrict trust and in turn what is shared. Thomas' (2012) connections between Honneth's Recognition Theory and children's participation suggest that human love, rights and solidarity are necessary for the rich, trusting

relationships that support participation; these highlight the complexity and intersubjective nature of interaction that is not captured when reducing processes to dialogue. They also suggest how injustice is constructed and interpreted through these.

Cammarota and Fine (2008) recognise the importance of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as a process that encourages young people to consider how injustice occurs, and challenge this; PAR provides the potential for such human growth.

“Although YPAR provides the opportunity for young people to recognize how social constructions mediate reality, the praxis of YPAR allows them to perceive the human machinations behind these constructions and thus encourages recreative actions to produce realities better suited to meet their needs and interests.” (Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p.7)

By recognising the knowledge that children can bring to such inquiry, it presents an epistemological challenge to traditional research (Galletta and Jones, 2010).

Contentions around hierarchies of knowledge have presented new opportunities to consider knowledge grounded in practice and participant experience (Chevalier and Buckles, 2008). Less well researched is how such hierarchies are preserved, for instance by schools, and how their capacity to take action or self mobilise is reduced (Pretty, et al, 1995). PAR can present opportunities to explore frames of reference and understand situations before generating knowledge for change. However, this is not common in PAR, even though claims for authenticity are often based on Freire’s (1970) ideas about social consciousness.

Levels or degrees of participation (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Pretty, et al, 1995) have led to idealistic notions of ‘good’ PAR with children where they suggest, plan, carry out, analyse and disseminate the data and findings, with as little interference in the process as possible by adults. However, this ignores the affect of society’s structures and systems on children’s everyday experience, and chances for interactive participation in their lives. Researchers and other adults can provide useful resources to improve this. As an ongoing process of action and reflection (Kinson, Pain, & Kesby, 2007, p.15) participation is very difficult to establish through occasional opportunities to give a view, especially where participants do not know each other very well. How much, when and in what way participants can be involved in inquiry, needs to be negotiated and respond to context.

In schools, it is almost impossible to engage children in this process at the design stage because of gate-keeping by adults (see section 6.2). Thus, it is unrealistic to base success on whether or not they had opportunities to initiate the research or even identify potential problems, until adults refrain from placing restrictions on opportunities to do so. A distinction has to be made between established children's participation, where it is embedded in system processes and structures, and PAR that presents opportunities to change attitudes and build this. PAR may not always be instigated by participants but this does not mean it cannot provide opportunities for children to conduct some of their own inquiry, which enables them to evaluate how their knowledge is produced and work together to construct meaning; thus it may answer questions instigated by a researcher but also enables children to reflect on issues they may not yet have considered because of the compulsory nature of schooling.

In this way they learn from the process and are active in shaping the knowledge used for inquiry as well as influential on how it may be used. Therefore children should not *have to* be involved at every stage of PAR, to justify or authenticate the method: some approaches used in PAR may require training and skills that a professional researcher can provide, therefore acting as a resource for the participants. If participation becomes an ordeal, or has potential to inadvertently cause children emotional distress because it places them in direct conflict with adults, then to expect them to manage all stages, especially without additional resources or support, would be unethical (McCarry, 2012). If the method is used as a mechanism to satisfy commissioning bodies, their involvement can become tokenistic (McLaughlin, 2010), rather than an empowering process for all involved that also takes account of their needs and other commitments. PAR should therefore take account of situations and employ methods for change that ensure the interests of children are paramount and not override this by trying to ensure a specific process is used.

5.2.2 Education

There is a tendency in PAR with children to elevate the techniques used as motivators through positive effects such as ownership, individual social skills and improved confidence (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004b) and as a technique or process toward particular outcomes, which distracts from the educational value of participation itself (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000). Participation through positive social interaction allows

children to share existing knowledge and experience and co-construct new ideas and knowledge; in this way it “*purposely shapes the subjectivity*” of those involved (Osberg and Biesta, 2008, p.314).

Facilitators have a useful role in ensuring that power relations are as equitable as possible, that everyone is included and able to take part without fear. Adults, professionals or other, can play a valuable role in children’s education by bringing knowledge and experience to the situation. Kellett (2005a, section 12) suggests they scaffold learning, building upon Vygotsky’s ideas, generally interpreted through children working with other more able children to develop their cognitive skills. Whilst the idea that differences in academic ability drive such interaction is controversial (see section 3.4), the potential range of individual ideas and experiences, brought together through interaction and co-construction, is compelling enough to suggest group-work is favourable to learning. Thus, understanding how children learn through their own agency and decision making may be a more useful way in which to understand the contribution they can make to education, through participation (Alderson, 1999, pp.197-198). Percy-Smith suggests that “primarily, meaningful participation is about whether their own needs are being met and whether they feel able to engage with the world” (2010, p.108); if schools are about education then children’s participation within them should surely be about whether their education is resourced in a way that they can flourish.

Researchers and teachers have their own agendas and expertise; these are not necessarily a threat to children’s agency but an inseparable contribution to the interactions and outcomes that occur in school situations. Viewed this way, they can also be positively involved in providing opportunities for communities to relate better. This role may be better understood through the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2005, p.39) where the lines between research and practice are less defined and the adult role is considered to be that of *architect* of participatory spaces. Researchers and teachers must design for complex human systems in order to create spaces capable of transformation.

5.2.3 Action

Reason and Bradbury describe action research as an orientation toward social inquiry (2008, p.1) and to change things with others. They suggest that it is challenging to some academics because its main purpose is “...to liberate the human body, mind and spirit

in the search for a better, freer world” (2008, p.5). Nevertheless, some action research may be used as a method for improving technocratic systems or practice which is contra to freedom or encourages automaton society. It does not necessarily challenge attitudes and processes that enable inequitable use of power. Thus it is useful to include the term ‘participatory’ to distinguish PAR as providing opportunities to do so and thus concerned with both present and future visions of how the social world ‘could be’ (Wadsworth, 1998, p.4). Like participation itself, these vary through the extent participants can make a difference (see Chapter 3).

Dewey (1916) describes thought as a tool with which we can predict, solve problems, take action and imagine the consequences of hypotheses; this disputes other philosophical ideas that explain thought as merely a tool used to describe, represent or mirror reality. This resonates with new understandings of neuro-physiology that offer insight in to complex system behaviour. Nerves and their connections appear to change as learning occurs and current thinking suggests that patterns of connections contain memory, rather than data being stored in particular places like a computer (Burton, 2002, p.14). Dewey believed that it is through enabling or empowering people to take action for themselves that social change occurs (Putnam, 1993) and that belief that an absolute truth has been attained or there is nothing more to know or be done to change our lot, results in a lack of motivation to expand and reconstruct ideas of society for the future, which is also consistent with Ryan and Deci’s *self-determination theory* (2000).

Interrelationships between individuals, social systems and participation are perhaps most apparent when PAR is used as a means to attain previously defined goals.

Chevalier and Buckles (2008) describe four main problems associated with the limits often observed in PAR and restrictions from such outcomes. By uniting the journey toward knowledge (the inquiry or process of participation) with outcomes, the knowledge produced, and what happens to this, can become subordinate to the research purpose itself. This means learning and understanding, from cooperative endeavour, may be lost or confined to those already closest to it, preventing wider reaching change. This is exacerbated by academic systems where insider knowledge or practice is less valued than the academic knowledge reproduced in journals for an academic audience.

Secondly, the journey or processes used for PAR can indicate there is a universal ideal of participation particularly where numbers or representative status groups are elevated above individuals’ relationships with each other. In this case processes and outcomes

are not necessarily transferable or lasting for the participants in the future because relationships are superficial and devised for the purposes of the project. The researcher can influence this by working with established groups but might then be challenged by their lack of representation of wider categories. However, this is unrealistic in schools where classes are rarely representative of the diversity of children because of geographical circumstance.

Thirdly, PAR may be used, alongside other limited opportunities for participation, as a substitute for actual democratic practice, leaving unfair practice unchallenged.

Cockburn (2005) suggests researchers avoid PAR in schools due to fears that any communication with children will be ‘schooled’ (p.25) rather than free and equitable. PAR is never fully controllable and such power differentials are a part of what it should seek to challenge. It is an emergent process leading to possibilities that cannot be predicted (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy, 1993); this is why it is compatible with complexity (see Chapter 4) even though it presents significant challenges for researchers, especially in schools.

Chevalier and Buckles (2008) describe a fourth problem:

“... while PAR may be sensitive to community life and local knowledge, it lacks practical tools to delve into local culture and value systems and the distinct ways people create new knowledge and meaning.” (p.20)

This study attempts to address this by recognising time as an essential resource. Action is temporal in that past, present and future frames of reference impact interaction and also agency itself. Consciousness of these is raised through broader education which is why participation in schools is so significant. Schools are elemental to social change (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009). They have the practical means to afford children opportunities to understand how knowledge is created and how they themselves contribute to this. PAR is more than a method for engaging people in consultation (Cahill, 2007). It is about relationships and interaction that are empowering, inspirational and concerned with positive change. Johnson and Johnson (2009) suggest, that a primary function of schools is to socialise children into the:

“...conventions, values, attitudes, roles, competencies, and ways of perceiving the world that are shared by one’s family, community, society, and culture” (2009, p.47).

Hence what this actually means for democracy should play an important part in education and so should opportunity to act upon this and grow. This requires a degree of agency and trust currently limited by schools. Knowledge making is inseparable from the knowledge produced (Chevalier and Buckles, 2008).

5.3 Choosing Methods

5.3.1 Overarching Issues

In the UK there have been well supported calls to rethink and broaden education such as Lawson and Spours (2011), Moss and Fielding (2011), Osberg and Biesta (2008). Because PAR is about research, action and education (Hall, 1993), it is easily associated with transformation at the local level with less influence over national practice or policy. However, a relational interpretation can be usefully employed toward rigorous understanding of complex systems such as schools. Divergence between theory and practice, largely due to positivism and the subordination of inquiry to the knowledge that is produced (Johnson and Johnson, 2015), allows policy to be produced remotely from schools resulting in tensions as it is introduced to systems. PAR can reveal potential spaces for change.

There are questions about whether the approach can be described as PAR if a researcher identifies problems and invites children to join in research based on these. Similarly where academic subjects are adopted for inquiry, rather than social issues, raises questions about the difference between PAR and pedagogy. However if the main point of PAR is to enable participation, then this places emphasis on the process rather than the topic under consideration and is also a useful means of understanding the relationship between research and practice.

Like participation itself, PAR is not just about taking part but also *being able* to take part and this may necessitate education and opportunities to engage collaboratively with others. Viewed in this way, PAR can be an opportunity for children to recognise their situation and understand how this could be different through their own agency and cooperation with others. Such opportunity is extremely limited in schools. Whilst a researcher may instigate such work, this does not mean that children cannot be involved in their own research, providing chances for them to identify more relevant problems for themselves and seek to address these. Through this, the researcher and children are

simultaneously both researcher and participants as they share knowledge and experience that is useful as they work together to construct new knowledge. PAR offers a characteristic that more traditional methods do not: it can be responsive to the situation and children's needs. This study considers that it is this concern with the dynamic nature of relationships that leads to criticism and misunderstanding, because it prevents PAR being reduced to an easily replicated method.

Thus PAR in schools is a pragmatic method through which research about children's participation can be constructed. Children are involved in shaping process, as well as inquiry that enables their participation in decisions about their education and classroom life. Researchers, teachers, children and adults may participate in different ways, influencing the research as a whole at various points but the underlying commitment to good relationships, solidarity and children's rights ensures all have opportunity to engage in research, education and action that develops their own understanding. The approaches used may thus validate a broader research agenda but do not validate practices that otherwise generate tensions by maintaining children's position as subordinate or passive in the system (Percy-Smith, 2010).

Therefore the design needs to be dynamic enough to respond to real classroom situations and reflect on whose agenda is being met as well as who is included at every stage. Group and mixed ability student inquiry are less well evidenced in children's research and yet they present favourable conditions to develop participation. The next two sections suggest why these may be useful forms of practice for PAR.

5.3.2 Student Inquiry

Student inquiry is recognised as a valuable opportunity to develop academic research skills with an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) being offered to sixth form students either as part of vocational, baccalaureate or stand alone programmes since 2006 and more recently a short GCSE. AQA (2016) suggest the EPQ teaches new skills such as *“independent research, project management, reflection and self-directed learning”* with benefits to students such as developing confidence, motivation and sense of achievement. The written research report, planning, research and analysis, presentation of results and conclusions, emphasise their association with higher level cognitive thinking and reinforce elitist academic versions of knowledge. The lack of similar opportunity for younger students may be associated with ideas about capacity and

suggests that highly competent outcomes are valued over the ways in which that knowledge is itself produced.

Some participatory research actively involves children to work with researchers on particular aspects (Alderson, 2000). Student inquiry is used as a technique for improving children's participation in primary schools, by enabling children to manage the whole process (such as Kellett, 2005a; 2005b; 2004b; Bucknall, 2009) with adult support. Fielding (2001a, 2001b) also considers student inquiry in the broader context of children's participation for transforming democratic schools for the future. What is important is that it is about children as "active researchers" (Kellett, 2005a, section 2), which suggests they have some sense of agency and self-determined action in the process. This can develop collaborative skills and motivate children and young people to take an active part in their communities (Kirkby, 2001).

Academic or teacher approaches to student inquiry draw on hierarchical ideas about the nature of knowledge. Myths still abound about the elevated status of quantitative or scientific knowledge (rather than qualitative and participant based) and reductionist techniques that seek key explanations through smaller units (Walby, 2007). In schools, inquiry may focus on predetermined expectations and a polished end 'product,' rather than the learning journey itself, and this has impacted on creativity in subjects such as Art. This leads to ethical questions about how children are oppressed in schools, how some are excluded from particular opportunities and the impact when withdrawn from them (Bucknall, 2010). Comparisons with 'professional' academic research miss the potential for all children to understand knowledge construction and build understanding with others.

However, use of student inquiry for individualistic or 'personalised' education may reinforce exclusion. Controversy about children's capacities is tempered by recognising that research competence is:

"...not age-related but is reliant on the acquisition of skills and knowledge which adults, by judging sensitively children's training and support, can 'scaffold' for children" (Kellett, 2005a, section 8).

Kellett (2005a) and Bucknall (2009; 2010; 2012) both privilege the academic research process and traditional outcomes concentrating on good design and implementation that is "sceptical, systematic and ethical" (Kellett, 2005a, section 8). Thus, they provide

opportunity to develop research skills and high order thinking skills through specialist training and support and have created useful resources to enable teachers to do this. However, by taking this stance they make predetermined judgements about outcome, based on formal academic research, which in turn determine the processes for children. So they really have little agency in determining their own methods or more creative response. Adults support and scaffold children's work but retain their superior position as instructors or teachers by prioritising what is already known over co-construction of knowledge.

Privileging academic outcomes over process is controversial given that most children have natural ability for inquiry from birth and academic intelligence is generally just a measure of historic attainment. Kellett (2005a; 2005b; 2004b) and Bucknall (2009) both recognise the potential for self-enhancement and increased capacities to participate through skills learned as student researchers; children's own choice of study may focus on a social problem within their school or community, raising awareness and opportunity for potential change but emphasis is on individual empowerment and less on improving the relationships and interactions that present as oppression in schools. Whilst Kellett (2005a) suggests that emancipatory research challenges the legitimacy of work that does not empower oppressed groups, the individualistic nature of some student inquiry reduces its potential for egalitarianism.

What is worrying is the apparent reluctance of researchers to work together with teachers and children in schools to challenge the status quo. Kellett (2005a) outlines the problems that exist in schools in terms of power relations (lack of choice and agency for children, measurement culture, age determined targets, authoritarian model of teaching) but located research training outside of the school setting which has impact on children's time and accessibility. Focus on practice that disassociates researchers from authoritarian teacher models may reinforce the idea that teachers cannot be trusted to work with children in alternative ways. Thus, whilst 'levelling' of power may take place to some extent through these exceptional opportunities, they are temporary arrangements that may briefly empower some children. Opportunity to participate and utilise skills learned still remains in the power of teachers and their control over children's lives and teachers may have little interest or motivation to invest time in student inquiry when it is not their priority. This was evident in earlier work (Thomas, et al. 2016) where a group of children were supported to work on individual research

projects during class time but the class teacher chose not to be involved, limiting the opportunities the children's inquiry presented for whole class activities and thus who benefited. A year later, a project in the same school supported the whole class; their new teacher was more interested and involved which resulted in more commitment from him.

Hence, this study considers the role of adults in building children's participation in more detail, particularly the potential of whole class inquiry that not only promotes inclusion but also engages the teacher in reflective practice as this may be necessary for lasting change.

5.3.3 Cooperative Learning and Group-Work

Social interdependence theory, suggests accomplishment of individual goals is affected by others and that where this is positive, groups are cooperative but where it is negative competition between individuals is exploitative. Perceived lack of interdependence is driven by individuals believing they can reach their goals, regardless of others (Johnson and Johnson, 2010) and this determines some interactions.

Individual student inquiry misses the potential to build children's participation through the social interdependences that already exists within schools. Groups such as friendship groups, family and school communities all rely on cooperation so that individuals with differing interests can advance together (Gustafson, et al., 1981). This is sometimes described as social participation (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010). However, in schools group work is more often used as a technique for finding the correct answer where some individuals gain more than others and some are able to dominate others to complete the tasks set (Johnson, 2015).

Johnson and Johnson suggest:

“...the way goals are structured determines how students interact with each other and the faculty, which in turn determines outcomes, including values” (2010, p.825).

Values needed to take part in and construct democratic society are learned through working cooperatively through mutual goals and positive conflict resolution.

Competition and individualism restrict such education. Johnson (2015) and Johnson and Johnson (2016, pp.20-21) describe five elements pertaining to social justice and

essential to inclusive group work: trust, cooperation, constructive conflict resolution, social justice and freedom from oppression. Group members need time to grow their involvement through dialogue and planning, which enable them to consider the emotional consequences of conflict through contradictions in approach at an early stage (Gustafson, et al. 1981). Group work is not just about carrying out activities together; it is about exploring why decisions need to be made and how these will affect group members.

Trust enables children in groups to take risks and positively manage conflict. Johnson (2015) suggests two aspects: the act of trusting and also being trustworthy. Trust is dynamic in that every interaction can change the level of trust between members of a group. Levels of trust and individual power can lead to conflict; care and respect for each other enables participants to decide how they will respond in different situations and build trustworthiness through their actions. When people trust they can argue; entering into dialogue by acknowledging problems and finding positive solutions. This does not mean leaving children to fight over problems instead of adults controlling their behaviour, but instead finding approaches to group work that are inclusive and value everyone's contribution, including the adults present. In these spaces disagreement can be positive in that it is a catalyst to find new solutions, "creative disagreement" (Fielding, 2004, p.309) rather than a fight for control. Johnson and Johnson (2007) teach techniques for children to engage in constructive controversy so best arguments are put forward rather than the most popular idea, which has obvious potential for participation.

Johnson (2015) suggests that teachers and facilitators can model useful behaviour in groups but must be aware of more negative influence. Use of silence, lack of acknowledgement when conflict or power imbalance occurs, can be just as oppressive as overly authoritarian leadership in that it is an indication of rejection to group members. Such subtle expressions of power and their ensuing disrespect indicate inequitable participation and, like more overt expressions of power, they also invite claims of unfairness within groups. Rather than a struggle for fairness, this may invite competition for recognition within a group, with attention drawn to offending participants rather than to building more trustworthy relationships. Adults can take part in sharing responsibility in a group by modelling how to communicate when behaviour may be damaging to relations. In this way they become a valuable resource along with the facilitator.

Hence, group work that encourages children to compete for recognition, results in further inequalities. Instead cooperative group work is about increasing equality through the resources there – including other children - so that everyone receives the most benefits. This is essential to overcome what Rawls (1993) described as the lottery of human circumstance (see Chapter 2).

5.4 Intergenerational Work and PAR

5.4.1 Why More Adults in the Classroom?

Teachers are active agents in schools and can change practice if they collaborate with others to do so (McLaughlin et al., 2004); in the case of children's participation this needs to be with the whole school community including school leaders, children and parents (Thornberg, 2010; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004a). Introducing outsiders to classrooms, such as parents or other community members (who are ordinarily kept out of schools) places adults and children in a position to understand the importance of their relationships, which Flores-Kastanis (2009) suggests is vital to bring about educational change.

The role of the researcher in PAR involving children's inquiry is not well defined; researchers and other adults may lead, support and scaffold their research but this can easily become a taught process reducing the value of children's own agency and self-determined action. Creative roles have to be found where the researcher facilitates activities, sharing their knowledge without imposing a view, whilst enabling children to bring their own knowledge, agendas and expectations to the shared intergenerational space. Thomas and O' Kane (2000) suggest that the messiness that arises from research where researcher, practitioner and children's agendas meet, enables positive rethinking of what research is for. PAR as a process of research, education and action places extra responsibilities on researchers and other adults as well as children. They all influence what happens.

As a teacher and researcher, it is difficult to separate the two when facilitating PAR. In the classroom, children look to adults (regardless of their titles) to be teachers in the most basic sense: to help them learn. Sometimes researchers in school settings stress that they 'are not teachers', which of course they are not in the professional sense, but as visitors to the classroom they play an educational role through the values, experiences,

behaviours and interactions that they bring. Research *with* children (as opposed to on or about them) is difficult because researchers bring preconceived ideas about process and outcome to the situation and no matter how child centred the activities, will have tasks that they need to complete, questions they want to answer and ethical processes they must follow. Similarly in schools there will also be other values, processes and outcomes constructed by the school in response to policy that must also be met. This does not mean that children cannot simultaneously take a more active role in determining activities and their own relevant outcomes. This balance is especially difficult where there are tensions from educational priorities and political demands for measurement of achievement. Thus the agency and sense of self-determined activity that student inquiry can build are also tempered by the reality of the situation:

“It requires great skill to achieve the right balance between adult support and adult management in such situations as too much of one or the other can affect a child’s sense of ownership and risk varying degrees of adult-filtered intervention.” (Kellett, 2005a, section 12)

Children’s participation requires adults to be responsive to what children want to research and negotiate sometimes shared and sometimes parallel agendas. This may challenge preconceived ideas about processes and outcomes and the control of classrooms. There are good arguments for practitioner research and inquiry in the classroom. These include the role teachers can take in changing schooling by better understanding it, improving their own practice, increasing democracy and justice, constructing knowledge with students that is useful and empowering, evidencing and disseminating good practice and contributing to broader knowledge (McLaughlin, Black-Hawkins and McIntyre, 2004). Evidence of positive benefits through teachers engaging in research and inquiry suggests that certain conditions are more favourable including support with development of the process and problem solving, from internal and external agents; critical debate; time and resources; and importantly support of the headteacher to ensure change goes beyond the classroom (McLaughlin, Black-Hawkins and McIntyre, 2004).

5.4.2 How does Intergenerational Work Support PAR?

Intergenerational work in classrooms can engage members of the broader community in education systems and open up debate on the purpose of schools, which is limited by

lack of understanding of what is actually happening in schools. Oppression can pass unrecognised by the school community because it is so deeply embedded (McDonald, 1997) Thus, intergenerational relationships must change to enable such policy and practice to evolve. Intergenerational learning can play an important part in establishing the trust necessary (Surlis, 2012). Mannion (2007) suggests that participation is best framed through adult-child relationships. Adults in schools are in a position to broaden children's experience of decision making by sharing their wisdom and beliefs and how they arrived at these (rather than enforcing particular viewpoints). This opens politics and relationships in education to different generations, embracing complexity, rather than seeking to reduce it (Trueit and Doll, 2010, p.135).

Increased segregation (see Chapters 2 and 3) means that for many there are few opportunities to engage with people from different generations, other than immediate family and in childcare settings. Unlike single age group work in class, intergenerational dialogue brings the adult social world in to the classroom – their work, relationships, creativity, histories and politics. It also provides chances for adults to understand the lives of children in schools and potential transformative opportunities for both (Mannion, 2007).

Researchers and teachers must negotiate careful pathways between sharing their own knowledge, raising awareness of other possibilities and enabling participants to develop their own understandings and knowledge through processes that facilitate reflection and action. The researcher cannot fully relinquish control or 'take a back seat' as some exponents of PAR suggest (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007, p.17). This is particularly unrealistic where people may have previously been discouraged from participation. Freire's (1970) work as an educator is important because it reminds us that whilst the motivation for social interaction, research and desire to learn may be innate, it is only through opportunities that foster such motivation that the capacity to participate is enabled. Similarly Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory suggests such motivation can be suppressed.

Adults as well as children may be uncomfortable with social interaction and fearful of exploring knowledge in ways that challenges the superiority of so-called facts presenting ethical dilemmas Thus for PAR to work, researchers may need to take a pedagogical role and this should be implicit in the design and explicit to participants.

Ideally, in schools, teachers would take on this role but current tensions between policy and practice may make this difficult.

A primary purpose of education is socialisation and part of this involves inculcation of values. Which values are promoted is influenced by the dominant political climate but they also play a role in children's and teachers' attitudes towards different approaches used in schools (Filipou and Buchs, 2015). These may be geared toward self-enhancement or self-transcendence, with the current political climate supporting the first but also using this as a means of oppression. Cooperative techniques can be used to enhance learning but this may be in pursuit of competition to raise standards of individual attainment. Instead self-transcendence is concerned with recognition of others and benefits to the whole group through cooperation, so that individual competition is more limited. Johnson and Johnson (2010) suggest that a conceptual framework is necessary for teaching values to avoid random promotion of certain values or individual interests and as a means to find positive conflict resolution.

But more equitable group work itself does not prevent the problems associated with it, such as how to attend to everyone's individual interests or needs, which are framed within past, present and future attitudes, whilst moving forward (Gustafson, et al. 1981, p.320). In schools (where education is the aim of group work), those needing more may have further to travel along their individual learning journey but they may also need more from the group. Whilst Freire's (1970) pedagogy suggests that they will unite when a common problem is identified, unless this is life-changing it is unlikely to be enough. There is clearly something more happening when groups cooperate.

Intergenerational work, especially where it involves adults from children's communities, may enable children to take more initiative and self-determine some actions by shifting emphasis from the class teacher as the sole human resource. Their involvement presents opportunity for children and teachers to evaluate relationships and consider what is important, considering themselves in relation to others; this sort of recognition may be the first stage to enable participation if Thomas' (2012) connections between children's participation and recognition theory are correct. Love and friendship, rights and esteem are all aspects of recognition that provide the conditions for participation. Thomas suggests that rights are the "missing link" because there are many examples of how these are not respected, directly and indirectly, through

intergenerational relationships, even though children do not generally challenge this when evaluating participation.

“If Honneth’s model is right, then one might expect that they will continue to have limited success in being recognized for the value of their contribution until they first engage in a more effective struggle for equal respect. (Thomas, 2012, p.463)

PAR requires a great deal more from the teacher or researcher than facilitation because cooperative inquiry breaks down traditional distinctions between researcher and participants (Bernard, 2000, p.168). To remain confident, and not threatened by alternative versions of knowledge, one must be capable of exploring that knowledge with others and prepared to construct new understandings as other ideas emerge. This suggests teachers must not only be able to explain their own version of knowledge to students but also be creative enough to prepare and provide the resources necessary, for students, to investigate how this knowledge was constructed, its relevance to their life and that of others and how this may impact on the future. Introducing other adults to the classroom, shares out responsibility for this.

6 UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION THROUGH TWO YEAR 6 SCHOOL CLASSES

6.1 Overview

The empirical study consists of two phases to gather data which contributes to understanding about children's participation in classroom settings. The specific methods used and types of data generated are listed in Table 6a, at the end of this section. With reference to the literature review and methodology, the main questions focus on children's and adults' frames of reference, in terms of views and knowledge about education, schooling and participation rights, how children are silenced and the intergenerational relationships that influence this, as well as how their agency is expressed. In turn, the participatory elements of the study seek to change classroom practice through intergenerational research, education and action (see Chapter 5), with the researcher, teachers and participants involved throughout in dialogue about what works, why, and how to potentially take this forward as practice develops. The aim is to present the findings (Chapters 7 and 8) in ways that further theoretical knowledge but also provide useful means of developing participation for school communities, following Bekerman's (2008) argument that research in educational settings should:

"...allow readers, participants and others to identify the world described as the world they inhabit and experience...presenting a richness of details which otherwise would go unnoticed, and should allow participants to learn what needs to be done next if they want to continue or change their present situation."
(p.160)

Thus, the study is also about bringing people together to construct knowledge and inform practice, moving beyond research which predominantly involves young people as a means to prove the researchers theory (McTaggart, 1997) to provide opportunities to participate, develop agency and ultimately shape classroom spaces. In this way the process itself is transformative, taking the idea (following Freire, 1970) that positive interaction and dialogue can be used to bring people together to work toward positive change, especially where relationships are more equitable.

“It is clear that, given powerful adult agendas at play, ‘having a say’ is insufficient to achieve effective and meaningful participation for young people. Instead, there is a need to more fully consider the complexity and interplay of values and interests in local decision-making and everyday social processes.”
(Clarke & Percy-Smith, 2006, p.2)

As Mannion (2007) suggests, identities and spaces where children and adults interact continually co-specify each other; hence this thesis proposes that it is the relationships thus formed that must be developed in order to break down power inequities and enable *Interactive Participation* (see Chapter 3).

During Phase 1, children and adults were asked about their views and attitudes around two main questions: ‘*What are schools for?*’ and ‘*Can children participate?*’ Cooperative learning methods and children’s inquiry were utilised to create a program of work that promotes individual agency, social skills and learning through inquiry, as well as potential emancipation from the more usual classroom constraints. Locating learning (in this sense broader education) as an objective of children’s participation is vital to the interpretation adopted for this study (see Chapter 3) and PAR (see Chapter 5). This requires flexibility at both the planning and implementation stages so that participants are able to negotiate and take some initiative in deciding how to proceed. However, unlike previous studies where increasing degrees of children’s power over the process are used as a measure of successful participation, this approach considers increasingly equitable relationships and use of agency to create spaces for inclusion, creativity and thus potential emergence as more useful evidence of change.

This chapter describes the two separate but related processes for recruitment and consent of two English primary schools and the ethical issues that had to be considered. It then describes how Phase 1 was planned to enable the researcher to observe and develop processes and interactions as well as inform the second phase, which is curriculum based. The intention is to demonstrate the range and interconnectivity of techniques and data collected and steps taken to ensure the inter-relatedness of theory and practice maintained through PAR. This produced a great deal of data, which can be considered temporally informed through past, present and future views and frames of reference. Ethics and decisions taken at each stage of the study contribute to the opportunities presented and thus are integral to the process itself. As well as the literature discussed throughout this thesis, two sets of ethical guidelines were consulted:

Table 6-a Overview of Research Methods

PHASE 1: Questionnaire plus 6 weeks in school, one afternoon per week			
Research Questions	Who was involved?	Research Methods	Types of data
What are children’s understandings and experiences of participation, education and schooling?	Class of 24 Y6 school children	Children’s questionnaire Participation voting activity – should children participate in deciding what happens in the classroom?	Individual questionnaire responses recorded in MS Excel for each question. Thematic analysis with data examples (Tables 6b and 6c).
What are adults’ understandings and experiences of participation, education and schooling?	One adult per children’s household School staff School governors Total 28	Adults’ questionnaire	Individual questionnaire responses recorded in MS Excel for each question. Thematic analysis with data examples (Tables 6b and 6c).
Were there differences in views and attitudes expressed in different temporal, locational or relational contexts?	Class of 24 Y6 school children 28 adults using questionnaire . 11 adults during interviews. 7 adults during mini-conference. Researcher.	Children’s and adults’ questionnaires Children’s views expressed through the ‘Participation voting activity.’ Children’s and adults’ views and shared experiences about schooling expressed through the intergenerational interviews. Children’s and adults’	Data grouped in MS Excel as responses to questions about past and present views on education and participation. Voting slips with written comments Activity plans Notes Audio of interviews Children’s written comparisons between past and present

		individual and collective views expressed through the activities of the mini-conference.	schooling Audio transcripts (mini-conference) Post its- what is education? A1 drawings x2 for each of 7 intergenerational groups. Written evaluations.
How did these differences affect the group activities?	Class of 24 Y6 schoolchildren. Teacher. TA. Researcher.	Observation, photos, audio recording and reflective journal/notes to record processes and outcomes of children's group activities and discussions	Notes in reflective journal and MS Word Activity plans and amendments
How did children's relationships change?	Class of 24 Y6 schoolchildren. Teacher. TA.	Observation, photos, audio recording and reflective journal/notes to record processes and outcomes of children's group activities and discussions: What is participation? Planning interviews – what are adults' experiences of school? Conducting interviews Analysing interviews – what differences are there between adults' and children's experiences? Presenting results Mini-conference	Results and comments from participation voting activity Notes about children's physical use of the classroom environment and their reactions to activities: 'Me and my community' circles activity. Children's interview schedules. Children's interview recordings. Children's presentations of findings. Audio and video recordings from mini-conference
How did the teacher's relationship with the children change?	Class of 24 Y6 children, their teacher and researcher	Dialogue regarding plans for activities and suitability for individual children Written activity plans and amendments	Notes in reflective journal and MS Word Activity plans and amendments

		Discussions with teacher and children Observation during class activities reflective journal/notes	
How did adults' understandings and experiences of participation, education and schooling change?	28 adults using questionnaire 11 adults during interviews. 7 adults during mini-conference. Researcher. Teacher	Mini-conference: Audio and video recording of activities and use of space Discussion about 'What is education?' Intergenerational focus groups' discussions and drawings: 'What are schools for?' and 'What do we want young people to gain from school?' Evaluation – views about the intergenerational process Views about the research process.	Activity plans Notes Audio transcripts Post its- what is education? A1 drawings x2 for each of 7 intergenerational groups. Written evaluations.
How did children's understandings and experiences of participation, education and schooling change?	Class of 24 Y6 children Researcher	Mini-conference: Audio and video recording of activities and use of space Discussion about 'What is education?' Intergenerational focus groups' discussions and drawings: 'What are schools for?' and 'What do we want young people to gain from school?' Evaluation – views about the intergenerational process; Views about the research process.	Activity plans Notes Audio transcripts Post its- what is education? A1 drawings x2 for each of 7 intergenerational groups. Written evaluations.

PHASE 2: 14 weeks in school, one afternoon per week

Research Questions	Who was involved?	Research Methods	Types of data
<p>What is the class teacher's understanding and experience of participation through education and schooling?</p>	<p>Teacher Researcher</p>	<p>Semi-structured Interviews at the start and end of the study. Informal discussions during the process. Collaborative activity planning.</p>	<p>Audio recordings and transcripts. Reflective journal and notes. Activity planning sheets</p>
<p>How can activities be structured to balance children's friendship and topic preferences with capabilities in groups?</p>	<p>Class of Y6 school children Teacher Researcher</p>	<p>Observation, photos, audio and limited video recording (where permission obtained) and reflective journal to record processes and outcomes of children's group activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is participation – voting activity • Discussion about participation, trust and responsibility • Choosing research themes • Planning interviews • Conducting interviews (with each other) • Analysing interviews – differences between Tudor and present day times • Designing and developing board games 	<p>Audio recordings and partial transcripts. Reflective journal and notes. Activity planning sheets Children's voting activity written responses Research themes spider diagram Children's research theme ideas Footsteps reflections on process</p>

<p>How can groups be encouraged to work cooperatively and with concern for the needs of all children and not just individual progress or attainment?</p>	<p>Class of Y6 school children Teacher TA Researcher</p>	<p>Observation, photos, audio and limited video recording (where permission obtained) and reflective journal to record processes and outcomes of children's group activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is research? • Ideas for Tudor Research topics • Ranking research themes • What is democracy? • How can we work well in a group? • Which research methods? • 'Starting to plan' activity • Class discussion on group work • Developing research questions • Deciding on work groups • Individual literature research • Planning intergenerational interviews • Conducting interviews (with each other) • Analysing interviews – differences between Tudor and present day times • Deciding on products of the research • Design and development of 	<p>Activity planning sheets Research idea sheets Ranking sheets Working in groups discussion spider diagram Completed which research methods? sheets Completed starting to plan sheets Class rules for fair and cooperative group work Notes and chosen reference materials Children's interview scripts Notes and reflective journal Children's individual first ideas for board game specifications Mid-way evaluation sheets Children's PPT presentations Evaluating designs completed sheets Photos of the board games Discussions about quality control and completed sheets</p>
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		<p>board games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-way evaluation (good/not so good things about the Tudor Projects – how much have they been able to decide for themselves; what has group work been like?) • Planning presentations of findings • Evaluating individual board game designs in intergenerational focus groups 	
How well can group inquiry meet the requirements of the National Curriculum?	<p>Class of Y6 school children Teacher Researcher Senior management team</p>	<p>Research notes in school project books Comparison of Tudors and present in school project books Moderation process (SMT and teacher) National Curriculum PoS</p>	<p>Photos of children’s written work Notes about results of moderation Cross-checking with National Curriculum PoS</p>
Does inter-generational work (including interviews) act as a catalyst for more equitable relationships?	<p>Class of Y6 school children Adult volunteers x4 Researcher</p>	<p>Planning intergenerational interviews Conducting interviews (with each other) Discussions with researcher around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning intergenerational interviews • Analysing interviews – differences between Tudor and present 	<p>Audio recordings and transcripts. Reflective journal and notes. Activity planning sheets Completed mid-way evaluation sheets Photos, video and audio recordings of intergenerational focus groups (final session)</p>

		<p>day times</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding on products of the research Planning presentations of findings <p>Mid-way evaluation (good/not so good things about the Tudor Projects – how much have they been able to decide for themselves; what has group work been like?)</p> <p>Presenting and evaluating the finished board games in intergenerational focus groups</p>	
How do children contribute to shaping the classroom space?	Class of Y6 school children Researcher	Observation, notes and discussions with children during all the activities listed above.	Activity planning sheets, notes and reflective journal
How can children be involved in decisions about their inquiry and products?	Class of Y6 school children Researcher	Development of activity plans (adjusted following each session) Development of resources for children with SEN	Activity plans Card templates Tudor Kings and Queens templates Children's completed game cards Completed activity sheets (as listed above)
How did children's relationships change?	Class of Y6 school children Researcher Teacher	Audio recordings of children interacting in groups Observations and work with children in group activities Teacher interviews and discussions	Audio recordings Photos Notes Transcripts

How did the teacher's relationship with the children change?	Class of Y6 school children Researcher Teacher	Semi-structured Interviews at the start and end of the study. Informal discussions during the process. Collaborative activity planning. Audio recordings of children and teacher interacting in groups	Audio recordings Transcripts Activity planning sheets Notes and Reflective journal
What does the teacher need to be able to change their role?	Teacher Researcher	Semi-structured Interviews at the start and end of the study. Informal discussions during the process. Collaborative activity planning. Audio recordings of children and teacher interacting in groups	Audio recordings Transcripts Activity planning sheets Notes and Reflective journal
What are the views and attitudes of teachers and other adults to children's participation in developing classroom activities?	Teacher Researcher Senior management TA Adult volunteers x4	Teacher interviews and discussions with researcher Discussions regarding adult participation in the study School policy documents	Notes Reflective journal Volunteers allowed to participate School policies Photos and video stills Adult short evaluation form
How can the processes involved in participation be evaluated?	Class of Y6 Children Researcher	Evaluative activity planning – discussions, developing resources and children's activities Evaluation activities at mid and end stages Children's choice of products (of their research) School moderation processes	Planning sheets Notes Reflective journal Evaluation sheets Completed Footsteps Participation circles Children's written and presentation work Children's finished board games Cross-checking with

		Teacher's views and assessment of outcomes	National Curriculum PoS and attainment targets Teacher interview transcripts
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6.2 Ethics and Recruitment

There are two main elements to Phase 1: (i) a survey using printed questionnaires for children and adults to find out about their experiences and understanding of children's participation, education and schooling; (ii) a series of classroom based workshops taking place on one afternoon per week across six weeks including an intergenerational mini-conference.

Phase 2 was designed by building upon the workshop plans for Phase 1 but incorporating additional objectives from the findings. The recruitment processes and ethical issues for both are discussed together because similar methods were applied but resulted in different varying responses by the schools and university ethics committees that are relevant to the findings and discussions about both phases.

The school that agreed to take part in Phase 1 was an average sized Catholic primary school in a small town just outside a much larger town and area of high deprivation in Northern England. At the recruitment stage, the headteacher passed the information supplied to an experienced PPA teacher who covered the Year 6 Class, one afternoon per week, whilst the main class teacher took her preparation time. She was looking for a suitable scheme of work to do with Year 6 during Summer Term that would provide useful skills for their transition to secondary school the following September.

The school that agreed to take part in Phase 2 was an average sized primary school in a large town in Northern England in an area of high deprivation, ranked in the ten most deprived education regions and unitary authorities in the UK. This was again a Year 6 Class but this time their main class teacher agreed to take part with the research spanning the whole Autumn Term with one afternoon per week dedicated to the children's inquiry.

6.2.1 Identifying and Recruiting Schools

The priority at the recruitment stage was to identify schools where it would be possible to work with a whole class of children. Firstly, this was to ensure that the workshops were inclusive, avoiding schools selecting only children they regarded as worthy or having capacity to take part (see Chapter 5). Secondly, as the purpose of the work is to understand and develop children's participation in the classroom then it is logical to work with existing school classes, recognising that there is no such thing as a class of children who can fully represent diversity at the macro level. Instead, they are always groups of children who attend the school due to location, sibling attendance, limits to parental choice, places available, or selective criteria such as religion or academic potential.

This is important because embedding children's participation in classrooms means adopting processes that are inclusive whoever happens to be among the thousands of variable groups that form school classes, and being responsive enough to these to welcome potential for change. Thus interventions where outcomes and processes are predetermined and tests used to identify affects on isolated groups to rule out variation and make valid claims are inappropriate. In this study variation and difference are recognised as positive and normal system components and thus essential to change. Even though some processes are stringently planned to enable agency, it is through this and participants differences that they become dynamic and responsive enough to generate a range of outcomes and potential transformation.

The aim was to include year 5 or year 6 children (aged 9-11) in the cohort, as this is a less researched group in terms of children's participation, and also an age group where one might reasonably expect children to be able to enter discussions about abstract ideas such as participation and not be placed under unreasonable stress by including adult visitors to their classroom. Most children, in non specialist state schools, have some level of literacy and communication by this stage and experience of a range of activities, thus providing potential for a wide variety of outcomes. It was assumed that most children's Special Educational Needs (SEN) would have been identified by this stage and that plans would be in place to support all children in the classroom environment to ensure inclusion and their needs are met. However this is not always the case as both phases of this study evidence. The summer term following SATs has previously been identified as a good time of year for schools to embark on broader educational

opportunities for children, as the pressure to teach and practice for the tests is over and, from experience, perceived as a time for broader educational practice such as the Arts, Design Technology and Sport. Transition has also previously been identified as a period to develop activities that may benefit children's social skills such as group work, planning and working independently in readiness for secondary school.

Recruitment of a whole class meant that very small or large schools were excluded due to classes with children from more than two year groups, not enough children to work in groups in a year group, or more than one year group class meaning that some groups in the school would be excluded. Whilst it could be argued that other year groups were also excluded by adopting age specific classes, this follows normal practice in schools. Schools within two LEAs were identified where there was one class group per year of between 24-30 children (30 being the most children allowed in an infant class with one teacher in England, whilst Scotland limits all classes to 24). This meant just under average size schools of 170-210 children, within reasonable travelling distance because of the regular visits needed to the school. Latest Ofsted reports were consulted as these provide details of numbers on roll, numbers of children with SEN and some basic demographics. Those with average numbers of children with SEN, free school meals (used as an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage by Ofsted) and English as a second language were identified to approach first. This was for the purely practical reason that extra resources and funding might be considered necessary to fairly implement the research where these are particularly high. Schools where the researcher had previously worked were excluded so that the researcher might better understand what is important in building intergenerational relationships and how these change through the approach, which might be different if the children are already used to the researcher in their classroom. It also meant that teachers' changing interactions could be more affectively observed as relationships change.

Headteachers were approached in the first instance by letter (including an information sheet) and this was followed up by email or phone call, two weeks later (see Appendix 1). Where schools were interested or required more information, the researcher offered to visit. A PowerPoint presentation was developed to support discussions about the research with staff, giving details of developments since the UK ratified the UNCRC, such as how participation theory has developed (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; and Fielding

and Moss, 2011), relevant policy, legislation and benefits such as that pertaining to School Governing Bodies (The Education and Skills Act, 2008):

“Pupils involved in the governing body report that they have gained a sense of responsibility and an enhanced feeling that they are part of the school. Their involvement had given them a positive attitude towards their school and they had become appreciative of the work, time and effort that the teachers put in. However, the experience does not only benefit the pupils involved but has a positive effect on the whole school. The involvement of pupils in decision-making is both fostered by and encourages a whole school ethos of participation in education and learning.” (Hallgarten, et al., 2004, p13)

Interested schools were also reminded about the outcomes of the two year Cambridge Primary Review which identified participation as one of its five main themes and recommended that schools should:

“Respect children’s experiences, voices and rights, and adopt the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the framework for policy.” (Cambridge Primary Review, 2009, p8)

Signposting was provided to nationally available resources such as: ‘Pupil Participation Guidance: Working Together - Giving Children and Young People a Say’ (DfES, 2004) and ‘Children’s Voices: Pupil Leadership in Primary Schools’ (Johnson, 2004), which were both available from the DFE website at the time of the study.

Most headteachers did not acknowledge the first contact with their school, even though the information made it clear there were no costs involved with the research and the school would benefit from the opportunity of a qualified teacher and workshops designed to broaden children’s experience. It is impossible to know why so few regarded this as a good opportunity; however experience at the two schools who eventually took part in the study and others, suggests that headteachers are very busy, have little concern for what happens in classrooms beyond national strategies and inspection and more concerned with results and administration. There was no indication that schools regard research as a normal or integral part of professional practice or of benefit to them.

The potential benefits to schools (at this planning stage) were that taking part would:

- Provide opportunities for teachers and governors to develop their understanding of children's rights especially children's participation.
- Provide opportunities to consider ways of involving children pro-actively in decisions about their schooling
- Impact on children's learning – year 5/6 will have chance to take part as young researchers and develop their real life skills in citizenship, speaking and listening, research and ICT
- Offer adults and children from different generations opportunities to work together on a more equitable level and explore the benefits of this (developing positive relationships with the community)
- Generate information and data about the school that may help the school to develop its ethos positively and for the future

During recruitment for Phase 1, one school agreed to take part. The headteacher made the decision that the school would take part and provided consent accordingly after consulting the teacher who was interested in the study and had done some preliminary research (following discussion with the researcher and signposting using the *PowerPoint* provided so that she was well informed). Children's and parents consent is discussed in the next section.

As the study includes intergenerational work, adults also needed to be recruited, known to the school and available during school time which was more difficult. In terms of the questionnaire, the children took one adult questionnaire home per household. Staff and governors were also asked to take part with questionnaires and envelopes available in the staffroom and distributed to governors by the office. The questionnaires included an invitation to take part in the classroom work which would involve being interviewed by the children and a mini-conference. No governors volunteered or asked for further information. They also did not take up the offer of a presentation about the work and children's participation rights offered via the letter to the headteacher.

Out of the few adults who did volunteer not all were available for both the interviews and mini-conference and some who said they could attend simply did not turn up. Those who did take part in the conference had not necessarily completed a questionnaire before they came in to school and had learned about the study from parents (five were grandparents and one was an older sibling). The headteacher and a school volunteer agreed to take part when it became evident that there would not be enough adults for

groups to work with. This enabled the children to conduct their interviews in eleven groups of 2 or 3 children with 1-2 adults. Fewer adults were available for the conference (including the headteacher). However the children merged with other groups to share their results and ideas, create presentations and interact with more people in preparation for the mini-conference, which meant that on the day all the focus groups included at least one adult. Despite these problems, it is perhaps significant that a range of adults wanted to take part and that parents were also very committed to the research, with an 85% return on the questionnaires. Clearly adults as well as children have something to say about schooling.

During the recruitment stage for Phase 2, the geographical area was shifted slightly to avoid approaching the same schools. This time there were two interested schools but only one was able to commit to the research. This time first contact was by phone or email. Again most headteachers did not reply.

6.2.2 Informed Consent

Research proposals were submitted to the UCLan Ethics PsySoc Committee after considering the UCLan and BERA guidelines at both Phases of study. This was intentional because the second phase would vary due to the findings from Phase 1. Whether children can consent (give formal permission) or assent (formally accept a course of action) to research and whether responsibility for this lies entirely with parents or in this case the school, is a contentious issue, reflective of some of the dominant constructs of children and childhood already discussed in the literature review. It is problematic and not as straight forward as some research appears to indicate (Gallagher, et al., 2010). In schools, parents consent to children being part of the school system when they register them for school. They also consent to routines by signing home school agreements for instance and children are similarly asked to sign that they agree with ICT or behaviour policies. However, there is little participation by children or parents in deciding the purpose of these activities or the procedures that will be used. There is almost an assumed ethicacy about school practice but such assumptions may be challenged when an outsider seeks to carry out research in the school setting. Overly formal or bureaucratised ethical procedures can mask potential problems.

BERA specify that all research involving human subjects should gain voluntary informed consent from participants:

“The Association takes voluntary informed consent to be the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway” (2011, BERA Guideline 10).

It is paramount that researchers take measures to safeguard children involved in research and work with settings to do so. The issues that can arise (including whether to involve children) must be fully considered before asking for consent. The legal basis for children’s consent is still disputed; based on a medical model (Gillick competence) children under 16 years of age may be considered able to provide consent if they have sufficient intelligence and understanding of what the research is about and its intentions (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). Parents are usually involved to help decide whether this is likely to be in the child’s ‘best interests.’ In schools the head teacher can similarly give consent for research to happen in school acting ‘in loco parentis.’ Like parents, this does not necessarily mean that they will prioritise ethical considerations or respect children’s rights. The compulsory nature and objectives of the school may also be used to subjugate children for such priorities.

Whilst teachers cannot actually consent for individual children to take part in research (as they are not legally classed as having parental responsibility), they do make decisions about what happens in the classroom and insist on participation. For example, children may be asked to sit pilot exams, without informed consent or the option of withdrawal, even though clearly there are ethical implications in terms of their rights, associated politics and individual negative effects such as anxiety. The problem is that no matter how simple or seemingly non-contentious research may seem, it is impossible to draw a defining line that says what is high or low risk when human beings are involved (Alderson and Morrow, 2011, p.101). Children themselves may have very different views about being a participant; even so, adults in schools take decisions that affect them without involving them in the decision process.

The best interest of the child must remain the priority in research, as is described by the BERA guidelines:

“The Association requires researchers to comply with Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3 requires that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration. Article 12 requires that children who are capable of

forming their own views should be granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity. Children should therefore be facilitated to give fully informed consent.” (2011, BERA Guideline 16)

The researcher considers that most children have the capacity to consent as long as suitable measures are taken to ensure that information is provided in an appropriate way for the needs of each child and that this is fully understood before asking for consent. In other words children are “truly informed” (Gallagher, et al., 2010). Rather than expecting children to evidence that they can communicate understanding in a mature fashion, it is adults who must look for ways to communicate with children that are appropriate to ensure inclusion. All children have something to communicate and researchers and other adults should find ways to enable them to do so, to make sure everyone’s perspectives are considered (Morris, 2003). Thus the idea that consent is a ‘central tenet of ethical practice in social research’ (Gallagher, et al., 2010) cannot be isolated from children’s participation rights and the tensions that surround these. Whilst it is considered normal practice to ask parental consent for children to take part in research (or an adult with parental responsibility as defined by the Children Act, 1989) this needs to be balanced with the potential harm of specifying this as the only or main means of consent, disregarding the views of the child, which may not be in their best interests.

Initial consent for the schools to take part in this study was gained from the headteachers in both phases. UCLan guidelines that state:

“Reliance on the consent of a head teacher acting "in loco parentis" should be reserved for the least contentious or intrusive studies, or those that are indistinguishable from normal school activities. In particular, it should not be relied upon where there is the possibility of a child being identified from the study results, or where the study is personal or relates to sensitive issues. Even when head teacher consent is being obtained, it is still considered good practice to advise the parents of the fact that the study is being undertaken, and to offer the option of withdrawal.” (UCLan, 2012, section 3.4).

In Phase 1, the researcher argued that whilst parents should be fully informed and given the option to withdraw their child from the research, they would not be provided with

written consent forms because failure to return these would inevitably exclude some children from the class's activities over a period of six weeks without reasonable grounds. In other words assumed parental consent would be used as the class activities were to be regarded as an educational opportunity for the children that would form some of their timetabled 'lessons' over the period of research. There were two main reasons for this decision. The first was to make sure that lack of a signed parental consent from did not place children in a position where they were treated differently to their peers, reprimanded for failing to return forms, made to do alternative activities or excluded from class, and prevented from accessing the same opportunities as their peers as these are all potentially detrimental.

Secondly, the main purpose of this study is to investigate and enable participation in schools by developing suitable processes in the classroom that enable children's rights. Unlike studies designed to test a limited intervention, this research is about expanding opportunity. Alderson and Morrow (2011, p.106) suggest that it is a mistake to argue that research is beneficial to children as it is a process of collecting data and producing and sharing results that does not directly benefit those involved. Whilst I share their concern that education is increasingly used to justify ethics protocols, children's inquiry and participation, as forwarded by this thesis, are educational methods that also promote children's rights and thus justifiable if they continue to meet the broader aims of state education. However benefits do not provide an excuse for research that may cause potential harm to children; nor should they be used to hide researchers' intentions and use of findings which should be fully discussed with participants as part of ongoing ethical practice.

Ultimately it is the children who are taking part in school activities, so their consent and right to withdraw at any time must be respected. This does not mean that their views should take priority over that of parents or teachers but instead that there are better ways of sharing decisions that respect and nurture inclusion rather than promoting unhelpful hierarchies. Discussion is considered a more appropriate and positive way of enabling all views to be considered, without prioritising those of particular individuals or promoting 'adultism' (Shier, 2012). In schools, open door type policies can also ensure that parents know their views are respected which is much more difficult to achieve through a faceless consent form. Alderson and Morrow (2011, p.108) suggests that parents who themselves feel disrespected may have difficulty in respecting children and

understanding their rights. One of the reasons for introducing intergenerational work in this study was to try and alleviate this problem through education and relationships.

All parents of the Phase 1 School were informed initially about the study through the school newsletter and asked to contact school if they needed further information or had any concerns. The Year 6 children were fully informed about the research, firstly by a visit from the researcher who outlined the study, what it was for and invited discussion and opportunities to ask questions. They were then given an information sheet to take home to discuss with their parents and encouraged to ask further questions about anything they did not understand or were unsure about. At this stage each child was given a questionnaire to complete at home and a separate questionnaire for one adult per household. Consent to take part in the survey was through completion. The questionnaires were all anonymous and returned in sealed envelopes to the researcher via the school office.

This was accompanied by a letter to parents of the year 6 children with a full information sheet detailing the data from the questionnaires would be used as well as that collected from observation during the workshops. The intergenerational work was explained and parents invited to take part on the dates given for interviews and a mini-conference. To ensure children were not coerced in to taking part during the workshops (or punished by the school for lack of cooperation), teachers were asked to agree that if a child did not want to take part in the activities or wished to withdraw at any time that the school would arrange a suitable alternative task with similar benefits and enable them to remain in the classroom if they wanted to do so, without placing any pressure or undue concern at the child's decision. However, none of the children chose to do this or expressed negative views about being involved in the study or other subtle indications that they did not want to take part. The workshops were designed to develop the children's agency over a period of time and they were very enthusiastic about this. Consent for the research was an ongoing part of the process (Kirkby, 2001) through careful observation of children's participation in the activities, reminders that some aspects were being recorded and verbal checking.

Phase 2 was to be a longer period of study and involve more intergenerational work. This time it was important to record the children's interactions and movement in the classroom space to enable more detailed analysis. This would mean recording data about individual children although this would be analysed in terms of the groups and

class as a whole. The teacher was also to be interviewed. Thus parents as well as children were asked for permission to record data using digital and video techniques at various stages. To ensure that children were not excluded from the class activities (as discussed earlier) informed consent was for the purposes of data collection rather than whether children could or could not take part in the activities with the provision again in place with the school that alternative suitable activities would be planned where children did not want to take part. One consent form was used for children and their parents to encourage discussion and understanding about the research after reading the information sheets and an initial visit to the school by the researcher. Options were provided to consent (or not) to data collection through observation and note-taking and digital recording. This enabled some children to opt out of digital recording even though their parents had given consent and their decisions were respected.

Separate information and consent was provided for adult participants including a clause asking for their agreement that *'I understand that I will be working with children and the school has procedures in place to ensure their safety and well-being at all times. I agree to abide by the school's policies including those for visitors, health and safety and safe-guarding and acknowledge that I can request these from the school.'* During the process of obtaining ethical approval the committee suggested that all participants should be checked for criminal records as per adults working with children. This was not appropriate or practical because schools must already have policies for safeguarding in place for visitors and volunteers which the researcher would be expected to follow as well as taking reasonable means to ensure practice reduced any potential risk. The workshops would be planned so that all work takes place in groups and adults would be supervised at all times.

6.3 Phase 1 Study Design

6.3.1 The Questionnaires and Workshops

The main purpose of the questionnaires was to find out views and attitudes about children's participation and education. In conjunction with data collected through the workshops, the aim was to identify main themes and assess whether there is any significance in how these are shared through different temporal, locational and

relational contexts. Thus how they may influence future events (Cross, 2011) and the way meaning and significance are applied to events (Elliot, 2005).

Two versions were created (see Appendix 3) so that the children's version could be shorter in format, making appropriate use of colour and emoticons with fewer open questions. Both were structured to include questions about the respondents' own experiences of schooling (both positive and negative), what schools are for, and what they believe schools should provide. The adult's questionnaire also explored views and attitudes to children's participation including children's influence in schools and who makes decisions. A practical activity was designed to take place in the first children's workshop to find out about their views. Each questionnaire contains a mixture of closed and open questions using a range of styles (such as circle the appropriate answer, tick or cross and select importance) to encourage participants to read the questions and maintain interest over the three A4 sides. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaires themselves at home although a few did so in school as visitors. Parents were asked to support children to read the questionnaires and information sheets but encourage them to provide their own responses.

All children in the class (24) completed a questionnaire. Twenty eight adults completed questionnaires including most of the children's parents.

The workshops were designed so that children could participate in research as well as explore their ideas about participation and their own education through the "words, ideas, conditions, and habits central to their experience" (Freire, 1970, p.31). In other words through classroom space, activities and interaction with others. This would be facilitated by the researcher with a supportive teacher who recognise the personal and social growth that takes place through the educational processes offered. Briefly, these consist of:

- Finding out about children's participation. What is the UNCRC? What does participation mean? 'Me and My Community' circles activity. Ways of making political decisions including the 'Participation Voting Activity.'
- Is /was school the same for everyone? How can we find out what adults think school is for and what their school lives were like? Use the researcher's 'story' as a starting point. Discuss research methods,

equipment available and how we are going to record other people's stories.

- Writing interview schedules and preparing to interview adults. Learning to use *Audacity* recording and editing software.
- Invite adults into school and interview them about their 'Experiences at School.' What do they think school is for? What was different when they went to school? Do they think some things have changed? Do they think some things need to change? Small group work.
- Analysing what we have found out – how can we present this to others. Preparing for the 'mini conference'
- Mini Conference – Invite the adult participants in to school again. Pupils present their findings from the interviews and outline similarities and differences between experiences. Post it exercise – 'What is Education?' Intergenerational discussions about: 'What is Education?' Working together in intergenerational focus groups to construct shared understanding about: 'What are Schools for?' 'What do we want young people to gain from school?'
- Evaluation - short questionnaires for adults and children who took part.

The researcher is a qualified secondary school teacher with experience of teaching classes in primary and secondary schools and leading children's art groups, as well as voluntary work with children of all ages. Thus activities draw on practical experience and understanding of the classroom environment with a view to overcoming potential restrictions and preconceived ideas of the classroom space.

6.3.2 Planning for Inclusion and Agency

Activities were designed to be as inclusive as possible with different needs addressed through interaction and support within groups rather than through the provision of differentiated tasks.

The potentially harmful effects of exclusion in everyday practice were raised in discussion with the teacher who revealed concerns that children with SEN are often excluded from the most creative class activities to work on focused maths and English tasks elsewhere. Whilst this issue was not considered as part of the institutional ethics process, it does strengthen the argument that children should be entitled to take part in

all class activities as equal members of the school community and that parental concerns about curriculum and practice should be considered through better involvement in developing curricula and discussion. The SEND Code of Practice, 2015, provides statutory guidance on participation:

“Sometimes these discussions can be challenging but it is in the child’s best interests for a positive dialogue between parents, teachers and others to be maintained, to work through points of difference and establish what action is to be taken.” (DfE and DoE, 2015, 1.7)

The teacher decided that she would not label or share details about children with SEN in the class, unless this became necessary to ensure inclusion, and thus requested that differentiated support was in response to the needs of children as they arose rather than through previously planned special provision. She agreed that a truly inclusive project is one that sets out to fully involve all the children from the onset with adults drawing upon their experience and responding to needs as they arise, whilst trying not to make unnecessary presumptions about what these might be. That is not to say that children would not need individual support, but rather that this would be identified as the project evolved and provided through the support of the groups as well as adults present; in short, children would not be isolated and expectations would be high for all regardless of academic or other ability.

However, problems arose at the beginning of the group work, when the children were able to choose who they worked with, because they tended to move almost automatically in to the ability groups that they usually worked in. Whether or not children are more likely to form friendships with children of similar ability, or they make friends within these groups because they are consistently limited to interacting with them, falls outside the scope of this work; however, it was clear that some children moved in to very able groups and two children with the most obvious SEN, were isolated because the teaching assistant (TA) encouraged them (against their wishes at some points) to sit together with her. Later, when groups joined together to consider their interview findings, this caused some conflict, and there was a marked lack of collaboration between the children. A turning point arose when the teacher asked for the TA to be assigned to another class during the mini-conference. The children were able to join the others, moving more freely and both were able to choose groups where they felt comfortable to join in. A child who presented with more serious communication

difficulties surprised the teacher at this point by taking part in the presentation and some of the focus group dialogue, which was a huge step. Whilst the project could more adequately have met his needs, it did reveal aspects of the process, particularly group work that could be managed more effectively to encourage participation suggesting that some facilitator planning for this is appropriate.

The 6 weeks of workshops resulted in a range of data as the children had opportunities to build skills that would enable them to take part in the mini-conference. Some activities were initiated by children; for example sharing interview questions with other groups and using the photocopier to do this. The children's input and planning was more limited than hoped because of the time taken for them to begin to use their own agency. At the first session the children referred to the researcher as "Miss" and clearly expected to receive and follow instructions to work at their desks. They were less comfortable with requests to discuss ideas with the person next to them or physically get up and move to talk to someone else. It was only late in the second session where questions such as "Can we...?" started to emerge and well in to the fourth session where children began to take some initiative.

The interviews with adults were planned as a means to introduce the intergenerational work and develop the children's agency through opportunity to conduct some of their own inquiry. Teaching preparation included the researcher sharing her own school story with the children to help them envisage what they might be able to gain from the adults, before they created their interview schedules in small groups of two or three. Teaching about open and closed questions was also included as well as how to use recording equipment and the *Audacity* computer application which is available free to schools. Following the interviews, the next workshop enabled children to consider what they had found out and decide how they would share this with the rest of the group including the adults at a mini-conference. The Class was able to identify several ways of doing this and chose to present using *PowerPoint* presentations or posters to convey what they had to say. One group chose to make a podcast and play this.

The intergenerational mini-conference itself was designed to enable increasingly equitable spaces through which the children and adults could consider the purpose of schools whilst simultaneously participating in the study. This culminated in intergenerational focus groups where each group discussed and drew their versions of what schools should be on flipchart paper. Whilst these topics had initially been

introduced by the researcher, they were relevant to the children and adults as they all had experience of schooling and could engage in the activities through reference to their own lives. The intergenerational work was also a motivator (as suggested in the findings). The children and adults were given evaluation sheets to complete at the end of the mini-conference. Whilst the original plan was to do this separately with the children afterwards, a decision was taken on the day to enable the children to think about their experience whilst it was still relevant to them. The children and adults helped each other to complete the forms and this generated more discussion.

6.4 Brief Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Phase 1

The data generated includes questionnaire results (open and closed responses), observation notes, the children's interview questions and recordings, the children's presentations using varied formats (posters, podcasts, power-point), post-it comments, video and audio recordings of the mini-conference and A1 drawings in response to the questions posed in the intergenerational activities. These images were later recorded digitally and assigned identity codes with accompanying text documents that include the words and descriptions. *Microsoft Excel* was used to record the responses to the questionnaires.

Two stages of thematic analysis were applied to the data using MAX-QDA to assist this process. Codes from the first stage were used to establish questions to help analyse the video and sound recordings.

The final stage of Phase 1 analysis was to re-group the data into themes or 'pattern codes' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) that help the researcher to "...elaborate a cognitive map, an evolving, more integrated schema for understanding local incidents and interactions" (ibid, p.69). This also organised the data to be more manageable, focused and accessible to a range of audiences. Two data sets were created that represent views and attitudes about: *Children's Participation* and *Education through schools* (see tables 6b and 6c).

Table 6-b Themes about Children's Participation

Code	Included	Examples (for and against participation)
Understanding	<i>Understand, difference, points of view, reactions, insight, know, ?, don't know, passing on knowledge, different perspectives, different opinions, experience</i>	<p><i>"Their input may give insight to the decision makers".</i></p> <p><i>"Because kids know what they need to learn and what they don't."</i></p>
Interactions	<i>Being with, socialising, discuss, develop relationships, behaviour, wisdom, share experience, learn from</i>	<p><i>"Because they can make school a lot more better and can help people with situations."</i></p> <p><i>"Because people could argue or not like the plans."</i></p>
Well-being	<i>Enjoyment, support, help, balance, well-rounded</i>	<p><i>"Yes a happy child will learn a lot more."</i></p> <p><i>"So we can plan and enjoy our lessons because we helped."</i></p>
Equity	<i>Justice, Fairness, meetings all children's needs, bridging gaps, helping</i>	<p><i>"A school is important for all children. Obviously teachers should be able to ensure this happens. However children should also be able to ensure their individual needs are met – creative needs, local support, extra, etc."</i></p> <p><i>"Because school is not fair and there should be a bit more justice in school!"</i></p>
Involvement	<i>Share, give, speak, listen, involve, have a say, bridge, citizenship, question, make decisions, practical skills needed to take part, discrimination, exclusion.</i>	<p><i>"They are listened to and treated as members of the school community".</i></p> <p><i>"By saying".</i></p>

Ownership	<i>Reflecting, considering (e.g. opinions of others), possibilities, future, change view</i>	<i>“Because it is their education.” “Yes because we are the one learning it and we should be allowed to choose what we want to learn.”</i>
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Table 6-c Themes about Education through Schools

Code	Included
Future Aspirations	<i>Successful, becomings, talent, jobs, economy, education, all round education, knowledge for the future, university, YOLO</i>
Citizenship	<i>Antidisestablishmentarianism, respectful (when about behaviour), respecting others, taught respect, head boy/girl, positions of responsibility, assemblies, discipline, boundaries, jobs at school, acceptable behaviour.</i>
Life Skills	<i>Literacy skills, numeric skills, wisdom, individual, prepared, disciplined, skills, improvisation, taking care of yourself, determined, different experiences, being more independent, fast brain and thinking, confidence</i>
Knowledge	<i>Subjects, subject skills such as musical, homework, school trips, exams, know/learnt a lot, learning, learning new things, times tables, maths, science, languages</i>
Social Skills	<i>Share, manners, social life, helpful, patience, communication, sport(referring to team games, playing with others), unselfish, listening skills, polite</i>
Relationships: Recognition and Wellbeing	<i>Love, friends, friendships, loyal, respect, put others first, mix with people of different backgrounds, socialise, being valued, nurtured, needs met, individual needs, safety, security, respect (when about being recognised), stability, facilities (including space to play), premises, being looked after, cared for, after school clubs, growing up, able to get up, reaching your potential, doing your best, being entertained,</i>
Values	<i>Beliefs, love one another, kind, tolerance, equality (we are all equal), respect for difference</i>

The first set of codes about participation describe the themes that children and adults used to express how children *are involved* in school transformation, *how* and *why* they could be and whether they think they actually *should* be. The second set of codes describes the themes that children and adults used to express their views about education and schools, what they perceive this to be or would like it to be and what is important to them.

The findings are described in the next chapter. The range of data enabled views and attitudes to be considered, that represent temporal shifts in emphasis, when framing these through *individual-personal*, *individual-social*, *participant-personal* or *participant-social* responses. This enabled the researcher to identify what sort of knowledge and experience was being used, when participants expressed past, present or future views and understandings, and the influence this might have on interactions in the classroom. The thesis proposes that temporal frames of reference are an important dynamic influence on interactions and relationships, which in turn act to form the system; this may aid understanding of the knowledge and power created through systems, challenging simplistic notions of participation and revealing instead the complexity of the system itself and its relationships.

7 PHASE 1 FINDINGS

7.1 Introduction to the Analysis

Thematic analysis (see Chapter 6) shows that both adults' and children's views about children's participation and schools are all about relationships. The values and attitudes that underpin these result in issues of power and thus have positive or negative effects on relationships. However, as discussed in previous chapters, it is not enough to simply remove or level power to enable more positive relationships and experiences. Instead values and attitudes, expressed at both the personal and social level, must be addressed; these, together with temporal and locational contexts, form the frames of reference that adults and children use to shape spaces through which their relationships develop. Understanding, well-being, equity, involvement and ownership are developed through interactions and are thus interconnected, but how each is experienced and shapes the subjective will ultimately affect individuals' world views. This reveals the complexity of systems and inadequacy of processes that ignore or do not recognise these relational components. This recognition (or lack of recognition) occurs at all levels, as individuals and groups seek cooperation either through solidarity with others or by using power over others, which may conflict with human rights.

Relationships appear to be excluded from data collection about social systems because they are difficult to measure or represent. They are subjective but it is through intersubjectivity that views may be shaped and expressed to reveal useful knowledge about how systems work and importantly where change may occur. Connections between spaces through which people interact, and the frames of reference that shape these, may provide clues about the complex connections that occur and relationships that enable change. Thus this analysis attempts to demonstrate how views and attitudes may shift depending on the space through which they are constructed and how children and adults may form positive spaces through which to do this. These subtle changes are not about choosing the most popular view or exchanging one person's view for another, but instead learning to work together more equitably so that they can recognise and evaluate what they know or come to know and where this comes from, considering different perspectives in order to work out what is important for the group. If Education is about growth, as discussed in previous chapters, then processes must address the relationships that enable such growth.

The themes and examples of data that generated these are shown in Tables 6b and 6c in Chapter 6. In this form they reveal little of their interconnectedness. A more useful way of visualising this, providing some indication of the subtle shifts that occur in emphasis for each theme, was developed using a digital online application *Wordle.net* that reproduces text that is sized in relation to how much it is emphasised. This technique is used extensively in social research to illustrate words are themes that occur most. However, in this case it is used to show how each theme is emphasised across data sets. To do this the data was allocated to temporal and spatial contexts (the *data sets*), examples of each theme (*pattern code*) were identified using MAXQDA and Microsoft EXCEL then the percentage of examples relating to each theme within each data set was calculated. Where examples correspond with more than one pattern code they were included in each. Where there was ambiguity, the context was considered carefully and a best fit approach used. This process was carried out for the two main strands of this phase:

- ***Children's Participation*** - Views and attitudes about children's participation in schools, what happens in the class room and how these shift as children's agency is enabled through intergenerational work.
- ***Education through Schools*** - What are schools for? Views and attitudes about schools, education and their main purpose and how these may shift through the intergenerational participatory process.

Table 7-a Strand 1 Pattern Codes

Strand 1 (Data Set 4)		
Pattern Code		% share
Interactions	0.26	26
Well-being	0.17	17
Equity	0.19	19
Ownership	0.21	21
Understanding	0.04	4
Involvement	0.13	13

For each data set within the two strands, a table containing the associated % share calculation was made and submitted to the *Wordle.net* application to produce the visual examples. For example, children's views about participation in schools - given during a workshop activity – generated the pattern code data shown in Table 7-a, above.

Where several samples of data were analysed as part of a set (for example, seven drawn images showing views about what schools should be like, produced during the intergenerational mini-conference) each sample was analysed separately and a percentage share allocated for each pattern code as above. These were then combined to produce a representative set. This reduced the chance that a particular sample would skew the results; for example one group's drawing contained many more words than other groups and their dominant multiple examples of *knowledge* would have resulted in the whole set being dominated by this theme if instances of recurring themes were simply counted up.

It should be noted at this point that the interpretation of data to numeric form does not indicate any bias toward such measure as a way of indicating results. This study is qualitative as it sets out to show and understand relationships in the social system of schooling, not just because they are impossible to measure but because the over-reduction that takes place when measurement alone is used to indicate validity of argument reduces chances to understand the interconnectedness of such systems. The use of measure here is to enable visualisation of the shifts that occur in views and attitudes through such interconnectedness. Data indicating, for example, that some people think *ownership* is an important aspect of participation, does not in itself tell us anything new or useful for developing practice. However, how this is emphasised varies in different spaces and temporal contexts, indicating which spaces are more supportive of positive change.

7.2 Adults Views and Attitudes to Children's Participation in Schools

Detailed analysis of the adults' views and attitudes to children's participation considered two data sets: Past views as suggested by the responses in the questionnaires, and newly constructed collective views, as suggested by their responses to the evaluation following the Intergenerational mini-conference. All responses were associated with the six themes described previously (Table 6b).

7.2.1 Findings about Views and Attitudes to Children's Participation

From the results of the questions about children's participation on the questionnaire, whilst over half (61%) the adult participants thought children already had some influence over what happens in schools (mainly through interactions with teachers where they are listened to or allowed to speak) fewer than half (43%) thought that children should be involved in deciding what schools are actually for although more (64%) thought that they should be involved in deciding what goes on in schools. Reasons given were assumptions about lack of experience and capacity. One adult suggested that children have no autonomy whatsoever because they are children; others suggested they are dependent on adults and thus their views are shaped by adults:

“Children are always influenced by adults directly or indirectly. It can be parents, teachers, TV presenters, Actors etc.”

Several different questions were asked about children's participation to ensure that variation in interpretation was considered (see Adults Questionnaire, Appendix 1). These produced inconsistent responses that may indicate that adults were distinguishing between examples through their attitudes to children and childhood rather than adopting a coherent standpoint about participation, per se. For example one respondent indicated that 'children's wisdom can be very profound' and they do influence what happens in school but should not be involved in deciding what schools are for or what goes on in school until secondary school age and should not be involved at all in deciding the school ethos or planning for the future.

Responses were invariably given about children in relation to adults. For example:

“Not as much as their parents. Children don't always have the confidence to speak out or they can't easily communicate their feelings.”

“Their input may give insight to the decision makers”

Children were regarded as future adults with developing capacities and experience linked to age. Arbitrary age groups were given to indicate when children might be able to participate or have limited participation, for example, 'older children years 5+6', 'at senior level', 'not in primary school', 'too young' or 'when they are 13-16y'. Some of this was also framed within ideas of vulnerability and protectionism:

“They are not experienced enough to make decisions and should not be placed under that pressure”

The majority of comments were about *equity* which included negative inequities and discrimination against children in relation to adults. Even where participation was partially acknowledged, most associated adult maturity with decision-making and children’s views as an additional source of help for adults, rather than children as autonomous decision makers in their own right:

“Children means they are sub standard to take decisions as they are not matured (<14) enough. But in certain instances it can be important to get their view as well to modify things in school.”

Only one comment suggested that involvement in deciding what schools are for should ‘take into consideration children’s needs.’ One response that answered ‘no’ to all questions about children’s participation suggested that ‘Adults are aware of children’s needs and objectives.’

Interactions also featured in the adults’ comments. Most of these suggested that school councils enable children to influence what happens at school. Others suggested influence is limited by the curriculum and choices of extra-curricular activity. The themes *involvement*, *well-being*, *understanding* and *ownership* all featured in less than 10% of the responses.



7-a Adults Views about Children's Participation

Clearly, adults’ views about children’s participation in transforming schools were very mixed but dominated by an assumption that inequity and discrimination toward children are acceptable along with the interactions that maintain adult power. There was no indication that the adults who took part had any knowledge or understanding of

children's rights or that they considered children capable of participation in the sense forwarded by this thesis (see Chapter 3). However, one respondent who thought children should be involved stated:

“It is their education” and “I think a child grows from being valued and having an input into their school life is very important.”

This small sample cannot be used to generalise adults' views and attitudes about children's participation across the UK but is consistent with the tensions discussed in the literature review. Moreover, they provide insight into the themes that seem to dominate participants' frames of reference and inevitably influence how spaces are shaped in schools. They also provide a valuable starting point for investigating how and when these can change.

7.2.2 What Evidence is there of Tension between Adult-Child Relations?

Adults' views about children's participation appear very mixed from the small sample in this study. However, they do not indicate that they believe children have no role to play but instead varying interpretations of what this role should be. They were not asked directly about adult – child relationships as part of the survey but the responses were overwhelmingly about relationships, across the many question contexts.

Adults were asked about their own experiences of school in order to understand the frames of reference that influence their views. Over half thought that their schooling was extremely important in developing respect for others; the rest but four indicated that it was somewhat important. When asked about their good and bad memories of school, most answers were about friendships or other relationships such as through a school team or favourite teacher. Responses were mainly about *interactions* and *wellbeing*, such as 'having fun', 'feeling safe' and 'being happy'. These also dominated the more negative experiences with many referring to bullying, corporal punishment, lack of teachers' understanding and severity. Despite this, 11 respondents described how they did things they were not supposed to during school, suggesting agency in at least some of their decision making, for example:

“I missed school with some friends and went to town to see the queen. I got away with it but still feel guilty”.

“Took a day off. I was in the senior school and my mum wasn't very well. My sister and I went to the pleasure beach for the day. We were only found out as a friend saw me going to school and wondered why I hadn't arrived there!”

“When the welfare staff went on strike the pupils went on strike too and locked themselves in a classroom as we were not allowed out at lunchtime. It was very stupid as we did not understand the issues at that time.”

“I did cross country out of the school grounds but never actually did the whole circuit. There were five girls who went to one of the girls houses and we sat down with fizzy drinks and chocolate. We were never caught!!”

“Quite often but the worst was being caught smoking. The punishment was quite severe. Beaten with a cane (six of the best).”

The dominant *interactions* theme continued through responses to the questions about the *Purpose of Education* and *Purpose of Schools*. Every respondent listed social skills including communication, being social, understanding others, how to act with others, respect, belonging building a community and being free from bullying.

Only three adult respondents to the questionnaire excluded children from those who should be involved in planning the future of the school and only three (two different participants) excluded them from having a role in shaping the ethos and mission statement of the school. However, none listed children as currently having the most influence over ethos or direction of the school; this was perceived by most to be the headteacher, followed by governors. The sample suggests that relationships and interactions are an extremely important aspect of education and schooling and that this dominates views expressed whether given in past, present or future contexts. This is in sharp contrast to discourse and policy about education and school improvement that limit children's participation.

The number of questionnaires returned by parents or relatives of the year 6 class taking part was very high; in contrast returns by teachers and staff in the school was very low, with only the two staff who took part in the class room workshops and one other volunteer taking part, even though the questionnaires were available to complete anonymously in the staffroom and given to school governors. This was only one school and cannot be considered representative of the thousands of others in England. However it does raise questions about state employees' reluctance to take part in a study about

children's participation in schools and their attitudes to transforming the system, given that children's rights in terms of the UNCRC (1989) have started to be incorporated in law and policy affecting children and those who work with them (see Chapter 3). There are clearly tensions between their frames of reference, children's rights in schools and implementation of relevant policy in schools.

7.2.3 What Evidence is there that Adults found Children's Participation a Worthwhile and Positive Experience?

Adults' views on participation, following their participation in the intergenerational work, remained within the six themes, but emphasis on these shifted, as did the extent to which these were positive or negative. All but two responses to the evaluation of the mini-conference were positive. One was a practical aspect that could improve *involvement*: 'lack of sound system.' The second was about *well-being* 'children's lives revolving around video games.' Yet these also demonstrate a motivation to want to change things and tackle problems that was not evident from the questionnaire results. The support for intergenerational work was overwhelmingly positive; only one indicated that it 'may be' a good thing.

The dominant theme was *understanding* - of the children, their lives, and their perspectives on each other. Comments included:

"It brings a different perspective to the learning."

"Understanding year 6s different perspective on life."

"I enjoyed all the mixed opinions regarding education and schooling."

These were followed by comments about *well-being* and *involvement*. Whether the adults developed enough motivation to want to take ownership and bring about change as a result of this project is debatable, but the fact that they did take part and were extremely positive is very promising for future work. Moreover their comments, like the children's (see next section), began to show a concern with future and present experiences and not just those of the past; thus by exploring knowledge together, children and adults were able to construct views bound temporally by past, present and future frames of reference.



7-b Adults' Views Following the Intergenerational Work

Many comments were about understanding the differences between the adults' and children's experiences of school and how this informed all age groups:

“Schooling has changed so much since I was at school and it's not all about education.”

“Changes over the years. Different generations with different opinions.”

Interactions appear less often. However, *understanding* could not have occurred without the children and adults developing relationships through interactions that enabled them to both express and consider the sort of information that they needed to process in order to construct knowledge that leads to understanding; because *interactions* themselves were not explicitly mentioned is not evidence that they are unimportant but rather they were occurring in ways that no longer distracted from the purpose they served during the mini-conference, which was to be able to work together and share and construct knowledge. This is useful as it indicates that genuine shared purpose can challenge power issues that usually occur in intergenerational relationships.

Similarly, *equity* did not really feature in the comments, even though over time interactions were more equitable. The evaluations provided are about the more explicit outcomes of the intergenerational work rather than how these occurred. However, the change in emphasis suggests changes in relationships were an important aspect of the process which is then developed in Phase 2. What is most significant is that during the process, the adults' views on participation – concerned predominantly with negative issues relating to *equity*, *interactions* and *involvement* at the start of the study – give way to more positive views where these have less focus.

7.2.4 What Changed?

The value of establishing processes that enable intergenerational participation in schools is evident from this first phase of the study. It clearly suggests how such work may provide a catalyst that enables adults to think differently about children's participation, and how adults can work with them toward transforming schools, with very little difficulty, when motivated to do so. By challenging individual frames of reference through new experiences and providing time for dialogue, it is possible to construct understandings of participation and the relationships necessary for this to take place.

The introduction of adults from the community to the process enabled children to develop their agency and take part in intergenerational focus groups, without the adults dominating or leading discussion. Their interviews started this process by enabling the adults to consider themselves as resources for the children's education (rather than having superior responsibility for it). Children revealed themselves as competent actors as they conducted the interviews with a mind to respectful interviewer – interviewee relationship. This respectful relationship continued through the mini-conference where the children demonstrated competence in their own learning and presentation of this learning, as well as how they valued the relationship with adults as a superb resource for education.

The views expressed by adults, through the questionnaires, showed that they were mostly negatively concerned with *equity* and *interactions*. It is significant that the adults who took part in the school activities were positive about developing these areas as well as delighted by the children's response:

“Helps to develop children/adult relationships.”

“The interview - the reactions from the children when they heard about the differences. Especially when I said I had to walk 45 minutes to high school.”

Whilst adults concerns about removing barriers to children's agency in schools are usually perceived to be about their potential loss of power through more equitable and appropriate interactions, such concerns are not expressed once adults have taken part in participatory intergenerational activities. This suggests that tensions may be due to misunderstandings about children's participation, what it actually entails, and adults' own insecurities; dominant attitudes to children and childhood serve to mask and

reinforce these, rather than explain lack of change. The marked shift, from concern to emphasis on better understanding, suggests this is a crucial aspect of the process (investigated further in Phase 2).

Interestingly, emphasis on the theme *involvement* remained stable for both sets of data. Whilst concerns were expressed about children's involvement through the questionnaires, mainly as a matter of age related competence, no such issues were raised about the school activities indicating that this is not a view based on the adults' own experience of children. Instead, the views expressed following the mini-conference acknowledged their competency:

"The great involvement of the children."

"They can give their ideas."

"Listening to pupils views."

7.3 Children's Views and Attitudes to Participation in Schools

7.3.1 Findings about Children's Views and Attitudes to Participation

The children's views about participation were gathered through the questionnaire and a voting activity at the first workshop. Whilst participation was not specifically asked about on the questionnaire, just over a third of the children did not like, or were unsure whether they liked, school and would like to change aspects of it, which suggests there is motivation to be more involved. Spending time with and meeting new friends was the most popular thing that children liked about school; only five made no direct mention of friends, with three of these mentioning playtimes and parties. Negative comments about interactions included:

"When teachers shout."

"Rude dinner ladies."

"People bullying others."

The children were asked who they thought made decisions about what happens in schools. Most suggested the government whereas five indicated the headteacher or governors. Only two indicated that they believed children and parents had an input.

The main data collected about children’s perspectives on participation were from the voting activity in school. These illustrated their present views and the themes that influence those views. 16 children believed that they should have a say in what goes on in schools whereas eight children did not. Their reasons all fell within the six themes and their distribution is indicated by the following image:



7-c Children's Views about Participation

The most emphasis was on *interactions* with others, followed by *ownership* of what they do in school. These were closely followed by *equity* and *wellbeing*. Most comments were about the (un)fairness of decisions being taken by adults and dominant paternal structures:

“Yes because we are the ones who go to school and have to do these things so we should have a say in what we do.”

“We need a say in it and teacher(s) kind of rule the world...”

“Because if the teacher chooses it’s not fair because you might not like it but if you choose it will be fair.”

One also recognised that everyone having a choice could lead to further inequities in the class:

“Because not everyone would get to learn about what they wanted because they would all want differently and we might not learn about what we need to.”

Children were concerned about interactions particularly poor behaviour and how this might affect the class:

“Because people could argue or not like the plans.”

They were also positive about their capacities to interact and take some ownership of their work as well as the role the teacher might take to support this:

“I think we should because then if we have ideas on what we want to learn about we can learn them. As long as it isn’t silly.”

“Because if you make a great plan for the school you may gain experience for important future decisions. Even if you make a silly plan the teachers will help you improve it.”

Questions were also raised about responsibility and competence, with two children indicating that it was teachers’ responsibility to plan what happens in class.

During a class discussion before the voting activity, it was obvious when the concept of participation was introduced that the children had no idea what it meant, had little awareness of children’s rights and no idea that participation constituted part of these rights. In terms of current involvement in decision making, the class were able to offer examples of how they may be included in school council but were unsure about how they might take part in deciding what happens in their everyday classroom activities. When the children were then given opportunity to consider participation during the voting activity, their views reflected the broader spectrum of ideas described earlier in this section. The children appeared to enjoy the voting activity in that it provided opportunity to express a view less publicly than, for example, by raising their hands and this may also be why a wider range of views were expressed at this point. It is unlikely though that the children would have been able to complete the voting activity as considerately as they did without the chance for discussion first. This suggests that staged activities are important for raising awareness and understanding of issues in order for children to be able to participate and express a view.

7.3.2 What Evidence is There That Children Found Intergenerational Participation a Worthwhile and Positive Experience?

All the children enjoyed taking part in the research activities and suggested that intergenerational participatory work is a good thing to take part in. Reasons given were mainly about *understanding* and *interactions* (the relationships developed) and included:

“It helps you interact better.”

“Because we see both sides of the story.”

“They help us if we struggle.”

“Because they have great ideas and have a lot of fun with them.”

Intergenerational understanding was developed by sharing experiences of school and how it had changed, through the interviews and dialogue.



7-d Children's Views following the Intergenerational Work

Both adults and children indicated that they liked being able to share their experiences and wisdom. Unfairness, expressed through lack of *ownership* and *equity*, were no longer significant. Instead comments relating to *equity* were this time very positive and about adults working with the children and helping them. The children also recognised that the process enabled adults to be more involved in schools. The few examples about *ownership* of their activities - what they planned and did - were about the children taking ownership of their own experiences compared to adults; thus many were value judgements: ‘Because it shows how grateful we should be.’ The children were asked specifically about intergenerational participation and not the outcomes of the process, which may be significant because it is more difficult to express ownership of a process than a material outcome.

The children were asked what they enjoyed about the workshops and most mentioned particular activities such as: ‘Doing the Interviews,’ ‘making a poster’ or ‘Drawing’. The same activities were also given as those that some children did not enjoy but this was about their perceived capacities to contribute, for example, ‘Drawing because I’m really bad at drawing.’ Thus, individual preferences and styles of working feature very much in determining enjoyment of participatory processes but not whether the children thought it was worthwhile, which was connected to *understanding* through good interactions enabled by the activities. This is important for future research as enjoyment

of activities is often used as an indicator of successful participation masking the significance of the intersubjective processes also taking place. Whilst *interactions* and *understanding* occurred through group work, this was neither mentioned as a factor for enjoyment or lack of enjoyment, so did not temper the children's participation.

7.3.3 What Changed?



7-e Comparison of Children's Views about Participation

As per the adults' results, whilst the same themes appeared in children's beliefs about participation at the beginning and end of the study, how these were emphasised and how positive or negatively they were expressed changed across the six weeks. Whilst *interactions* were significant across the study for children, these shifted from mainly negative to all positive by the time of the evaluation. Concerns expressed in the voting activity about the likelihood of poor interactions (such as arguing or children choosing to do whatever they please) appear to have been alleviated through the activities. Interestingly, there were some instances of anti-social behaviour from two boys who can be heard repeatedly saying 'YOLO' in the recordings and added this to their images about schools in the mini-conference. This irritated some of the other children who asked them to stop but such behaviour does not appear to have had any significant impact on the process or the children's (or adults) views about intergenerational participation.

Views and ideas expressed through the questionnaire and voting activity about children's participation could be considered their frames of reference as they came into the research. These had evolved as a result of past experience (or lack of it) and knowledge. The design of the empirical study meant that the children were introduced to relatively new ways of acting and being treated in schools (for example, opportunities to express a view, choice of activities, free movement around the classroom and other

rooms). One might expect that their existing frames of reference could impede them from taking part in activities that move toward a participatory model. However, this did not appear to be the case. The research was purposely designed to shift activities from traditional teacher (authority) led orientation - imparting knowledge and instructing children what to do - to one where children are considered capable of instigating their own methods for tackling problems and investigating or creating new knowledge through this. Adults, who may themselves have relevant experience, provide an important resource for the children when needed.

As a researcher with teaching experience trying to facilitate this in school, it should not have been a surprise that children expected to be 'taught' at the first workshop. Yet, even with a great deal of preparation it is difficult to avoid an authoritarian teacher type role when faced with three rows of children sat neatly behind desks. The literature fails to acknowledge that children, as well as adults, have very clear expectations about what they think adults in a classroom are there to do, particularly when such an adult stands in place of the usual teacher. It was clear in this situation, particularly at the start of the session, which included registration, that the children expected instruction and very little else. Good intentions of approaching the sessions in the way one might expect of a youth worker (first names, informally arranged environment, etc) are out of place in such a controlled environment, yet no matter how daunting the experience, they are a necessary aspect of the transition from a more traditional classroom structure to one which enables participation. The children referred to me as 'Mrs Crook' throughout the workshops. It was only after meeting the adult interviewees and asking within their groups what they should call them, they were happy to adopt first names at the mini-conference suggesting a different relationship with the adult volunteers that is discussed in Chapters 9-12.

The most significant change across the six week's workshops was how children's agency developed through opportunities to self-determine some of their activities and organise these. During the first workshop discussions about 'Me and my community' children were encouraged to think about their connections and relationships with others, using circles to indicate the communities (or groups) they belonged to. They all placed these together and recognised how they were also interconnected through their various relationships and communities and where they lived. Through this they could consider

where they enjoy most participation and make decisions. They identified family and close friends as the main ‘communities’ where they could do this.



7-f Exploring Community and Relationships

Identifying themselves as agents in their own lives was the first step to understanding participation. However this did not mean that they could apply this to a school setting where relationships are very different. Many children did not include school as one of their communities. Clearly they needed time to enable them to engage in new processes.

Children expressed some concern about lack of *ownership* of schooling at the beginning of Phase 1 but this was less significant following the workshops. They were similarly concerned about the sorts of negative interactions that might occur if children’s participation is enabled. The adults did not appear to link ownership with these concepts in the same way and perceived that lack of experience and capacity prevented children from participating even though their comments revealed underlying power issues and discrimination.

The interviews with the adults were very important in encouraging agency as the children had to think not just about how they might answer the question (What differences are there between their schooling and the adults?) but the process of investigating this and how to communicate effectively with the adults when they visited the class. They were highly motivated by the forthcoming visits. They all thought of questions they would like to ask, and then shared these in their groups and across groups. This moved on considerably from the voting activity, which was conducted in a very ordered, typical classroom environment, and although providing the opportunity for children to directly consider their participation in transforming schools, was limited by their lack of experience of doing so.

As the children began to develop their questions for the interviews, they were quite dependent upon the researcher for instruction on what to do and, for example, how to use the technology available. However, the clear enjoyment they gained from this soon encouraged their small group ownership of the task, which in itself paved the way for the groups to make their own decisions about how they would conduct their interviews and present their findings. At this point the context started to shift quite dramatically, from researcher and teacher led, to adults as facilitators or even supporters or co-workers. Once decisions were taken about how to proceed, questions such as “Can I..?” or “Am I allowed..?” were replaced by a busy environment with children taking the initiative to generate spaces in which they could work (in or out of their classroom).

Before the interviews, noise levels began to rise as children negotiated their tasks and tried to agree how to proceed. Such negotiations and the issues of power that arise were even more noticeable when the groups began to work on their responses to the interviews ready to present at the mini-conference. Some opted for *PowerPoint* presentations but argued about who should use the computer. They lacked the skills to plan and negotiate individual tasks, which is an important feature of Phase 2.

This sort of group work also highlighted inclusion issues that began to arise when two children with SEN were discriminated against by other children and also the TA who was supposed to support their needs. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 11. It was intended that they would work with other children in mixed ability groups (see Chapter 6). However the TA repeatedly constrained this process by isolating these two children until the teacher asked her to be placed in a different class.

The introduction of intergenerational work appears to have acted as a catalyst for developing participation for several reasons. Their involvement helped shift the context in which participation and education through schooling were considered, both in terms of the physical space and the frames of reference which inform knowledge. The adults' presence (and anticipated presence) shifted the teacher's focus to social skills and process rather than outcomes only, by ensuring the children considered what behaviour would be appropriate when receiving guests, how they might make sure they used the experience to learn and how they could take responsibility for both of these. As the children began to do this by creating interview scripts and practicing with recording equipment, the researcher's and teacher's roles began to change to that of support, encouragement and scaffolding as they helped the children to discuss and develop their

ideas. As the children's agency increased, the teacher also seemed more able to let them use the classroom environment in ways that they thought were appropriate and she eventually allowed them the freedom of using the hall, classroom and corridor as needed to do the interviews and prepare for the mini-conference, which was unusual. The teacher was obviously confident enough to do this and unworried about potential challenges from other staff who observed with some puzzlement particularly when the mini-conference was underway.



7-g Interviewing the Adults

In turn, by inviting adults into the unfamiliar environment of the working modern school and what is effectively the children's space, this provided an opportunity for them to learn and develop their own ideas, and appeared to forestall any imbalance of power because they were clear that they were there as resources to support the children with their projects and then to enter into dialogue with them about what schools are for. Whilst some of the children were quite shy about interviewing the adults, their preparation helped them through this and so did the knowledge that it was an equally daunting experience for the adults who participated too. Adults at the mini-conference openly shared their own worries about public speaking, normalising the children's own reactions. Once the children began to take control of their activities they were able to ensure the spaces created were welcoming and fun without worrying about getting outcomes 'right' or doing their interviews in a particular way. The experience helped shape the mini-conference as the children were very eager to meet the adults again and share with them what they had found out through their comparisons of schooling present and past.

The intergenerational work enabled the children and adults to learn from each other and develop understanding of the generations as well as the topic. The children also recognised adults as supportive and scaffolding their education: "*they help us if we struggle*", as useful resources: "*Can learn new things*", and as teachers: "*cause they*

taught us so much.” The experience also enabled them to think about the deeper meaning of such work:

“because it shows how grateful we should be”

“so we can learn how lucky we are today”

“because we saw both sides of school.”

The views expressed at the beginning of the study were individualistic and even when provided in a social setting such as the children’s voting activity, were negatively concerned with relational issues of *equity*, *interactions* and *ownership*. There was also some limited concern about *wellbeing* that disappeared by the end of the study. Views were much more positive about *interactions* at the end of the study where individual views were expressed in a social context. The intergenerational views about what children and adults would like schools to provide were created in groups which were able to function successfully because of the work that had taken place across the study. This suggests that intergenerational social experience, not just skills, is important in developing children’s participation. Transformation may be possible where individual views are positively influenced by views formed as a participant. Good relationships enabled all individuals agency and thus the means to contribute and construct new meaning with others.

The children’s original concerns about competency to participate were practical in that they recognised the difficulties and power issues that can occur through such interaction. The idea that this is something that school could help them to do better, through the development of positive social skills such as agency, was new to them. However, the knowledge constructed about schooling, described in the next section, contradicts this and suggests that children and adults believe that the skills and experience necessary for participation should be a major part of education in schools. The real problem appears to be lack of understanding of what children’s participation is and what it means for schools which will be developed through Phase 2 and should be considered when disseminating the thesis.

7.4 What are Schools For?

How children's participation is enabled or disabled in schools is entwined with attitudes to education and schooling, as well as prevailing notions of childhood. Thus this second strand set out to consider the question 'What are schools for?' as an issue through which to develop participation as well as a means to understand this complex relationship. Views about education and schooling were sought through the questionnaires, the children's inquiry and the intergenerational mini-conference. The range of data collected (Table 7b) indicates how this was considered from individual and social perspectives as well as the temporal basis for these. Thematic analysis was used and subsequent pattern codes using MAXQDA and *Microsoft Excel* to develop data sets representing these different contexts. These were then used to establish emphasis of themes across temporal contexts. Table 7c shows the pattern codes and what is included for each.

Table 7-b Perspectives on Education

	Children (Individual- personal)	Description	Adults (Individual- personal)	Description	Both (Individual-Social; Participant-Social)	Description
Past	Data source: Children's Questionnaire	What did they like about school, dislike or would like to change?	Data source: Adults' Questionnaire	Favourite memories, worst memories and things they did that they were not supposed to.		
Present (views before participatory activity)	Data source: Children's Questionnaire	What children think school is for, why they go to school, why they think adults want them to go to school	Data source: Adults' Questionnaire	What is the purpose of school? The purpose of Education?	Data source: Post-it Activity at the Mini-conference	What is education? (individual but sat in groups)
Future (views from participatory activity)					Data source: Mini- conference - Drawings group activity	What are schools for? What do we want young people to be like when they leave school?

Table 7-c Phase 1 Education and Schooling

Code	Included
Future Aspirations	Successful, becomings, talent, jobs, economy, education, all round education, knowledge for the future, university, YOLO
Citizenship	Antidisestablishmentarianism, respectful (when about behaviour), respecting others, taught respect, head boy/girl, positions of responsibility, assemblies, discipline, boundaries, jobs at school, acceptable behaviour.
Life Skills	Literacy skills, numeric skills, wisdom, individual, prepared, disciplined, skills, improvisation, taking care of yourself, determined, different experiences, being more independent, fast brain and thinking, confidence
Knowledge	Subjects, subject skills such as musical, homework, school trips, exams, know/learnt a lot, learning, learning new things, times tables, maths, science, languages
Social Skills	Share, manners, social life, helpful, patience, communication, sport(referring to team games, playing with others), unselfish, listening skills, polite
Relationships: Recognition and Wellbeing	Love, friends, friendships, loyal, respect, put others first, mix with people of different backgrounds, socialize, being valued, nurtured, needs met, individual needs, safety, security, respect (when about being recognised), stability, facilities (including space to play), premises, being looked after, cared for, after school clubs, growing up, able to get up, reaching your potential, doing your best, being entertained,
Values	Beliefs, love one another, kind, tolerance, equality (we are all equal), respect for difference

7.4.1 Temporal Frames of Reference

There was extensive deliberation about using themes at all as they are clearly interlinked. This was especially so for the *relationship* themes: *recognition and wellbeing*. Both descriptors were retained under the umbrella of *relationships* because the results suggest recognition is important to establish well-being (through love, rights

and solidarity, see Chapter 5). The views expressed on both the adults' and children's questionnaires were about past experiences of schooling.

There was very little difference in emphasis between the adults' and children's responses (and these reflected both positive and negative views). Both expressed *relationships* as by far the most important aspect of education. This includes whether they are recognised by others and make friends, as well as love, being nurtured and cared for. The second most emphasised theme was *knowledge* in terms of what children may learn through education. *Citizenship, values, social skills* and *life skills* were only occasionally mentioned although these may affect interactions for relationships to form and through which to develop knowledge. *Future aspirations* were hardly mentioned at all, as a purpose of education, suggesting that views were very much rooted in the day to day experiences in schools. Significantly, their views given at the start of the study (what they believe to be the purpose of education and purpose of schools) differ considerably to those produced later during the mini-conference. Clearly there are factors other than own school experience that influence these views. Frames of reference are shaped by many experiences, including the context and methods used and participatory methods appear to generate different responses.

There is a distinct contrast between adults' past views (from their own experiences of schools) and their present views (from the questionnaires and first activity at the mini-conference) about education and schools. *Relationships*, which were the main focus of their past views, are sidelined for other themes. Dominant are skills that can be taught – *social skills* and *life skills*. *Citizenship, values* and *future aspirations* appear with similar emphasis. It is possible that these indicate some influence by the media and politics and what is publicly broadcast about schools but these obviously do not draw upon the adults' experiences which were so different. Similarly children's past views, again dominated by *relationships*, are replaced with *future aspirations*. This may be because the questions invited them to think about the current situation, instead of past memories, yet *knowledge* remains almost constant within both. *Social skills* and *values* do not appear at all and *citizenship* remains only a tiny aspect.

The marked difference between views constituted through past and present frames of reference may be due to ideas of what children and adults believe is now expected of education, even if this is not necessarily the same as their experience. If this is the case, this may be evidence of the growing discrepancy between political views of education

(reinforced by media and publicly broadcast measurements) and people's experience and understanding. The adults describe an education dominated by skills or what is already known; yet this ignores the world that children have to live in now, especially the effects of new technology, threat of terrorism and instability. If schools are simply enabling this adult version of education, then questions need to be asked about how this may limit children in the future and whether their future aspirations will be enough to motivate them to challenge this.

Adults' and children's present views were also explored at the beginning of the mini-conference (through a post-it activity) so that these were given in a social rather than individual setting. What was produced was a simple combination of the views already expressed above, dominated by the children's views as there were more of them. Thus *future aspirations* and *knowledge* are emphasised the most, followed by *life skills*, *social skills* and *relationships*. *Citizenship*, however, increased in emphasis which may be because the participants were working together and considering participation, whilst *values* did not appear at all. This suggests that bringing people together to explore an issue and express their views may simply result in a limited collection of individual views that are used to 'represent' the group but actually only illustrate the range of views given. At this point there had been little opportunity for the participants to talk about or share their views in meaningful ways. The rest of the mini-conference was designed to encourage the focus groups to really consider each others' views and where these come from, starting with the children's presentations based on their interviews and analysis of differences and similarities between children's and adults' experiences. The idea was that this then enabled them to create shared visions of what school 'should' be like or in other words, future thinking perspectives (discussed further in Chapter 10).

This builds on distinct forms of group work that consider who benefits. For example, a group activity may be formulated to encourage children to solve a maths problem. If everyone works individually and then the group offers the most popular answer for the group, they may or may not solve the problem, and little will have been learned from each other. If however children are encouraged to work together using different approaches and dialogue to explain their thinking and then put forward the most clearly worked out answer for the group, much will have been learned about how to solve problems. Even if the response is considered to be 'incorrect' it is much easier for the group to understand why as they are all involved in the process of constructed

knowledge. The mini-conference was concerned with this approach and the findings show a significant difference in the views expressed as a cooperative group, taking a more equitable intergenerational approach, than those that are given as a set of combined individual views.

7.4.2 What Happened When Children and Adults Created a Shared Vision of What Schools Should Be For?

In their intergenerational groups at the mini-conference, children and adults were asked to consider two questions:

What are schools for?



Draw a school – surround it with ideas about what you think school should be for.



7-h Slides from mini-conference

For the first, they were asked to draw a school pupil and write or draw around it their responses to the question based on their discussions. For the second they were asked to draw their vision of a school and similarly use notes or pictures to show what would be important. All the ideas were transcribed by the researcher and thematic analysis applied as per other data. Emphasis of themes was established for each group. These were then combined to show the most important themes across the groups.

It is important to mention that the individual group results were also significant (see Chapter 11) because they indicate a link between children's ability groupings and

themes expressed, which may reflect expectations of them in the school. This informs Phase 2 where a greater emphasis was placed on forging mixed ability groups so that children could share different experiences, expectations and approaches.



7-i What should schools ‘gift’ to children?

There was some variation between the most dominant themes for the two questions. In terms of young people’s opportunities through school (what schools should ‘gift’ them) *future aspirations* and *relationships* were the most significant, followed closely by *social skills*. Not all groups associated these *future aspirations* with employment. Broader ideas of success such as “go to uni,” “get a degree,” “own your own house,” “get to the Olympics,” were mentioned in one group as well as “be a tennis player or F1 driver” in another. But across the other groups this was more varied, “get a good job,” “look forward,” “be good at...,” “dream job,” Many mentioned opportunity to develop character qualities that were personal and value based, such as “values,” “politeness,” “determined”, “good mannered,” “tolerant,” “patient,” “caring,” “kind,” “catholic,” and “eco-friendly.” Some of these were about relationships, such as “sticking up for each other” and “good team work.” Others were about wellbeing: “be happy,” “no worry,” “be healthy.” Clearly most of the participants did not consider high economic gain

through employment as the main opportunity or indicator of a successful school experience.

Relationships (recognition and wellbeing) included ‘safety’ and ‘security’, being ‘part of a happy community’, a ‘happy home’, ‘being healthy’ and ‘happy’, ‘food and water’, ‘low unemployment.’ ‘Love’ was mentioned by four groups and ‘friends’ or ‘friendship’ appeared on every group’s drawings except one where ‘being sociable,’ ‘loving’ and ‘caring’ were mentioned. *Knowledge* was hardly mentioned. *Life skills* had limited mention in most groups.



7-j What are schools for?

In the drawings representing the school, *relationships* dominated followed closely by *knowledge*, thus making a distinction between what the school should provide and how children benefit. Academic subjects themselves had limited mention: ‘maths’, ‘subjects’, ‘good history knowledge,’ ‘good science knowledge,’ ‘read and write.’ Instead the emphasis was more general: ‘education,’ ‘build up knowledge.’ One striking difference was from a group who would be considered high ability; they placed more emphasis on subjects than any other group. They also commented during the mini-conference that education is about ‘Development of knowledge for the future.’

The idea that the school should be a system that provides opportunity for education through which to build relationships and knowledge, so that children can grow through cooperative social skills and aspire to a good life where values, rich relationships and well-being are most important is compelling. It also raises questions about teachers, researchers and policy makers' capacities to establish such opportunity and contradicts school improvement trends, especially the GERM (Wrigley, 2015).

7.4.3 Temporal Perspectives and Differences between Individual and Co-Constructed Views

The extent to which *relationships* dominate views about what schools should be for, in both the co-constructed intergenerational views and the children's and adults' past perspectives, is significant as it contrasts so distinctly, not only from dominant political discourse but also views expressed by adults and children when asked about their present understandings of education. It may be that such present views are simply a reflection of current context or expectations. However, when adults and children have the opportunity, through time, process and sharing of knowledge and experience, to think about schooling more adequately and produce co-constructed views, these appear to represent a much deeper understanding of education and context. That these also relate to their past views (based on their subjective experiences of education and schooling) may indicate that such participation enables broader temporal evaluation of children's circumstances and childhood, that takes into account much more than would be the case if they were simply asked to provide individual views about schooling in the present with little time to reflect. Further to this, it may avoid participants responding to researcher's inquiries by expressing what they believe they are expected to say or even regurgitation of what has been heard through the media. The findings show that processes that provide opportunities to think and discuss and co-create ideas in safe spaces – created through equitable expectation and practice – encourage reasoned opinions that relate to past and present experience as well as respect for opinions of others. Significantly, the processes enabled adults and children to explore their views in different contexts and these enabled them to construct a future vision of school that re-engages their past views and challenges their present views. Thus, such participation is distinctive from consultation or other versions of pupil voice.

That future vision is dominated by *relationships (recognition and well-being)*. The sorts of relationships necessary to enable such participation to occur are those that embrace equity and mutual benefit. In this way, there is a symbiotic relationship between children's participation and education in its broadest sense, as described in this study. Such relationships may appear at odds with the current mainstream school system, but this phase of the study demonstrates without a doubt that there are children and adults whose ideas of education through schooling do not reflect those of dominant policy. Furthermore, through richer relationships it is possible to enable children's participation, in schools, that can also provide contexts through which transformation can occur.

Missing from this first phase of empirical research was the participation of governors and teachers (other than the class teacher and the Head who took part for a short period only). The age based curriculum and lack of connection between class activities may explain teachers' lack of interest. However, the study provides no explanation for governors' lack of interest in children's rights, broader education or the purpose of schools. Future work should engage the wider school community in the intergenerational experience as well as discussion of their own perspectives. The challenge is how to persuade schools that this is a worthwhile experience.

7.5 Summary Informing Phase 2

The findings from this first phase informed the design of Phase 2 where a similar process was adapted to enable children's participation through intergenerational work but this time by working within a statutory curriculum area. Additional objectives following the findings were to:

- Ensure groups are mixed ability by adopting a means of balancing children's preferences for friendship groups with their individual interests.
- Develop approaches that are more inclusive for all children (and challenge exclusion in participating schools).
- Develop group-work further, using cooperative learning techniques.
- Develop children's inquiry, through such group work.

- Include opportunities for children to interview adults as this provides an effective means to begin the process of building more equitable relationships.
- Enable children to decide on their own ‘products’ of their inquiry.
- Enable children to develop agency by making more of their own decisions in their groups, particularly about the activities they choose in response to their research questions.
- Include specific activities and resources to help children discuss ideas and make decisions in groups.
- Provide more time for the research so children can develop their group relations and intergenerational work.
- Enable more opportunity for intergenerational work that reflects the broad benefits of this: adults as resources, sharing experience and wisdom, supporting and scaffolding children, providing recognition and equitable dialogue about areas of shared interest.
- Support the teacher in their changing role and explore further what this actually means to them as a professional, using interviews where appropriate.
- Investigate whether the process will work with existing National Curriculum subject objectives, whilst focusing on the broader learning and opportunity that it encourages.
- Understand better why other staff and governors do not get involved.
- Consider ways that participation may be evaluated that do not rely on end outcomes or short-term benefits.

8 PHASE 2: SYNTHESIS OF EVIDENCE

8.1 Introduction

This synthesis has been compiled following thematic analysis of the data collected during Phase 2, through workshops with a class of Year 6 children, over a 14 week period in the Autumn school term. The children worked in small groups of three to five children on a topic they had chosen from the Tudor Period of history. There were five groups whose topics were:

- School and Punishment
- Law and Punishment
- Towns and Entertainment
- Rich and Poor
- Tudor Food

The intention was to include intergenerational work as a catalyst for the children's agency and participation as in Phase 1. However, this was limited by decisions taken at a late stage by the school, which prohibited parents from taking part and revealed useful evidence about constraints on children's participation and the effects of intergenerational relationships. Despite this, the children conducted their own cooperative inquiries, planned interviews to compare modern life to the Tudor Era and then decided how they would like to present or report their findings and share these with adults. They all chose to design and make educational games. A wide range of data was collected to try to capture the relationships that occurred and how these developed over time, as well as what worked and did not, in terms of furthering children's participation as per the model discussed in Chapter 3.

This data includes:

- Audio recordings from the classroom (partial transcripts)
- Photos
- 2 Interviews with the main class teacher – at the start and end of the project (full transcripts)
- Video of the final session
- Session materials

- Children's evaluation during the project
- Reflective journal
- Participation Circles activity
- Footsteps activity
- Adult participants' evaluation



8-a Tudors board game

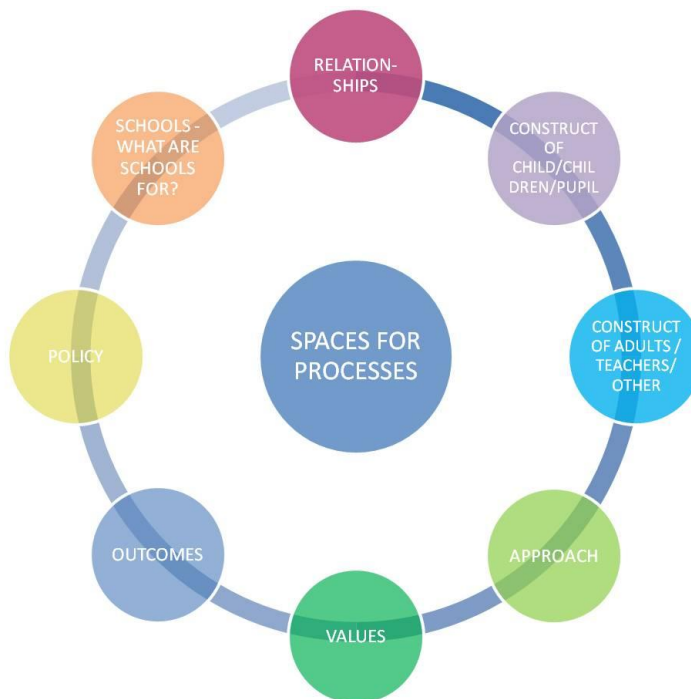
This provides a rich data set that describes the influence of frames of reference (the interplay between temporal perspectives and context) that surround processes in schools which in turn make up the complexity of the system itself. By describing and analysing these data, recurrent themes can be explored to produce recommendations for practice that take into account the reality of day to day interactions between people and between people and spaces as well as the perceptions and political stances that either hinder or foster participation. In this way the approach is a valid and practicable intervention as it requires reflexive practice rather than limited theories of cause and effect that ignore social influence or simply categorise it as predictable variance and thus ultimately fail to bring about positive change. The findings are presented as a synthesis of evidence in an attempt to adequately describe how frames of reference and the values that are established through experience and knowledge production impact upon everyday decision-making in school classrooms.

The analysis involved a two stage approach where themes were identified to establish initial codes using NVivo. These were then considered with the themes from Phase 1. Most examples could be related to the Phase 1 themes about participation and education and often they included several, demonstrating the strong relationships between each. A main set of eight threads emerged that describe the frames of reference that influence participation in schools. There may be others but these are representative of the data

from this study and provide a means to express their interconnectedness within a manageable format.

These are:

- Relationships in schools
- Constructs of the child / children / pupil
- Constructs of adults / teachers
- Approaches to education and participation
- Outcomes from following this approach
- Values – children, adults, dominant wider society/political view
- Policy tensions and opportunities
- What are schools for?



8-b Frames of Reference Influencing Participation

The threads are better described as an interwoven outer shell that wraps around processes and influences children's participation; this shell includes the frames of reference that influence spaces where such processes can occur. It can be inspiring and creative or restrictive in effect. The process is one of participation and education in

symbiosis, each benefiting or hindering the other, depending on the effects of the more complex outer shell. In terms of this research, it is the process of intergenerational PAR that is being investigated.

This synthesis provides evidence within each of the eight themes and how each affects the process of participation and education.

8.2 Approach

The 'footsteps' activity provides a useful overview of what the children did from their perspectives. They had little recall of workshops at the beginning of the study, and mostly described the process from when they started to design their educational games.



8-c Footstep

Cooperation (and the impact this had on participation) was the most common theme throughout each step. The themes from the children's comments are briefly described below:

Step 1. Deciding on our projects

Cooperation, choosing something that everyone is interested in (inclusion), rules, teamwork, dialogue and how it will work

Step 2. Collecting data for our projects

Cooperation, negotiation, conflict, resolution, taking turns involvement (inclusion) and having fun

Step 3. Analysing the data and presenting it

Research skills, searching, interpreting data, presenting

Step 4. Designing the board games to share what we found out

Cooperation, interpreting data, designing

Step 5. Making the board games to share what we found out

Realisation, practical activity and skills, cooperation, ownership “we”

The workshops began with an introduction to the study and voting activity, as developed in Phase 1, which enabled the researcher to find out what children know and think about participation and discusses some of the potential benefits and challenges, through discussion. The process involved some structured activities at the beginning to foster cooperation and evaluate whether the children were able to make decisions to determine how their projects proceed. Resources were provided (see Appendix 4 for examples) to help generate dialogue and inform decisions. These were noisy sessions as children negotiated and discovered more about each other and the contributions they could make.

The teacher was concerned that some children would not be able to make decisions for themselves or work well with other children, especially those with SEN:

“...obviously there's a few that have taken exception to somebody saying right, this is what I want you to do, this is what I want you to do, because they don't like being told what to do but they're the ones who can't work and, and they're the ones who need to be told mainly by an adult, do this, then do this, then do this.”

However he did concede that some of this was due to the teacher role and constant instruction and control of the class. Thus the first workshops were planned as ‘lessons’ with objectives and tasks to get the children started on their projects. The tasks involved groups thinking of as many topics of interest to do with Tudors as they could, then individually identifying their favourite three, bearing in mind that they would be working on this for a long time and would be expected to produce something interesting that showed what they had learned. Groups were then asked to move and to link up children with similar interests. Some children moved again after they discussed their ideas with others. Where this was simply to sit with friends, the researcher and teacher encouraged them to think more carefully about their interests and choices. However, choosing to sit with a friend was not considered a negative reason for choice. Children

who chose to work with friends were encouraged to link up with other children they would not usually work with.

The teacher was anxious about the children deciding their own groups and whether he should have allocated them instead:

“I don't know how else we'd have got round it, I mean I, yeah, I don't know, because, because the groups technically, you know, worked well to some extent that, there was areas like we said that didn't work, that, that caused issues but, you know, they've all produced something, they've all researched something, they can all tell you something about their area that I know if I asked some of the other groups they wouldn't be able to tell us... because it was something they were interested in so I don't know, I suppose it's a lesson too.”

He was concerned about ability – children perceived to be higher ability might not work hard enough if grouped with those considered lower ability - and about behaviour – some children could distract others and not work well.

Once in ‘topic’ groups the children were encouraged to think about suitable research questions. Alongside this was work on types of question (open, closed and comparative) and that the questions should be detailed, open enough to interest all of the group, interesting enough to share what is found and inspirational enough to eventually create a product to show findings. The researcher modelled questions using a *PowerPoint* presentation, talked about social science research, the sort of decisions that need to be made and how bias can occur. There was discussion about fairness in group work, the meaning of democracy and the voting activity. This was used to develop the class’ ideas about responsibility within the groups:

Working in a group means:

Listening to every person in the group and valuing what they say

Finding **sensible ways to agree** what to do next

It is **everyone's responsibility** to make sure that everyone learns

Everyone must **contribute** something

8-d Group members' responsibilities

The teacher had talked briefly about the Tudor Era with the children, thus they were able to identify a range of topics they might like to research and these were used to form five groups. Each group then identified their own research questions on their chosen topic and recorded these on a mind map. The first workshops were very noisy and the teacher was clearly worried by this and the low level arguing about questions that took place in each group. However the range of questions produced provided opportunity for highly educational projects in terms of meeting the requirements of the curriculum and providing enough research potential for the groups.

The next stage was to incorporate children doing some of their own individual research at home so they could bring this back to the next session. However it became evident that very few children had access to computers or other resources at home or the library. This task was therefore optional; none of the children conducted research at home at any stage in the project, illustrating the challenges that many children have when completing homework tasks. Some did not appear to have paper or pens and were very excited when given the opportunity to take craft materials home.

The teacher wanted the children to do some of their research from traditional sources rather than internet searches. This involved children selecting from the quite extensive range of books about Tudors in the classroom. The researcher supplemented these with texts printed from appropriate resources on the Internet. Whilst this controlled what was available, it also utilised the adults' experience to locate sources and protect children from less suitable or inappropriate material and overcame the problem of school firewalls preventing children from accessing useful websites.

The children were asked to bring what they had found to the rest of the group, thereby increasing access to resources across the group and encouraging them to learn from each other. Whilst this was quite a formal task and appeased the teacher by providing some 'quiet' time and assurance that they were all engaged, on reflection it may have been better if the children were supported to plan their searches in their groups to avoid reproduction. There was a tendency to collect the easier to find 'facts' rather than ideas that were contradicting or unusual, which may have led to more discussion and interesting results. Whilst most of the children in the class were competent readers, this did not mean that they found it easy to access non-fiction texts or indeed extract key pieces of information. This would have been a useful additional taught aspect; the researcher may have underestimated a lack of focus on comprehension in the current primary curriculum.

When the children discussed what they had found, they at first spoke over each other and struggled to take turns or listen to others, paying little attention until their turn. The researcher introduced a soft toy to each group and children were encouraged to speak only when they held the toy. This focused their attention on each other and they were more willing to listen and interact in order to have their turn with the toy. As they got better at this the need for the toys lessened.

The children were asked to consider how other adults might support the research process and help with their final products. The researcher introduced the idea of a timeline in order to understand where in history the Tudors existed. It was evident that some children could not describe this and did not think that the Tudor times were as long ago as they were. Research techniques such as interviews and focus groups were discussed as a class and the children were asked to decide what they could ask adults from their local community about their chosen themes and research questions. They were extremely excited by the prospect of conducting interviews and regarded this as 'being reporters'. The teacher agreed that he would send a letter to families asking for volunteers (parents were already aware that this was to be part of the research from the information during the consent process).

The groups produced interview schedules that would provide comparisons between their own, the adults and Tudor times. Unfortunately, even though a date was set to carry out the interviews in school, the teacher was not able to send out the letter of invitation and thus there were no adult volunteers for this session. The researcher

suggested that the children try out their interviews on each other and record notes about the answers. Whilst not the process intended, it was worthwhile as the children started to understand how they could rephrase questions to help their inquiries. They identified differences between their own experiences as a class, as well as between their lives and those in Tudor Times.

Following this activity, the teacher announced that he had to provide school managers with some 'evidence' of the children's work to show he was meeting targets at their termly moderation meeting. Children were asked to work in their 'best' topic books and write up what they had found out so far on their chosen research question. The researcher suggested they extend this by showing a comparison between their lives (from the interviews) and the Tudor lives (from their literature review). All of the children were able to access this task and produced some very informative work and this met moderation purposes.



8-e Academic moderation task

The children were asked to think what they could do with their research in terms of their continued learning and sharing it with others. It was suggested that this could be an opportunity to be creative, having previously discussed the potential to meet Art and Design Technology targets with the teacher and identified that freedom of expression was very limited in the school. Whilst the intention was that this would enable more autonomy, the researcher and teacher failed to recognise just how difficult a proposition this was for the children. They had little, if any, experience of planning and deciding how to make artefacts. Even the most creative in the class had few materials at home with which to construct; creative play materials such as Lego were less commonplace than expected, although encouraged at play times by the teacher. They had few creative or construction experiences in school; when asked about this, they gave examples from their time in Reception or Key Stage 1 classes. Whilst there were some well presented images on the classroom walls, these were very similar and there were no examples of

free expression. Thus they found it very difficult to think of creative outcomes for research when these were not within their experience.

Lack of focus on possible outcome was not a lack of capacity but a lack of experience from which to make a reasoned decision about what they might do and this also raises questions about school purpose and provision. Clearly these children were disadvantaged because of lack of creative opportunity including sharing and co-constructing ideas. This may be reduced compared to children in more affluent areas and yet the school did not appear to recognise this. Instead disadvantage appeared to be framed within physical needs – the school provided breakfast for all children and the older children were able to take what was left at the end of the day if they were hungry.

Before one workshop, the researcher had arrived to find children playing board games during the lunch break. When asked about this activity, the children described this as a club to help them develop maths. Later, when discussing potential outcomes for the project with one group, the researcher asked them again about board games and what they liked about them. It was at this point that one suggested making such a game. At first the others were reticent – would they be allowed? Is it possible? The teacher shared this as a possibility with the rest of the class. All the children were inspired and this marked a turning point in their enthusiasm and motivation toward their projects. All the children produced designs for games and were eager to share these with their peers.

When later asked about the decision to make educational games, the teacher suggested that having this as the objective from the beginning may have provided focus for the children throughout the project. There could also have been more input then on the specification:

“...if we'd have, if we'd have focused on, right, you're going to make a game and this is what, because then, then they'd have always been thinking about, you know, right, well, I could do this, I could do that, oh this would really link well with this part of the game or, and, and maybe then they might have started, they could have started designing, producing a little bit earlier so some of them would have got to a better, a better quality.”

It was interesting that although the game idea had originally come from the children, the teacher later talked about it as something the children had been told to do. He described their focus as:

"All of a sudden they became a little bit more interested, the spark kind of was there for some of them."

The board game idea was adopted by all the groups except one who chose to make a 'Top Trumps' type card game instead demonstrating their understanding of the agreed task, which was to ensure that the product was educational or in other words could be used by others to learn about what they had found out. The boys with the card game set themselves quite a complex task in that they had to try and find some way of assigning 'values' to what they found out so that some cards could beat others; this was the only all male group, which may reflect a gender preference for logic activities. The teacher did not appear to recognise the value of this and the opportunities it opened up for mathematical work and ethical argument. However, this may have been because the game was outside his own experience.

Following the school's reluctance to invite adults to participate in the children's interviews, the researcher discussed the support that they could provide for the game project with the teacher and he agreed with this. There was opportunity for the children to work with adults to increase their research, to try out their initial ideas and to test how the games worked with third parties. The teacher was also keen for the children to visit the researcher's university as he felt this would develop their aspirations. Delays around this decision meant the teacher did not arrange for adults to work with the children until the final session and this was a last minute arrangement that meant they could only spend a short time with the groups before returning to their other roles. Even so, there were benefits from their small amount of input.

The children constructed their games to include everything they had learned about their topic and some included ways of considering differences between eras. One group made a 3D castle to go in the centre of their board along with small flags to represent players. The researcher showed them how to use papier-mâché to make this. The children were able to access materials from stores themselves once they knew what they needed, furthering their agency. The group approach meant that the children had to cooperate in order to produce a joint outcome. This included deciding what needed to be done, deciding who did what tasks, evaluating progress and making improvements. There was evidence that the children's cooperative skills developed through the project and this is discussed in more detail later.

However there were a number of observations about the approach itself and intergenerational relationships. The children in this phase needed adults to scaffold their learning and resource decisions and activities that were outside their current experience; this developed their opportunities. The mentoring type relationship observed in Phase 1, helped shape more equitable spaces through which they could develop their ideas about schooling and participation. The five adults who supported the children in the final workshop did not have the opportunity to develop rich relationships with the children but were already fairly well known to them; this also meant that they made assumptions about each other that reduced chances to create more equitable space (see section 8.6).

The children's cooperation within the groups and ownership of the projects was demonstrated by the reduction in reliance on the teacher for instruction and what to do next. In the final session he had to cover another class so their teacher could act as one of the adult visitors to the class and this provided him with the necessary space to reflect on the children's participation:

"I'm kind of glad I wasn't in here for all of that because when I came back I then went round the groups and they were able to tell me what, you know, what they'd talked about, what feedback they'd got."

The adults completed a short questionnaire regarding their discussions with the children during the final workshop. They perceived challenges as:

'Finding the information and applying it to what they are doing.'

'Fact finding, being creative, work as part of a team (co-operation).'

'Children can't always be objective.'

Their perceived benefits are discussed in Chapter 12.

The fieldwork finished just before Christmas and the researcher gave each child a small gift and received a lovely thank you card and chocolates. Some of the children had not understood that the researcher would not be part of their classes after Christmas. The teacher did not appear concerned about this break in continuity for the children as it is 'part of the course' of schooling. However it does suggest that children value other adults working with them in school and continuity matters to them.

8.3 Policy

The school community's attitudes to children and adults are described in the following sections. However, practice was also influenced by policy and there were tensions highlighted by the study. The school's Behaviour Policy (September 2014) states:

Community links are important in developing positive attitudes to behaviour. They develop the profile of the school within the community and so develop in the children, parents and staff, a sense of pride in, and commitment to, the school. Our Children's Centre plays a key part in developing relationships with parents and the local community.

There were few instances where parents or other members of the local community were allowed onto school premises. A children's centre is attached to the school but, besides sharing an entrance and families, there are few links or joint activities. The school's reciprocal arrangements were about keeping children in school. Parents were not seen as valuable contributors to the children's education and their lack of power limited the possibility of any real partnership. There is no mention in the policy about parents and carers being able to open dialogue with the school about their own concerns or aspirations for the children or to ask for further support to improve education within the family. They were simply expected to tell the school if something might affect their children's learning.

We expect parents and carers to support their child's learning, and to cooperate with the school, as set out in the home-school agreement. We try to build a supportive dialogue between the home and the school, and we inform parents and carers immediately if we have concerns about their child's welfare or behaviour.

The governors' role is described as advising the headteacher about behaviour and the setting and review of standards. However there is no expectation that they get involved in school life to develop understanding and they were not invited to take part in this study by the headteacher. The policy states that the headteacher does not have to take advice from governors and reveals the superficial nature of the governor role in actually contributing to the school's ethos and practice. Governors are drawn from across the community including parents but they are not intended to represent that community. The main power lies with the headteacher in all decisions.

The visitors to school policy (September 2013) includes a set of questions for staff to consider when making arrangements for external visitors to the school (such as the researcher and others involved in enhancing the curriculum). One particular question: “*What is the visitor providing that the school cannot?*” may indicate that the school believes that it provides most activities necessary for education. However this overlooks the actual value of having visitors to the school in terms of developing intergenerational understanding and relations and may well be one of the reasons why the researcher ran into problems with the intergenerational aspect of the study. It is assumed that the researcher met the list of criteria as an acceptable visitor and that the project was perceived to provide “*aims and objectives compatible with those of the school.*” However parents taking part in the study would also have met the school’s criteria by providing a valuable resource for children’s education as per Phase 1.

The school’s Child Protection Policy is written with reference to the local authority policy and is based upon:

“the principles contained within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the European Convention of Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and the government document Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010.” (Child Protection Policy, 2014)

The school’s policy is to approach child protection from a pastoral as well as well as protection from harm perspective:

“Pastoral care is the responsibility of all adults involved in our community, employees, students, volunteers, representatives of other agencies and governors.”

“Pastoral care is concerned with promoting the moral, social, physical and emotional well-being of children. This is best achieved in an environment in which children can grow in confidence, personal awareness and in self-esteem. Pastoral care incorporates Child Protection.”

“Child Protection is concerned with protecting from, being alert to and making appropriate responses to, possibilities of child abuse. Proactive pastoral care of children helps to strengthen a child’s ability to prevent and/or report abuse.”

The child protection policy adopts safe recruitment procedures for staff and volunteers and contains a clause that: “All persons who work directly with children have to obtain an advanced DBS check.” However, it does not define what is meant by ‘work’ or ‘volunteer’. The policy also states that staff should avoid being alone with one child. This is extended to the Visitor Policy that states that:

Visitors should not be left with child/ren out of sight of a member of staff unless they hold a fully enhanced CRB disclosure and can present this for examination. (2013)

Neither policy describes whether governors have to be DBS cleared even though they presumably have occasional visits to school to observe the curriculum in practice, SEN policy in practice or to discuss child protection policy, depending on their roles. The teacher did not approach the governors to help with the project although this was suggested many times and it can only be assumed that this was again because they lacked DBS clearance or that the school did not really encourage community visitors into school.

The teacher indicated that parents were not allowed in school as they had not been DBS checked; this directly conflicts with the child protection policy that states:

*Close contact with parents is promoted throughout the school and centre. As well as formal parental consultation procedures **we promote parental involvement**, parents are constantly encouraged to discuss with school and centre staff, any concerns they have regarding their child, whether academic, social, medical or developmental. (2014, Researcher’s emphasis).*

Parents were not actively involved in the school and decisions made about the intergenerational aspects of the study demonstrate that this is discouraged. The intergenerational work potentially offered potential for the school to model appropriate behaviour and relationships between adults and children and support safeguarding. Further to this, negative and elevated perceptions of the parents’ high potential for abuse, but lack of outreach to the community to ensure children build positive relationships that may help protect them from potential abuse, contradict the policy. Parents who had concerns about children were expected to make an appointment or talk to the teacher in the school yard when other parents and children were present.

There was evidence of local authority policy in the school such as the provision of breakfast for all the children. Children were also provided with opportunities to ride the school bus to their new secondary schools in year 6 to help them prepare for what for many will be the first time they have left their immediate community. Whilst the physical and sometimes social needs of children were being recognised by the school and local authority, the impact of these on children, particularly the impact of lack of experience of the world beyond their community is not recognised at government policy level.

The impact of top down government policy was evident in the teacher's day to day struggle to complete all the activities necessary to meet curriculum requirements and targets as well as cater for children's individual education needs and avoid a total absence of broader experience:

"It is, it is difficult and I suppose the schools obviously, it comes down to with things being realistic, you know, can it be funded if it needs it? Have we got the time, have we got the staffing, have we got the facilities? And, and schools are restricted unfortunately, especially with the cuts that are being made at the moment in education, just, I would possibly say the things that could have been done maybe five or six years ago can't now because schools don't have the resources at their disposal like they did have,"

The teacher was very clear that he did not believe government policy makers were really in touch with the needs of disadvantaged communities:

some things they, they churn out, you just think, you can tell it's been manufactured by people who've been brought up in a public school education, you know, they, they're not aware of the everyday struggles

He felt that it was difficult to maintain a balance between curriculum and examination requirements and broader education and opportunities:

Because if you spend too much time on, on one aspect then something else slips and, and, and I mean schools are obviously judged on the, the performance, the results performance, not how active children are in, here now, but, you know, we do get out there in the community, we do make ourselves known and the, the, the, as well as doing Christmas jumper day we had a competition on, and that

was the children's idea, so every class did it, design a t-shirt for the teacher to wear

The school's SEN policy was not available but must conform to recent changes following the Children and Families Act, 2014, which government recognised will require "significant cultural and procedural change" (Timpson, 2015). This includes attention to children's rights in schools and their participation in decisions that affect them. One child's reluctance at being observed by an educational psychologist clearly demonstrates that this was not happening in the school. Further to this, whilst identification of SEN was obviously carried out and teachers and support staff were well aware of children's needs, there was little evidence that whole class planning or practice was adapted to ensure such children could take part in all activities. They did not have the opportunity to discuss lessons with the teacher and inform what might be more suitable practice. And yet the results of the study showed that when teachers engaged in discussion with pupils, they were more aware of what they had achieved and where they need to go next.

8.4 Constructs of the Child

In Phase 2 children were generally more wary of the researcher than in the Phase 1 school and less confident to speak. While children were enthusiastic and eager to join in, many spoke so quietly they were difficult to hear, so it was difficult to evaluate how articulate they were at this stage; neither boys nor girls dominated discussion.

The class teacher's ideas about childhood and the children in his care were at times conflicting. He believed that there was a difference in childhood now compared to when he was younger (10-15 years ago) and made connections between this and what happens in the classroom. He described how, when he was young, children would call for each other to play football or similar and sort out their own disagreements swiftly. The children in the study played out during breaks at school and described how they often played games requiring cooperation - football, tig and acting which contradicts his perception:

" I think it's a change in society we're having because I mean a lot of these children go home they just sit in front of the computer so therefore it is them and no other interaction whereas when I was a child we'd be out playing."

Children did meet up and collaborate outside school but this was sometimes negatively interpreted. During one session, all the children were ‘warned’ that their behaviour outside school would not be tolerated following an incident where a group had been ‘terrorising’ members of the community.

The school had previously been classed as below standard by Ofsted. The teacher described how the school had built bridges with parents following the appointment of a new headteacher. They made reciprocal contracts with parents providing bags, pens and food for children in return for parents making sure homework is completed and children regularly attend. They did not appear to regard family units as capable of contributing much else to the children’s education and the teachers spoke negatively about parents:

“This is the thing with the children, it's what they want to please, when they're at school they want to please and I think it's unfortunate because of maybe the area that we're in, this is where they know that actually if I do something right and I please, you know, and I show that I can do it then I'm going to get acknowledged for it whereas at home they might not, because Mum might not be there, she might be at work type of thing, you know.”

The teacher suggested that children in the area lack ambition because of reduced opportunity and knowledge of the wider world; at the same time this meant there was more respect for the teachers’ roles as educators:

“...last year I was speaking to one of the teachers from Montgomery and he was saying that when they go there a lot of them, they're, they're kind of aspiration is to be a teacher because that, it's that highest level of any kind of profession that they see in their day to day life because parents, quite a few parents are unemployed so obviously they don't know any different and that's, you know, their parents were unemployed and their grandparents were un, and it's just maybe a bit of a vicious circle they're in, so yeah, and I think that's also why we are quite, I mean like the parents that are onboard now do respect us, whereas in, in other schools that I've been in, you don't have the same level of, of respect and that's possibly because the parents deem themselves to be, you know, above you, so.”

During the study, the children rarely talked about the future or what they would like to do or become. They lived very much in the moment. They had views about their

capacities. In answer to the question ‘*Should children participate in decisions about what happens at school?*’ 11 responded ‘no’, 4 ‘yes’ and 4 were unsure. The children’s reasons included “*Because they don’t let me no,*” that arguments would take place “*Because so many people would say so many different things – it would be so chaotic it’d be like a prison riot!*” and that they would not learn “*Because people will say ‘no work’ and then you will get a bad education.*” Even though the study revealed otherwise, they had little confidence in their own capacities or existing skills. Those who were in favour of participation in schools expressed injustice ‘*Because children have ideas as well.*’

The teacher often used labels to describe children and there was an association between children with SEN or ‘problems’ and their perceived capacity to participate. There was no evidence of lack of capacity for any of the children, but some did struggle to form positive relationships with other children, including some who were regarded as having high academic ability; behavioural intervention and lower expectations occurred less for these children. The teacher considered working independently as evidence of higher ability. He only seemed to link this to lack of responsibility or capacity to take ownership when talking about children with SEN. In the following transcript he is talking about a child with SEN (Child A) and a child considered high ability (Child D).

“Yeah, because we have just, you know, certain children that have certain behavioural issues or they’re special needs then obviously it’s difficult that you can step back and just say, you know, this is. Like [child A] is a prime example, [Child A], he, he obviously, he’s one that very much needs, he’s another one that needs to be told but he needs support to do a lot of things, if he’s given the freedom he will always just do the wrong thing... most of the time he knows it’s the wrong thing, it’s not that he doesn’t know, so, so I suppose he’s, he’s one that’s, that would fall into that category of taking ownership himself is a difficult concept, but that, but I, but I know why he does it and it’s, it’s learnt behaviour, the way [Child D] reacts is learnt behaviour, it’s, you know.”

The teacher recognised that what may be described as lack of capacity is often learnt response to the resulting intervention of adults. Child A was supported by a teaching assistant each morning who sat beside him and ‘checked’ his behaviour and also instructed him on what to do. There did not appear to be much space for him to attempt independent tasks or take responsibility for his own work; assumptions about children’s

lack of capacity appear to infer a permanent deficiency and not something that teachers can help them to overcome. The teacher was particularly concerned that Child A would be excluded permanently from the school system shortly after entering secondary school. This lack of perceived means to overcome problems for children who do not fit comfortably within the system and indeed lack of hope for the future is troubling.

Both the children, mentioned above, tried very hard to establish relationships with other children during the project and clearly wanted to take part; lack of provision to include them more actively in activities resulted in them sometimes being sidelined by other children. In the case of Child A, who faced the biggest challenges in terms of both academic work and social maturity, the teacher felt that he could only take part with full-time supervision. When he was particularly challenging the teacher removed him to another class rather than taking steps to plan to include him before each workshop. When asked about this, the teacher expressed a belief that he must spend the same amount of time on each child and that extra work to support a child with SEN takes time away from the rest of the class.

On one occasion the researcher created resources to enable him to make 'Top Trump' type cards about the Tudor Kings and Queens after noticing that he had started to become familiar with this information on the school display. His task was to match the correct information to the correct monarch which he did independently following clear instructions and encouragement to do so. He remained in the class all afternoon even though he became restless later. Being able to construct his own game cards meant he was able to join in with the group's discussion and intergenerational work during the final workshop. Whilst he can be heard interfering with the audio recorder whilst the teacher was giving instructions on what would happen when the visitors arrived in class, this is followed by two other boys in the group questioning his behaviour and trying to get him to understand why this could make the teacher think poorly of the whole group:

"Leave it leave it...oy back...are you trying to record it?...Why did you do that [Child A]... {Child A pulled it out and put it back and recorded it...Why did you do that?...Why did you lug that in?...Mr [teacher] will think we did it...without you noticing...Why do you do it [Child A]...that's annoying...no [Child A] will you not do that"

The boys eventually manage to overcome conflict themselves and continued to positively include this child within the group, which had not been the case earlier in the study. This raises questions about the normal response to conflict in the school. The children were very capable of managing relationships and behaviour to make sure other children are included when they were expected to do so. However, adults frequently demonstrated to them that they did not have to do this by segregating or excluding children in or out of the class.

Another boy was repeatedly warned about his behaviour by the deputy head during the researcher's introductory visit. The children had just been on a residential trip and this boy had been sent home. He explained to the researcher afterwards that he felt this was unjustified as he had reacted to something that other children were doing. He expressed sadness and regret as well as injustice. Later in the term it was evident the boy had been referred for assessment and placed on medication for ADHD but was reluctant to comply even though the teacher criticised him for this. Whilst he struggled to remain seated and attentive for long periods (as did other children) children appeared to like him and spend time with him. Problems mainly arose when he did not do the tasks required as they thought he might get them into trouble. Thus he spent a lot of time on his own or wandering around class.

Once his project interests were established, the teacher encouraged him into a group with some girls he would not ordinarily work with. They initially found it difficult to include him as they were very quick to get on with their own research and ideas and two of them were high academic achievers. However as the term progressed, one girl in particular recognised that he was often on his own and needed encouragement to work with them. She did very well at including him and suggesting tasks during several of the project lessons. The group then became more solid. This boy sometimes appeared to find it easier to be troublesome and fit the label he had been given rather than try to bond with others and risk rejection or produce work he thought would not be considered good enough, however his evaluation showed that he had felt 'really included and valued throughout the project'. Further longitudinal research would be necessary to demonstrate whether continued attention to this approach could eventually impact on his academic achievements or that of other children with SEN. However the approach did not negatively impact on learning.

The teacher tried very hard to build bridges between children and encourage more respectful behaviour but this seemed to take a back seat to academic achievement during lesson time promoting academic work and attainment, achieved through a teacher led process, ahead of social learning and its wider benefits. Although he agreed to take part, he believed that some children just do not have the capacity for participation or have missed opportunities to develop that capacity before the age of 10/11 and that once this has happened it cannot be undone. This was evident in his comments about the previous year's class:

"I mean the, the, the class I had last year, we couldn't have tables like this, they had to be individual tables in rows and they, and I only had a small class so they all had their own table because they could not, I did no group work because they got the stage, you put even two together and it would turn into a full on fisticuff fight so, over a simple thing, you know, get your elbow off my side of the table type thing, and that, so I think we find children unfortunately get to the stage where they can't do it, I don't know whether it's because lower down the school there isn't enough emphasis on group work but in, but then the group taking responsibility, I think, I think possibly as teachers what, what we tend to do is go, right, get into groups, this is what you've got to do, get into groups, this is what you've got to do and a step by step process rather than sometimes saying, right, get into groups, this is a synopsis or this is a, a, an objective, you decide how you get that and let, and it's kind of just standing back."

The project highlighted the risk teachers perceived in trying to do something more participatory with children, especially where their behaviour is considered to be challenging. There appeared to be assumptions made about children growing up in more challenging situations (high deprivation) and their capacities for participation, based on experience:

"I think it was more possibly the experiences the children have had within life, they've not had as much as, as others. I suppose things that we take for granted like going on a plane or even going on the train or going to London and, and things like that, because at my last school it, it was in quite an affluent area so the children would go off on nice holiday and things like that but here they don't have the experience and, and for a lot of them, you know, the life out of school is going to the park and staying on the park for a couple of hours, it is just

roaming the streets, it, it's, it is going home and being home alone until, you know, mum or dad, or whoever, gets home and that's even at the age of eight, seven, six. You know, a lot of children here will walk home on their own, well in the juniors we don't allow it below Year Four, but now, the, the, we never had things like, as long as, at the other school but."

How children were constructed as pupils in the school was also associated with views about their potential for academic achievement. The class could be described as mixed ability in terms of children's academic output. The school had recently chosen to address the range of ability by 'setting' children across two year groups into ability (attainment) groups. This meant that for English and Maths some of the older children were in the 'bottom' group in the younger year's classroom. There was anecdotal evidence that this distressed some children. One boy changed the colour of a spot representing his set on his maths book in an attempt to disassociate himself from what others described as the 'bottom group'. Another child believed she was 'rubbish' at Maths as she was in a low set and other children could perform multiplication tasks which she could not. She had recently moved to the school from Spain. When the researcher helped her learn a new concept and reassured her that she would eventually 'get there' she was delighted; clearly no-one had ever discussed learning Maths as a progression with her. The age-related curriculum reinforced the idea of failure for those who had not grasped concepts at the appointed time earlier in their schooling, for whatever reason.

The teacher linked academic ability to motivation:

"More able children can become, become them which, you know, will help their education and development because they're always trying to find ways to improve themselves."

There was evidence that some children found ways of using their agency even though they were discouraged from doing so through classroom management. Compliance with a task did not mean that children simply got on with work as told. In the main they were very good at working when the teacher paid them attention and then self-determined when and how much they would be on and off tasks at other times. Other children struggled more with focus on tasks because they did not really want to do them and thus were reliant on the teacher telling them when they 'had' to work and rewards and

sanctions were used to enforce this. This could suggest that some children are more advantaged in classrooms because they know how to manage the processes and self-determine their compliance whilst recognising that the work is 'valuable' whilst some are less so because they struggle to engage or recognise this. This is not necessarily about academic ability. Whilst paternalistic attitudes and structures and tightly managed curricula contained children in orderly school spaces, there was evidence that this did not have a positive effect on children and that quiet conflict appeared as they struggled for agency.

8.5 Constructs of the Adult or Teacher

Teachers in the school were typically authoritarian but not in an oppressive sense. Both the class teacher and deputy headteacher led from the front of the class and often talked to the children (rather than with them). Communication was instructional (*this is what you need to know, this is what you will do, this is how you will do it*). The teacher's role was clearly to manage the class and classroom in order to meet set outcomes and targets. Behaviour management was about ensuring this process occurred rather than social learning as an important aspect of education. Lessons were observed at the beginning of the project were in Maths and English. Following whole class instructions, children were provided with a task and expected to quickly complete this by themselves and quietly. There was no evidence of group work, although the children were seated in groups around tables, and set in ability groups for some lessons. Power in the classroom was dominated by the teachers. However, surreptitious behaviour demonstrated that children found ways to use their agency and make decisions about what they actually did, by choosing whether to listen, relying on friends to explain tasks later whilst they occupied themselves with their own thoughts or communicating silently with other children.

The teachers' attitudes to parents were largely shaped by perceptions about socio-economic status and local area. The school had built up strong reciprocal arrangements. Teachers went outside to see parents at the end of school; but parents were generally kept outside the actual school building. Attitudes to parents sometimes appeared quite hostile. The original agreements to arrange the intergenerational aspects of the study by the school were then undermined by the headteacher. The children constructed interview schedules and the teacher told them that he was going to arrange the first adult

visits to school. At this point there was no indication that there would be a problem or that the school had reservations about this aspect of the work. Over a period of three weeks, the teacher promised to send a previously drafted letter to parents but this did not happen. Eventually he informed the researcher that he was not 'allowed' to invite parents in due to safeguarding concerns (see section 8.3).

When asked why the decision had been made the teacher replied that there was concern there could be "paedophiles" among the parents because of the area which effectively silenced him as, until this point, he had been confident the work would go ahead.

Known offenders would clearly not have been invited in to school. Following this first setback, the teacher was still hopeful that governors or other existing volunteers could be invited to work with the children. The researcher was not invited to discuss the issue with school management. The final decision about who could work with the children was not made until the penultimate week. Only adults already working at the school and thus already DBS/CRB checked were allowed to take part.

The most disturbing aspect was the lack of apology to children who had already worked hard on preparation and were looking forward to the adult visits. The children accepted that this part of the project was not going to happen with a resignation that suggested they were used to such disappointment and lack of culpability by schools. Even though the eventual intergenerational work was a short workshop where they shared their educational games with adults and evaluated what they had learned and achieved, they were extremely pleased to have this opportunity and very positive about outcomes.

The teacher's role was restricted by continuous output measures. Plans for subject based curriculum had to be provided to managers in the previous academic year and he found it difficult to accommodate change or emergence within this. In particular, children choosing their own research topics could affect the knowledge learned, making it more difficult to evidence. Managers clearly expected written outcomes in exercise books as evidence of attainment, devaluing other types of evidence such as spoken testimony or visual artefacts. Whilst the teacher retained the everyday responsibility for the class and their activities, school managers were able to stop activities at any time to speak to the class about other issues and the teacher was never consulted as to the appropriateness of such interruptions, undermining his autonomy. Children were also removed or brought to the class at various times and the teacher was expected to accommodate this.

The teacher's role was one of classroom manager who was expected to pass on certain information to the children, ensure they digest this and regurgitate and are able to regurgitate it to pass tests at the appropriate levels. Even so, he tried very hard to model acceptable behaviour for the children and encouraged positive relationships. Thus power and conflict were an everyday part of school experience, marked by hierarchical structures and systems that often silence adults as well as children.

8.6 Relationships

Whilst a reciprocal approach to relationships was evident in the school, power and conflict appeared through adults' views and school structures, and between school and home, thus resulting relationships were not equitable. Reciprocity was about ensuring conformity to the system. This was less evident in the children's own relationships. The classroom was a warm, welcoming space but there was sometimes conflict between children which seemed to be accepted as a normal everyday occurrence, with children rarely visibly upset by altercations.

Children did not always engage with the teachers when they addressed them from the front of class. They were observed resting on their desks and not listening. During the first workshop (which was actually the class teacher's first day back in school following paternity leave) the atmosphere was very tense as the deputy headteacher was reprimanding the class. The class teacher followed by adopting a stance of power, refusing to listen to the children's obvious need to talk about the incident, silencing the class, which made the activities a challenge as they were then confused and nervous when expected to discuss their activities. This diminished as the term went on, as he developed a less dominant relationship with the children, which was warm and friendly whilst setting high expectations for behaviour and contributions.

The children clearly had particular friendship groups but were expected to sit where the teacher decided. When entering the classroom after break, they were able to help themselves to water before settling in their allocated seats at the tables. The tables were mixed boys and girls and the children were seated so they could see each other in their groups as well as see the whiteboard at the front of the classroom. Many children 'blanked' each other as they sat down. The teacher usually asked them to sit and read a book until they were all quiet and calm. He often had to settle disagreements that had taken place on the playground or outside school and tried to encourage them to see both

sides. Most incidents did not spill far into lesson time although there were a couple of exceptions which resulted in children being silent and refusing to join in with activities. The teacher generally ignored these but on one occasion the deputy headteacher removed a boy from the class. On another occasion, two boys were not in class as they had been excluded for fighting.

During activities to decide on their topics of inquiry, some based their decisions on friendship as well as their actual interests. This was framed within a work capacity:

“We knew we’d work well together because we’re all friends and we had the same ideas on our sheets.”

Where the teacher intervened, introducing someone who would not usually work with them, the children found this difficult but recognised the value of cooperation:

“We feel the project went well, so did [Name] (he didn’t do much). We think it would have been better if he got involved.”

The teacher was concerned that the children would not be able to cooperate in the way expected for the project and thus would have difficulty taking control of their learning and participating in decisions about this. This was expressed first through his concern about letting the children choose their own project themes. The first two workshops were very noisy as the children tried to establish and negotiate what they wanted to do and there was some low level arguing but this was not unpleasant. When asked about this at the end of the project the teacher conceded that even with more teacher control, this was likely to happen anyway:

“I don’t know, possibly, possibly all I did, all I maybe thought about is right... but it, you’d just end, we’d have just ended up with some argument at the beginning... is actually grouping them and saying right, you’re a group, you’re a group, you’re a group, strategically placing children and then say right, now you’ve got to decide on what area you’re interested in...but then that would have led to obviously, well I want to do this, I want to do this, I want to do this.”

The children also identified conflict as a problem when working together. They described this as: ‘Bad things: arguing over who did what.’

But they also identified that when allowed to participate in discussions about their learning they could negotiate and find a way through:

“There was a lot of arguing over disagreements but at the end we came to a conclusion.”

Even where children were not always listened to this did not mean that their overall experience was negative:

“I felt involved, but sometimes people ignored my ideas, it was fun!”

The children identified interactions that both benefit and challenge cooperation for inquiry. This included being distracted or talking about other things. However, whilst some dialogue was seen as a distraction, one child recognised that it was also a valuable aspect of their participation:

“Talking too much.

Yeah.

Talking.

Too much. What have you put?

Too much. I can't think of any.

Well you're supposed to talk, supposed to talk too much, because we're in a group and we're supposed to talk ...”

The teacher agreed that the researcher would lead the earlier workshops. He contributed by reiterating what was said, reinforcing key messages and supporting the children's understanding. This developed over the 14 weeks into a team teaching approach which itself may have set a positive example for the children in terms of working together through open respectful negotiation and shared responsibility. This contradicted the researcher's experience of other studies where teachers have tended to 'hand over' responsibility and take only a minor role in supporting children's inquiry.

The teacher's relationship with the children changed during the study. Whilst he frequently checked what each group was doing he began to recognise that children were capable of working on their projects without constant surveillance and guidance, and that children were developing their ability to recognise when they needed support from him.

Cooperation was an important aspect of the study. Firstly, children had to find other children with similar interests to negotiate their proposed research questions(s). They found various ways to do this such as identifying shared interests and this strategy continued as they and decisions such as how to present their inquiry:

“We decided that we were going to do Top Trumps because we like playing cards.”

Entering into dialogue about others views and opinions suggests that the children recognised the others in their group as important contributors to the tasks and decision making processes. Two children in the class struggled with these concepts trying instead to badger others to do their projects or by sabotaging dialogue between others. They were both particularly absorbed in their own experiences and feelings of injustice. Whilst other children began to talk about their group as an entity - “we decided...”- these children struggled to move away from talking about themselves, never really taking ownership of their group’s inquiries. They were often allowed by the teacher to work aside from the group and their lack of cooperation was accepted in return for completion of individual tasks even though both demonstrated behaviour that was at times aggressive and purposefully negative toward other children. Other children who faced barriers to cooperation, however, indicated they had felt included by their group.

It is not clear at what point in the process ‘I’ became ‘we’ but this shift is marked and evidenced by the footsteps activity toward the end of the project where only two uses of ‘I’ were recorded. This group ownership of projects was possible where children participated with their groups and can be described as: i) Cooperation through willingness to be included and include others, interaction with others and recognition of each others’ views and contributions to the activities and decision making process; this was achieved through willingness to enter into dialogue and exchange ideas as well as work together or share tasks among the group; ii) Some degree of self-determined learning and activity developed by taking responsibility and thus ownership of the projects through this cooperation.

The teacher maintained the idea that successful inquiry or project work is where children work independently, getting on with work without his interference:

“I suppose the stronger characters have kind of assumed a leadership role in terms of, right, I know this is what we need to do as a group because we’ve

decided it's what we need to do but they've taken it upon themselves to delegate the roles, so there was obviously [name] in one group, [name] in another group."

The success of the project is located in their ability to relate and cooperate with others, or interdependence. Instead of waiting for the teacher to tell them what to do, the children began to value the teacher (and researcher) as a resource and support for their work. In this way they took ownership and some responsibility for their activities whilst recognising that the adults in the room (and other children) were also useful resources. This was clearly not just a selfish use of other people to attain goals, but recognition of others' skills and potential contribution to the projects and enjoyment from working in this way. One of the outcomes given by the children was that they had fun.

By the final workshop, the children had taken full ownership of their projects. Adults were invited into the classroom to play and talk about their educational games. This reinforced the value and ownership they placed upon their work:

"Well that was really interesting today actually when they were, they have the other staff in because they were in their groups and they were all full of it and, you know, occasionally were, the ones I went up to it's like, well what, you know, you're not part of this now, go away."

Five adults attended the final workshop, one per group. Recordings show four groups where children were clearly involved in fairly equitable conversation with the adults and enthusiastically describing what they had done and answering questions. However the fifth group's adult was a teacher from another class and the children appeared to be a lot less comfortable with her (see photos 8d). The conversation was controlled by the teacher which meant that this group did not benefit from the same level of interaction and thus evaluation and intergenerational exchange as the other groups. The teacher did not return her own evaluation to the researcher which was unfortunate.



8-f Evaluating the educational board games

Although teachers listened to the children a lot in school and sometimes tried to sort out social problems, they did not routinely include listening to or acting upon children's views in class. The teacher had recently set up a school council but was critical of children's capacities to raise issues through this. He suggested the school 'had to have' a school council as it was accepted as evidence of pupil voice by Ofsted. The teacher recognised lack of confidence and social skills but tended to blame this on circumstances outside school such as some children being continually 'put down' by parents. He suggested more notice was taken of children's views during after school clubs, mainly for welfare reasons and management of behaviour:

“So yes we, to that extent we do [listen to children's views] but the parents don't because the parents would rather they were in the clubs so they can have an extra hour.”

8.7 Outcomes

The children shared many thoughts about the benefits and challenges of their inquiry and the research. These were within the themes: *Cooperation, practical activity, product, enjoyment and learning*. Only one group specifically mentioned learning positively in their evaluation: 'Learning about the Tudors (food).'

One child wrote "Thinking of the game" as a challenge, which could also be interpreted as a learning experience. The challenges were overwhelmingly about *cooperation*. These included: team working behaviour, such as 'messing about,' 'not listening,' or being distracted away from projects and dialogue. When asked how they might make the project work better, the children were less articulate, although this may be because they had already responded about benefits and challenges. The few responses were

about cooperation – ‘Work as a team’ and ‘Do not mess around as much’ - as well a more personal comment ‘No one doubting them self.’

The product of the research was also very important to the children and they regarded making their educational games positively. Some mentioned the standard or lack of work as a problem. Other products included PowerPoint presentations that were used in some cases to develop game questions. Most comments were about the practical approach: *making, drawing, colouring, sharing ideas, designing, writing instructions* and *doing things differently*. These were related to the cooperative activities: *working together, working in a group, teamwork, sharing, helping each other* and *communicating*. There was also a perception of the process being enjoyable: ‘Having fun.’

The teacher recognised major change over the weeks of the project. Changes in the children's relationships and ability to work with less direction appear to have surprised him. He admitted that he was more focused on outcome rather than process at the beginning:

“I, to be honest I had no idea what I would, what they would be able to do, I was just, I, I was just playing it by what, you know, what it would be like at the end.”

He noted that most children had developed their ability to get on and work without his direction:

“...they know what to do... they don't need me to say, what's, what's next?”

But he also added:

“And there are still a few that go, what do I do? Do the next thing then.”

The teacher had indicated at the beginning of the project that he considered working independently to be associated with higher levels of attainment. He clearly thought that children taking ownership of their work and getting on with this without instruction was very positive:

“...what I've been pleased to see is, is those that can do it, you know, those that... there were some groups that I very rarely went over to... I would go over occasionally just to see, you alright? Yeah, fine, do you need? No, we're fine. Okay, I'll leave you to it.”

He noted that two of the most challenged children in an organisational respect were able to contribute and did join in with the projects and produce results even though he had clearly not expected them to have the capability to do this. One child has Dyspraxia and was not perceived as someone able to work well with others or work without instruction. Yet he was able to work cooperatively and contributed especially well in terms of ideas and creativity to his group; he was academically very able and the approach enabled him to realise his potential without being hindered by the writing that he struggled with. Another was working at a much lower attainment (low level 3) than expected for his age and as previously mentioned also struggled to engage with activities and was often removed from the class. It was only when the teacher talked through how these children felt about their own participation that he was able to more readily recognise achievements:

“I was speaking to [Child A] before, at times he, he has contributed, it's almost like, he was laughing, and it's almost like one week he decided I'll help and the next week decide I don't need to because I helped last week. But from him perspective that's, that's huge steps for him, huge steps for him.”

“And to an extent with [Child E] I mean [name] said he didn't do anything, didn't contribute, but he did, because when I was talking in more depth about it...He said, oh well, I designed this and then... and for him as well, that's a huge step the fact that he's been able to, to work cooperatively and not required us to provide [instruction]. So I mean teamwork has, has improved to an extent, because I, and I have noticed it in other areas quicker than that, some of them just get on with it, they'll get on with something.”

The extent to which the changes were also felt during other lessons is evident in the way the children were now taking the initiative to make a start on extension or ‘challenge’ tasks without the teacher instructing them to do this:

“You know, it's more me saying, what, what are you doing, why are you out of your seat, and it's because they know, so it's, let's go get a challenge.”

The influence of the approach was discussed earlier; however it was clear both the desired and unexpected outcomes were not as evident for some children. This was particularly evident for two children: neither engaged in the mentoring type relationship with the teacher, and their behaviour was often challenging to the groups. Conversation

about the projects was very superficial. However discussion and observation revealed both were extremely anxious and lacking in confidence in their own ability to do anything other than straight forward teacher led tasks even though both were extremely intelligent young men and recognised as high ability by the teacher. The teacher was well aware of this lack of confidence and described one boy:

“I think he constantly thinks that whatever he does people are going to think it's not good enough and also have it, I don't know whether he's had it in the past, perhaps he's been told, those aren't good enough, so therefore I'm not going to put myself forward because I don't want to, I don't want to put myself forward to fail.”

However, it appeared that positive reinforcement from the teacher meant that both felt very able in terms of the ‘normal’ maths and literacy tasks expected but their social needs were being disregarded to some extent in exchange for compliance with these tasks. Whilst the teacher was originally worried by the groupings and letting the children take control of some of the organisational aspects of the projects, he also recognised that despite problems all the children had responded well and achieved something.

“Some of them now will probably dislike each other even more because they didn't like their idea, however others, you've got children that wouldn't usually have worked together ... wouldn't choose to work, I mean [name] wouldn't have chosen to work with [name] out of choice, but they got on with it.”

Whilst some children were already very compliant with the teacher’s choice of working partners, others improved as a result of the project. The teacher viewed this recognition of others’ capabilities as important to their working relationship:

“I think there has been improvements, and I think what I'll find is if I put somebody with somebody else they'll go, oh yeah ... I've worked with them before, I know what they're like, and, and they'll probably have learnt a bit more about each other, so they'll know either to listen to them or to not listen to them, because they'll know, right, sometimes they say relevant things other times they say waffly things which are irrelevant, oh sounds like they're waffling, don't need to listen to this but I'll just kind of appease them and just nod and agree, so.”

Others began to develop more sophisticated interaction involving negotiation of tasks based on who was best suited to each and time management. The girls tended to take these leadership roles:

“We've got fifteen minutes to try and figure out the rest of it and then we've got to learn these ... no, I've got it on my watch.”

Academic outcomes are more difficult to measure. The projects clearly met attainment targets outlined in the planning stage. However the teacher would need to record examples of work to evidence this. Time to establish and plan this is an important aspect of the participatory process that could have been better developed through this research.

8.8 Values

The school provided a warm, caring environment for the children. When the researcher met other staff in the school, they were always polite and friendly. The school's Behaviour Policy (September, 2014) suggests:

...that every member of the school community feels valued and respected, and that each person is treated fairly and well.

Each class develops its own set of rules through which every member of the school community is expected to “behave in a considerate way towards others.” The policy also states:

We treat all children fairly and apply this behaviour policy in a consistent way.

The school rewards good behaviour, as it believes that this will develop an ethos of kindness and cooperation.

Mostly the children were treated with respect and this included times when they did not conform to expectations. This was evident through the headteacher's usually open door and children playing on the computer in her office when removed from class, which helped diffuse negative situations. Unlike other schools the researcher has visited, there were no obvious instances of children being made to stand outside the office or raised voices or other humiliating situations. When children got angry or lost their temper, they were asked to move out of the space quietly and calmly until they had calmed

down and were ready to talk about the issue. They would often just initiate this process themselves and the staff allowed them enough space to do so. The teacher then tried to reason with children to make sure they understood both sides of a situation. Good behaviour was recognised on a daily basis through a points system and the teacher gave out small gifts in recognition of this. He also tried very hard to ensure all children were recognised frequently so there was no bias toward extra rewards for children who only occasionally work well or against those who always did.

The TA seemed less mindful in her approach, tending to take the most obvious behaviour as that to be reprimanded rather than modelling a respectful approach to both opposing points of view. She tended to have a protectionist attitude to the children in that they needed to be looked after, protected and corrected. The TA was very open about her own life and experiences and these informed how she interacted with the children. In the main she did not accept that schooling should be as narrow as it currently is and is committed to the welfare of children and the development of the whole person. She obviously contributed much more than she was employed to do. Although she had home schooled her own children, it was interesting that she appeared most challenged by the research and ‘doing something different’. It was difficult to find an explanation for this other than that she appeared to distrust ‘outsiders’ because she saw such involvement as short-lived. The children had experienced a great lack of continuity in their schooling with very high staff turnover and the school being labelled as below standard and this TA had observed this over her many years of service.

Her expectations and faith in the children’s capacities were clearly framed within a broader understanding of education than current schooling enables and every child’s potential for growth. It was difficult to establish other staff’s political views but a genuinely caring attitude alongside commitment to meeting targets and improving outcomes across the school was evident. In the staff room conversation was directed to this and there was no evidence of the negative and disrespectful criticism of children and other staff the researcher has experienced at other schools. The description of the teacher’s role given in the behaviour policy appeared to be taken seriously:

All staff act as models of good behaviour in that they treat each other, the children, their parents and all visitors with the courtesy and respect they want to encourage in the children.

However, hierarchical structures tended to undermine this as mentioned in earlier sections. Children's rights were not specifically mentioned or an obvious part of processes in the school. However they are mentioned in the school's child protection policy which refers to the local authority policy and its basis in related children's rights and human rights acts (see Policy section for further discussion). Whilst the teacher had a vague awareness of the existence of the UNCRC (1989), this was framed in terms of it being about 'normal' values or government policy such as the reason why they had to start a school council.

"I don't think without, without I suppose, with this, without the children having these, these rights, probably School Council's wouldn't have ever really come to anything and then nothing would have actually been put into place so I suppose it is a, it's a good thing to have."

He believed few teachers were aware of children's rights but he thought that much of it would be "common sense". He also felt that those who had been in the profession longer were less likely to know about rights and disrespect children through their approach. He described this and his own approach:

"...it's a case of...right...I'm the teacher...I am saying this and this is final. I mean I, I tend to have quite a... don't know... not an open but if a child says something to me, if it's logical, you know, I say, right, okay, yeah, let's, let's do it, let's do it, I mean ... even though, we've made Christmas calendars the other day and I was like, right this is what I want us to do and some of them went, do we have to, and I went, no, we don't, go on, what do you want to do and they said, oh can we do it different? Yeah, fine, you, you know, that's, that's, it's your, you know, it's not for me to say what your calendar needs to look like, it, it's your calendar so therefore you have the right for how it is."

In this way, the teacher clearly interpreted children's rights as relational and something that adults enabled, requiring some sort of interaction between adult and child. This included children being listened to and enabled to make decisions where appropriate. He perceived these to be realised through milestones related to age rather than as something incontrovertible for all humans:

"I think at this age particularly they should be able, you know, they're, they're eleven, they actually have, some of them will have official rights at eleven don't

they that, you know, for other areas of, of things shall we say? Human rights...And they're, they're talking about bringing the voting aren't they for sixteen year olds somewhere? And I, I don't think that's right, I mean I know it, but, but I still don't think that's right, because something, something like that you need to have a good understanding of what, what they're talking about."

Whether this understanding of rights is shared by other teacher's is outside the scope of this study. However, it is interesting that in a school environment that is defined by grouping children by age with set expectations for behaviour and attainment also by age, that rights are considered in the same way. This suggests a link between constructs of children's capacities and how they are treated that is not defined by reality and what children can actually do (or have capacity for). As far as the teacher was aware, none of the staff had ever had any training about children's rights and it is not part of initial teacher training which is concurrent with the researcher's experience and other studies that recognise the lack of awareness and education for adults (Lundy, et al., 2013). What was difficult to assess from this study was whether the staff recognised the development of participation as a necessary means to claim rights both in the future and as citizens now.

Children's rights were not substantive in the classroom or through the processes adopted by practitioners. The other adults who took part in the study had a similar lack of knowledge of the UNCRC (1989). Two had never heard of it or knowledge was limited: *'I lived abroad and met a lady who worked for the UN.'*

The children in Phase 2 had a very strong sense of fairness and justice about their involvement in school. Many argued often and some of this was an extension of what was happening outside the school. This was particularly marked by exchanges between one girl and another who had joined the class part way through the study. The first girl appeared threatened by another strong character being in 'her' space and was often disparaging and difficult toward the other. In turn the new character would retaliate but also often point out that the behaviour was very unfair the other girl knew very little about her. Two boys also joined the class later during the project. They were more readily accepted into the group with little issue. It was not clear why these differences occurred or whether they were gender related. The teacher was always welcoming and simply absorbed the new children into the routines of the day. There were no judgements about capacity to contribute to the project at a late stage. He just expected

them to join in and they did. This expectation from the teacher that children will participate and overcome any difficulties they have may be important to their developing capacities; however he did not extend this to all children.

The problem of inclusion is itself value driven. Whilst the school sought to label children and intervene where possible, the number of children experiencing difficulty meant they could not all be routinely isolated or segregated to sit with TAs. There was an expectation that the teacher should be able to speak and provide instructions to all the children at once. They were not always ready to do this and the teacher appeared frustrated when the class was unable to do so. However, he only occasionally allowed this irritation to show. The children clearly understood what was expected of them and appeared to accept this as fair. Similarly they quickly recognised the place for their own responsibility when group work was discussed early in the project.

Expectations about group work emerged from the children's own ideas about the challenges and benefits of participation as demonstrated in the voting activity in the first workshop. Negative responses to participation – arguments, fighting, lack of learning and cooperation – were also used to suggest ways of cooperating and learning together. These themes were to continue throughout the project and the children's evaluations show that cooperation presented both the positive benefits and negative challenges of the project but it was through these that participation was enabled. It was evident that the children cared very much about the quality of their relationships and developing cooperation so that they could learn and enjoy activities together. What was less evident was why these children were motivated to participate. Even though intergenerational work was minimal beyond the teacher and researcher's roles, the prospect of other adults coming in to school created an enthusiasm that lasted (as it did in Phase 1) despite the setbacks.

It is possible that the schools in both phases already shared some of the values necessary for substantive participation in that they agreed to take part in the research. However the researcher's experience of similar children's inquiry, where cooperation was not a main objective, suggests that the group approach is significant.

8.9 What Are Schools For?

Whilst Phase 2 did not specifically ask ‘What are schools for?’ many of the tensions indicate that a coherent answer is not possible given current policy and practice and lack of children and community involvement in deciding school purpose and provision. The children recognised school as something important with most attending regularly and engaged in class work. There was concern that they need a ‘good’ education, expressed as worries about children’s participation during the voting activity:

“Because people will say ‘no work’ and then you will get a bad education”

The teacher suggested the children lacked aspiration because of the community they lived in. These assumptions were rooted in a lack of experience among the children and their families about other people’s lives and what might be possible for them to achieve. The teacher was less convinced by the influence that schooling could have on children’s lives, even though it clearly affected their lives on a day to day basis by ensuring some of their welfare needs such as food, clothing and structure to the day. What he was describing as aspiration was based on the children’s perceived lack of willingness to work toward higher paid jobs through academic qualification. This limited idea of success based on income alone ignores the contribution that people (including children) make to their families and communities in other ways. It also places little value upon their human worth and rights as human beings, framing them instead as the next workforce whose value is only measured by potential to generate more money in the economy.

Whilst the school strived for children to be tolerant and form good relationships, these were primarily to ensure the pursuit of the academic outcomes that would improve the school’s status and not the individual growth of children. Education was associated with academic achievement and lack of it as failure. This was particularly evident in the teacher’s attitude to the children with SEN, one of whom he believed would be excluded from secondary school shortly after he arrived. The teacher was obviously bothered by this but felt that this was outside his control and as a result of the child not fitting into the system. He did not seem to consider the possibility that schools could be organised differently to ensure that the lack of inclusion already directed at some children did not get worse.

Children's rights are supposed to be inalienable because they recognise children as human beings and of equal value. The school did not regard children as equal to each other, or to adults, instead framing them as citizens in the making, some of whom would be worth more than others in their future employment. In this way the main purpose of school could be described as sorting those who are able to conform to the requirements of the National Curriculum and achieve good results in qualifications at a time set purely by age, so that they can access higher education and the best jobs. Whilst those who, for whatever reason, are unable to comply are devalued regardless of their intelligence or talents. This directly contradicts any notion of equity or the right for every child to an education that develops their full potential.

The rationale for PAR with a whole class of children rather than a group selected to meet certain research criteria was to enable these sorts of issues to be investigated. In doing so further questions are raised about *who* schools are for? A more explicit emphasis on children's rights within schools challenges practice, particularly lack of inclusion. The findings highlight the need to build cooperative skills in order to enable self-determined actions and learning. They show that the relationships between children and adults, and between children, are essential to this. This school already had an ethos that promoted respectful relationships but this breaks down when academic outcomes are given higher status than social education and building capacities for all children's participation. This hierarchy itself challenges children's rights, suggesting that England in particular is heading further and further away from its promise to embed these rights in law, policy and practice.

9 OVERVIEW OF DISCUSSION CHAPTERS 10-12

This short chapter outlines some of the key learning from the study that will be addressed in more detail in the following three discussion chapters and conclusions.

The study set out to understand the processes involved in participation and how these can be improved for children in schools. From the onset, understanding schools as complex adaptive systems that are dynamic and capable of change indicated that relationships are of utmost importance to this. Hence, the study design enabled relationships and the frames of reference that shape the spaces through which these occur, to be considered. Woven into these is the knowledge that people share in trying to understand their world and the values formed through this. Such knowledge and values continuously shape spaces where relationships are built, further knowledge created and interpreted with others, and thus the cycle continues. Formal education or schooling contributes to specific learning and shaping of spaces, which are not necessarily conducive to forming positive relationships. However, the structured nature of such learning also means that it can be changed to promote different spaces providing more opportunity for both deliberate and emergent change.

The research findings reveal the extent to which relationships not only influence processes in schools but also how the frames of reference and knowledge constructed through interactions shapes these relationships and thus the spaces through which they occur. Yet such spaces are not a fixed result of experience and location but instead dynamic meeting points where relationships grow or disintegrate in many directions through the interplay between individual frames of reference and society's system controls. Urry (1995) describes these spaces as "intersecting complex mobilities" (p.362), fluid relational processes no longer bound by place. Allen et al. (1998) suggest they are constructions of social relationships stretched over space and time. Larkins (2011) echoes this through her interpretation of children's locations as their lived citizenship.

However, I suggest that locations themselves, whether physical or virtual, are also important to the formation of relationships and thus how spaces evolve. Control of these can limit relationships through the interactions that occur. This shaping of space and resultant social networks is what is brought into the location in terms of past, present and future frames of reference, political pressure and expectation. Power gained through

inequities can be used to control which aspects of these dominate and serve to shape the space interactions and thus relationships; this presents a challenge to democratic values and human rights.

In schools, as this study reveals, there are tensions between individual members of communities' understandings of schooling and those processes imposed on school spaces, particularly about school purpose and the values upheld. Yet these are not necessarily rejected by children and parents whilst what is done is understood to be in the interests of children and society at large. There is also no legitimate means through which to bring about change in the system where a school is not addressing the broad needs of an individual child to ensure that they flourish (see Chapter 3). What happens in schools is symbiotic with dominant societal trends; to challenge the status quo means to challenge these trends too. This requires understanding of where power lies, and why, as well as how more equitable relationships challenge abuse of such power and can produce the interactions necessary to reshape school spaces whilst meeting both individual and collective needs.

This study contends that the UK is already nearing unsustainable societal control, evidenced through growing levels of anxiety, physical and mental health issues, manifesting unequally across different sectors of society even though the UK remains one of the wealthiest nations in the world (see Chapter 2). As school improvement measures (in the interests of maintaining this inequitable status quo above improving outcomes for children) continue to increase, and children and parents are expected to run faster and faster on the treadmill designed to fulfil this ambition, the educational purpose of a state school system (to provide education for all children so that they can develop to their full potential) and value to society, appears to have been greatly ignored in favour of less virtuous function.

The findings are a further indicator that what is happening is in sharp contrast to what children and adults believe schools should actually be for. Further to this there is some evidence that whilst they are currently being pitted against teachers and other professionals trying to carry out statutory requirements, children, and adults from their communities, share views about broader education and values that are not at odds with a teaching profession that in the main still views the education of children as a vocation and more than the simple transmission of knowledge that can be tested (see Chapter 3). This is discussed further in Chapter 12.

This study proposes that children's participation is not just a further agenda with which schools should comply, but instead an essential part of education for a democratic society that has the potential to challenge power abuse in the school system as well as transform classroom spaces for a more positive sustainable future. That could be why it presents such a challenge to school leaders. Moving beyond limited interpretations of participation as a purely consultative right, this thesis suggests it is a process of recognition where children from an early age begin to understand that cooperation and interaction with others enables them to create knowledge and understanding of the world, developing agency so that they can proactively shape spaces with others through which to learn and progress. Crucial to such recognition, in a society where democratic values are upheld, is appreciation and understanding of others, the ability to place oneself in others' shoes and respect different points of view, to reconstruct meaning and ultimately move forward for the common good.

It is through such rich relationships that trust is formed and safe spaces created where views may be shared, conflicts overcome and research actioned to construct new knowledge. This actionable element shifts knowledge from its objectification as a commodity to dynamic understanding, which is capable of being more thoroughly researched, debated and interpreted so that it serves to better society rather than a limited number of individuals. Thus learning to evaluate, discuss, communicate and construct knowledge (rather than just choosing to receive it where it is perceived as useful for oneself) becomes an intrinsic part of both participation and education in a democracy where it is possible for human beings to really grow and develop their potential in community.

The counter narrative to this claim is that children understand that collaboration brings rewards from an early age and use shallow objective knowledge to gain status in the school system and compete for their individual progress through compliance. In this way interactions may be power laden and relationships restricted to the processes adopted to meet limited goals. But this also suggests that the dominant narrative is the only narrative at play in schools and is stronger than its alternatives. The damage done through negative relationships to children who do not (or cannot) comply, along with increase in poor mental health of children and young people, suggests that what is happening is not making a positive contribution to their well-being and that in itself should be an indicator for serious attention to values and relationships in schools. This

research disputes whether schools can legitimately continue to ignore their contribution to the health of the nation, limiting attention to the statutory curriculum and public tests. It demonstrates that there is appetite for change and that this can be achieved through fairly simple adjustments to school ethos that enable children's participation, and welcome the creation of positive spaces for children's agency, through intergenerational work.

Much research seeks participants' points of view, in order to make changes that are representative of service users. But what is captured, whilst often revealing in terms of dominant trends, is only a snapshot of people's belief and experience and context based (see Chapter 5). This study was designed to collect data from a range of contexts such as *personal and individual* (through the questionnaires), *personal but given socially* (such as the post-it and voting activities) and then through *co-construction of knowledge* (through the final mini-conference and educational game activities).

The findings reveal that, whilst the themes that emerge are the same in each context, the emphasis of these themes shifts depending on the context and how data is collected. What is produced as a result of interactive participation (through the opportunity to evaluate, discuss, communicate and construct knowledge with others based on both individual and shared knowledge, experience and research) provides a richer, more useful interpretation in terms of enabling change and opportunities for emergence of new ideas. This suggests that research that truly seeks to involve children and adults in decisions about their lives needs to pay much more attention to the time, guidance and locations provided.

In schools this means that children's inquiry, supported by good intergenerational relationships, should be an essential (not additional) form of practice, that is more valid than other traditional teaching methods in terms of developing children's full potential; such relationships value inclusion, through cooperation and agency and foster knowledge construction (not commodification). In other words, genuine children's participation in schools is where they have continuous opportunities to learn with others and shape the spaces in which this takes place by fostering democratic values across the whole school community.

The following three discussion chapters consider the findings and literature in these terms, as well as what they means for theory and practice. The first chapter considers

why **rich relationships** are so important for children's participation and how the evidence suggests that this is the real problem that schools need to address to achieve the broader education and progress that is being called for. The second considers why **children's agency** matters and how intergenerational work can combat the dominant attitudes to childhood that prevent children's participation in schools. The third focuses on the role of teachers who are gatekeepers to classrooms and have the power to support or reject classroom change. It argues that teachers need to move from authoritarian classroom management, that ultimately maintains their own lack of status and fear of imposed change, and instead adopt the stance of **wise teacher**, embracing their vocation and enabling children to grow. Within each is the role schools play in enabling or preventing inclusion, and thus participation in decisions about classroom activities, and its potential impact beyond schooling. In effect it questions the extent to which the UK (particularly England) can continue to regard itself as a fair or democratic society, whilst maintaining a school system that clearly does not attend to the flourishing of every child and actively encourages inequitable relationships.

These chapters propose that children's participation in schools is not only a beneficial process for children but that it is the only way that children's dignity as human beings can be fully respected by adults who also claim to protect them in systems designed to structure society. Such dignity is at the heart of democracy as it requires us to take equality seriously and recognise that children, like adults, are all human beings worthy of respect. Article 12 cannot be separated from other rights and reduced to a simple process of collecting common views. It underpins children's potential to exercise their rights, and respect the rights of others; it is an indicator of their individual agency and capacity as human beings to influence social spaces from birth (or earlier). It reveals the untruths told by adults when they consider children's lack of power (resulting from an inequitable adult controlled society) as reason to withdraw or abuse their rights.

Thus children's participation must also be a matter of better intergenerational relationships.

10 PARTICIPATION AND RICH RELATIONSHIPS: TIME FOR CHANGE

10.1 Introduction

This chapter considers why rich relationships are important for children's participation and positive change in schools. It discusses evidence from this study and literature, framing these within complexity theory. Through the question 'What are schools for?' it suggests that children and adults can create very different classroom spaces where intergenerational participation enables children to flourish and broaden their education. It refocuses children's participation as a relational process that involves learning by understanding how knowledge is constructed, how frames of reference contribute to this, and how better relationships foster inclusive spaces where this can take place. In this way, participation is for the benefit of communities rather than individual gain, although there are personal and social advantages from such involvement. Central to rich relationships is building a culture of trust, where children and adults recognise themselves and others, what this means in a classroom environment and beyond. Trust is widely recognised as essential for sustainable society and children's understanding of the world (Szcześniak, Colaço & Rondón, 2012; Erikson, 1995). Thus time is essential as participants learn to value each others' contributions, overcome conflict and become trustworthy, through opportunities presented through shared inquiry, agency, co-construction and the responsibilities that these bring.

Both phases of this study involved intergenerational work because schools are part of an education system where children and adults meet to share and construct knowledge for the benefit of individuals and society. As discussed in earlier chapters, progress can be measured by how much schooling contributes to a neo-liberal status quo (which ranks children by how likely they are to benefit the economy, thus placing more value on some, than others), or alternatively by how much schooling contributes to fairer democratic society through which all can flourish. This thesis proposes that the latter is more sustainable, in an increasingly interconnected world, where democracy and positive relationships are important to combat elitism and uphold human rights. In order to achieve this, schools will need to look to broader educational goals and schooling,

which encourages social learning and participation, as well as sharing knowledge perceived to be useful.

This thesis proposes that all these can be achieved by adopting cooperative methods that enable agency and trust to be built through group and intergenerational inquiry. By emphasising children's participation as a means of inclusion, then extending the method to include academic objectives in Phase 2, tensions are revealed more explicitly, especially inequities between generations. These serve to deny children's rights in schools, as do policy, practice and education that counter children's and society's future positive growth. This invites questions such as 'who benefits?' and 'why?' which are important for a more honest appraisal of the school system and how children are treated within it.

Childhood constructs have tended to view children's social worlds as separate from adults; researchers have tended to do research 'on' or 'about' children, and only recently started to work 'with' them (Mayall, 2002, p.121). Even participatory research has tended to maintain this construct of child separateness rather than recognising human interconnectedness. Wyness (2006a) suggests that research must move beyond dominant paradigms to recognise children as agents in their own lives. This chapter discusses how this may be achieved, through recognition of the importance of intergenerational relationships and opportunities to develop them further in schools.

The evidence from the study demonstrates that participation is not about shifting power from adults to children, but instead a complex matter of providing educational opportunities for all, where everyone benefits and can take part in determining matters that affect their lives; thus everyone can utilise their own power. This means convincing those with most power that change is worthwhile, by bringing democratic values to the forefront of education and focusing on sustainable societal progress. In this way, children's participation becomes not a question of *why would we* but instead a question of *why would we not?*

10.2 What Are Schools For?

10.2.1 Rich Relationships and Frames of Reference

I suggest that the main obstacle to children's participation in schools is lack of societal attention to the purpose of schools. One parent in the study suggested that: "*I think the basic principle of what schools are for is already widely established and understood;*" the study, literature and growing concern of teachers and parents with the school system suggest otherwise. Tensions between children's rights and school policy and practice, as well as inequities between generations, are outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. Claims about what children's participation should ideally be provide a sense of how entrenched adults have become in the control of children's lives. It would be easy to (mistakenly) assume that this control, and seeming lack of respect for children's capacities, is based on knowledge about them or even concern; this research suggests otherwise, that schooling represents a neoliberal undercurrent of inequity reinforced by undemocratic policymaking, out of touch with the real value of education for sustainable democratic society. Lack of time and opportunity for people (including children) to establish dialogue about the purpose of schools maintains an unsustainable status quo and already failing economic system.

Top down policy and increased focus on data and targets, rather than the human beings who inhabit schools, affect practice but also how adults and children perceive what school is for. In this study there is evidence that when children and adults are asked about schooling now, which I have considered to be their *present* views, this contrasts considerably with perspectives based on past experience, as well as those constructed through participation with others. The themes expressed in the findings represent ideas about the **purpose of schools**: *future aspirations, citizenship, life skills, knowledge, social skills, relationships (recognition and wellbeing) and values*. **Present views** (at the time of the study and before taking part in the intergenerational work) indicate that *future aspirations* and *knowledge* are considered the main reasons why adults believe children should go to school. *Relationships* are less important; *social skills* and *values* do not feature at all. Children, however, suggest schools exist so they can gain *knowledge*, but this is followed closely by *relationships* (mostly friendship) and *future aspiration*. They include ideas about *life skills, social skills, citizenship* and *values* too. When asked why they go to school, the main reasons are about *relationships* and

knowledge, with *future aspiration* much less significant. Whilst *knowledge* and *future aspiration* may reflect the dominant trend in policy toward qualification they are clearly not the only concern of this school community. Similarly academic literature suggests that broader state education would be more beneficial and protect children’s rights (see Chapters 2 and 3).

However, when children and adults worked together to co-construct their ideas about what schools are for (which I have called their **future views**) there was more emphasis on *relationships* (which includes wellbeing and recognition). *Knowledge* is considered something that schools should provide but this appears to be in order to achieve their vision of how children’s characters should develop through *relationships*, *social skills* and *aspiration*, with *values* and *life skills* also gaining more emphasis. *Knowledge* itself, as an outcome of schooling, is almost insignificant, contesting dominant policy. The following *wordles* illustrate the data about ‘future views’ co-constructed during the intergenerational mini-conference:



10-a What should schools be for?



10-b What should schools ‘gift’ to children?

Significantly these views were expressed after the children and adults had the time and opportunity to participate with others, to consider the question ‘What are schools for?’ enabling them to think about their past experience with their more current

understandings (through the interviews and children's presentations) and co-construct a view of what they believed schools are for, using such insight. This shifted emphasis away from education to meet neoliberal concern with the economy (qualification and competition for the best paid jobs) to being able to flourish as human beings. Their descriptions were sympathetic to Article 29 of the UNCRC (1989) such as:

"Good rounded person." "Respect." "Tolerance." "Patience."

"Happy in life!" "Never quit." "Be good to each other."

"LOVE." "To be part of a community."

"To help you mix with all ages."

"Help you make new friends."

In Phase 1, there were also differences in how the participants placed emphasis on the themes in relation to their past views. Main emphasis on *relationships* is similar to that in their co-constructed future views but less positive. For example, past views included negative relations such as *bullying, teasing, being shouted and laughed at* whilst the views from the mini-conference suggested *friendship, patience and respect*. When participants arrived at the mini-conference and were first asked to do a simple post-it exercise, where adults and children provided all their present views on education, *knowledge* and *future aspiration* were emphasised the most, as they were in equivalent questions on the questionnaires. This is significant in terms of data collection as it suggests that current location (in this case a school hall) as well as context may influence participants to give a view based on current expectation or knowledge, (*present view*) if they are only asked to share their individual views in a social setting and not interact with others to construct these. Once asked to join their groups and talk to each other, they could recreate the 'safer' spaces they had formed through the workshops, cooperating in participatory activities over a period of time leading up to the conference, and interact in a more trusting manner. In doing so, they discussed the issues and considered their own and others' views and experience. The resulting co-constructed views of the purpose of schools suggest a more informed and thoughtful representation of what might be possible. This development of trust and dialogue is discussed in Section 10.3.

Whilst *present views* of schooling framed it as preparation for the future, in line with Christensen and James' (2001) work, participants future *views*, based on deeper exploration and understanding of their knowledge and how views emerge, were concerned with relationships and participation. This locates schooling outcomes and opportunities in the 'now' with ongoing current - not just future - benefits. Even though teachers' views were under-represented by this research, their commitment to primary education as a way of creating opportunity for the future through rich experience now and frustration with increasing top down control as described by Christensen and James (2001, p.73) is not at odds with the findings of this study. Neither is children's frustration and boredom as a result of their lack of control throughout the school day with similar "time-shifting" behaviour taking place.

This research evidences less divergence between adults' and children's views of what schools are for than their study suggests and instead that time is a factor in not only enabling change but also how views are shared. Lack of opportunity for children and adults to participate in shaping classroom spaces together is preventing schools from realising the potential that richer relationships provide for teachers to embrace children's participation and its broader outcomes. Intergenerational work, far from setting children and adults against each other in a struggle for power over how children spend their time, builds richer relationships that change school spaces and potential for emergence.

10.2.2 How Power is Used

Opportunities for communities to participate in transforming schools are limited. In terms of the two schools who took part in this study, there was a stark difference between the 'successful' faith school involved in Phase 1, keen to invite adults in to school and share what they do, and the Phase 2 School. This was still involved in making improvements following an unsatisfactory Ofsted, keeping parents and community firmly outside the school doors. Such gate keeping served to foster a sense of 'them and us,' with anecdotal evidence of blame for children's lack of progress placed on parents and the community because of high levels of deprivation, even though research disputes such causal links (Dobbie and Fryer, 2011). This was echoed by the teacher's concerns that children lacked aspiration because of their backgrounds and lack

of experience, and that many, especially those with SEN, just stopped progressing towards the end of primary school:

“...quite a few parents are unemployed so obviously they don't know any different and that's, you know, their parents were unemployed and their grandparents were un, and it's just maybe a bit of a vicious circle they're in.”

Prejudice against disadvantaged children and their abilities to reach high academic attainment are not limited to the UK but do appear to be culturally constructed. Following the introduction of ‘Teach for America’ in the late 1990s, high achieving graduate participants started to recognise that “the achievement gap is a solvable problem” (Dobbie and Fryer, 2015, p.3). However, in the UK the gap continues (Hobbs, 2016).

The most extreme example of prejudice was protracted negotiation that took place over plans to invite parents in to school to take part in the research, which was finally declined on the basis that the management thought it highly likely that there could be sex offenders amongst the parents because the school is in an area of high deprivation. The issues of power that enabled such decision making appear to be linked to emphasis on data driven performance and measurement (Section 10.4). However, what is relevant here is that lack of participation, not only by children but by the whole school community, *together* with top down policy, and hierarchical school system, enables such power to be established and unchallenged. The Phase 1 School, whilst similarly having to respond to top down targets, invested much more in terms of the growth of the children as human beings, which it extended to its parents and community. Even though there was still little evidence of their participation in shaping what should happen in the school, the strong faith ethos meant that this was not limited to the statutory curriculum, strategies or school managers’ priorities.

Whilst this study involves only two schools, they provide good examples of the fluidity of spaces within the system and the effects of power when simplistic hierarchical relationships are maintained. The difference between the schools’ attitudes to intergenerational work and participation suggests that school managers play a very important part in deciding how much they will allow top down policy to determine school ethos and how much attention is paid to children’s broader education and needs, particularly in primary schools. Such inequalities and the apparent ease by which

stakeholders can be excluded from determining what schools should be for, should be a major concern, given the current government's commitment to forcing academisation of all schools, which will further weaken social accountability. However, the school community is much more than a sum of this power and thus what happened in this study, particularly in the second school, is significant in challenging such inequality, as described in the following sections. This alternative vision of relationship focused learning sets the context for the following chapters' discussions and the conclusions.

10.3 Participation Refocused

Children's capacities, independence and contributions are often measured in relation to adults; thus dominant attitudes are easily construed as truthful identity. Equitable relationships are not normal phenomena in state school classrooms. Children are subordinate to adults, particularly the 'master' teacher. Those considered less able to contribute to the school's status are in turn subordinate to those considered more able (through their high levels of attainment). Children and families in communities of high deprivation are in danger of being valued less than those in neighbouring suburbs as they do not easily measure up to Ofsted's concepts of success (see next section). Even though the UNCRC (1989) recognises children as human beings who should all be treated with dignity and respect, how this is interpreted in UK policy and practice, particularly in England, belies a sense of incompleteness, or adults in the making, that appears to ignore this. Schools are both a reflection of such attitudes and complicit in establishing their place.

In terms of children's participation, much work has been done to challenge such inequity by consulting children and letting them have a say in children's services but less so in schools; yet this does not in itself change adult child relations. Current narratives of children's participation or the right to be involved in matters that affect their lives, present hierarchies of involvement for different circumstances, where ultimate levels of children's agency are at adults' discretion or in child only spaces. Some have gone further and recognised children's participation as a learning process (Percy-Smith, 2010) and an intergenerational problem (Mannion, 2007). This study builds upon these to define children's participation as an interactive, relational process, where learning is always involved because it is about sharing ideas and knowledge to

co-construct understanding; thus requiring participants to recognise and trust each other and in turn create safe spaces through which this can happen.

The previous section illustrates how the ways views are collected may limit data to *present* views, reflecting dominant trends that do not convey complexities involved in relationships, systems and knowledge construction. The current UK voting system, where participants are expected to choose between representations, without necessary information and means to explore and understand consequences of such elections, is a good example of oversimplification and corresponding lack of participation. In other words, change can be brought to bear through simplistic models of participation, but this is not necessarily positive for individuals or progressive for society and its systems. Thus, it increasingly excludes many citizens, including children. This thesis proposes that more useful and authentic participation is where change occurs as a result of decisions taken, through spaces in which rich relationships develop, where time and effort is made to share views and understand how these were constructed, as well as the consequences of action taken for others. In this way, representational participation is dependent on social participation, for democracy; otherwise it will maintain inequities and the status quo.

Participatory systems, such as councils, provide democratic frameworks but they should not constitute the main process by which participation actually occurs. This is something more complex and relational that can take place through all communities, from close family and friendships, to wider social systems. Children are not being encouraged to develop the rich relationships needed for such participation, raising questions about UK governments' actual commitment to democracy. Safe spaces, through which to participate in public spaces, are limited to locations such as social media, where such participation is easily abused. Yet schools provide locations for intergenerational participation as well as potential purpose. The next part of this chapter considers how this can be achieved in practice through attention to group work.

10.3.1 Group Work

The decision to adopt group work as the main approach, in the school based research, followed previous ethnography involving children's inquiry through school councils and cooperative learning. Through work with The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation between 2013 and 2016 (Thomas, et al., 2016), benefits were

recorded involving new opportunities, increased children's ownership, contributing and sharing ideas, working with others, and improved research skills. Whether as a support for individual projects or working on projects together, children benefit from group interaction, especially where opportunities are provided for projects to evolve over a period of time. However, other attempts to facilitate group inquiry in schools, by bringing children with similar interests together, fell short of achieving the dialogical and social concern that may be gained through projects where a social issue is first identified. Further to this, there are ongoing tensions surrounding the academic versus social merits of student inquiry, particularly in primary schools (Kim, 2016). A tendency to measure children's research outcomes through the production of formal written work was illustrated during Phase 2 of this study, when the children had to write everything they had found out so far in their 'best books' so that school managers could moderate the work.

This poses important questions for this type of research: Is choice of topic an issue? For example, is the process different for social issue based research or children's special interests? Can children's participation be enabled wherever there is a common interest such as in schools? Does concern about quality and the 'products' of student inquiry overshadow other outcomes such as those that enable participation? The Phase 1 question 'What are schools for?' provided sociological issues as well as potential for academic skills learning (visual representation, interviewing, recording and presentation). In Phase 2, the academic topic 'the Tudors' did not in itself rule out the potential for similar sociological inquiry but instead it was overshadowed by the school's objectives, dominated by children learning historical 'facts.' Participation was about children being able to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about their learning rather than full control of what they learned.

Arguments have been made that children's inquiry and other participatory processes may act as a new form of governance and control (Bragg, 2007; Fielding, 2001b) that effectively furthers children's lack of autonomy in matters that affect their lives. Where a sociological issue is identified (and potential suggestions for change the intended outcome) then participation can become a means of simply achieving an already identified goal. However, where participation itself is one of the main aims, enabling children and adults to understand each other and develop potential spaces for emergent change, children can develop their own ways of researching and presenting their

studies; thus adults preconceived ideas of what is acceptable – used to maintain control – are no longer viable. In this way, products are more difficult to predict, presenting challenges for schools where measures of limited data and predictable outcomes (such as tests and qualifications) are the norm. Lack of pre-determined product of learning is also difficult for children who have grown used to a system where they may not have been free to produce their own interpretations of learning since the Early Years Foundation Stage.

During Phase 1, the process moved children progressively from working individually, to partners, to group work with a free choice of who they wished to be with. There was a tendency for them to move in to the ability groups in which they usually worked and children with SEN were isolated or expected to work with a TA. This suggested more deliberate intervention was needed for Phase 2. This time children were asked to think about what interested them about the Tudors and what they would like to find out more about, before starting the process of forming groups. Children were asked to form groups through their chosen interests and thus there was a broader mix of ability. Although some children objected to being in groups with children they had not previously worked with or did not know well, when it was explained that they may be able to help each other and learn how to cooperate better by doing so, they agreed to do so. Some children manipulated their choices to be with friends, but for them this was a first step toward creating a safe, trusting space, which was to become increasingly important as the research moved on. Intervention in group arrangements however was not enough to address potential power issues. They needed support to establish good communication and respect.

10.3.2 Building Trust through Shared Responsibility and Conflict Resolution

The children in Phase 2 were given resources to find out what they could about the Tudors, in relation to their chosen theme (e.g. Laws). When the groups came together to discuss their findings there were difficulties with social skills, such as turn taking, summarising and the most competitive individuals placing more value on their own work and criticising others' input. For the teacher this meant a very noisy classroom, potentially disturbing others, and children off task as they struggled with new responsibilities and interactions with their group. However, this was also a useful

starting point for the children to learn about their relationships and what would be necessary to progress.

The researcher introduced soft toys to the groups which children held when it was their turn to speak, with the expectation that others' would then listen to them. With the researcher's guidance, this quickly progressed to the children beginning to recognise that they should also hand the toys over when someone had a question or wished to engage in discussion about what was being shared. Some children were more successful than others at this but it worked as a focus and means to recognise that others in the group had valuable contributions to make. At this point, it was possible to have open, meaningful group and class discussions about what behaviour works and what does not. This was reinforced through teacher intervention where behaviours were more personally challenging, for example modelling positive language to discuss contributions rather than using derisive or abusive comment. This included discussion about why people may find it difficult to interact positively (by not contributing or acting up) so that children could make more reasoned decisions about their own behaviour and attitudes. Observations in both schools suggest that they had previously followed school teachers' judgements about disruptive behaviour being detrimental to them, condemning rather than understanding different reasons for behaviour, placing onus on the individual to conform rather than the class being more inclusive.

Such intervention worked particularly well with one child who found it very difficult to identify an interest and once having done so refused to work with a group with similar interests despite the teacher's efforts to encourage him. Discussion revealed that he was frightened of their rejection and not being able to contribute anything that they would think was worthwhile. At first the rest of the group were visibly cross at his behaviour and very critical. However, they were asked to consider what had been happening in the classroom and what they knew of the child's circumstances at the time which they chose to share: constantly being told off and removed from class when often he just did not know what to do, being assessed for ADHD, being medicated against his own wishes, told off in class for non-compliance by teachers when the researcher was present, leading them to believe they could also get in to trouble by working with him.

They quickly realised that the class had been excluding him because of his difficulties and tried very hard to overturn this. Their efforts, whilst sometimes initially patronising, made a huge difference and he was able to start sharing his interests and ideas and his

contributions were valued by the group even if he chose to work aside from them on some occasions. Over the term a genuine respect developed between these children. Building trust in this way was a challenge for many of the children in Phase 2. Whilst teachers spent time making sure that arguments and negative behaviour were left outside school or sorted in the playground, this was fundamentally about creating an orderly classroom, rather than regard for such matters as part of the children's education.

Developmental theory (such as Erikson, 1995) suggests that trust is an important stage of children's development. There is little evidence of concern for trust and trustworthiness as essential precursors to participation and education in schools. Other work suggests that it is important in developing children's confidence to deal with new situations (Szcześniak, Colaço & Rondón, 2012). According to Deutsch (1960) trusting behaviour occurs when children cooperate because they believe this will help them through ambiguous situations, perceived as harmful or beneficial (cited in Szcześniak et al., 2012). Unless children can trust each other they are unlikely to have the confidence to take risks associated with these ambiguous paths and make less trustful choices. One child who participated least really struggled to trust anyone in the class but had also grown used to being segregated from them:

"I mean I know there's one child in this class in particular who will quite happily work on tasks on his own and he will do it, he will get on with the work but if you try and put him in a group he struggles, he, he struggles to work, you know, cooperatively and, and likes to do it his own way, in his own set little way, so then children like, they, they are forced upon it they can separate themselves and all of a sudden they don't want to do it, they become a distraction to the class but I think going this way, this will help him."

Another child realised she could take a lead position in planning and getting the group to do the work needed. However, this dominant attitude conflicted with two others who were far from cooperative. It was evident that in the past the substantial negative interaction that took place between the children was alleviated by keeping them separate or telling off. What was lacking was any real attempt to model better ways of interacting in the classroom which could thus challenge their perspectives. For the child wanting to lead, this was a way for her to be heard in a classroom where she normally struggled

and, in her eyes, achieved very little. She found it very difficult to retain leadership with a tendency to try to bully rather than treating them more fairly.

Despite the conflict, there was evidence of marked change in interactions over time. Addressing conflict by building participation in this way is challenging, but provides children with valuable learning opportunities and chances to grow as young people. It is also consistent with Phase 1 intergenerational *future views* of schools where they hoped children would have:

“Good ideas.”

“Gaining confidence.”

“Improvisation.” “Wisdom.”

“Be prepared to try new things.”

The most significant evidence of growing trust was how the children shifted from a position of ‘I’ to that of ‘we.’ In previous related projects this was observed as children began to share their ideas more openly and react in positive ways to each other. In this study more detailed observation suggests this occurs when they begin to work productively together, discussing and evaluating what they are doing, at a point where they begin to understand that what they do, and how, influences the whole group.

10.3.3 Developing Agency

The space changed because children were able to develop their agency. This is important as it enables children to recognise not only what they *should* do to embrace education but also what they *could* do to shape this.

In both phases, the teachers and additional participating adults acted as catalysts toward agency (their respective roles are discussed in more detail in the following two chapters). The approach and intergenerational work appear to trigger a cycle of experience and imagining that enables children to both contemplate and take action. In other words, the more they understand what should be done (to achieve, or construct something), the more they could envisage what they needed to do and thus were able to plan and take steps toward this, without the teacher or researcher having to provide instruction.

In Phase 1, the locations used confidently by the children expanded, as they to work around the classroom, in corridors and the main hall, making use of the resources available to them. Similarly, in Phase 2, whilst all work was in the classroom, the children began to move around and move furniture or use the floors and other locations more effectively, whereas previously they were confined to locations chosen by the teacher. This extended beyond the research workshops to other lessons with the teacher reporting:

“I have noticed it in other areas quicker than that, some of them just get on with it, they'll get on with something...And even when they've finished because ... if you finish I have a challenge area, so get something from the challenge are... quite often they'll finish and I'll watch them get up and [I'll ask] where are you go? Going to get a challenge... oh right, you're done, yeah, right, brilliant”.

One of the biggest challenges to children's agency was their initial lack of experience of inquiry and thus imagining possible outcomes or products of their work. Observations during Phase 2, suggested children were used to teacher led tasks and set outcomes and had to make very few decisions regarding their own studies. Whilst National Curriculum targets formed part of the planning for this research and ensured the children had access to relevant resources, what they chose to do with this was left to them to decide. Originally the researcher and teacher suggested they might consider artworks or design technology type outcomes, given the researcher's own experience of teaching in this area. However, it rapidly became evident, through discussions and the work on display in the classroom, that the children had very little experience of such work and so little to draw on in imagining products or themes that they might wish to explore. The children's decision to develop board games was based on their familiarity with these as a resource to improve learning and engagement at lunchtime clubs. Many enjoyed playing these and the social interaction required. Practical skills to make high quality products were limited (an area that will be considered in future work) but the actual suitability and success of the groups' games in communicating what they had learned and could share as a result of their inquiry was good and of a level consistent with National curriculum targets for their age.

Adults involved in the Phase 2 evaluation of the games with the children described some of the benefits of the children's inquiry and interpretations through the games:

“I feel the children have been more ‘hands on’ therefore learnt more.”

“It re-enforces what they are researching”.

“Empowering, enables children to consider their own feelings.”

“Gives them a chance to see different points of view and experience a real-life situation.”

10.4 Why are Rich Relationships a Challenge for Schools?

Chapters 2 and 3 describe some of the tensions in schools and suggest that many of these arise through dominant constructs of children and childhood, neo-liberalism and limited recognition of the role relationships have in education systems. As explained in Chapter 4, social systems such as state schools are complex systems where incalculable interactions take place each day in spaces shaped through human relationships and frames of reference and political emphasis on what must be achieved. However, these spaces are adaptive and respond to the motivations and pressures of power from individuals, media and policymakers alike. Both phases of this study show how classroom spaces can be differently conceived and the potential benefits of this.

It appears that tensions between internationally agreed rights and UK governments’ agendas are being concealed by the state school system, through growing control and enforcement of practice and deliberate exclusion of communities’ participation in shaping what schools are for. This may indicate real fear of change by those in power who cling to traditional class based success systems to the detriment of equality and societal progress. Such abuse of power can be used to manipulate interactions and thus spaces in schools and leads to untrusting relationships. Participation is essential to challenge such inequity; without attention to relationships it may also unwittingly contribute to simplistic populist decision making reinforcing what it set out to dispel.

Education legislation and school policy are dominated by processes designed to meet set, narrow outcomes for schools and children. Schools have become conveyor belts for the development of future workers: success measured by qualifications and levels achieved, with little concern for the idea of human flourishing (Brighouse, 2007a; 2007b; Fielding and Moss, 2011). Technocratic management, target driven culture and treatment of children as data objects has led to all the teaching unions instigating calls

for change and to reject government proposals such as the White paper in circulation as this thesis was developed (DFE, 2016). Other pressure groups have taken their participatory inquiry to government with little response (for example, The Compass Education Group, 2015). Detrimental effects on relationships are beginning to emerge particularly claims that schooling is already affecting children's mental health; schools are struggling to meet the needs of children who are not getting support because of lack of mental health services (ATL, 2016, p.13).

Ofsted, introduced through the 1992 Education (Schools) Act by the Conservative government, with its growing powers to enforce standards, may be the biggest barrier to children's participation in schools. Lack of democratic accountability by those devising and operating the inspections may also contribute. Controversy continues to follow Ofsted's practice including frequent changes to criteria and related statutory guidance and problems with companies commissioned to meet its obligations such as lack of teaching experience among the additional inspectors who carry out most inspections and hiring of head teachers previously removed from posts for unsatisfactory schools.

The latest *Common Inspection Framework* (Ofsted, 2015) does not mention good relationships, either in the classroom or as part of community cohesion, nor the role they play in implementing processes. Instead it is dominated by assessment of processes and outcomes. There is a focus on knowledge (rather than its application) which must be "communicated well to children," (Ofsted, 2015) with assessment used to identify failure. In this study, the Phase 2 School's moderation processes highlighted this. Ofsted state that parents, carers and employers "must be engaged to understand standards expected" (ibid.) and opportunity promoted through learning but there is no acknowledgement that children, families or communities themselves are part of these processes or have any agency in shaping them or indeed the outcomes they themselves might hope to achieve. This validates school policy that keeps them outside the school gates.

Personal development is defined through being, and understanding how to be, a successful learner by attending school, following rules and being part of a positive school culture, even though there is evidence that such conformity is not actually positive at all (Smyth, 2006; Sullivan, 2016). Most of the children in this study conformed most of the time but there were many instances where they were disrespected. Instead, schooling appears to limit personal development to provision of

information on how to be healthy, avoid abuse and exploitation, or how well the school *prepares* children to respect others and contribute to their communities rather than their *actual well-being* and interaction with others. In this way knowledge has become a commodity that schools must deliver and children its consumers. If they reject or cannot engage in such transactions, it is they who are considered to have a problem, not the system itself.

The language of schools has changed accordingly to reflect the process of learning but this does not necessarily reflect education which has broader purpose (Biesta, 2012a, p.583): pupils have become learners who must attain set criteria, thus they must be made ready to learn, with disadvantages (flaws) removed and behaviour modified where necessary; teachers are practitioners enabling learning objectives to take place and measuring progress; headteachers are managers or directors assisted by business managers. The emphasis on schools providing this ‘ready for learning’ environment, order and rigorous application of national strategies means that those who have worked hard to improve community relations and made real effort to provide structure, support and opportunity for children who otherwise have little, without the resourcing necessary to meet the academic targets required, can result in failure of a school.

Children and learners (as they are dually described), especially those from vulnerable groups (including those with medical conditions), are supposed to be evaluated in terms of how they individually benefit from education provided by their schools. However, there is no redress for individuals who have been let down by the system. Ofsted have to assess compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998 and must ‘act in the best interests and well-being of service users’ (2015, p.8). However this is evaluated through schools self-assessment and improvement plans and not by how well individual children flourish. Interestingly the framework states that leaders, managers and governors should:

“...provide learning programmes or a curriculum that have suitable breadth, depth and relevance so that they meet any relevant statutory requirements, as well as the needs and interests of children, learners and employers, nationally and in the local community.”(Ofsted, 2015, p.12)

Yet this can only be aspirational in a system where outcome based performance indicative data used to measure schools do not evidence this.

This latest framework is important in understanding the context in which this study took place and how its results are interpreted. The children in Phase 1 had completed SATs and this was seen as an opportunity to engage in broader learning opportunities. The children in Phase 2 were in the first term of Year 6 and, whilst the exams were months away, there was already incredible focus on these and getting children to the required levels. As a school that had recently been in special measures, a high percentage change in staff including those in management followed and there was a great deal of emphasis on evidencing children's academic progress. There was some indication that children were acutely aware of failure and their place in achieving the required levels (see Chapter 11) and this negatively influenced their enjoyment of school, behaviour and self-esteem. The study workshops countered this to some extent but also acted as a stark reminder of how the children's other lessons, particularly in Maths and English were non-participatory, required them to sit in groups labelled by ability (previous attainment) and perform tasks aimed at achieving age appropriate levels.

The extent to which this was given priority was evidenced through the teacher's lack of action when a particular child refused to cooperate with requests from himself and other children to the point of aggressive and abusive behaviour; he knew this child was capable of the higher levels the school needed to evidence SATs but that he would not do the necessary tasks if he entered in to conflict with him. The importance of conflict is discussed in the previous section. In contrast, those likely to achieve lower levels, including children with mental health issues and other SEN were frequently excluded.

Opportunities for more creative curriculum work, which could also build social skills, were sidelined. For example Art, Design and Information Technology projects could only be started after completion of the SATs. The teacher in Phase 2 believed his own primary education had been broader, with more opportunity for group work where children had to interact with each other and less social problems in the classroom:

"...even in English we would do project work but it was a case of right, you're a group, this is your project title, off you go...But that was it then and then we would present and then we'd get graded on it, so, you know, but I remember we, we never argued or fought and threw things."

Even with such priorities, both schools in this study had a strong ethos of care for children and their learning, suggested by taking part in the study; teachers' hopes for the children sometimes contradicted what the school provided:

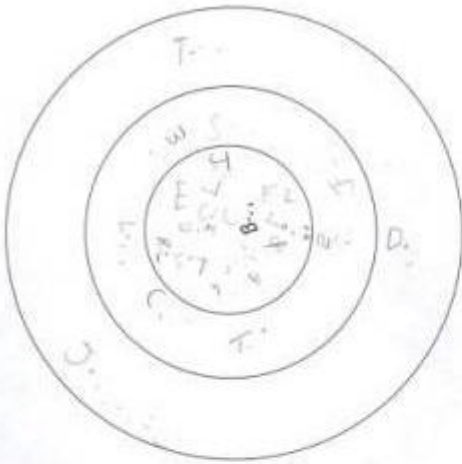
“Well I think in terms of like hopes, if the children by the end of it can, can be more self-regulated and, and take responsibility and actually kind of be able to do the, the task as such and in good detail and, and produce good quality work independently and take responsibility for, in a way it's taking responsibility for their learning.”

During Phase 1, the main class teacher did not take part in or ask about the study or show any interest in the children's activities or progress suggesting they lay outside her main concerns and purpose. The Headteacher in contrast joined in one of the intergenerational activities and was enthusiastic about the project in terms of its extra-curricular potential. In the Phase 2 school, the main class teacher took part in the study and was motivated by the possibility that the children would improve their social skills. He was clearly worried about how some of the children would cope in secondary school, acknowledging that many had problems with organisation and independent work.

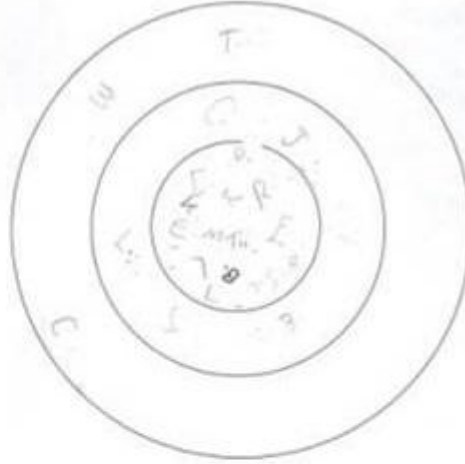
The children in both schools were able to participate by shaping different classroom spaces which enabled them to start to take more control of their learning and work more effectively with the adults and other children present to do so. The children were all positive about their participation. The teacher's and children's fears about the potential for worsening behaviour were shown to be unnecessary by their actual engagement and positive efforts to cooperate throughout each phase.

What was most revealing about relationships in the study was the way in which those who were most able to participate, positively, also gained most from the projects, with those struggling gaining least. This is illustrated by the circles evaluation illustrated below. The centre of each circle represents the first descriptor for each evaluation question (see the boxes underneath), working outwards with a layer for each alternate descriptor, so the fourth lies outside the circles.

How do I feel about my participation in the project?



How valued have I felt during the project?



I have been actively involved throughout the project and able to share my ideas. I have contributed a great deal.

I have been actively involved for most of the project but sometimes I have not been able to share my ideas. I have been able to contribute.

I have not been actively involved throughout the project. I do not feel that I have been able to share my ideas or contribute very much.

I have not been involved much at all. I do not feel I have been able to share my ideas or contribute anything.

I have felt really included and valued throughout the project.

I have felt included and valued for most of the project.

I have not felt included and valued for some of the project.

I have not felt included or valued at all.

10-c Children's evaluation of their participation

One of the children who had not felt actively involved or able to share ideas or contribute very much placed himself at the centre for the second question, indicated that despite this he felt really involved throughout the study workshops. This child had substantial SEN and was excluded for part of the project. Another felt included and valued for most of the project, however she had joined the school part way through. The third placed himself at this third layer for both questions and had most difficulties engaging with others as described earlier in the chapter. This raises further questions about expectations and teacher's relationships with children who they find most challenging and is discussed further in the next chapter. It also raises questions about teachers' abilities to work positively with children who have social communication

difficulties and assumptions made about group work and such children. In both phases, all children were able to engage positively with support for some of the time and this suggests potential for further work in this area. One such child placed himself at the centre of the circles for both questions. So did another who had joined the school part way through, suggesting that group support and development of positive interactions and trust are also important for positive experiences of participation.

11 THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN'S AGENCY: CREATING PARTICIPATORY SPACES THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL WORK

11.1 Introduction

This chapter considers how children's agency developed during the research workshops and why this matters. It discusses how intergenerational work can combat challenges to children's participation in schools, by recognising both children and adults as significant actors in a process that fosters inquiry and cooperation. It suggests agency is needed for meaningful participation as well as learning, encouraging symbiosis between democratic participation and education. Agency and cooperation involve children in a psychological process of recognition of both themselves and others. This reinforces their potential to work together for everyone's benefit, enabling each child to flourish through inclusion and encouragement (rather than competitive interactions) and understand when social power is abused. In turn this also furthers their knowledge and understanding of human rights, their consciousness of human dignity, both as - and of - other human beings who influence and shape social spaces and what happens within these.

The findings suggest that adults can act as catalysts for such change and that, by paying more attention to relationships, intergenerational understanding can be fostered. This challenges preconceived notions about capacity and protection that allow adults to otherwise limit children's agency and thus participation in matters about schooling. In doing so the findings also suggest that a change in emphasis of purpose is needed in schools, to further democracy and inclusion as essential standards of education that are integral to better outcomes not just for each individual but also wider society. Thus more creative and meaningful methods should be devised through which to evaluate what a 'good education' actually means with children's participation at its heart.

The school activities forming the PAR were designed to challenge constraints to participation in schools, encouraging children's agency through less power laden intergenerational and peer relationships. This requires a fundamental shift in attitudes, as well as school staff and children willing to make the practical changes necessary to

achieve this. However, it was only by the researcher herself taking part in the classroom activities that the importance of a more complex understanding of children's agency was revealed, and its relevance to both to the processes involved in participation and the creation of spaces through which this can occur. Children's agency, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, is marginalised in schools (Wyness, 2006a, p.141).

As Qvortrup (1994a) suggests, school roles are shaped around the notion of children as human 'becomings' rather than 'beings' in the now, which ultimately undermines their human rights. Since the introduction of the National Curriculum, what is taught has been increasingly determined by policy and statutory guidance developed by people remote from school communities, constraining classroom activities through their deterministic detail and measurable outcomes. Age creates further hierarchy between groups of children and between children and adults (Wyness, 2006a, p.147; James and Prout, 2015) reinforcing inequitable ideas of human worth. Even though New Labour emphasised that pupils should take more responsibility for their own learning (DFEE, 2001), their perspectives continue to be ignored. Parents are increasingly accountable (and often responsible) for children's learning (see Chapter 3) whilst teachers deliver a curriculum that reduces their vocation to that of technician. As Wyness (2006a) suggests:

"...as yet children are at best peripheral actors within an educational network of accountability." (p.154)

The findings of this research suggest that limits on children's agency may also constrain their capacity to shape the spaces through which positive interactions and participation can occur. Furthermore, such spaces enable intergenerational understanding, challenging perspectives that allow such limitations to be imposed. In order to evaluate these claims further, it is useful to consider how the study enabled children's agency to develop and how spaces for participation evolved.

11.2 What Does Children's Agency Look Like in Schools?

11.2.1 Changing Space

During the first session of Phase 1, the children presented themselves behind orderly rows of desks ready to receive instruction and direction from the teachers and

researcher. Observations suggest that they were used to the teachers micromanaging their classroom environment and activities and were less at ease with opportunities for discussion or to work out for themselves what to do. Through a drawing activity, designed to generate discussion about community and belonging, they shared experiences and talked about common groups such as family, friends and clubs. As Dias and Menezes (2013) study suggests, children can represent and discuss concepts about the organisational structures of societies. However, unlike their study (where children were directly asked about their school and participation) in this study few children chose to represent schools in their drawings when considering their relationships. Yet the questionnaires (completed before the school workshops) revealed that relationships dominated children's views about school. Adults too used examples of past relationship experience to illustrate their views about schooling. Whilst social interaction and relationships (including friendships) are so important to children in schools, it does not follow that they view school settings as places where social participation (Percy-Smyth and Thomas, 2010, p.359) occurs, as they do with other communities. Children's responses to questions about participation in schools provide a better indication as to why this may be the case.

Children have very little primary involvement in school decisions that affect them, including the curriculum. Whilst some of the children who took part in the questionnaire felt their lack of participation in school matters was unjust, many also believed participation was impossible because it could (in their view) lead to disruptive behaviour and thus the collapse of the systems in place. A dichotomous relationship between adult decision makers and child students was keenly expressed, with no indication that there might be other less simplistic but reasonable relationship possibilities or ways to interact. And yet after only two sessions behaviour did begin to change and normal power inequalities began to shift. In other words children can and do form relationships in schools and this is important to them, but they have to do this within the constraints imposed by teacher regulation of their day and activities. When this regulation is changed to enable children's agency, they can take time to more consciously develop positive relationships.

This was not simply a process of taking power from adults and giving it to children so they take responsibility for all decisions and actions. Instead it was about developing agency and understanding others enough to be able to respect capabilities and

contributions, a concept that was then made a priority in Phase 2. Responsibility in this way was about everyone working together, to take the project forward to their best ability, rather than wasting time making unnecessary comparisons about particular roles or contributions or arbitrary attempts to make everyone perform the same tasks. Thus the idea of responsibility shifted from that of explicit challenge to teamwork to a more implicit form of recognition and thus fairness which is discussed further in Section 11.4.

Children were able to utilise the opportunities presented to further their agency. Once they were reassured that there were no 'correct' answers to their inquiry tasks and that it was pertinent to explore knowledge with other children, signs of progress toward a collaborative response began to emerge and children's agency in doing so. Whilst both children's and teachers' concerns for order (as evidenced in the data, see Chapters 7 and 8) were expressed in the questionnaires, this did not feature in the classroom, possibly because children's greater involvement once carrying out more self-determined or at least responsible tasks meant they had little time to be distracted by other concerns. In both phases there was an initial period of excitement as the children began to work together, for example as they recognised similarities and differences in their questions for interviews. This dialogue was free flowing and encouraged movement around the classrooms, which until that point was unusual. This was an important stage as it cues a shift in use of location and how the children interact that in turn begins to change the space.

The teacher in Phase 1 was less perturbed by noise levels than her Phase 2 counterpart, recognising that decision making and learning take place when children enter meaningful dialogue (Psaltis and Duveen, 2007). This enabled the children to recognise for themselves the problems that arise when 24 children all talk and move at once they determined how to overcome this and maintain a more orderly environment without resorting to authoritarian control. This transition stage also heralded shifts in expectation. In both phases, children were clearly used to being told what to do, when and in what manner, so a period of adjustment was necessary for them to begin to join the decision making process and determine their actions. Whilst it could be argued that the children began to take more responsibility for their actions, it is questionable as to whether this was actually a real increase or instead differently demonstrated action. The teacher (and researcher) was still ultimately responsible for what happened, but the children were no longer objectified to the point that they were controlled like pawns in a

game by the teacher. Instead they were able to act more freely whilst being respectful of advice offered by others.

Children are already actors in classroom spaces (see Chapter 3) but have very little input in to the purpose or intended outcomes or how they might respond to these. The inquiry based activities during the workshops, whilst introduced and controlled throughout to some extent by the researcher, enabled the children to take more initiative and think about the purpose of their actions in relation to and with others. This thesis suggests this sort of recognition is a crucial aspect of enabling participation in that it is the first step toward consciousness of both one's own agency and the potential to affect the space through action with others. So, rather than approaching children's agency as a form of self-determined action only, it considers it as a process of social interaction in that it is affected by how much or little regard there is for others in the location and thus the space created. The activities encouraged children to think about the wider implications and impact of their decision making, using more complex cognitive processes that reflect the complex social relationships in all aspects of their lives. As Dias and Menezes suggest:

“only a cooperative environment creates a genuine exchange of thought, discussion and reflection necessary for psychological development to emerge, including the elements of critical thinking, tolerance for diversity, conflict resolution or expression of one's point of view that constitute some of the psychological prerequisites for civic and political participation.” (2013, p.27)

Whilst this is not and does not claim to be a measurable psychological experiment, these links between children's participation and psychological development theory in education are particularly relevant when considering the transition stage necessary for children's agency in classrooms described earlier; relatively small adjustments are necessary to change the space and thus enable higher cognitive practice. Psychological theories suggest how social interaction influences cognitive development, how new knowledge is constructed and thus social influence. Cooperative interaction is associated with the most advanced cognitive operations and solution forming with transactional discussions leading to reasoning (Psaltis and Duveen, 2007). Rather than what is learned being about the knowledge shared or constructed, it is the interaction or how it is shared or communicated that “is decisive for the construction of new knowledge” (Psaltis and Duveen, 2007, p.80).

Psaltis and Duveen's (2007) research about conversation types reveals the significance of dialogue, interaction, reflection and coordination of perspectives in children's developmental progress and co-construction of knowledge. Where inequalities were used to limit time spent on task and control outcomes, discussions were limited and progress constrained. Similarly in both phases of this study, children originally found it difficult to move away from asymmetrical interactions (where they sought to control each others' actions to get the task done) to those where they considered other members in the group. However, like Psaltis and Duveen's (2007) work, where there was resistance, conflict increased with parties expressing points of view and recognising each other as thinking agents, but employing more elaborate argument to persuade. This was the point where the teacher in Phase 2 became increasingly uncomfortable because it may also result in noisy episodes. Psaltis and Duveen (2007, p.95) suggest, however, that where there is also more explicit recognition of the problem set, so discussion leads to deeper understanding through chances for those with opposing views to question and reflect, solutions are more skilfully devised (relating this to Piaget's (1995) ideas about the necessity of cooperative, reciprocal, reflective and mutually respectful relations for children to be able to construct rather than simply receive knowledge).

During both phases at this transition stage, observations of children's interactions suggest that they had to enter in to broader discussions in order to work out not just how to address the purposes of their research but also how to go about it. This required a time element that would ordinarily be negated by the teacher giving prescriptive instruction. These conversations were more natural, and thus diffuse, but it was the opportunities presented by such conversation time that enabled the children to think things through, begin to self-determine their actions and, crucially, identify what they needed help with (see Chapter 12). As they moved beyond this stage, discussions became less diffuse, and less likely to stray in to unrelated subjects and action, so that individuals within each group used their time more purposefully. This suggests a link between shared purpose and meaningful participation.

There is evidence that those who cooperated with others the least also felt less involved and valued by others (see Chapter 10); significantly they were also less able to recognise the benefits of working with a group, instead maintaining a self-centred approach. This was particularly pronounced in Phase 2 where such behaviour was reinforced by the more usual school approach.

Psaltis and Duveen (2007) suggest there is little measurable empirical evidence of how, or how much, dialogue improves development, however, there is much that suggests positive interaction is an effective way of learning that broadens outcomes and experience beyond reductionist instruction and transmission styles. This broader element is important because it offers the opportunity for schools to attend to social learning otherwise limited by reinforcement of inequalities through power laden interactions. It may also open up the system itself enabling it to mutate. Whilst time was required in the study for children (and adults) to adjust to a different way of working and being, it was not the time per se that resulted in better relations and children's agency but the changes in expectation and interactions that enabled the space to evolve.

By actively encouraging participation - encouraging children and adults to enter a process of recognition (of themselves and others), in order to cooperate in ways that benefit each member of the group - the researcher (teacher) is also effectively encouraging the complex thinking that is necessary to solve problems on a social, as well as academic, level. In other words, interactions that provide opportunities to evaluate, discuss, communicate and construct knowledge. Whilst time is necessary for interactions to take place and relationships to be forged, this is an ongoing process that happens in schools despite statutory curriculum and strategies. Thus it is the quality of these interactions that provides opportunity:

“...it is not the length of a problem-solving session that makes it a better or worse arena for cognitive progress, but rather the nature and structure of the microgenetic process, which contributes to the stability of newly acquired knowledge and the possible emergence of novelty.” (Psaltis and Duveen, 2007, p.95).

11.2.2 Inclusion

In both phases, the children's classes were described as mixed ability by the schools with a proportion considered to have SEN. All these children (when allowed, see Chapter 12) demonstrated that they were capable of joining in with discussions, offering and listening to others' views and making decisions to some extent. They were also capable of evaluating their own actions and progress and contribution to their group. Where they believed this was a problem, this appeared to be linked to low self esteem, based on a track record of academic failure reinforced by the teachers' assessments. In

other words, they were often told what they cannot do, but rarely what they can. Anecdotal evidence of this was recorded as the researcher supported a child with maths during an observation session; having spent time abroad she had missed two years of the age related curriculum but was offered no additional support. By starting with what she could do, and moving on to the newer stages, she was soon able to grasp new concepts and recognise that there was no problem with her ability, which she had previously described as poor.

In both schools, the teachers worried whether less academically able children would be able to take part in student inquiry related activities to the extent that the teacher in Phase 2 tried to find an alternative class for one boy who he believed would really struggle to participate. This is consistent with assumptions about the higher cognitive processing necessary for inquiry being associated with age and high ability or developmental stages (see Chapter 5). However, the findings suggest that such children can participate and develop their own agency even where their academic achievement is limited. This raises questions around assumptions made about thinking and learning when simplistic attainment records are used to justify lower expectations. That is not to suggest that appropriately differentiated activities should not be designed so that all children can develop further, but that these should support their inclusion within the peer group, rather than be so different that they must work elsewhere and are thus excluded.

The children in both schools were all able to demonstrate a degree of agency and cooperation that was otherwise ignored by teachers and TAs, presenting a real challenge to inclusion. For some children, the teachers' reliance on whole class instruction meant that they often did not know what to do, and this could easily have been alleviated by better one to one or small group communication by staff or other children. In the case of the child mentioned earlier, the researcher spent time preparing resources so that he had something to bring to his group, aiding communication and most importantly his capacity to work alongside and be supported by others who in turn learned by developing their own communication and evaluation of the work produced.

Student inquiry offers opportunities for children to develop their education in ways that they find more interesting or at least more relevant (see Chapter 5); more importantly this research suggests that this is possible for all children, not just those considered the academic elite. In previous related work children with SEN or those considered less

academically able struggled to utilise their own agency and self-determine what they would do, producing very little or hindering others. This happened even where children were asked to work in groups because each child was still in the main responsible for their own project and there was little attention to the greater needs of their group. In contrast the methods used in this study, where a broad topic was introduced by the researcher (In Phase 1: *What are schools for?* and in Phase 2: *The Tudors*), meant that there was shared group focus from the start, even though children could interpret this in their own ways. During Phase 2, the class chose their own themes and worked in groups with others with similar interests. This resulted in some groups of children who did not normally get along or work together, and thus ample opportunity to stress the need for cooperation and the qualities necessary to achieve this. Emphasis on fair treatment, trying to get to know each other's capabilities and planning tasks that enabled everyone to contribute, enabled the children's relationships to develop through increasingly rich interactions. The main focus was trying to establish positive ways to participate through shared goals and (re)construction of knowledge, in contrast to other inquiry where being able to choose and promote a particular individual interest are usually promoted.

It is impossible to predict at what point an individual child will recognise the value of working cooperatively; yet it was clear that all the children who managed to do this also went through a process of starting to recognise themselves in relation to the group and what they could do (some with encouragement and scaffolding from the teacher, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 12). For many, this involved starting to recognise others as autonomous individuals who could also provide benefits to the group, whether in terms of social or academic support. This is significant as group work in schools is often about achieving individual tasks (for individual assessment), with little or no concern for social learning, and this can quickly become an exercise of social power where little learning actually occurs for most group members (Johnson and Johnson, 2015b). Thus the interactions and how problems are communicated and solved are important.

This thesis suggests that instead of considering children's participation in terms of power – where marginalised people must struggle to take power from those who have most – it is more useful to consider it as an interactive process that involves recognition (of self and others) and learning (through sharing and understanding one's own and

others knowledge and experience) that also shapes the space through which relationships are built. In other words the process is about the quality of interactions:

“In this sense, both cooperation and the styles of consistency and fairness are interactional forms in which there is recognition of the conversational partner as a thinking, autonomous subject rather than a more instrumental recognition of the partner through the assertion of an asymmetrical status or power.”

(Psaltis and Duveen, 2007, p.81)

Furthermore, it is about the quality of spaces through which interactions occur; equitable participation enables everyone involved to shape this space.

Consultation processes that simply provide a chance to give a view to an interested party (for instance a researcher or school management team), reduce the knowledge shared to a commodity, which can be used or rejected by those in receipt, maintaining shallow relationships that constitute hierarchies of power. Thus participatory activities designed to negate the effects of such power tend to involve those in power ‘allowing’ others to speak, or take some ‘designated action,’ but do not involve otherwise unequal status groups to build better relationships.

Recognition and time to think enable children and adults to appreciate the potential contribution of each other as a community brought together by a societal system. Thus inclusion is not just about taking part, but being able to take part in a meaningful way, because the space evolves to one which is jointly shaped (rather than controlled) by those involved. Being able to affect the space positively for the benefit of individuals and the group is the point at which agency enables participation.

Putman (1993) suggests that it is a quest to get closer to truth that motivates humans to make further investigation; if we already believe we have attained absolute truth or as much as we are capable of knowing, there is little motivation to go on to expand and reconstruct ideas or participate for societal progress. Education is a lifelong process that thus requires lifelong means of engagement and inclusion. Schools can begin this process by providing opportunities for children to develop their agency and participation. This is more than empowerment through autonomous activity. It is the capacity to see how, where and when it is possible to affect change. That means having opportunity to explore and develop relationships, that enable spaces to change and systems to evolve, so that relevant learning can occur.

11.3 Intergenerational work: A catalyst for democratic change?

Enabling children's agency, using cooperative inquiry to change practice, is not the only factor in transforming the space. At the beginning of both phases, the children were told that there would be an intergenerational aspect to the activities and that this would mean people from their communities would be asked to take part at school. This appears to have been motivating as well as a means to generate dialogue about interactions that were to take place and the topics to be explored. They were enthusiastic about the opportunity to hear about adults' school lives in Phase 1 and themes related to their topics in Phase 2. The decision by school managers in Phase 2 to disallow adults in to school highlighted some differences that suggest adults provide a role in moderating or at least modelling social behaviour, which works for or against participation. During group interactions in Phase 1, the children's behaviour toward each other and quality of interactions appeared to improve following the interviews. It appears that because they knew the adults would be visiting again, they were eager to share their findings and their solidarity grew.

This was also observed to some degree in Phase 2, with the eventual promise that adults would be allowed to support the final workshop and share their educational games, but the benefits were less pronounced.

Two children in Phase 2 found it very difficult to move through a process of recognition to work cooperatively with others although their difficulties were similar to those of others in Phase 1. It is possible this could have been tempered if the same level of adult inclusion had been enabled to produce positive intergenerational space where these children's earlier experiences of adult relations might have less influence. These children were already very aware of their own agency and power to accept or reject what was expected of them and it was evident that the unequal treatment afforded to them contributed to a lack of cooperation throughout the workshops.

This suggests that discriminatory practices by school management and lack of redress for children, teachers, parents and community to challenge these when schools do not respect children's rights is a major challenge for children's participation. This was particularly marked in Phase 2 where children's family status was used to justify abhorrent discrimination (suggesting their parents had a high potential to abuse children in the school) which in effect barred any member of the community from the school

unless they already were employed and DBS checked. In taking this decision the children were essentially deprived of an opportunity to participate in activities that could build intergenerational understanding across the wider school community.

11.4 Agency and Recognition

Lack of attention to opportunity for children already greatly marginalised by society, disregard for their participation and education rights and ease at which unsubstantiated claims for protection can be used to justify unfair practice, suggest children's participation should be located within a relational and thus multi-disciplinary field of theory and practice. Intergenerational understandings affect the way knowledge is constructed and shared so that it can be used to either abuse power or make positive societal progress. Attention to the psychosocial processes that take place during interactions and broader engagement with justice are essential to avoid oversimplification of the processes through which systems evolve.

Honneth (2004) argues for a plural theory of justice based on Recognition Theory. He does not support segregation of respect for rights and human dignity – or participatory equality – from fairer redistribution of resources and opportunities (p.351) in the way that some have begun to describe participation, because of their ambiguity and tendency toward dichotomised understanding (particularly criticising Nancy Fraser's, 1997, work). Essentially the idea that participation can be achieved by enabling everyone to take part in society without considering the concepts of recognition (love, equal treatment and social esteem) provides a way to ignore or at least claim the impossibility of more progressive change, maintaining neoliberal concern of the economy and the unequal value this places on people. Participation without recognition is at its extreme a manifestation of tokenism, made acceptable by the rhetoric of rights; unlike concerns for human dignity, democratic concepts and belief in an alternative better future that led to the formation of such rights, they offer little hope or attention to the complexities of human systems.

Fairer distribution of resources and opportunity are essential to the process of participation, as well as its outcomes, because these are direct manifestations of the relationships and interactions that occur between human beings within communities, which are magnified at the global level. Technology is beginning to make it less possible to ignore relationships at the system or inter-societal level because we can

communicate and interact more quickly, on a wider scale, affecting change for good and bad. But it is possible to ignore the consequences of such relationships and interactions where there is little recognition of self in relation to others or of others as autonomous human beings who can themselves affect change. This thesis argues that positive participation, where spaces are created through which to (re)construct knowledge and build understanding, opening up systems to emergent change, is possible when agency is developed through a process that begins with recognition, thus enabling understanding and cooperation toward shared and meaningful goals. Inequities have an impact on this, limiting interactions and reducing the potential quality of relationships. These inequalities are driven not just by power but by the unequal share of resources that those with power maintain. It is relevant in schools because it is not only policy that ensures such inequalities are maintained but also the attitudes of those involved.

This is illustrated by the differences in attitudes of management teams in the two schools that took part in the study. Although not intentionally observed to make comparisons, there were stark differences between attitudes and these affected the intergenerational work and the children's opportunities to develop agency. In the Phase 2 School, efforts were being made to address some of the affects of poverty on learning such as providing free breakfast and snacks for the children. However, this was to ensure they were 'ready for learning' and able to behave as expected, rather than any societal responsibility to improve the lives of those in the community. Parents were criticised for their perceived lack of care. However, the lack of opportunity afforded to the children (and deliberate containment of their schooling to the school building) was controlled by school managers whose attitudes and focus were on raising test standards rather than the children's growth as human beings. Thus their participation, although acknowledged as useful in the school (through teacher and child discussion) was tokenistic in that it served the adults' purposes without any concern or recognition of the children's capacities or potential to contribute to their own education or a more positive community. This was essentially a lack of recognition of the children as human beings in the now, made easy by their objectification as 'pupils' or 'students'.

In Honneth's (2004) terms, recognition is about love, equal treatment and social esteem which are themselves built and expressed through interactions and relationships. Systems that seek to over simplify or control these interactions and relationships by avoiding such human complexity, also serve to dismiss love as a necessary aspect of

positive interaction, disrespect human dignity and ignore individuals' potential. Thus the roles people play in providing or reducing opportunities and resources for those marginalised just because they are children, or as children with less resources than others or as children with SEN or other status, is just as important to system spaces as policy and practice either imposed or adopted.

In the Phase 1 school, where there was more opportunity to interact with other adults and forge intergenerational relationships, what emerged was learning and understanding by all participants which served to emphasise the school as a central location for the wider community. Whilst the school is in a more affluent area, as a Catholic primary school it draws from a wide geographical and socio-economic area. Arguments about the extent to which faith schools themselves contribute or limit inclusion are outside the scope of this thesis but could also be addressed through better engagement with complexity and recognition theories. However, genuine respect for children, their families and wider community was evident. Honneth's recognition theory presents love, equal treatment and social esteem as necessary for personal identity but in his outline of a theory for plural justice he also acknowledges that:

"...in modern society, as we have seen, the conditions of individual self-realization are only socially secured when subjects are able to experience intersubjective recognition not only of their personal autonomy, but also of their specific needs and their particular capabilities". (Honneth, 2004, p.363)

In terms of school spaces, this means that children's agency is not only essential for participation but must not be confused with simplistic notions of choice or personalised learning. To meet specific needs and develop individual capabilities, the space must also be capable of adapting to different needs; children's agency should be encouraged in a way that enables them to shape the space through recognition of their own and others' potential contribution and needs. In terms of co-operative learning this may mean that some children need more time and other resources because they need more to flourish. Where the focus is outcome or attainment driven, this reduces the process to a production line where this will never be the case; hence many children never flourish or develop their full potential because the space cannot adapt to their needs. In this way the process of teaching and learning in schools becomes simply a means to an end (a notion rejected by Dewey, 1938) rather than an important part of education and social participation in itself. Biesta (2011, p152) suggests that it is this experience itself – one

of lived democracy where subjectification is important; it is the ‘ultimate learning context’ (cited in Dias and Menezes, 2013, p.27). By bringing parents and other adults from the community in to this cooperative experience, democracy is emphasised in a much broader, relational context that can enable children to learn about citizenship through both the formal and informal curriculum (Kerr, 1999).

11.5 What This Means for Schools: Better Ways to Evaluate Practice

Intergenerational work, using cooperative inquiry to develop children’s agency and further participation, also reveals the social interdependence that exists between people of all ages, which is often hidden by the adult – child dichotomy promoted by schools. Children are not fully dependent on adults any more than adults are fully independent of each other; thus interdependence offers a more useful concept through which to understand relationships (Cockburn, 1998) and consider the legitimacy of adults’ power and control of children.

Whilst both schools were happy to take part in the study, welcoming interventions that could contribute to children’s participation and increasing independence in readiness for transition to secondary school, neither management team (and thus governing body) took up the offer to learn more about children’s rights and the role of children’s participation in schools. Teachers in both schools were supportive and interested in the children’s growing agency and did not question their growing autonomy around the school. However this was not enough to encourage them to find out more or consider extending the work to their own classrooms. Class teachers tended to work independently of each other and there was little evidence of collegiality in either school although relations in general appeared positive.

Emphasis on the technocratic elements of teaching, increasingly hierarchical or business type structures and lack of collegiality may be a barrier to change in schools, maintaining the status quo. In terms of societal progress this is a worrying trend as opportunities for emergence of new ideas and innovative thinking are limited. However teachers themselves continue to provide mutual support and express concern at the system via the teaching unions, all of which have stressed the need for broader education and less imposed change in recent years. The National Union of Teachers funded the *Compass Education Inquiry* (Compass Education Group, 2015; Lawson and Spours, 2011) which is committed to a comprehensive school system that provides

social as well as academic education and asks what sort of society the UK wishes to be. Whilst the final report (Compass Education Group, 2015) was disappointing in that it failed to make links with children's rights or indeed children's participation, its commitment to "Big Education" that "*invokes a more extensive social alliance between learners, parents, families, friends, communities and wider stakeholders as people collaborate to help individuals to strive and flourish throughout life*"(p.18) suggests the importance of relationships and agency, which have otherwise been ignored by policy, school improvement measures and their inspection by Ofsted.

Relationships are not mentioned at all in the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework (2015). According to the current *School Inspection Handbook* (Ofsted, 2016), relationships between staff and students must be 'exemplary' in outstanding schools and 'positive' in good schools, but how this is measured is limited to evidence and judgement about leadership, in particular children's behaviour and how they are disciplined, rather than evidence of relationships that enable children to flourish. Cooperation is mentioned in assessment of Early Years only, whilst decision making 16-19 year olds only. Democracy is only considered in terms of children's knowledge of the parliamentary system. Even though social development must be considered before making judgements about the school as a whole it is limited to children's:

"...acceptance and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; they develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain" (Ofsted, 2016, p.35).

The actual values that define such democracy are not defined and neither is there a need to evidence that they are understood or adopted within the ethos of the school. In other words there is no necessity for schools to ensure democratic values or systems are used during their teaching or as a fundamental basis for relationships across the school community or the structures in place including those of representation such as school councils and parent groups, which are also unmentioned. As such, lack of motivation to engage in discussion about children's rights is perhaps understandable. School leaders, staff and pupils must not tolerate prejudiced behaviour; however this does not extend to all types of prejudice such as age or simply being a child. 'Personal development,

behaviour and welfare' does not require evidence of good relationships but instead evidence of learning *about* staying healthy.

This lack of engagement with children and families' lived experience within the school system, over simplification of the relationships involved, and emphasis on academic performance rather than social development continues in the latest White Paper (DFE, 2016), despite calls for an alternative approach. Parents' influence on decisions taken about children in school is mentioned, but confrontational in that it is about being able to make complaints rather than how better relationships. Indeed the only relationships mentioned are those between schools, local authorities and businesses, disregarding those who interact within the school. It is suggested that the proposals will:

“Support schools to develop pupils into well-rounded, confident, happy and resilient individuals to boost their academic attainment, employability and ability to engage in society as active citizens” (DFE, 2016, p.124)

Yet there is no attempt to redefine the system itself as one which actively promotes social development with needs such as mental health and SEN considered additional rather than integral aspects of the system. There is also no attempt to learn from those systems that appear to be working better than the UK such as the Nordic systems which are based on a high trust, high professionalism model (Compass Education Group, 2015) where attention to relationships is essential.

The way in which agency is enabled or disabled is fundamental to children's participation and thus the claims of this thesis. But it is also a crucial aspect of education that is being ignored by policymakers and theorists alike in reductionist attempts to improve the state school system. As the system itself has grown more complex, a chasm appears to have grown between those with most power (include school leadership teams) and those involved directly in children's education on a daily basis – children, class teachers and families - and this is enabling their objectification of the most significant actors in the school at the expense of what this study demonstrates is possible – children's social learning as an integral and democratic aspect of their education.

Participation is more than just individual agency. It has a complex social context at both the personal and system level and as such evolves because of and through relationships. When individuals come together they may be participating or taking part in a social

process. However, if they have little agency in the space created or reason to recognise themselves or others in relation within that space, then the social process itself may be devoid of learning, positive knowledge construction or shared purpose. Where instead these are a priority, better relationships can be formed through positive cooperation and interaction, shaping the space further and providing room for emergence. Participation is a variable construct (as suggested by Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010, p.357) but children's participation in a society committed to fairer democracy and progress, where all humans are valued equally, should build spaces where individual agency and recognition are enabled through rich relationships allowing social systems to evolve for better society.

As stated previously, it is unhelpful to distinguish between individual and social models of participation as separate concepts because individual perspectives are constructed through interaction with others (whether virtual or physical) and are contextual. But how we choose to use what we come to know appears to be determined much more by the quality of interactions with other individuals and groups and the relationships formed. Representational participation is not problematic in itself, but rather the way that knowledge is constructed and then used to express a view through this *is*. If what is expressed is views made popular by media attention (as appeared to be the case of immigration that dominated during the Brexit referendum) then new ways of thinking and being are less likely to emerge. Without meaningful participation at the social level, it is very difficult to learn and co-construct knowledge that is socially useful and had benefits for all.

The findings of this research suggest that in the two schools who took part, opportunities for participation were limited, especially for children who lived in an area of high deprivation. Yet these children were very capable of agency, recognition and establishing rich relationships and able to use these to shape spaces where they learned from each other, co-constructed knowledge and realised outcomes that demonstrate their growing understanding of society and potential contribution to it. This is all consistent with broader aims for education that enable individuals to flourish and develop positive society.

Children's participation as described in this study is about changing spaces within complex social systems that are ultimately shaped by relationships. Whilst Osberg and Biesta (2008) evoke fear by describing the space of emergence as "violent" (p.325) it

perhaps demonstrates just how brave and prepared school managers must be to face what may be uncomfortable changes, without the assurance of predictability to make way for new knowledge, experience and ideas. Through recognition, individuals take a risk by exposing themselves to others and the difficult processes of conflict, building trust and trustworthiness and cooperating with others toward outcomes that may or may not be favourable. The children and teachers in this study were able and willing to do this and changes to the teacher's role are discussed more fully in the next chapter. They demonstrated that participation is a process of *being* that can be common to people who invest in the idea that democratic values are worthwhile. Thus as Osberg and Biesta (2008) suggest:

“As educators, we are responsible, instead for enabling people to become more unique, more irreplaceable as singular human beings. The educational responsibility, in other words, is to ensure that everyone being educated is able to become an irreplaceable someone.” (2008, p.326).

This is why participation must be encouraged as an everyday process in schools rather than a more limiting practice of quasi governance. At the personal and social, rather than system level, it is about the rich relationships that shape spaces. It is through these spaces that systems can evolve.

12 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS

12.1 Introduction

Tensions between schooling and children's participation rights arise through dominant paternalistic, hierarchical social structures and their positioning of children as subordinate to adults (see Chapter 2). Schooling is something 'done' to children (Devine, 2002, p.312) legitimised by perceived future needs and protectionism, to the extent that children's immediate well-being, future public health and democracy are sidelined. Limited attempts to address a growing crisis in the UK state education system are through additional rather than embedded resources (for example school counsellors). School processes and practice that favour competition, inequality and exclusion are left in place and even favoured by an inspection regime that rewards control of children over their well-being.

Children's participation rights are not recognised in schools other than through consultation to meet adult driven objectives. School councils are the exception but there is no statutory requirement for these (other than in Wales) and they are usually adult controlled. The extent to which such paternalism is entrenched in the classroom through both adults' and children's views is illustrated in this study through children's concerns about participation rights at school and their fears about teachers losing control of the class or responsibility.

Interrelationships between education, democracy and participation rights provoke questions about the ethics of school practice. The introduction of other adults to act as catalysts for participation, shifts some of the burden of the class teacher as the sole provider of knowledge for children, and instigates dialogue about the purpose of schools. This unexpectedly revealed the importance of teachers and their relationships with children and different uses of power. Those currently holding most power over schools increasingly do so through dubious hierarchical decision making, driven by competition rather than quality of education or concern for children and young people. Those who must deliver this are no more passive instruments of the system than the children with whom they work. Instead teachers and other adults who make up school

communities, including parents, are social agents with the potential to shape spaces in schools for the better.

This chapter considers how tensions in schooling undermine teachers as well as children's agency and thus potential to participate in developing classrooms through attention to the participation rights. It discusses how the teacher's role must change to enable children's participation in schools and what happens when such opportunity presents. It considers how the authoritarian model of teaching has continued to dominate classrooms in response to external pressure from a system that undermines democratic values. It questions just how much teachers and families support such values, given the evidence from the study, and the silencing that takes place in schools that renders participation a threat to the status quo.

The findings are situated within growing debates about understandings of knowledge and its construction and calls for broader education that acknowledges the intersubjectivity of learning and thus questions the purpose of schools. They suggest that intergenerational relationships are key to overturning the unethical control of children that places limitations on their development as citizens, with changes to the teacher's role essential to the transformation of spaces through which participation can occur. By building more trust within classrooms, and thus trustworthiness of both adults and children, teachers have an important role to play which re-casts them as *wise* and *knowing* rather than dominant and controlling. The chapter concludes with the teachers' views on this shifting experience, the positive benefits to children as well as the challenges.

12.2 Authoritarian Teachers and Subordinate Children?

The speed at which technology has developed to enable almost instantaneous, global communication has resulted in troubling times as human beings come to terms with the dangers that present when such connection is used for power and control over others rather than the means to forge rich, positive relationships. Yet these tensions did not arise because of technology; it simply magnifies the extent to which knowledge and control of interactions are continuously used in both positive and negative ways. As the world catches up with this growing complexity, education for children has done very little to address how knowledge is constructed or used to further societal progress or exploit others.

Whilst some descriptions of participation work in the Majority World have tended toward social inclusion and empowering of marginalised groups (such as the development work described in Johnson, et al.,1998) others have started to consider how participation, particularly in schools, may also be used as a form of governance and thus potential exclusion (Bragg, 2007; Fielding, 2006; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010); in this way it may be used to sanctify allocation of resources through consultation or the most popular vote. In schools children are knowledge recipients with privileged adults maintaining increasingly tight control over the production of the most successful students through their ability to adapt to a standardised process. This limits children and young people's participation (where it exists at all) to adult acquisition of knowledge about how to improve compliance and knowledge retention, through control of behaviours (which distract from such standardised process) as well as correction of those who do not fit the ideal component type. Everyone has capacity to learn and UNCRC (1989) Article 29(1a) encapsulates how this should enable all children to flourish, but this has no priority in UK school systems where adults control who has opportunity to learn and what is allowed to be learned.

Education in its broadest sense is less about such objectification and more deeply rooted in the subjective (individuals sense of the world) and how as social beings we make sense of the world together to construct knowledge. Thus education is about intersubjectivity, the ways through which human beings interact and arrive at knowledge and the various types of interaction and contexts that enable its construction. Knowledge is not a finished product that can be sold for gain but instead a work in progress always temporary and ready to be extended and re-shaped as new experiences and opportunities to understand the world are presented through interaction. In this way, as the findings of this study suggest, knowledge that is constructed and shared is influenced by frames of reference – past, present and future contexts – and therefore what is produced through any form of deliberate participation that seeks to construct knowledge about specific phenomenon can only ever provide a representation of any one or combination of these. However, through interaction and shaping of spaces where richer relationships are formed as this study demonstrates, it is possible for children and adults to construct deeper understanding of such knowledge and each other that may ultimately be more useful in opening up spaces for change and thus emergence. Hence, participation is as much about the process and the learning which occurs through it, as it is about working together to address a problem or need.

The intersubjectivity of broader education is where schooling and participation meet. It is through understanding how knowledge is created, and how interactions shaped by values and experience affect both context and outcomes, that the political nature of knowledge sharing is revealed. Control and limits on whose views and experiences are valued not only increase inequalities and threaten inclusion but also reduce opportunities to develop communities and society through their one major asset: the unlimited intersubjectivity, and thus combined thinking capacity, of all people involved. It is the quality of relationships that are important to enable contexts through which everyone can contribute and create knowledge:

“...the creation of shared meaning and new understandings requires conditions of genuine intersubjectivity such as those which exist between parent and child, between siblings, or between friends.” (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2004, p.27)

This intersubjectivity is awakened through genuine opportunities to participate but adult control of children in schools challenges this and arguably limits children’s potential to take part. The findings suggest that teaching in schools continues to promote transmissive learning with state testing regimes encouraging teaching to the test, limiting broader education.

In both schools, lessons between Autumn Term and May were dedicated almost entirely to preparation for SATs. Lesson observations and plans suggested that most objectives were based on measurable outputs, or knowledge objects and skills that can be replicated in a test. There was no evidence of personal or social development targets in formal plans although the teachers’ interest in this was evidenced by them taking part in the research. Creative subjects such as Art and Design Technology were carefully controlled so that children produced similar products rather than expressions of their experience and creativity (evidenced by the work on display and lesson plans). Such control over the children’s environment, time and activities by adults subordinated children to passive recipients of curriculum knowledge objects, preventing them from engaging in positive influence of the space for their own learning, or from building positive relationships with everyone in the class. Friendships and conflict were supposed to be left out in the playground, with children instructed where to sit and with whom, reducing many of their interactions to artful subterfuge. In terms of participation, this may as Devine (2002, p.304) suggests leave children “with negative implications for their perception of themselves as active contributors to the schooling process.”

The findings revealed that children are concerned about participation in matters that affect them in schools and that there is a strong paternalistic influence on their views. For example some believed that it would mean the teacher was no longer in charge and this would lead to chaos through poor behaviour in the classroom. At the same time, they also recognised injustice in the way they are treated and positioned as subordinate to adults. For example, they believed it is their education and so they should have some say in what they need to learn. Thus, whilst schools form a symbiosis with society, clearly what is being reproduced is based on adult terms and not necessarily mutually beneficial for the children involved. Children's lack of agency also appears to contribute to a lack of understanding of what participation may actually mean. Whilst children can recognise injustice they may be less aware that they can actively shape social systems through their participation and this may also limit their education in terms of future political involvement. Adults' control and subordination of children maintains this misconception, even though this may be counterproductive in the future because as Giddens (1976) suggests:

“Social Structures are both constituted by human agency and yet at the same time are the very medium of that constitution.” (p.121)

Whilst this structural duality does not provide the theory for change, it does indicate that it is those with most agency who have the power to alter the contexts or spaces through which this can take place. Who influences such spaces cannot be achieved through direct control; complexity demonstrates that structures emerge through boundless inter-related interactions. However, contexts for emergent change can be enabled by ensuring that all those who form the system have agency in the system. Limiting children's agency and opportunities for reflexivity, reduces their chances to understand social participation and this must surely impact on their agency. As Giddens (2013, p.5) suggests: *“All actors are social theorists, and must be so to be social agents at all.”*

Children's positioning in relation to adults is further entrenched by hierarchies that exist in schools between adults, especially those between leadership, teachers and parents. In the Phase 2 school, lessons were frequently interrupted by the Deputy Head as she chose to address the children about negative matters such as behaviour in the classroom and outside school (regardless of how busy they were). Such behaviour would not have been tolerated from children who were instead controlled by the use of complicated rules, sanctions and rewards to ensure the potential for such behaviour rarely occurred.

Control of resources was also used to reinforce low status. For example, the children's chairs were uncomfortable and difficult for them to sit in for long periods, with time out of them used as reward to motivate compliance. The teacher's chair was more functional as well as comfortable. Children also provided further examples of inequity through the questionnaires in Phase 1.

Whilst children demonstrated and developed their agency during both phases (see Chapter 11), lack of opportunity to do so was evident outside the study activities, which presents a marked challenge to their participation. Devine (2002, p.305) suggests:

“...a change in their rights and status will only come about by challenging the structural positioning of children and adults with the society at large.”

Whilst children already challenge classroom structures through their cooperation or lack of it (Smyth, 2006), the degree of control, justified by their subordination, means that they are rarely able to influence the system in the way that adults do. Similarly parents and other community members may have roles to play within the system but very little influence. Examples from the questionnaires illustrate just how little they perceived this to be. Moreover, system change is not just about enabling individual agency and challenging structural positioning as neither of these elements eliminate why power inequities actually arise. Addressing school inequities by seeking to redistribute power per se ignores the relationships and social interaction that shape the system, and complicate its structures and processes, allowing resourcing inequities to form. Power itself cannot be removed from human interaction because it is what drives and motivates its existence. It cannot be given or taken away as this in itself is derived through unequal relationships where particular individuals believe they have the right to dominate others. Instead *how* power is used or abused to influence interactions is important, as it can shape spaces either to empower individuals to use their agency more effectively for mutual benefit, or to dominate and disempower, to other ends. In both cases, cooperation is possible, but it is how that cooperation is achieved that is significant.

Recognition can be seen as a pre-requisite for social justice developed through participation (Honneth, 2004) where all individuals are able to work together to shape spaces through which to communicate, share ideas, construct and evaluate knowledge. In other words, the experience of participation is just as important as what is learned

from it. Realisation of self in relation to and with others ensures the intersubjectivity of knowledge is valued through the sharing of experience and (re)construction of further knowledge. In schools the teacher has the most power to realise the benefits of this within the classroom and thus it is his or her role that needs to change.

Teachers and children create spaces together in schools but children are dominated by teacher control. Tensions arise as classroom teachers carry out the structuring curriculum, devised by policymakers and enforced by school managers, with little regard for children's well-being or capacities to develop the system. Teachers who unquestionably use their power to control children and meet requirements may do so with little attention or care for their human flourishing or regard for children's rights. Teachers who recognise children as human beings with rights are pulled in many different directions as they make choices about how to exercise their own power whilst being subordinated by structures that reduce their own capacities to participate and ignore their pedagogic knowledge by engendering a technical approach to teaching and learning. This authoritarian teacher role sustains tensions because neither teachers nor children can bring about the sort of transformation that the vocation of teaching envisages. If each child's expected attainment through school is already predicted then there is little reward in making sure this happens and indeed none whatsoever if they fail. However, the shift in teacher role as described in the remainder of this chapter reveals teachers have much to gain by adopting children's participation in classrooms and little to fear through a change of approach.

It is not just how power is used to dominate others in classrooms that is problematic, but how it is used to control resources (Devine, 2002, p.308). The authoritarian teacher role ensures that children have very limited access to resources and become reliant on their teacher as the sole provider of knowledge and main resource for their learning because of the focus on a very narrow set of outcomes known only to him or her (particularly in primary schools where they usually have one main teacher for the majority of the time). If instead outcomes are broadened to include social and individual personal development to encourage children to flourish, then the process of education itself becomes not just important in delivering outcomes but part of the outcomes themselves. In this way it is almost impossible for one teacher to be sole resource but they retain an important role in coordinating experience and opportunity through their capacity to broaden or limit access to resources.

A criticism of inquiry or project based learning, and indeed developments in education technology, is a perceived lack of need for a teacher which ignores the substantial contribution social interaction makes to learning through intersubjectivity (the reason why group work was adopted as an approach for this study). By attending to adults and children themselves as resources for learning (in that they (re)construct knowledge through their participation) education is realised as a social process with schools providing locations where spaces can be created for children's participation and through which to learn. This requires a major revision in the underlying purpose of schools by policy and curriculum developers but not, as this study illustrates, children and parents, whose understanding of the school system is already socially bound and concerned predominantly with relationships (see Chapter 7).

What is suggested by Phase 2 is that policy may cause tensions within schools due to its narrow focus; but practice can be more concerned with children's rights and the sustainable democratic future of society, even whilst the prescriptive curriculum and focus on measurement dominate. By engaging children *and* their teachers and other adults in a process where all are valued as important resources for education, through their agency and cooperation, intergenerational relationships can be challenged and understanding developed, about the current potential of children to transform classroom spaces. Essential to this is a teacher who recognises children as capable human beings, who can and do participate, and who considers him or herself wise enough to provide other opportunities and resources for change.

12.3 Approaching Participation in Schools: What changed?

By legitimising the use of power to dominate and control children in schools, they are constructed in particular ways and this also defines how they experience education (Devine, 2002, p.312) through the resultant space. The role of authoritarian teacher requires a constant level of surveillance in the classroom to ensure that children are compliant and following instruction (Prout, 2005; McCahill and Finn, 2010). Tensions arise as the teacher takes measures to enable this surveillance, such as seating plans, limiting children's movement and insisting they are always 'on task'. Children's covert attempts to demonstrate their agency through child culture (Giddens, 1984) may be met with criticism or punishment; for example one child's attempt to flee conflict by

jumping out of a window whilst on a school residential was criticised publicly in school as unreasonable behaviour.

Teachers too are under surveillance as school managers and inspectors check for quiet, orderly classrooms, compliance and sanctions systems as evidence of outstanding schools (Ofsted, 2016). Fear of losing control is likely to be the main reason why teachers worry about children taking part in their own inquiry in the classroom. In Phase 2, the teacher particularly worried about the noise levels as children formed their groups, overcoming the necessary conflict to establish cooperation and begin their inquiries. However, this was not a complete 'letting go' of control by the teacher but a transitional process where he adapted his own behaviour to the needs of the children and project.

Whilst the teacher maintained power through his authoritarian role, this was not a completely one-sided assertion of power. Instead language in the classroom was used by the teacher and children to negotiate completion of tasks. This "dialectic of control" (Giddens, 1984, according to Devine, 2002, p.316) "exists in all relations centred on power and is particularly pertinent to understanding interaction patterns in the classroom." However by empowering children (by developing their participation) teachers' power is not structurally decreased unless they decide that what happens is no longer their responsibility (another simplistic argument sometimes used against participation). Instead teachers have the choice of maintaining sole power, overly controlling children's inquiry by insisting on set outcomes or products, or empowering children by enabling them to negotiate their own outcomes or products through scaffolding by sharing experience and access to opportunity by widening resources.

The key to the success of Phase 2 was that from the onset the teacher wanted to support the children to work "independently." This was both in a present desire to use time more effectively and also a future desire that they would manage life in secondary school. The teacher in Phase 1 expressed similar reasons for taking part in the study. What both teachers lacked was experience of processes where children can develop their participation (other than through a traditional teacher led school council) and how to contribute to such processes and balance this with curriculum demands and fears about classroom control. Previous student inquiry (such as Bucknall, 2009; Kellett, 2005b) has considered the benefits to schools and individuals of children conducting inquiry in to issues in their lives in terms of academic research skills and individual

social skills. However they do not consider children's ability to cooperate or interact with others, including adults, to transform the school space. Hence such projects may raise the profile of children's participation in schools and the results may be used by school managers to develop school planning, but the power or inclination to do so remains with them. In this way children's participation continues to be passive rather than active or interactive in transforming schools, and children still have little input in to the purpose or structuring of their education and learning.

In both phases, it was necessary for the teachers (and researcher) to provide some instruction and resources to enable the children and teachers to make the transition toward a participatory space. These were aimed at how the children related to each other through group work, for example by providing a semi-formal process of identifying interests and groups, practical modelling of cooperative behaviours and use of toys for turn-taking. The importance of such focus on interaction was revealed during the analysis stage and provides scope for further research, in particular how adults' roles in intensive interaction pedagogy (Kellett, 2004), where the focus is on process rather than outcome, may also contribute to understanding wider intergenerational participation. It also highlights the commonality between many theoretical frameworks in Education (such as social interdependence theory) that might usefully contribute to improving children's participation in schools through their practical processes.

As the study utilised PAR, this meant that the teachers and researcher provided resources and developed techniques in response to the changing space and children's needs. The potential to adapt process and resources was essential to each phase and is a significant aspect of the findings because it suggests that an interactive and responsive process, less bound by structured method, enables transition to spaces through which participation can occur and potentially the emergence of new ideas consistent with complexity theory (see Chapter 4).

This continuous cycle of interaction and process change, enabled learning to take place but was not limited to the artificial input output claims of reductionist teaching methods. What emerges is a complex pattern of developing relationships somewhat akin to the threads of a looped tapestry. Control and intervention by the teacher form intersections where threads may change colour or characteristic but these enrich interactions further promoting endless possibility.

12.4 Better Use of Power for Transformation

The teachers did not relinquish their power during the study. Instead they used it in ways that were more beneficial to the children's broader education and thus supported their empowerment. The findings suggest that this necessitates three stages of action by teachers.

The first is to recognise that even though they work with children through authoritarian structures and classroom management, the children are more than a collection of pupils whose varying potential academic attainment is to be extracted; instead they are individual human beings all capable and motivated to learn. It is the teacher's role to create space with the children through which this can happen rather than expect all children to conform to a fixed environment and methods where those who cannot participate as expected are labelled inadequate and excluded. Teachers often worry about how to include children with SEN in classroom activities (Ainscow, 2000) and tensions were evident in both schools around the employment of teaching assistants and methods used, particularly routine use of other locations and activities that effectively excluded children from the main activities of each class. Whilst the teachers were committed to developing independence for all children, the Phase 2 teacher was sceptical that some of the children would ever be able to achieve any level of this, which is why individual agency, recognition and awareness of interdependence is more useful in considering such progress. Participation is not the same as independence; emphasis on solidarity and inclusion shifts definitions away from individualistic self-determinism, to mutual respect for each other's rights and support to exercise these.

The second stage was to act as facilitator for the children's learning. By intentionally managing group formation, by identifying children's interests and encouraging them to work together with others with similar interests, the teacher facilitated the first stage of recognition between children who may attend the same class every day but did not necessarily know each other very well or in some cases had made unsubstantiated judgements about others. This enabled the teacher to support the children in a process of building both trust and trustworthiness, between themselves and between teacher and each child, as they learned to accept his guidance to form relationships and learn from other children (as opposed to just negotiated compliance). Whilst the Phase 2 teacher used his authority to tell off children for behaviour he did not want to see, later in the study he began to spend more time in interaction with them, trying to reason and

explain why a change in behaviour might be positively beneficial to them (an approach used by the researcher throughout). Significantly, a child who had great difficulty building positive relationships appeared unable to trust the adults present which impacted on his behaviour. Whether more time, intense interaction and consistency would eventually have resulted in positive benefits for him was not possible to attain through the study; however small steps of progress indicate that this would be a useful area of further research.

By embarking on a facilitator role, the teachers also committed themselves to a different approach to the resources available. Both were able to recognise the value of other adults' time and experiences to the children's learning. Neither shared the overly protectionist idea that adults are inherently dangerous to children that was demonstrated by managers in the Phase 2 school; even though ethical problems emerged from this (through judgements about parents and the local community and the value of their involvement), the teacher was able to overcome this by inviting other existing school staff and volunteers to take part. The teachers quickly adopted the idea of intergenerational work in to their 'dialectic of control' (Giddens, 1984) but also began to consider the benefits of other adults' involvement to the children's education and learning.

The teachers also adapted their control of material resources such as books and access to computers, enabling children to use these when the need arose rather than when they dictated. Whilst this raised concerns that the children might use computers or the internet for purposes other than their studies, instances of such behaviour were very limited in both schools as the children were obviously interested in their choice of topic and the tasks. The study did not measure time on or off task but observations suggest that levels of engagement were consistently high throughout. There were few gender differences pertinent to the findings but choice of media for communication and products was one. The boys tended to like using computers, whereas some of the girls chose to produce drawn or written responses.

The teacher's role as facilitator also extended in Phase 2 to enabling the children to decide for themselves how they might present or compile their studies and demonstrate what they had learned. This was established with some difficulty in response to the children's needs, most notably their lack of awareness of the sort of things they might produce drawing on very narrow experience. However the teacher's willingness to hear

their ideas and respond by finding relevant resources (in this case to make board games) enabled their participation in not just the decision of what they would do but also negotiating what is possible and realistic. This shift from reliance on the teacher to tell them what to do to a relationship where he could offer the benefit of his own experience and insight to support the children's decision making and ideas heralded the third stage of transformation, described in the next section.

12.5 The 'Wise Teacher'

In both phases the relationship between children and teacher (and researcher) adapted to that which would be most appropriately described as a *mentoring* role. The teachers' fundamental roles as educators were not diminished, but their incarnation changed from that of technicians, to facilitators of participation (and thus learning), to that of mentor where they used their own wisdom to act as trusted advisor or guide to the children. Education in its broadest sense is often described as a journey with many paths and junctions to negotiate; the teacher's role in this analogy is obvious.

The main challenge to the teacher as mentor role is that of an assumed dominant behavioural management role, or authoritarian teacher. For several decades UK policy has promoted effective classroom management as necessary for teaching and learning to the extent that children must now be made 'ready to learn' which is really a euphemism for 'ready to teach' in that it refers to a particular set of behaviours to be demonstrated by the child; good classroom management is where teachers "manage pupils' behaviour highly effectively with clear rules that are consistently enforced" (Ofsted, 2016, p.47). Thus a system of rewards and sanctions and rules must be in place and adhered to in order to maintain a controlled, well-managed space ahead of any learning. The arguments made earlier in this thesis suggest that this sort of control does not actually encourage learning but effectively excludes some children from an education that might otherwise help them flourish and reach their potential as human beings (see Chapters 2 and 10).

Measures of attainment isolated from personal and social development hide the damage that may be incurred through processes that disempower people including children, especially those who are already marginalised and do not conform to a transmissive system. Lack of focus on anything other than academic attainment and leadership in policy, especially Ofsted's frameworks, reveals how sidelined broader state educational

goals have become as do the examples described earlier where the Phase 2 school management team insisted that exercise book evidence was necessary as proof of the children's learning (see Chapter 8).

However, the findings suggest that group inquiry, achieved through children's richer relationships with the teacher and each other, provides an effective approach to learning knowledge required by the curriculum as well as offering much broader education in terms of children developing their agency, research capabilities and cooperative interaction so that they can participate in matters that affect them in school. Through this approach the teacher is able to spend more time interacting with all members of the class as and when they need it and ensuring that the activities are meaningful and beneficial for each individual (Ainscow, 2000). The extended intergenerational element provides additional resources as well as acting as catalyst to change the teacher's role. The teachers themselves provide the most substantial evidence as to why such change is worthwhile in the classroom.

12.6 Why the 'Wise Teacher' Role Works

The teachers who took part in the study were committed to improving the life chances of the children in their care and were especially concerned with their transition to secondary school and the challenges they might face, in particular a perceived need to work more independently. The Phase 2 teacher was also very aware of inequalities in experience and opportunity faced by the children because of their social class and the area in which they lived. Many of the views expressed in the school were associated with views about the community rather than the individual and collective capacities of the children themselves. Those who attained most academically, and were therefore labelled as more able, were also perceived to be the most capable learners and agents in their own lives:

"More able children can become, become them which, you know, will help their education and development because they're always trying to find ways to improve themselves."(Class teacher)

This teacher also recognised that children's potential to cooperate and work together may start to diminish through school and that this may be related to teachers' classroom management. He described one previous class where he believed this had happened:

“I mean the, the, the class I had last year, we couldn't have tables like this, they had to be individual tables in rows and they, and I only had a small class so they all had their own table because they could not, I did no group work because they got the stage, you put even two together and it would turn into a full on fisticuff fight so, over a simple thing, you know, get your elbow off my side of the table type thing, and that, so I think we find children unfortunately get to the stage where they can't do it, I don't know whether it's because lower down the school there isn't enough emphasis on group work but in, but then the group taking responsibility, I think, I think possibly as teachers what, what we tend to do is go, right, get into groups, this is what you've got to do, get into groups, this is what you've got to do and a step by step process rather than sometimes saying, right, get into groups, this is a synopsis or this is a, a, an objective, you decide how you get that and let, and it's kind of just standing back.”

Whilst this teacher was making efforts to address a lack of opportunity for social learning through involvement in the study, he appeared to have little chance to express his concerns or make changes in how such learning was taking place across the school although he had ideas of how this might work:

“And then obviously lower down the school give them the steps at times but as you move up school slowly just withdraw the amount of steps they have so that by the time they get here it's almost a case of right, this is what we want, see if you can, and I do do a lot of it, I say right, you come up with what you think needs to be doing and then we as a class collective we go, right, what have we got, what have we missed, because they always miss things.”

The teacher's ideas about teaching children the steps that they need to go through to engage in group inquiry in schools, highlight the problems encountered when trying to establish children's participation. Even though children have the capacity to participate, they have been conditioned to work within very narrow constraints, where over emphasis on control, surveillance and set outcomes renders the agency needed for participation as a developmental skill to be mastered, rather than an innate predisposition to socialise in order to meet individual and collective needs. Interdependence has been suggested as a useful way of describing how children and adults work both individually and through interaction with others on a continuous basis.

Whilst adults must alter their control over children and resources, using their power in ways that are more conducive to enabling children's agency and participation, some responsibilities remain with teachers; they must still provide educational opportunity, manage change when this occurs, as well as develop their own professionalism by participating with other teachers to share, evaluate and develop processes. There was a distinct lack of opportunity and possibly motivation for teachers to do this in both schools, which requires further research outside the scope of this study. However the teachers' commitment to an idea of independence, where children can use their own agency to learn for themselves, is very much related to the concept of participation as described in this thesis and thus should be viewed as the meeting place where teachers can comfortably engage with its ideas.

The teachers who took part appeared to have very little awareness of children's rights or the constructs of childhood that frame these; the researcher has experienced a similar lack of understanding in many other schools, across the profession. Calls to respect children's rights through the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander and Armstrong, 2009) have been virtually ignored, possibly because they do not suggest how this can be achieved; other rhetoric about calls for change, such as the Compass Inquiry (Compass Education Group, 2015), although lacking in mention of children's rights, does emphasise how social development is currently lacking in most schools and the potential that social, rather than transmissive, learning has to improve the system and outcomes. Committed teachers are essential to this:

“Highly qualified, competent, dedicated and socially aware teachers are key to any successful education system. They are the life-blood of Big Education. Recent and current policy has emphasised the ‘heroic head teacher’. While we believe that effective institutional leadership is important, we have a stronger belief in the capacity of all teachers to be learning leaders who can get the best out of individuals, develop a class or group as a social learning environment, assist the participation of learners, and work effectively with other social partners in an increasingly complex and interconnected world” (Compass Education Group, 2015, p.19).

Even though this study might have enabled wider changes in practice if other teachers and governors had been more involved, the results suggest that change did occur and that the teachers' roles were extremely important for this. Their willingness to try

something different for the children was the first step toward participation because it acknowledged that the power they had as teachers could be used to benefit and empower children, as well as to control. They were also willing to work with the researcher, acting as facilitators for the children's inquiries and thus adapting their roles which had been less successful in previous related studies. This is important as it indicates that teachers can adapt participatory methods to their lesson plans, with support, and already have the capacity to work in different ways.

It would not have been possible to respond to the children and teachers' changing needs, without adopting PAR, which enabled all participants to contribute and shape the research even though ultimately what is contained in this thesis is the researcher's interpretation. The teachers' views, reactions and evaluation of the activities as they developed are crucial to understanding relationships and outcomes.

The change in teachers' roles enabled a different type of surveillance; instead of constantly checking for 'correct' behaviour, the children's self-determined activities meant that the teacher was able to observe the class and establish who needed support, thus using his skills more effectively:

“But what I've been pleased to see is, is those that can do it, you know, those that, there were some groups that I very rarely went over to, I would go over occasionally just to see, you alright? Yeah, fine, do you need? No, we're fine, okay, I'll leave you to it.

And it was almost a case of leave, they were saying, well just leave us to it, we know what we're doing, don't want you coming over and interjecting, we know what we're doing.”

The amount of time spent with individual children or groups was not measured, but in both schools, the teachers' evaluations revealed that they had a very good idea of how each child had progressed and where attention could be suitably focused in future, which is a positive indicator that children's cooperative inquiry enables formative assessment.

The Phase 2 teacher also recognised a change in the children's agency and reduced reliance on his instruction. This was not limited to individual action but also how they began to cooperate with each other sometimes taking on specific roles:

“...as the project has gone on it has been clear to see how much more independence some of the children have, ... if I think back to that first, those first few sessions, there was loads of like, 'what do you mean? I don't understand', and, and, and that's because they're so used to the guidance, I've said right, you do this then you do this, but as it's gone on, you can see they've just got on with it and they've done it and then some of them within the groups have, have almost assumed that the more, I suppose the stronger characters have kind of assumed a leadership role in terms of, right, I know this is what we need to do as a group because we've decided it's what we need to do but they've taken it upon themselves to delegate the roles.”

The children's evaluations of the school based activities were dominated by comments about cooperation and inclusion, practical activities and skills. They used their products to show what they had learned and as such were proud of their achievements. The products were also very important to the teachers because they provided evidence of learning. The Phase 2 teacher also realised that he could have used the children's ideas and developing knowledge more broadly across the curriculum, which is another reason why a whole school approach may have worked more effectively to enable ongoing participation. He noticed that the approach had led to changes in other classroom activities beyond the research, such as children taking initiative and beginning other extension tasks when they had completed work set. The teacher admitted during his final interview that he really had no idea what would happen during lessons using the study approach, and was more concerned with the final outcomes, and hence believed some of the children might achieve very little. He reported some very positive individual learning, which he had not expected, particularly from children who have SEN:

“I was speaking to [Child A] before, at times he, he has contributed, it's almost like, he was laughing, and it's almost like one week he decided I'll help and the next week decide I don't need to because I helped last week. But from hi[s] perspective that's, that's huge steps for him, huge steps for him.”

“And to an extent with [Child E] I mean [name] said he didn't do anything, didn't contribute, but he did, because when I was talking in more depth about it...He said, oh well, I designed this and then... and for him as well, that's a huge step the fact that he's been able to, to work cooperatively and not required us to

provide [instruction]. So I mean teamwork has, has improved to an extent, because I, and I have noticed it in other areas quicker than that, some of them just get on with it, they'll get on with something."

Whilst the teacher was originally worried by the groupings and the children's capacity to organise their projects, he recognised that all the children had responded well and achieved something:

"the groups technically, you know, worked well to some extent that, there was areas like we said that didn't work, that, that caused issues but, you know, they've all produced something, they've all researched something, they can all tell you something about their area that I know if I asked some of the other groups they wouldn't be able to tell us because it was something they were interested in ... I know they've enjoyed it and I, I do know they have enjoyed doing it."

However, the main benefit to enabling participation, from the teacher's perspective, appeared to be that he could envisage how children will act during future projects and what he needs to do to encourage them to work well in groups. In other words experience of process enables development of the process. Suggestions for future work included adopting a group work approach from the start of future projects and clear specifications for an end product (as opposed to a set outcome). He was also aware that such processes should not be 'one offs' and would improve over time. He was concerned that the next opportunity for the children to work in this way would be after SATs (6 months later). Also promising was that he began to consider how he could strategically cover many more curriculum objectives and include project work for the children at the end of each week so that what they worked on in other areas could build up to this across the week.

There were also perceived benefits given by adults who took part in the intergenerational work that reinforce how these extend children's learning:

"I feel the children have been more 'hands on' therefore learnt more."

"It re-enforces what they are researching."

"Empowering, enables children to consider their own feelings."

“Gives them a chance to see different points of view and experience a real-life situation.”

In order to achieve such complex practice, the teacher has to be more aware of the children’s capabilities and interests as well as develop trusting relationships with them and across the class. The mentoring type role of the ‘Wise Teacher’ enables children’s participation to develop through increased opportunity to use their agency and more equitable access to resources, including teachers and other adults.

13 CONCLUSION

13.1 Children and the Transformation of Schools: Enabling Participation through Intergenerational Work

This study set out to find out how children can participate in transforming what happens in their school lessons and how intergenerational work might support this. It aimed to build opportunity for children's participation, in primary classroom settings, and explored the challenges and benefits involved. The results extend theory about children's participation in schools by establishing the centrality of intergenerational relationships for change, thus relating education and childhood to the evolving field of complexity.

Many challenges to children's participation revealed by the study are described in the literature review and were expected (see Chapters 2 and 3). Paternalism and hierarchical structures, particularly class and socio-economic based, continue to be reproduced through social systems allowing adults to use power to subjugate others and justify inequitable behaviour. This was particularly marked in the school involved in Phase 2. Control of children's lives and their physical and emotional environment reduces their agency and opportunities to involve themselves in learning at a deeper level. Lack of time and focus on the purpose of schools is rarely considered in research and thus was an important aspect of this study.

Calls for more radical, broader democratic education such as Fielding and Moss' idea of the 'Common School,' recognise the idea that individuals co-construct the common, by what they share through 'relationships, communication and collaboration' (2011, p.115). They see schools as spaces for everyone, old and young, for all sorts of projects, where individuals come together, not to create sameness but, as Dewey (1916) suggested, making communities, where outcomes are not preset. Fielding and Moss (2011) suggest this can be done by involving communities in local democratic structures and governance that enable more people to participate. However, they rely on representational systems to do so, rather than recognising that ordinary people may already have valuable knowledge about what they really value from education and would like schools to be. They identify that children's participation or 'voice' needs to be considered differently within democratic structures but fall short of appreciating

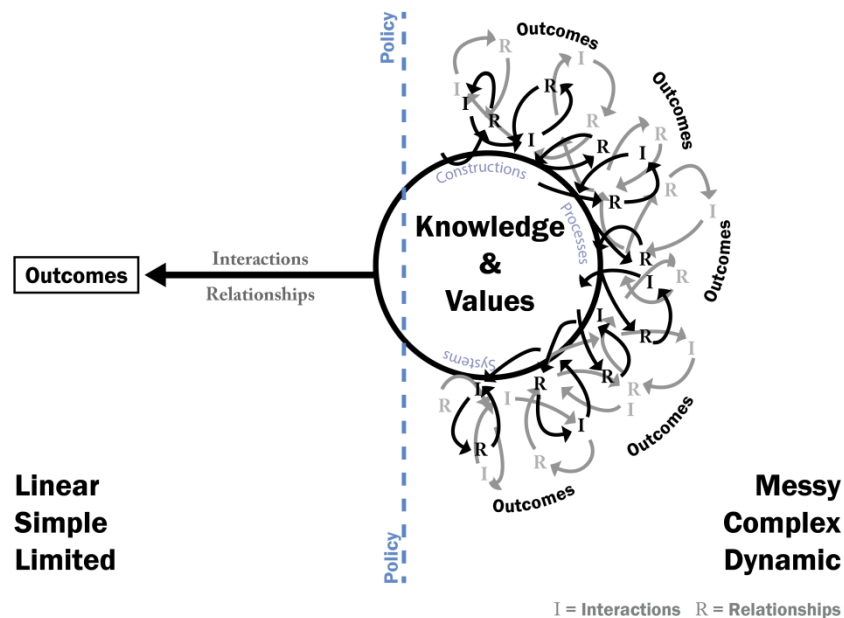
participation itself as essential to the processes of children's education, which is where this study presents new ideas.

The thesis considers relationships as both the problem and solution, or at least a way to move forward. This contrasts considerably with policy and improvement agendas that continue to ignore social education, whilst over emphasising limited knowledge objectives, their transmission by teachers and measurements of this. The study reveals that it is possible, even in the current climate, to approach schooling differently. Such practice is not just about changing views about children, childhood or participation, but about enabling communities to do this for themselves so they might begin to take seriously their own capacities to make a difference. Systems are complex. Relationships are important and adults and children recognise this. Education is a way of ensuring ordinary children and adults can construct and access democratic systems that currently fall short of representing or involving them.

Part of the problem appears to be understanding (or lack of) knowledge and how it is constructed. Despite schools being centres of learning, there appears to be a lack of attention across school policy and practice, to where this knowledge comes from, how it is created and how as a society we may or may not progress through what we know. This allows knowledge to be objectified and school processes to be technocratic; if children cannot integrate the required knowledge because interactions are not effective enough to affect them at the subjective level, then they, not the system, are considered problematic. How knowledge is constructed and shared is just as important to research and this clearly connects one to the other; yet this connectedness is greatly ignored by the all too separate worlds of academic research and schooling. This study reconnects the two through its methodology and results, shaping theory towards connectedness that unites efforts towards practical change which ensures rigour.

The workshops revealed that children and adults do use their subjective understanding and frames of reference – the temporal and spatial contexts through which knowledge and views are constructed – to shape spaces and share their views. They are able to work together to construct deeper meaning, when not prevented from doing so, and opportunities to consider past, present and future frames of reference are significant in doing so. However, this needs time: time to reflect; time to build trusting relationships so knowledge can be shared in safe spaces; and time to establish these safe spaces together with others.

It is almost as if those with most power believe that those with least cannot understand, when the evidence in this study is that they do. Knowledge and therefore views and values, are dynamic and shaped through interactions and their effects at both the conscious and subconscious level. Learning is an intersubjective experience, regardless of how teaching approaches regard or choose to simplify this. Whilst it was not the intention of this research to reduce something so complex to a simple model that can be used to forward children's participation, illustrations can provide a means to understand this. Interactions (between people and also with their inner selves) make up countless interweaving threads that, when they meet or are closely grouped together, can sometimes enable shared understanding and new ideas to emerge. This process is messy, complex, dynamic, and no matter how much we try to manage it, continues infinitely. Rich relationships that enable people to develop understanding through their intersubjectivity are complex and powerful. If power is abused to limit and control knowledge production and relationships, to simplify participation to linear inputs and outputs, opportunities for emergence too are limited. Thus power is wasted on maintaining artificial hierarchies, instead of developing relationships that enable broader education and the potential for human progress.



13-a Producing Knowledge through Interactive Participation

Neoliberal policy is out of touch with the value of symbiosis between education and democracy and their potential contribution to human rights. Ofsted is currently an

obstacle because everything it measures is about maintaining this agenda, with only tokenistic regard for children's individual needs and how well they do or do not flourish through education. Further to this, there is no commitment to equality and democracy as a defining purpose of state schools. Children and their communities have little, if any means to shape policy. Yet this study shows that they are very aware of the benefits of broader education and motivated by opportunities to participate in more than just information exchange. Mannion, Sowerby, and L'Anson (2015) through research for Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, considered how children participate in different areas of their schooling and that although limited, what they call "a political dimension of participation" (p.42), as this thesis addresses, is a form of engagement that children valued. Their findings suggest that rights based education and good education are not easily separated, enhance each other and should be integrated in school life. This study takes a step further by embedding participation in classroom practice.

13.2 Participation and Education for Democracy

Interactive participation is about changing spaces and this is positive for societal development if it is genuinely concerned with democracy and equality. Processes that claim to be democratic because they provide chance for people to give a view or vote can only act as representational consultation as they maintain power inequities that undermine democracy. Modern democracy is where participation rights are enjoyed and exercised by all so that they can devise representational structures to carry well thought out views to policy makers who work toward equality and democratic values for all. State schooling currently ignores the potential of children's participation. This study overcomes challenges by adopting intergenerational and group inquiry as a means to change school spaces by encouraging children's agency. Through safer (trusting) spaces, children and adults were able to evaluate and share what they know, building intergenerational understanding and co-constructing ideas.

The resulting repositioning of children as more equal actors in the classroom, supported by others, including adults who are a wonderful resource because of their range of experiences, did not lead to chaos or anarchy but a different sort of order where everyone benefits. The results of Phase 1 demonstrate how intergenerational focus groups can be carefully developed so that children and adults build understanding and

can work together to construct meaningful future views through better relationships. Their views of what schools should be for are closer to broader education suggested by independently commissioned research such as Alexander and Armstrong (2010) and Lawson and Spours (2011) (see Chapter 3) and add further evidence that governments are ignoring citizens' views. The work in Phase 2 was about the Tudors, so that it could meet curriculum objectives, but it could have been any topic that children or wider society believe is important for them to understand. What was important was how this was learned. The approaches enabled engagement with the subjective – how, why, when and where knowledge comes from, how we feel and relate to this and how everyone has the power to consider and recreate such knowledge. This is about thinking, questioning and relating, not some closed process of input and output where knowledge is objectified and passed on.

Enabling children and their teachers to change spaces opens up opportunities to do things differently and potential for emergence. The study illustrates the need for all stakeholders to overcome fear of lack of order and understand that change simply leads to other order that may bring positive progress. The intergenerational element of the approach contributed to this. How to build on such progress and how to establish whether it is worthwhile is another aspect of education that can only be sensibly achieved through continued opportunities for participation with others.

Children's participation in matters about their schooling, based on the findings of this study, can be enabled by considering it as a process that begins with recognition of the self and of others. By working and learning together through cooperative interaction where each person can use their agency to shape spaces, better relationships are forged which in turn enable participation. The process of group inquiry to evaluate past, present and future knowledge and views through spaces committed to democratic values, especially equality, enables children and adults to construct or reconstruct knowledge promoting understanding. Whether this takes place as a means of education about specific subjects or as research to identify spaces for change in a system, does not matter as it is the relational process itself that builds children's participation. In schools, children and adults are important collaborators for learning about and taking part in life's journey. Children's participation is enabled through genuine commitment to the social education and experience necessary for democracy, not just the exchange of

views through Pupil Voice. It is through this education and experience that children and adults can recognise injustice and realise the benefits of equality.

13.3 Relationship Focused Learning

The study demonstrates that opportunities to establish children's agency in classrooms are essential to change because this enables them to shape participatory spaces and be more actively involved in everyday decision making. Whilst some of this can be facilitated by teachers, other interactions emerge that indicate children are taking more subtle control of their activities. Thus, change at the subconscious level may be involved, or in other words, learning. Examples included freer use of environment, more spontaneous interaction with others and growing solidarity. Children's agency is more than them simply having power over individual actions but using that power on a deeper level to work positively with others.

The introduction of other adults to the classrooms in this study, acted as a catalyst for children's agency. By providing opportunity to plan and interview adults, children were repositioned as capable social actors and students and adults as wonderful resources for their learning. This positive shift in relationships enabled children in both phases to enter in to participatory activities more equitably and allowed the teachers room for change. Children's participation enabled through intergenerational and group work takes the focus away from attainment and ability to that of democratic practice and is relevant to children's lives in the evolving technological era. Group work is positive for building trust and richer relationships, even when children have social communication difficulties, as long as the focus is on inclusion, respect and valuing everyone's contributions to work together and benefit all by co-constructing meaning. This requires careful intervention and modelling by teachers and other adults involved to establish inclusion.

There were no children with profound social communication challenges in the cohort. The opportunities for groups to begin to recognise and work with each other in ways that enabled them to tailor the suitability of activities to the group, provide a refreshing alternative to other forms of group practice that tend to isolate those with even low level communication difficulties, as they consider what they *cannot* do instead of what they *can*, which was the process for this study. Furthering inclusion by preparing individual resources to enable children to contribute and take part, as well as focus on intense

communication skills, may be better ways of ensuring children's participation for all children; the current tendency is to isolate or take individuals with SEN out of class to work with TAs. In this study this was an incidental aspect of planning that needs much more attention in future work. It does however resonate with new work in fields such as neuro science where emphasis on preventing disabling factors by working with all children to build social and communication from infancy, is producing promising results.

Cooperative learning approaches have a good evidence base and are widely used in the USA and Europe, but are often ignored in the UK in favour of teacher led activities. This research demonstrates how these can be used effectively to build better relationships in classrooms and provide broader educational experience whilst maintaining academic standards. This study should therefore provide a useful contribution to the evidence base, particularly that informing teacher training. Schools need to decide what they want to be. Those involved in this study were far from the progressive communities that cooperative and democratic schools are sometimes perceived to be. They were just ordinary people who want children's education to help them create and live happy and fulfilled lives.

13.4 The 'Wise Teacher'

This thesis establishes 'Wise Teachers' as important actors in enabling children's participation and education, challenging technocratic roles which undermine the profession. It moves away from emphasis on teachers' importance as behavioural managers or enforcers and suggests a much more valuable way of establishing classroom relationships through a mentoring role. The results should provide a welcome break to the profession from ongoing criticism about standards. In some ways the thesis maintains the idea that schools prepare children for the future, in that it recognises the work that children do is almost as an apprenticeship for life outside the classroom. However, this is not in the derogatory sense sometimes portrayed about lack of skills, but in its deeper sense of being involved and participating in a working community, so that they can construct the tacit knowledge that enables understanding of the social space. If children are to learn and take society forward, then adults need to respect their capacities to do this, participate in the present and thus shape the spaces in which they are involved.

This requires teachers to understand how knowledge is constructed and understood through interaction and how relationships affect this. This was clearly not a priority in the schools who took part. It challenges knowledge objectification and rejects the idea that anything worthwhile can be passed on from knowing teachers to uninformed children. Instead the research demonstrates how the class teacher's role must shift from that of *authoritarian* to *facilitator* to *mentor* to enable social learning and richer relationships to develop. This requires a lot more of teachers than to act as technicians; it highlights the need to build a profession who are well informed and also have opportunity to participate through research, education and action to maintain progress.

Government and media are unhelpful in criticising different education practices as 'progressive' and adversaries to high standards, without evidence for this. Instead education *should* be concerned with societal progress and be valued for its potential to challenge inequities, and build democratic values in the classroom. Cooperative learning challenges individualism, whilst retaining identity and understanding. In other words it enables children to flourish as diverse individuals because they are well supported to do so by their community. Whilst ultimately this thesis suggests that the processes of participation and education are at least as important as knowledge itself, this does not mean schools should not have end goals or particular knowledge that society believes is important to share through generations, but this should enable them to participate so they understand where and how that knowledge was conceived and how they are part of the countless communities that motivate that knowledge to be constructed in the first place.

The second phase, though in some ways appearing more controlling of children's participation because it was designed around a curriculum subject, may have been more empowering for children than the first, because it enabled them to take control of classroom activities and education that are normally much more prescribed. Rather than being told what they should know, the children were able to decide what was important to them whilst respecting that the teacher had experience of what may be important to learn. Humans interact because they want to understand; understanding comes through engaging with much more than the object of study, by sharing experiences and intersubjectivity. This is at every level of our existence not just the academic where we hope to record and then take forward human endeavour.

Interactive participation, as conceived through this study, is about inter-relationships, interconnectedness and intersubjectivity. Individuals may need to step back and reflect on experience to understand it; even then they are connected as they consider selves, knowledge and thus views in relation to others. The Wise Teacher is the person who can do this whilst supporting children to do so.

13.5 PAR for Participation (not Consultation)

Education and research are also linked. What researchers do and set up affects the intersubjectivity of participants. This study suggests that social researchers should recognise this and consider the educative aspects of their methods even when using traditional approaches. Participatory practice that maintains power inequities will always be consultation; thus so called democratic practice where everyone is allowed to voice a view or vote will never be more than market research, unless researchers attend to the frames of reference through which these views are produced. This study introduces PAR approaches that enable research to engage with temporal perspectives. It suggests these are useful for building richer relationships, that enable participants to evaluate and share how their knowledge and views have been shaped. Through more trusting relationships they can work with others to construct views, using past and future thinking to shape meaningful knowledge about their lives and systems. How PAR plays a part in creating new knowledge has been less well considered than the emancipatory effects of the process itself (Cahill, 2007); this study provides insight and suggests why collectively produced data may be more useful in enabling policy and system change than collections of individual views that are influenced by present situational contexts, often given without time to think about their meaning and can result in quasi forms of market research that are used to maintain systems rather than encouraging them to adapt.

This thesis extends thinking about PAR and clearly makes a case for ‘research, education and action’ as essential aspects of participatory research that genuinely seeks change for marginalised people, especially children. In this case this change was about social learning and being able to affect what was happening in the classroom in meaningful ways. This meant that although the researcher initiated the research and workshops in the schools for the aims outlined in this thesis, the benefits for those involved went beyond those usually associated with PAR (such as increased individual

confidence and social skills). In this case the most significant change was the participants' agency in shaping school space. This space is more than the location; it is the interactions that are able to occur because of the relationships involved and the intersubjective understandings that emerge through these.

Authentic PAR is often described in terms of participants' opportunities to identify issues and decide what research should take place so that they can change their own situation. Taking such a rigid stance in schools, given current dominant structures, effectively sidelines such participation as extra-curricular activity. This research is about building participation in the classroom, within the existing curriculum because children and communities have virtually no means to bring about change. However, what this research demonstrates is that far from being a compromised version of PAR, the approach was able to reveal significant data about children's and adults' temporal views about participation and education as well as act as a catalyst for significant change. Thus it made a difference to participants' situation but also produced new knowledge about how it is understood (Genat, 2009). What it does differently is to remove the focus of research, from measurement of preconceived outcomes (which are usually the focus of PAR even if children are encouraged to instigate their own research) to a focus on building participation itself. As such the results provide significant findings that go beyond benefits and challenges and offer real insight in to how rights based education can be made to work in schools, in spite of the challenges.

The research process moves beyond consultation to involve genuinely active participants who have opportunity to learn from the process and shape their own social spaces, even though this may be different to the researcher's interest. Thus, for this to be an ethically sound process, the researcher must also be committed to using their own expertise and experience to provide information and suggestions for activities that promote more equitable relationships, building participants' skills and confidence to apply their own agency and shape social space. This means drawing on educational and cooperative pedagogy that encourages group work, where everyone's involvement and contributions count so that benefits are for all, not just a few. This is considerably different to approaches where researchers use participatory methods to engage children rather than promote growing opportunity for participation. It is very positive for those who work tirelessly to do this in that it suggests support to help other adults such as teachers to do this could be very welcome.

13.6 Looking Forward

This thesis set out to consider how children's participation could be enabled in schools following concerns that the UK has not routinely built participation rights in to education law and policy even after being criticised for this by the CRC in 2008. The results challenge the statement frequently expressed during the period of this study that 'schools cannot do everything.' They can and do make a difference in children's lives and for society and this study shows that they can do better in enabling children's participation rights. It contributes to a growing body of evidence that suggests above all that UK citizens need to decide what schools are for and what sort of society we want to be.

The study is relevant to the Rights Respecting School Award in that it offers further potential for developing children's participation in the classroom. Such initiatives will be needed increasingly to maintain schools' connectedness and as a means to share theory and practice if the current government's plans to make all schools academies are implemented.

The study is also timely when considered in the wider field of childhood and especially the crisis in mental health being experienced by children, young people and their families. Schools are poorly prepared to cope with children suffering on a daily basis and are increasingly employing school counsellors to manage this, even though these are rarely qualified to diagnose or treat disorders. School approaches may themselves be contributing to this crisis, but mental health and well-being are peripheral subjects that children are occasionally taught about and not a priority of the system itself. There is developing evidence that children's participation may have connections with and positive effects on wellbeing; the children in this study felt included and valued which are important. Emerging evidence from a large study in Australian schools suggests that active participation is important for wellbeing, and that this is mediated by relationships of intersubjective recognition (Nigel Thomas, personal communication). This study offers two glimpses of what classrooms might actually be like if the positive benefits associated with children's participation are enabled. As well as further evidence to support its development, it provides a more meaningful definition of children's participation in schools which leaves behind the current plethora of connotations.

This research demonstrates that it is feasible to embed children's participation in schools through classroom practice. However, what was lacking in both phases was a whole school commitment to the ideas and approach, especially from school managers and governors. It is hoped that a further study can be developed to take a whole school approach to children's participation in the classroom, again utilising intergenerational and group work to act as a catalyst for change. Through participants' creation of school spaces, where knowledge and understanding can be built across the school community about the relationship between participation and education for democracy, the focus would be to open dialogue between children, teachers, school managers and local community, to share meaningful knowledge about the purpose of schools. Such a study would be crucial in demonstrating how to embed children's participation for the long term, as well as increasing the evidence base for potential system change through relational learning. It would provide further understanding of the roles governors and school managers take in maintaining or challenging policy and engagement with children's rights.

This study did not engage with utopian theory, although it does offer a means to promote spaces for change that draw on ordinary children and adults' own power to join together in research, experimentation and more equitable relationships toward democratic transformation. Schools cannot continue as they are (Fielding and Moss, 2011). If Unger was right in suggesting that small scale anticipations of future society need to emerge so that these can be passed on and spread to other generations (Unger, 2004, pp.411-412), then schools are an ideal place to start. First, they must learn that noise and conflict can be a good thing as they are a sign that children and adults are beginning to question ideals and views and construct deeper meaning so they can create something different.

Here in the UK, like other minority world countries such as Australia, there is a need to raise social consciousness about children's rights (Bessell, 2013); embedding participation in schools could make widespread progress towards this goal. However, as this study suggests, children's participation is much more than a set of values; it is the relationships that enable children and adults to co-construct knowledge and understand what is important, the agency to be able to take part and act upon this and the opportunities to create spaces through which this can occur. Education is both an essential part of participation and enabled through it. The Wise Teacher has the

potential to engage children and adults in a process of positive intergenerational relationships where they can recognise their own power to encourage emergent and sustainable change.

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