

**Teachers' Constructions of Creativity in Secondary English: Who Gets to Be
Creative in Class?**

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Abstract

This thesis examines English teachers' constructions of creativity in three different schools. The investigation is of interest because of the importance given to creativity by English teachers and the contested, shifting role it plays in English teaching and education as a whole. It differs from similar work because it treats creativity as a material resource that teachers can draw on in different ways and measures. In this, it treats the enactment of creativity as a matter of social justice.

The thesis draws on a wide body of literature about creativity. Fundamental to this is an overview of the literature as it relates to creativity and language, with most significance given to Williams' ideas about the centrality of "creativity and self-creation" to knowledge generation (1977: p.212), and to Freire's about "problem posing" and "banking" forms of education (1970: pps.64-65). It also draws on recent research into the effect of accountability measures in schools. This research suggests that such measures have considerable influence on how education is enacted in schools, placing limits, for example, on creative practices.

The data is qualitative in nature and analysed using a framework of critical discourse theory, exploring patterns and omissions in teachers' comments and interrogating them within the context of dominant policy, educational and institutional discourses.

The research itself gathered data from semi-structured interviews with individual English teachers in three different secondary schools, one private and two state comprehensives. The study found that teachers across all three schools constructed creativity in similar ways in the abstract, but in accounts of actual practice, considerable differences emerged across schools. The most pronounced differences were between

responses by teachers in the two state schools compared to teachers in the private one. These differences clustered most significantly around constructions of creativity as it related to accountability measures in schools.

The findings are important because they suggest that teachers struggle to draw on creative practices, even as they see them as pedagogically important, because of the restrictive nature of accountability measures. They also suggest that some teachers feel more able than others to enact creative practices, depending on the institutional nature of their school.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 What the research is about

This thesis explores how secondary English teachers in three different schools constructed creativity and how this fed into enactments of creativity and creative practice in their classrooms, as articulated by the teachers themselves. It interrogates the various forces and discourses that played into these constructions, taking into consideration the personal beliefs and backgrounds of the teachers involved, the particular ways in which their own schools and subject departments operated, the young people that they taught, and the impact of national educational policies. It is, then, as interested in the landscape in which constructions of creativity are formed, as in the concept of creativity itself.

The thesis draws on data produced by interviews with 17 teachers in three different secondary schools, selected because of their different institutional structures, terms of governance, broad educational aims, and student bodies. One was a private school, one a state comprehensive with a mixed intake containing substantial numbers of both middle and working class children, and one a state comprehensive of predominantly working class children. The thesis is at one and the same time the study of a single case and a comparative study of three cases: the former because it treats the English teachers as a collective professional body, engaged in practising the same subject in three different locations; the latter because it treats them as members of discrete institutions with their own practices and demands. The differences across schools allowed for some elements of comparison, with a particular focus on iniquities in the way that creativity was enacted, according to the teachers interviewed, in some compared to others.

1.2 Context for the research

1.2.1 Policy context

The research project was situated in a moment of transition in England in terms of educational policy. It was conceived in 2010 when a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition (the Coalition) entered government, displacing a Labour government (New Labour) that had been in power between 1997 and 2010. The interviews were carried out in June and July 2013, two months before statutory changes to the curriculum legislated for by the Coalition, which had a direct impact on the shape of secondary English teaching, came into force.

Creativity was central to New Labour educational policy (Jones, 2009; Hall, 2010), yet it was largely excluded from Coalition policy documentation. This alone makes it a significant concept to study. Why was a concept given prominence by one administration marginalised and even discredited by another? It suggests that the word has a rhetorical force (Banaji and Burn, 2010) beyond its literal meanings, acting as a site of contestation for different approaches to education, both pedagogical and ideological (Marshall, 2001). This significance is particularly pertinent when looking at English teaching. Large number of English teachers value the centrality of creativity to their subject practice (Marshall, 2000; Goodwyn, 2003). Creativity is also, in and of itself, a field of growing interest at tertiary level in relation to language (Carter, 2004), literature (Kearney, 1988, 2002; Armstrong, 2000; Attridge, 2004), and the interplay of the two (Swann, Pope and Carter, 2011). In exploring English teachers' constructions of creativity, then, the research raises questions about the role of policy on teaching practices, the agency teachers have in deciding what and how to teach, and the possibilities for particular linguistic and literary

practices in their classrooms. This does not just include the role played by policy directly relating to creativity, but by a whole raft of measures acting on (primarily state) schools that lead to them working in a culture of all-pervasive performativity (Ball, 2003) and accountability (Hutchings, 2015). It also allows for similar questions to be raised about what happens in private schools when these measures either do not apply, or produce different kinds of pressures and outcomes.

1.2.2. Social justice context

This study is positioned within a model of educational research that regards the struggles and contestations over policy construction and implementation as matters of social justice (Griffiths, 1998; Ozga, 2000; Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012). If we regard education as part of a social justice project that acts “as a vehicle for improving life chances and opportunities, and as a means of enriching and enhancing the business of living” (Ozga, p.8), then it becomes necessary for researchers to interrogate the ways by which this might or might not come about, and how policy facilitates or restricts such outcomes. Therefore, it engages with how constructions of creativity in secondary English play their part in facilitating or limiting this process.

1.2.3 Personal context

My interest in creativity stems from my own experience of 15 years as a secondary English teacher and my subsequent careers in initial teacher education (running a Postgraduate Certificate in Education [PGCE] training course for secondary English teachers) and in subject development (working for a small, nationally renowned charity).

These instilled in me the belief that creativity offers an ethical approach to language teaching (Misson & Morgan, 2006; 2007), one that focuses on opportunities for self-expression, experimentation and imaginative work. It also made me believe that creativity offers a way for teachers to conceptualise the opportunities that language provides for making and negotiating meaning, so making it crucial to the development of sophisticated language capabilities in young people.

When creativity was codified with its inclusion as one of four key concepts in the 2008 *National curriculum programme of study for English* (QCDA, 2007), I was given the opportunity to write a book about it (McCallum, 2012), which helped me to discover new possibilities about how to apply this versatile word. It also helped me to sharpen my understanding of what is, after all, an abstract concept with multiple meanings (Pope 2005; Banaji and Burn, 2010; Swann, Pope & Carter, 2011).

Simultaneous to writing my book, I had started studying for a doctorate in education and it made sense to have the same focus for both activities, particularly as the book lacked a research element. While it offered extensive coverage of the literature in the field as it sought to establish a connection between creativity and learning in English, based on a combination of my practical experience and wider reading, ironically it may well have taken my own construction of creativity to a place not generally shared by my colleagues in the classroom. For while the book was well received (Atherton, 2012; McIlroy, 2012; Stock, 2014), I was well aware that the majority of classroom teachers did not engage in extensive reading around the subject. Its modest readership, then, had largely been confined to trainee teachers and those studying at Masters level. Exploring how creativity was constructed by the broader community of English teachers struck me, then, as more interesting and relevant to actual practice than the multiple articulations of and justifications for creativity to be found in academic textbooks.

My interest in exploring social justice around the distribution of creativity also stemmed initially from personal observations. In my work as a teacher educator at a London university, I introduced trainees to many of my ideas about how to bring creativity into the classroom, both through practical workshops and through directing them to reading material on the subject. The ideas explored were enthusiastically received and trainees were given the opportunity to reflect critically on how they might transfer to actual practice. However, when I subsequently observed the same trainees teaching, very few drew on the strategies that had been offered, instead more often than not using teaching methods that I considered as detrimental both to the promotion of creativity and to effective learning. When pushed to explain the lack of creativity in their lesson design, trainees generally offered one of two responses: either their school-based mentors had directed them to teach in a particular way, or they did not feel confident about using strategies engaging with creativity with the pupils in their class (a response that, in turn, was often linked to anxieties about managing classroom behaviour, and about the perceived ability levels of their students).

This research, then, sprang from a personal desire to explore further the disjuncture between my own convictions about the role of creativity in English teaching, the apparently shared convictions held by trainee teachers when engaged in university-based activities, and the actual practice I encountered when observing their lessons. Was I misguided in what I thought was effective and possible in secondary English classrooms? Had my own classroom experience, between 1993 and 2008, been an aberration rather than, as I thought at the time, subscribing to a widely distributed orthodoxy? And why were experienced teachers advising trainees not to use strategies that I valued, presumably shunning them in their own practice too?

1.3 Research questions

The study has two primary research questions:

- How do secondary English teachers construct creativity?
- How is creativity enacted in English teachers' lessons?

Several secondary questions are used to probe more deeply, specifically:

- What importance do English teachers attach to creativity? Why do they regard it as important, or not? How do they locate it within the context of other competing curriculum demands?
- What different constructions of creativity emerge among English teachers and why? To what extent do differences relate to contesting versions of English teaching that they follow in their practice? To what extent are they influenced by the social and educational background of the teachers involved and by their personal experience of teaching, including the type of institution in which they work?
- How do English teachers' constructions of creativity coincide with or differ from policy constructions of the term, both at local and national levels? To what extent are teachers aware of policy constructions and how do they feed into their own constructions?
- What tensions are there between teachers' own constructions of creativity and policy constructions? To what extent do teachers try to adapt their practice to fit in with policy demands? To what extent do they actively engage in resisting policy demands?

- How do English teachers construct creativity in relation to broader educational policies, particularly those linked to performativity and accountability?
- How are constructions of creativity affected by the statutory or non-statutory nature of educational policies?
- How do constructions differ or compare among state and private school teachers?
- What issues of social justice arise when considering how English teachers construct creativity, particularly in respect to the enactment of creativity in different classrooms? Do English teachers regard creativity as a matter of social justice?
- What is the affective response of teachers to creativity? What feelings are linked to their constructions of creativity? In talking about creativity, what else do they talk about?

1.4 Literature about creativity

Creativity is a concept used widely in a large number of different fields. One literature review of creativity as it relates specifically to education identifies nine different “rhetorics” of creativity (Banaji and Burn, 2010), and acknowledges that its method of classification can be extended further still. In order to place manageable limits on what is achievable, then, this thesis takes a pragmatic approach when drawing on the literature about the subject. It focuses primarily on areas of most concern to English teaching: specifically, creativity as it is applied to English teaching theory and practice; creativity and language; creativity as it intersects with measures of performativity and accountability; and creativity as constructed in educational policy terms, particularly language policy. As part of this process, the thesis draws on epistemological thinking about creativity to create its own *epistemology of creativity*.

1.5 Gaps in the literature

While an extensive body of literature exists about creativity and education and about creativity and language, relatively little has been written about the intersection of the two. The former does not generally focus on specific subject areas. It tends to construct creativity in general terms as a way of *doing* teaching and learning, or as a set of skills that can be passed on to students and then applied to a whole range of fields (Craft, 2000; Jeffrey, 2006). The work also tends to have a primary age focus (see previous references), with creativity often applied across subject disciplines rather than being subject specific. As with this thesis, work that is specifically about English teaching and creativity often focuses on policy and the politics of the subject (Marshall, 2001; Jones, 2006). This work, though, tends to lack a research element.

There is an extensive body of theoretical work about creativity and language, but relatively little in terms of research. Significant examples of the theoretical material include Pope's (2005) *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice*; Carter's (2004) *Language and Creativity: The Art of Common Talk*; Swann, Pope and Carter's (2011) edited collection of essays by various authors; *Creativity in Language and Literature: The state of the art*; and Blommaert's (2010) *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Parallel to such work in the field of language, is a renewed interest in creativity in literary study in work, such as Attridge's (2004) *The Singularity of Literature* and *The Work of Literature* (2015) and Kearney's (1988) *The Wake of Imagination: Ideas of Creativity in Western Culture*. Both linguistic and literary models, in turn, draw extensively on long-established work that theorises the function of language in society (Vygotsky, 1986; Volosinov, 2000) and the specific function of literary language (Williams, 1977; Bakhtin, 2006).

Examples of research work linking creativity and English to these theorists tend to focus on a single aspect of the subject, such as writing (Grainger, Gooch and Lambirth, 2005; Mendelowitz, 2014), or poetry (Myhill and Wilson, 2013), and, again, the bulk of the research is based on primary age pupils. My own book, *Creativity and Learning in Secondary English* (McCallum, 2012) also draws extensively on these theorists, but lacks a research element. A largely Australian collection, *Language and Creativity in Contemporary English Classrooms* (eds. Doecke, Parr and Sawyer, 2014) follows similar principles, like me taking Williams' (1977) theorisation of language and creativity as a starting point and seeking to explore further how English teachers use creativity "to name certain practices within the domain of their professional practice" and to open up "a small window on larger social issues, including the role of English teaching in contemporary society" (Doecke, Parr and Sawyer, 2014: p.3). Various of its chapters link classroom research to theory to look at how creativity in English is constructed in relation to, for example, policy (Sawyer, 2014), assessment (Mayes, 2014), engaging with Literature (Coulombe and Chastwa, 2014), imaginative response (Gannon, 2014) and recreativity (Kober, 2014). This publication has, perhaps, more in common than any other with what this thesis is trying to achieve. There are significant differences, though, and not just its predominantly Australian context. Most of the chapters in Doecke, Parr and Sawyer focus on a particular pedagogical strategy to develop and use creativity in the classroom. These strategies were devised with a particular aspect of research in mind and do not necessarily fit in with the statutory demands of a curriculum. This thesis does not explore versions of creativity designed with the research in mind; rather it seeks to see how creativity is constructed in actual practice on the ground. Such constructions might involve the absence of creativity as much as its presence, its disparagement as much as its affirmation. It means that the thesis is able to reflect on the state of the broad field of secondary English

teaching, as well as the place of creativity in it, and, as well as considering what facilitates creativity, to investigate obstacles, such as those previously suggested by research into teachers' emotions (Hargreaves, 2000), performativity (Ball, 2003; Jeffrey and Troman, 2013) and accountability (Lobascher, 2011; Hutchings, 2015).

This research also differs from other studies in its focus on the enactment of creativity in English according to the type of institution in which learning takes place. Thus, it seeks to position itself within a wider body of work about educational rationing (Fraser, 1997; Gillborn and Youdell, 1999). Creativity, then, is constructed not just as a method of teaching and learning, but as a material resource and important element of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990; Coleman, 1998), with the potential for teachers to draw on it restricted or enabled in different measures according to the institutional pressures within which they work. In this sense, the inclusion of teacher responses from a private school is particularly significant. Often, Ball (2017: 169) points out, "policy may be looking in the wrong place" in "addressing itself to social disadvantage as a free-standing problem". He explains that this is the case because:

Inequality is also produced and reproduced relationally by the actions and strategies of the socially advantaged to maintain and enhance their advantages.

If, as Ball states, the structures at work in state schools act to deepen "the relationship between education policy and social class and the reproduction of social inequalities and privilege and disadvantage" (7), through restricting access to socially desirable resources such as creativity, then, *relationally*, does it simultaneously enable students in private

schools to accumulate more of the same resource? The data chapters will explore whether or not this is the case.

1.6 Research design

The English departments in the three different secondary schools were treated as a case study. Individual interviews were carried out with five to seven teachers in each (17 in total) over a 30-45 minute time period, using loosely structured questioning. The questioning was designed both to allow teachers to talk directly about creativity and to establish the broader educational and personal landscape within which creativity was constructed.

The schools were chosen for their contrasting characteristics in terms of their institutional structure, their geographical location and the social mix of their student intake. Consequently, the research was simultaneously designed as “a collective case study” (Simons, 2009) of secondary English teachers, allowing me to explore how creativity was constructed by the English teaching profession across different schools, but also as a comparative study of three different cases, providing opportunities to explore how constructions of creativity intersected with the particulars of each institution. The latter was of crucial importance to my second research question: *how is creativity enacted in classrooms?* It allowed for an exploration, drawing on what teachers themselves said, of whether or not creativity was enacted equitably by teachers working with different pupils in different schools.

1.7 Outline of the chapters

Chapters two to four are closely related, offering a survey of creativity as it relates to English teaching, epistemology and policy. Chapter two is an overview of English teaching and creativity itself. To comply with word length restrictions, it necessarily ignores a large body of work about creativity that might be of tangential interest to this research. The scale of work relating to creativity can be gauged by the inclusion of chapter three as a separate epistemology chapter that explores the close relationship between creativity and epistemology in relevant fields such as linguistics, literature, education and affect. There are significant examples within each of these fields that draw on creativity to help explain the status and generation of knowledge. These are grouped together to construct, for the purposes of this study, *an epistemology of creativity*. Chapter four then offers an overview of policy about creativity, and also policy that establishes accountability systems in schools.

Chapter five looks at methods and methodology. It contextualises the study's social constructionist approach, before placing it within the context of policy research. It then provides a rationale for using a case study approach before explaining practical details about the selection of schools and teachers. Finally, it explains the choice of Critical Discourse Analysis to scrutinise the data, and of ethical considerations.

Chapter six is the first to explore the research data. It looks at how creativity was constructed within a wider context of teachers' accountability in relation to their students' examination results. The data chapters start with this because it was the topic teachers focused on most, sometimes regardless of the specifics of the questioning. It also filtered through into responses about a number of other topics. Thus chapter seven is about the relationship between creativity and the English curriculum; but it must take into account

the impact of examinations on that curriculum. Chapter eight, ‘Creativity: meanings, practices and feelings’, draws together some of the findings of the previous two chapters to suggest what creativity meant, looked and felt like when practised on the ground; again, this involves recognising the significant role played by the pressures of high-stakes testing.

All of the data chapters look for patterns in teachers’ responses across all three schools, but also for differences both between teachers and between schools. The findings from these patterns and differences then feed into the conclusions, which include recommendations at teacher, school and national policy level.

Chapter Two: English teaching and creativity: an overview

This chapter is the first of three that are inter-related. It does not use the conventional term ‘literature review’ because all three chapters draw on literature that is relevant to a study of English teaching and creativity. Overview is preferred here because the chapter offers readers a broad survey of how creativity has been theorised and practised in relation to English teaching since the subject was established at the start of the 20th century. The chapter that follows explores literature in which creativity is drawn on as an epistemological tool, which is then used to put together an *epistemology of creativity* for the purposes of this thesis. The final of the three chapters looks at policy documentation, particularly as it relates to language.

2.1 Historical background

Creativity has played an important role in constructions of English since it became an established subject at the start of the 20th century. The first policy document about English teaching in England (Newbolt, 1921) argued that the subject should be “treated as an art, the means of creative expression”. In the same period, the first full-length book about English teaching (Sampson, 1922) stated that it should strive “to give the whole English people a humane, creative education in and through the treasures of their own language and literature” (p.104). The subsequent development of the subject over the next 30 years or so, resulted in what an extensive history of English teaching as a school subject called “the post-1945 creativity movement” (Shayler, 1972: p.40).

The important role given to both creativity and English teaching in the post-war years was a consequence of the particular status of literature and literary study at the time.

Leavis (2011) and others in the English department at Cambridge University in the mid-twentieth century expanded on ideas first developed in the 19th century (Arnold, 1869) about the ability of literature to fulfil the societal functions once afforded to organised religion. “Creative” and “imaginative” works of an exceptional quality were to act as a spiritual buffer against the alienating forces of mechanisation and industrialisation (Eagleton, 1983: p.16). Great authors, it was argued, could draw on forms of creativity unavailable to anyone else. This creativity was embedded in the language of their work and, if accessed by readers, could provide them with intellectual and spiritual sustenance. However, given the supposedly superior intellect and sensitivity of the great writers, their creativity was not immediately apparent to the casual reader. Instead, teachers, themselves rigorously trained in the skills of literary analysis, were required to act as conduits to the hidden creativity locked within literary texts (Hilliard, 2012). Creativity was staged: great authors had it, teachers could identify it, and students could learn from it.

This hierarchical formulation of creativity was exemplified by Hourd (1949), who argued that students needed exposure to the likes of Shakespeare, Keats and Coleridge in order to develop appropriate forms of creativity. She called this process “growth through literature” and explained that “the child may read trash when he is alone, but when he becomes creative, in the presence of creators, only the highest standards are appropriate to his efforts” (14).

This work from many decades ago remains important because it helped to establish the ongoing cultural trope of the creative English teacher (Fisher, Harris and Jarvis, 2008). This can be seen in films like *Dead Poet’s Society*, *Dangerous Minds* and *Freedom Writers*, in which the English teacher’s love and knowledge of great literature is transmitted down to students who, in turn, produce writing of their own that transforms their lives.

It also relied upon and promoted the notion of the great author as a creative genius. The deconstruction of this epistemological construct, as will be apparent in the next section, was a staging post on the way to the reconfiguration of creativity in English in more recent years.

2.2 The deconstruction of creativity

While there has been unprecedented (positive) interest in creativity over the past two decades or so, in the previous three decades it was largely absent from critical discourse (Pope, 2005) and viewed with mistrust (Sennett, 2009). This applied both to general epistemological discourses and those specifically about English teaching: with thinking about language and about authorship central to both. This section looks at why this rejection and mistrust arose, in order to establish the background for the resurgence of interest in a reconfigured creativity in recent years.

‘What is an author?’ (Foucault, 1991 [1969]) offers a rigorous challenge to the concepts of authorial intention and creativity that helped bring into being “the post-1945 creativity movement”. It describes the author as “the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning” (p.222). As such, the authority granted to the author as the source of knowledge limits rather than enables creativity, by reducing the “inexhaustible world of significations” (p.221) to the output of a single being.

Foucault himself was wary of even using the term creativity because of its connotations of individual genius. In a live television debate with Chomsky (Chomsky and Foucault, 2011), he initially refused to engage with it as a concept when asked to do so. Chomsky, in contrast, spoke about the “true creativity” of someone like Sir Isaac Newton as opposed to the “normal creativity” of everyday people. The debate can be seen crudely as

marking a paradigm shift in dominant epistemological constructions: from an essentialist paradigm as offered by Chomsky to a deconstructionist position offered by Foucault.

A deconstructionist position offers no room for an essentialist model of creativity and its focus on a single source of authority. Applying deconstruction specifically to the landscape of English teaching, Hunter (p.1988) argues that a teaching approach that privileges the creativity of the author represents “the contraction of the morally managed space of the school into the landscape of the literary text” (p.67). In other words, both school and text exert an essentialist authority over the pupil.

Eagleton (1983), from a Marxist perspective, also offers a critique of approaches that focus on the creativity of the author. He argues that literary study, in this paradigm, is “part of the ideological apparatus of the state” (p.174), with teachers “custodians of discourse [tasked] to preserve this discourse, extend and elaborate on it as necessary” (p.175). Thus, creativity represents what the general population can never fully obtain, a form of discourse only available to an elite few and only understood properly by their foot soldiers (primarily English teachers).

2.3 The reconstruction of creativity

Dixon’s (1967) *Growth Through English* marks a significant shift away from preceding ideas about English teaching and creativity. The title signifies a renewed focus on language and a move away from a “growth through literature” model. This influential work, a summary report of a month-long seminar of English practitioners from around the globe, places importance on “culture as the pupil knows it” (p.3) rather than privileging high cultural forms. Creativity, then, is no longer constructed as an internal resource to draw on in order to represent external reality, but the process of drawing on the material of external

life – including literary works - to give it a shape and meaning relevant to one's own. In this model the creativity of the reader is given an importance to rival that of the writer.

It is a model alluded to by Foucault, even as he resisted using the word creativity. In his debate with Chomsky, while rejecting the importance of individual creativity, he recognised that “there exist ... possible creations, possible innovations” (Chomsky and Foucault, 2011). ‘What is an author?’ recognises the possibilities for “the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, the recomposition of fiction” (1969: p.221). In a sense, this work marks a shift towards something beyond deconstruction. With the dismantling of creativity, what might be termed *re-creativity* takes its place (Pope, 2005: p.84); the creativity of the great author is replaced by the creativity of the reader. Indeed, work into the history of the subject alludes to such practices having long been established, even as they are not necessarily recognised in official accounts of the subject. Detailed studies of working class intellectual life in the 19th century (Dixon, 1991; Rose, 2002) suggested an alternative vein running through literary study: one of *self-creation*, of readers drawing from literature what was relevant to their own lives and placing their own interpretations on it. This process of re-construction, or re-creativity, enabling an alternative epistemological model of creativity to take its place in the pedagogy of the English classroom, is mirrored by further attempts to give the subject new inflections, as outlined below.

2.4 Towards a new aesthetic

Deconstructionist challenges to creativity were fundamental to the development of the field of *critical literacy* (Morgan, 1996; Luke, 1997). As a critique of the wider social context within which all representation took place, its focus is on *deconstruction*, leaving

little room for creativity, or what might be termed *re-construction*. Misson and Morgan (2006; 2007) recognise that this could be problematic for the construction of knowledge in the classroom, where school-aged students need the opportunity to absorb and enjoy cultural experiences as well as critiquing them, to be acted on by texts as well as acting on them. Thus they draw attention to “the limitations of critical literacy in terms of its conceptualisations of significant matters such as individual identity, human emotion, and creativity” (x). They stress the importance of emotion and affect to theory and practice, aligning aspects of critical literacy with the *aesthetic*. Their work recognises that linguistic and literary exploration do not just involve deconstructing texts, but are also about understanding how they make people feel and react.

2.5 The creativity of genre

Kress (1993; 1995) developed a *genre-based* approach to English teaching (Martin 1989; Cope and Kalantzis 1993) which advocated the need to give students explicit direction about how to identify and reproduce the internal features of different generic forms. The approach is open to the criticism that it restricts creativity because it directs students to write within the tightly regulated constraints of particular ‘text types’, such as persuasive writing, instructional writing, or writing to describe. Kress, however, suggests that students should be encouraged to play with genre, to subvert it and re-make it for their own purposes. He emphasises that such an approach has “possibilities for change, innovation and creativity – that is, the possibilities and means of altering generic form” (1993: p.28). Such an approach resonates with Cremin and Myhill’s (2013) work on writing which recognises that “(y)oung writers do not simply reproduce the genres they encounter or are taught; they actively use them to make sense of their life experiences and their literacy experiences” (p.12). They

draw on a range of approaches in exploring how to teach writing, and recognise that all forms of writing can potentially be creative (p.23). Thus, their work acknowledges the importance of context in any language formulation and that all language practices, to a greater or lesser degree, are processes of *re*-construction. They share some of the genre-school's recognition of the need explicitly to teach particular codes and conventions, but they also construct language as a resource that students should be encouraged to draw on as they themselves see fit, so that writing

occurs within an environment of democratic participation, where children's voices are heard, where they have ownership of their texts and their decision-making, and where they can articulate with confidence their reasons for their writing choices. (p.24)

2.6 Multimodality and creative design

Cremin and Myhill extend the idea of *making meaning* in writing to one of *negotiating meaning*. They recognise that all writing occurs within socially constructed structures, but that within these students need opportunities to exercise a degree of agency. Thus, creativity does not represent the freedom to write anything, but to explore the possibilities available while adhering to particular conventions. In this they share much in common with recent interest from English and related fields in *multimodality* (QCDA, 2007; Kress, 2010). Initially ideas about multimodality (New London Group, 1996; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000) developed as a response to advances in new media technologies that democratised forms of production that were previously too expensive and complex for general use. Such work argues that when constructing meaning, we all have a choice about

the range of modes in which we can choose to do so. Creativity lies in the particular way we make design choices. This might mean deciding to represent something using the moving image rather than writing.

The changes in how creativity has been constructed in relation to English, and fluctuations in the value afforded to it at different times, track broader shifts in epistemological thinking. The changes were themselves constructed within wider epistemological discourses: specifically the “linguistic turn” (Buchanan, 2010), and a subsequent development, the “affective turn” (Clough and Halley, 2007). The next chapter explores the importance of creativity to epistemology, drawing on a range of theorists who have worked in the fields of language, literature, education and affect. While wide-ranging, the chapter will attempt to pull together ideas from them all to construct an *epistemology of creativity* specifically for the purposes of this study.

Chapter Three: An epistemology of creativity

A change of emphasis in the discourse of the humanities and social sciences in the late 1960s and early 1970s, commonly referred to as the ‘linguistic turn’, reflected an epistemological recognition of the importance of language in human meaning-making (Buchanan, 2010). The work that influenced and came from this moment was central to the reconfiguration of creativity in the subsequent period and included Foucault’s referred to previously. It afforded to creativity particular possibilities in the processes of meaning-making and knowledge construction. This section offers an overview of that work as it relates to creativity, before moving on to look at further developments in the field of epistemology, commonly referred to as the ‘affective turn’ (Clough and Halley, 2007). The chapter, then, looks at theories of language in relation to creativity and combines these with theories of affect to create an *epistemology of creativity*.

Creativity is, in and of itself, a useful epistemological tool. Its versatility in being able to “range over very different forms and intentions which, in partial theories, are separated and specialised” (Williams, 1977: p.207) means that it can somehow encapsulate a quality in the production and reception of literature, sculpture and painting; of cooking, music and carpentry; of technological innovation, entrepreneurialism and teaching. In fact, it can be applied to almost any aspect of life. Clearly this can present problems for any study attempting to use the term: it is used so widely, and so generally, that it risks losing all force. But within each of these specialist areas, and any others that care to use the word, it can be applied more specifically, while still hinting at an elusive general quality present in any form of human activity – and so simultaneously suggesting the complex interrelatedness of such activity and the impossibility of ever representing it in full.

All of the theorists drawn upon share the idea that knowledge is generated through a process of *becoming*. In this, creativity and knowledge become analogous. For both build on – or are built from – what came before, and are never fixed. They consider not just what is, but what is still to be. Thus an *epistemology of creativity* is particularly apposite for a social constructionist approach: it sees knowledge formation as a continual process, impossible to pin down absolutely, subject to multiple contextual forces that can be identified and explored but never fully articulated in absolute terms, and always contestable. Its suitability for my own research stems from my desire not to turn creativity into a particular set of criteria and to view the construction of any classroom practice, or concept applicable to the classroom, as endlessly in flux, contestable and subject to change for the better – so adding to my social justice agenda.

While the theorists have much in common, in the interests of simplicity, they are presented one by one, or in small clusters. Raymond Williams acts as a fulcrum on which balance theories of language and creativity, and affect and creativity. I explore how his concept of ‘structures of feeling’ (1977) links to creativity and creative practices, the later examine how it is developed by theorists of affect (Kosofsky Sedgwick, 2003; Woodward, 2009). In between, I draw on work that considers the emancipatory potential of creative practices as they relate to education (Freire, 1970), to the operation of language (Ricouer, 1981; Bourdieu, 1991), and the overlap of the two (Blommaert, 2005; 2011).

3.1 The linguistic turn

3.1.1 Dialogic creativity

Volosinov (2000) argues that words exist “in a chain of ideological creativity” (p.11). This means that a word’s meaning can never be fixed but is always dependent on its “new contextual meaning” (p.77). Creativity lies not in the word itself but in the meaning activated in the context of a particular utterance. If we take creativity, at a very simple level, to be the process by which new meaning is brought into being, then every utterance involves creativity, for no utterance can exactly mirror what has gone before. Contextual particulars, no matter how small, must be different. All utterances must also be met with a response (uttered in a social vacuum they are devoid of any meaning at all). This involves comprehending what has been said or written with recourse to one’s existing linguistic resources, so that “understanding strives to match the speaker’s words with a *counter word*” (p.102).

Language as constituted by Volosinov is a dynamic medium, generating meaning at the same time as it carries it. In a sense creativity just happens because any given utterance cannot but be contextually different from what has gone before; so meaning can never be fixed. However, this would be to misread Volosinov’s understanding of how words come to be filled with meaning. Creativity might exist in the infinite number of inflections that can be given to a word, but those inflections are themselves determined by the social conditions in which the words are forged. Seen like this, language becomes “an arena of class struggle” (p.23) in which “a word in the mouth of a particular individual person is a product of the living interaction of social forces” (p.26). The word “struggle” here is an important one to consider in the context of the English classroom. It suggests that language is a site of

contestation, with linguistic creativity not simply happening but self-consciously brought into being through its agentive manipulation within particular contexts. If students can develop an understanding of how language is formed then they might be able to exploit its creativity for particular effect. “Understanding one’s own language,” Volosinov writes, “is focused not on identifying identical elements of speech but on understanding their new, contextual meaning” (77). It is an understanding drawn on by exponents of *recreative* or *transformative* writing, who propose ways of working in the English classroom that recognise language as a material resource, with creativity coming from using it in new contexts for particular effect (Pope, 2005; Goldsmith, 2011; McCallum, 2012).

Bakhtin (2006) constructs language as, paradoxically, rule-bound yet endlessly creative. He postulates that it is “as diverse as human activity itself” (2006: p.60) so that “each separate utterance is individual, of course”; but that each utterance occurs within relatively stable spheres, or “speech genres”. Speech genres, themselves, he argues, are so heterogeneous that they resist easy study (p.61): any attempt at analysis needs to take into account genres as diverse as “the single-word everyday rejoinder and the multivolume novel”, or “the military command that is standardised even in its intonation and the profoundly individualised lyrical work”. His solution is to develop a theory about how genres are formed. At the heart of this is the idea of *dialogue*, that all language is social and only takes on meaning in human interaction. Dialogue is constructed at the level of *utterance* rather than word or sentence, a construction that allows context to become paramount in any understanding of how meaning is transmitted and developed. Speech genres, then, organise speech “in almost the same way as grammatical (syntactical) forms do” (p.78) so that mutual understanding is possible. “Without them,” Bakhtin wrote, “communication would be almost impossible”.

An individual cannot create a speech genre: the process is historical and to learn a speech genre is to be immersed in its use. Linguistic creativity only becomes possible once a genre is “fully mastered in order to be manipulated freely” (p.80). This has important implications for teaching, both in terms of the types of language to which students are exposed and how they are encouraged to play with it. Bakhtin argues that “conditions for reflecting individuality in language” (p.63) vary from genre to genre. So “the most conducive genres are those of artistic literature” because “here the individual style enters directly into the very task of the utterance”. In contrast, other genres, such as “many kinds of business documents, military commands, verbal signals in industry, and so on” require “standard forms”. Some genres, then, are more creative than others. While postmodernism might subsequently challenge this – for example, the fiction of George Saunders (2001) plays with the genre of the business document for literary effect – Bakhtin’s work provides us with an argument for a strong focus on creative writing and studying literature in the classroom: for here are genres that demand creativity and experimentation as part of their formation, stretching and teaching about the boundaries and possibilities of language. It also encourages us to see that students can arrive in classrooms already with “a repertoire of oral (and written) speech genres at their disposal” (p.78), particularly at secondary level. This means that teachers can confidently allow students to explore material through talk in order to generate new forms of knowledge around it (Wells, 1986; Mercer, 1995; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2007; Alexander, 2008; Littleton and Mercer, 2013). Simultaneously, however, they need to recognise that students will still “often feel quite helpless in certain spheres of communication ... because they do not have a practical command of the generic forms used in the given spheres” (p.80). So they also need to provide students with opportunities to learn about the linguistic conventions of a range of different genres in order to show competence in particular fields, something picked up by contemporary writers interested in exploring the

tension between linguistic creativity and constraint according to contexts of use and socialisation: such as Blommaert's work on "indexicality" (2010), Carter's on the relationship between spoken and literary language (2004) and Mercer's on language as a "social mode of thinking" (1995).

3.1.2 Literary creativity

The linguistic turn has fed into approaches to literature, also of significance when thinking about the theorisation of school English. Bakhtin himself makes a case for the creativity of "artistic literature" over other forms of language use when he asserts that its "individual style enters directly into the very task of the utterance" (2006: p.63). Its conventions require authors actively to look for ways to move beyond generic constraints and so its very essence relies upon creativity and transformation. Jakobson makes a similar case when he develops the idea of the "poetic function" to mark out creative writing in which there is a "focus on the message for its own sake" (in Swann and Pope, 2011: p.14).

Bakhtin's focus on the dialogic nature of language means that the creativity of literary texts comes from two sources: the creativity of language as it works on readers and the creativity of readers as they process the language. A literary text has the potential for greater generative capacity than many others because it actively seeks to use vocabulary and language structures in unfamiliar ways; consequently it imposes a greater range of meanings on readers who, in turn, have more material from which to create their own meanings. These ideas feed directly into theories of reader-response (Iser, 1978; Fish, 1990) that focus on the reader's role in the construction of meaning in a text. Such theories make reading, as much as writing, into a creative act, exploring the multiple interpretations opened up by different perspectives. Texts become sites of endless creativity, each new reading bringing with it new

possibilities, and marking a shift in the source of creativity from the writer to the reader, mirroring the famous last line in Barthes' (1977) essay 'The Death of the Author': "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author". They are matched by a concomitant shift in the concept of originality, with a focus on how authors of texts themselves are involved in a process of *re-creativity* rather than creativity. Pope (2005) refers to the production of any cultural product as "the ongoing process of making fresh" (p.84) and argues that it "turns upon the relation between what has happened so far and what may happen now and now and now (i.e. 'next' conceived as an unfolding series)"; Attridge (2004), writing specifically about literature, remarks that "the creative act, however internal it might seem, works with materials absorbed from a culture or a *melange* of cultures", while Kearney (1988) presents the postmodern age as one in which the idea of "the artist as one who not only emulates but actually replaces God" (p.12) was superseded by the idea of "the *bricoleur*: someone who plays around with fragments of meaning which he himself has not created". Theorising about the relationship between creativity and re-creativity is absorbed into pedagogical practices described by Knights and Thurgar-Dawson (2006), English (2012), McCallum (2012) and Goldsmith (2011). The first three explore how *recreative* – sometimes called *transformative* – writing offers a valid critical response to texts, while the third offers a radical challenge to the process of writing itself, arguing for the validity of processes such as cutting and pasting, re-purposing and re-contextualising.

Such approaches do not pay particularly close attention to the creativity of a text itself as it acts upon the reader, what might be called the *affect* or *aesthetic* of the text. A contemporaneous strand of thinking has also sought to find space for these terms within literary study. Kearney (1988) constructs a "poetics of the possible" in recognition that some ways of being and doing, exemplified in literary language, may well offer insight into what it is to be human in ways that resist deconstruction. Literary texts seek explicitly to create

these possibilities. Elsewhere (2002) he explores the creativity of stories. He explains that all stories are linked to human agency in the way they all came from real life while also forever altering real life by bringing something new into being. His is a sophisticated development of the idea contained within all influential reader-response work, though often overlooked, that texts can never assert “an infinite plurality of meanings” (Fish 1990: p.307) because they are written in language that is socially constructed. In other words, while all readings are different, they still operate within particular parameters; consequently, particular texts can act on readers in particular ways. Rosenblatt’s (1978) ‘theory of transactional reading’ draws on the relationship between reader and writer of the text to recognise the creativity of both. Warning against awarding the reader “the reflected glory of duplicating the author’s initial creativity” (p.49) and “the view that the reader in re-creating the work re-enacts the author’s creative role”, she instead emphasises “the reader’s own unique form of literary creativity” (p.50). The writer, in this model, tries to guide the reader to a particular response but it is still for the reader to make that response in his or her unique way at the transactional point where prior experience meets with the experience of what is being read.

These theories of literary creativity are important when considering the status of literature in secondary school English. Almost all students in England sit GCSE examinations in both English Language and English Literature at the age of 16, and the Language GCSE itself contains a large number of literary texts. They offer a way of constructing the importance of Literature, both as a subject in its own right, but also as an important aspect of linguistic development.

3.1.3 Language: creative freedoms and constraints

Ricouer (1981), writing about the creativity of language, recognises that “creativity is always governed by objective linguistic codes” (p.341) but that “it continually brings [these codes] to their limit in order to invent something new”. His project is to demonstrate the inventiveness of human language *despite* the codes by which it is governed. Human creativity, in Ricouer’s terms, “is always in some ways a response to a regulating order” (p.343). In making this claim he positions language as a potential site of resistance to “the erosion of the everyday, conditioned by technocratic and political interests” (p.341), with “the narrative resources of language” containing within them the possibility of rejuvenating human potential that might have been “flattened or diminished”. He links narrative directly to “literary language”, which he argues “involves a creative use of language often ignored by science or by our everyday existence” (p.343). This is because narration always reframes human action in some way, so challenging what has gone before: it becomes “our way of using human history and praxis”.

Ricouer’s work is particularly attractive to an epistemology of creativity because it constructs creativity as a fundamental form of challenge to existing structures of knowledge and encourages thinking about the potential held within language if it is used in different ways. It is also interesting when researching constructions within English teaching, because of its dual focus on language and literature, which are taught side by side in the secondary curriculum. It provides a possible focus through which to explore the ways that teachers structure language learning in their classrooms and how they encourage students to work with literary texts. It is worth noting, however, that other theorists pay much more attention to the constraints within which language use occurs than Ricouer or, at least, are less expansive about its emancipatory possibilities: also important when considering how

English teachers construct creativity, given that it is perfectly possible within the framework of the current *National curriculum programme of study for English* (DFE, 2013) for an English teacher to construct the subject in terms that see their role as inducting students into the competent use of “objective linguistic codes”, without paying any attention to creativity. Bourdieu, for example, also recognises the creativity inherent in language, writing that its “generative capacities are without limits” but is careful to qualify this, adding that “one can say everything in language ... within the limits of grammaticality” (1991: p.41). Bourdieu argues that “grammar defines meaning only very partially” (p.38). It emerges fully “in relation to a market”. Circulating in this “linguistic market is not ‘language’, but rather ‘discourses’” (p.39). The presence of this market restricts the theoretical capacity to generate an infinite number of grammatically correct discourses, or at least means that they have little or no value if they sit outside of discourses of authority and power. To demonstrate this, Bourdieu suggests that legal discourse is particularly creative because it “brings into existence that which it utters” (p.42). This is unlike all other utterances which “simply record a pre-existent given”. The constraining nature of discourse, as constructed by Bourdieu, does not exclude the usefulness of his work from an *epistemology of creativity*. As with Ricouer, his work allows for recognition of how constructions of language practice have a central role to play in the formation and transmission of knowledge. His work is particularly useful in the context of thinking about language teaching and creativity because it looks closely at the role played by education in perpetuating discourses of authority and so, concomitantly, restricting the creative capacity to generate alternative discourses. He argues that official definitions of a language – speaking of *the* language, placing high value on *standard* language forms – impose a legitimacy on an entire population, with teachers acting as “agents of regulation and imposition ... empowered *universally* to subject the linguistic performance of speaking to examination and to the legal sanction of academic performance”

(p.45). Any people unable to meet the linguistic competence required of the school system “are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence” (p.55). Those most likely to fall into this category come from disadvantaged groups and so constructions of language perpetuate social inequities (p.62). This is highly problematic for any first language teacher. Where does their responsibility lie? How can they empower students to use standard forms, but also to be aware of how they are constructed and of the possibilities and problems in attempting to draw on and use alternative discourses? It means that my *epistemology of creativity* allows for reflection about how constructions of creativity sit alongside the formal requirements for students to be inducted into standard forms, and how teachers reconcile their own beliefs with what is required of them at a policy level.

3.1.4 Pragmatic creativity

Blommaert’s work on discourse (2005) and sociolinguistics (2010) grapples with the problems raised by Bourdieu’s work and offers one possible route through. He links an analysis of discourse to the same inequalities identified by Bourdieu, but more actively engages with how a degree of agency can be found in the creativity afforded by and inherent in language. He does this through linking the concept of discourse closely to that of ‘voice’, which, he explains, “stands for the way in which people manage to make themselves understood, or fail to do so” (2005: p.4). Voice’s “capacity for semiotic mobility” (p.68) means that while “it is constrained by normativities, *determined* by general patterns of inequality” (p.99), there still remain possibilities of “creativity, choice or freedom” in communicative acts. In other words, through use of voice, people can “creatively select forms of discourse” even as “there is a limit to choice and freedom”. This is not counter to

the notion of constraints within which discourses operate, but explains how those very constraints are acted on – both consciously and unconsciously – so that they shift over time. Blommaert explains the importance of recognising the relationship between constraints and creativity in discourse when he writes that “it is the interplay between creativity and determination that accounts for the social, the cultural, the political, the historical in communicative events”. Creativity, in this construction, helps to explain how discourses are formed, even as they simultaneously place limits on creativity.

3.2 Creativity and Williams’ ‘structures of feeling’

Creativity is central to Raymond Williams’ construction of knowledge as an ongoing process of *becoming* (1977). He draws on it to help work his way beyond the observation that “in most descriptions and analysis, culture and society are expressed in an habitual past tense” (p.128). This, he explains, results in an artificial separation of the social and the personal, the past and the present, as “relationships, institutions and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted ... into formal wholes rather than forming and formative processes”. Consequently “analysis is then centered on relations between these produced institutions, formations and experiences” at the expense of “lived experience”. How, then, to reconcile this epistemological conundrum: that knowledge as conceived is never knowledge as lived? Williams’ suggested solution is contained in his coining of the term ‘structures of feeling’. These he defines as “social experiences in *solution*, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been *precipitated* and are more evidently and more immediately available” (pps.133-4). Effectively he is attempting to categorise what is almost uncategorisable, to identify a process which “is at the very edge of semantic availability” (p.134). ‘Feeling’ is used to “emphasise a distinction from more formal

concepts of ‘world-view’ or ‘ideology’” (p.132), what Williams calls “affective elements of consciousness and relationships ... practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-related continuity”. ‘Structures’ recognises that these feelings are “never mere flux” (p.134) but have “specific internal relations” (p.132) which constitute “a social experience which is still *in process*”. This means it can often be mistaken for the private, or idiosyncratic, rather than the social, but “in analysis ... [it] has its emergent, connecting and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies”.

Creativity, what Williams also calls ‘creative practice’, relates to the active role played in the formation of structures of feeling. Its scope, in Williams’ hands, is wide-ranging. He recognises that creativity can refer to deliberate acts, but also to the unforeseen consequences of such acts, with the onus for social action being on recognising and working with both the foreseen and the unforeseen, so that “creativity and social self-creation are ... known and unknown events” and it is “from grasping the known that the unknown – the next step, the next work – is conceived” (p.212).

Epistemologically, then, creativity provides the means to attempt to give voice to, or explain, the emergent forms discernible in *structures of feeling*. It can be as present in “the relatively simple and direct practice of everyday communication” (p.211) as it can be in “new articulations ... which ... reach beyond their time and occasion”. Significantly, it is opposed to simple reproductive forms of social practice and so offers a challenge to the *status quo* without making grand and unsubstantiated claims about what might be to follow.

Williams’ work is useful to this study for two substantial reasons. First, the concept of ‘structures of feeling’ provides an interesting lens through which to look at any emerging patterns in what teachers say when discussing creativity. In particular, it provides opportunities to think about the affective responses that talking about creativity opens up in teachers, something that will be explored more fully later in this chapter. Second, in placing

creativity at the centre of the process of knowledge construction itself, he enables thinking about the epistemological constraints and freedoms within which teachers construct creativity, and also about the extension of those constraints and freedoms to their students.

3.3 Freire: epistemological re-creations

While working with Brazilian peasants on literacy programmes, Freire developed emancipatory practices that reject a “banking” form of pedagogy (1970: pps.52-56) in favour of a “problem-solving pedagogy” (pps.64-65). The former reinforces the existing *status quo* through transmission forms of education, in which “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (p.53). Implicit in the banking model, he explains, “is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world” (p.56). There is no opportunity, then, for that human being to act on the world, to exercise creativity, because “a person is merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others”. A banking form of education, then, denies agency, renders the individual “a spectator, not re-creator”.

In Freire’s alternative “problem-solving” model, those learning act on material in a process of *praxis*, or *action-reflection*. Thus, at one and the same time, learners are acting on knowledge, bringing in into their own realm of experience, and reflecting on this process, one not of *being*, but of *becoming*. Gone is the separation of the individual and environment, replaced by a situation in which “people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves” (p.64). Thus, the world is no longer “static” but “in process, in transformation”. Freire draws a direct link between pedagogy and creativity, saying that “banking education inhibits creativity” while “problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon

reality”. Authentic existence, he goes on, is only possible when people are “engaged in inquiry and creative transformation” (p.65).

The strength of Freire’s work for this *epistemology of creativity* lies in its construction of creativity as a transformative force through the process of acting on the world, and his insistence that this is a right of everyone. Much of his work deals directly with literacy development and so is particularly relevant for research that draws on the constructions of English teachers. Action on the *word*, in Freire’s terms, equates to action on the *world*, so that “to speak a true word is to transform the world” (p.68). Statements such as this can seem overblown, products of the emancipatory fervour of the times in which they were written. Nonetheless, they still resonate, in large part because of the continuing struggle within the English education system and its policy domain over transmission and problem-posing forms. Several proponents of the former (Willingham, 2010; Christadoulou, 2014; Peal, 2014) have been mentioned in policy speeches in recent years, with one author, Christodoulou, actively attacking Freire’s ideas in her book. Freire would share one of her main arguments, namely that students need opportunities to acquire knowledge (Macedo and Freire, 1987). His concern would be about where that knowledge comes from and how it is acted and reflected upon: would there even be opportunities for action and reflection, for *praxis*?

It is worth emphasising the value of Freire’s ideas to this *epistemology of creativity*. Primarily it allows for consideration to be given to what teachers’ constructions of creativity reveal about the types of learning that they want to take place in their classrooms. Do English teachers, for example, construct learning as a process of transmission or of problem-solving, of *being* or of *becoming*? And which do they feel able to practise in their own classrooms and to what degree? Additionally, it enables thinking about the opportunities for *praxis* that exist in lessons, how these are distributed, and how they fit with the wider policy agenda.

3.4 The creativity of affect

Williams' work has relatively recently been picked up by theorists of affect (Kosofsky Sedgwick, 2003; Woodward, 2009). The concepts of 'structures of feeling' and 'creative practice' both resonate with attempts to articulate that which resists easy definition, given their affinity with the non-verbal, with tone and the emotions, conceptually identified as "in-between-ness" (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010: p.1), "yet-ness" (p.3) and "beside-ness" (Kosofsky Sedgwick). Epistemological constructions of creativity so far looked at emphasise this sense of knowledge never being complete, always *becoming*. In these circumstances the very word becomes imbued with potential: it hints at alternatives to what is, and so gathers positive feelings and emotions around it. An *epistemology of creativity* can draw on these positive emotions, identifying where constructions of creativity might point towards new possibilities. The creativity of affect, though, is not necessarily positive in orientation. If positive emotions do accrue around the concept, then what happens when those emotions cannot be acted on? In other words, what happens when emotions of possibility come up against the constraints of dominant discourses? This is a very useful perspective when considering the emotions that form around teachers' constructions of creativity. What emotions does it produce when talking about how they are able to act on their own ideas and beliefs? And what does it lead them to talk about besides creativity? In this context, concepts such as Berlant's of 'cruel optimism' (2011), Woodward's (2009) of 'statistical panic' and 'bureaucratic rage' and Ahmed's of 'hap' (2010) take on relevance. The first two are attempts to articulate feelings that cluster around a sense of frustration brought about by contemporary existence. 'Cruel optimism', Berlant explains, "names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility": in other words, the relative wealth and technological advancement in which much of Western life is located, point

towards a feeling of optimism, yet such a feeling often turns out to be impossible in reality. Berlant, then, hints at a way of structuring the frustrations that an epistemology of creativity might give rise to: it promises so much, but might come to little.

Woodward (2009) identifies more overtly negative emotions that come together to form a response to the frustrations of modern life. ‘Bureaucratic rage’ arises in the face of “deadlines and other inflexible requirements of bureaucracy” (p.168), while ‘statistical panic’ is a feeling of intense, ongoing distress brought about by the mobilisation of statistics – “facts completely detached from the world” (p.209) – in order to justify various public policies. Both are emotions of stasis, of *not becoming*, and so might prove useful when thinking about the negative emotions that might arise when talking about a concept with positive orientations, situated within a school system managed at national level through a bureaucratic inspectorate and judged against examination statistics.

Ahmed (2010) provides a way of recognising more clearly the negative as well as the positive emotions that might accrue around creativity. Exploring the concept of happiness, she argues that it is important to accept the negative as an integral part of being. To do this, she asks that we see the character of the ‘killjoy’ as a force for good. She points out that those labelled killjoys, such as feminists, gay-rights activists, and black-rights activists, tend to be at the vanguard of resistance to oppressive norms. Their resistance necessarily leads them to *kill joy*. The negative emotions generated, though, are not “simply reactive ... but creative responses to histories that are unfinished”. Ahmed’s work is useful for an epistemology of creativity, then, in recognising that knowledge might well be constructed from the negative, from what is not necessarily planned or wished for. Creativity is not just acting on the world, but responding to the world.

3.5 Using the epistemology of creativity

The *epistemology of creativity* as described above will be used in the following ways when writing up and analysing the study's data:

- To look for and analyse the freedoms and constraints open to teachers in their approaches to teaching language and literature.
- To explore the extent to which teachers construct creativity as part of a process of *becoming* in their lessons.
- To explore the positive and negative emotions that accrue around creativity.
- To identify possible structures of feeling that point to new possibilities and creations, even as they are not yet fully articulated.

Chapter Four: Creativity, policy and accountability

This chapter gives an overview of policy discourses that influence English as it links to creativity. It focuses primarily on New Labour's time in office and the Coalition and Conservative governments that have followed. Creativity was given an important status in the former's educational policy discourse (Jones, 2009; Hall, 2010); it has been afforded very few mentions by the latter. The chapter begins, though, by going back four decades or so to examine the historical roots of a "discourse of derision" (Kenway, 1987; Ball, 2006) that has been used to discredit creativity and attendant educational approaches, particularly when applied to English teaching. It does so in order to establish the foundations for what the chapter will suggest is a degree of continuation between that period and the present, even in the New Labour years, in how creativity and English teaching has been constructed in ways that, at times, actively place limits on creativity and creative practice.

The chapter ends by exploring studies about the impact of performativity and accountability measures on teachers and how this relates to creativity. It suggests particular policies exert control over English teachers and their teaching and, by extension, of possibilities for creativity in the classroom.

4.1 A discourse of derision

Direct government intervention into the school curriculum in England, not practised on a significant scale until the introduction of the National Curriculum (DOE) in 1989, became a matter of serious policy discussion at about the time of the publication in the late 1960s and early 1970s of the *Black Papers* (Cox and Dyson, 1971), a series of position pieces attacking progressive pedagogical practices and the widespread introduction of secondary

comprehensive schools. One polemical piece, by Cyril Burt (1971), discusses an alleged decline in educational standards as follows:

The deterioration is most marked in English composition. Here the vogue is all for ‘creativity’. Bad spelling, bad grammar, and the crudest vulgarisms are no longer frowned upon, but freely tolerated. Instead of accuracy, the teacher aims at ‘self-expression’; instead of clear and logical thought or precise description of facts, he – and still more often she – seeks to foster what is called ‘imagination’. At the same time parents and members of the public at large are beginning to wonder whether the free discipline, or lack of discipline, in the new permissive school may not largely be responsible for much of the subsequent delinquency, violence and general unrest that characterise our permissive society. (p.60)

Here creativity is constructed as an individual quality, closely linked to self-expression and imagination. It is actively *anti*-social, responsible, it seems, for an existential breakdown in social order. Linked specifically to the teaching of English, it appears to be incommensurate with any wish to value accuracy in writing: to break down the formal constraints of language, is to break down what holds society together. The use of scare quotes calls into question creativity’s very existence, marking it out as part of a wider project – deserving of a different name, perhaps - to bring about a permissive society. Significantly “parents and members of the public” are positioned as having no say in these matters: creativity - or ‘creativity’ - is part of a teacher-led project to win control of classroom - and wider social - practices.

Claims like these were not backed up by empirical evidence. The Bullock Report into English teaching (1975), *A Language for Life*, involved gathering data from hundreds

of English lessons. It concluded that accusations of “unchecked creativity” (p.6) in schools at the time were unsubstantiated. Creativity, then, it seems, was being used as part of a wider “discourse of derision” (Kenway, 1987; Ball, 2006), whereby some of the terms used by progressive educationalists were turned against them, equated with general social problems, though without any proven causal link. This particular discourse constructs creativity as the enemy of academic development, particularly in language work, *and* of social order, with the consequence that English teachers are given a prominent role in the supposed breakdown of this order. Burt’s paper belongs to a discourse of social control, something that becomes apparent when looking at it further. At one point, he quotes a short story as short-hand for his entire philosophy of education: “‘Make them work like niggers,’ says the headmaster in Ian Hay’s short story, ‘that’s education in a nutshell’.” (1971: p.58). Education, in this construction, is the means by which social hierarchies and (often gross) inequities are maintained; any threat to the *status quo*, including that offered by concepts such as creativity, must meet with derisory rejection.

4.2 New Labour, new creativity

Labour government policy between 1997 and 2010 also links creativity to issues of social order, but in a very different way. In this case it is constructed as contributing to a social good, afforded an important role in efforts at achieving and maintaining global economic competitiveness.

The foundational document for how creativity is constructed in this period is *All Our Futures* (NACCCE, 1999), a report commissioned jointly by David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, and Chris Smith, the State Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport at the time, who had already indicated his interest in this area with

the publication of *Creative Britain* (1998). With a remit “to make recommendations ... on the creative and cultural development of young people through formal and informal education”, it is carefully framed within a wider discourse of economic growth and global competitiveness. For example, the sidebar of the opening page contains the following three endorsements:

Our aim must be to create a nation where the creative talents of all the people are used to build a true enterprise economy for the twenty-first century – where we compete on brains, not brawn.

The Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon Tony Blair MP

... we cannot rely on a small elite, no matter how highly educated or highly paid. Instead we need the creativity, enterprise and scholarship of all our people.

*Rt. Hon David Blunkett MP, Secretary of State for Education and
Employment*

We must change the concept of creativity from being something that is ‘added on’ to education, skills, training and management and make sure it becomes intrinsic to all of these.

Rt. Hon Chris Smith MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Each statement belongs to a discourse that equates creativity with social progress and economic competitiveness. Nation-building itself, in Blair’s statement, is a matter of creativity: he and his team must “create a nation”. In a sense that is just what they are doing

in policy documents like this: constructing a version of Britain (or, in educational terms, more precisely England), where all aspects of life are required to conform to an economic imperative.

All Our Futures develops its own working definition of creativity (pps.28-30), which fits with this imperative. Creativity is defined as “imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value” (p.30). “Originality” and “value” tie the document into the prime minister’s concept of “an enterprise economy for the twenty-first century” in which the workforce must constantly innovate in order to maintain economic competitiveness, and in which individuals must have the capacity to frequently adapt to the changing employment demands of the marketplace. The terms once placed within scare quotes by Burt are revived by linking them directly to outcomes that are constructed as concrete and socially positive – creativity, self-expression and imagination, far from being socially subversive, now add value. In this model creativity is no longer an “experimental and destabilising force” (Sefton-Green, Thomson, Jones and Bresler, 2011: p.2) but is co-opted into New Labour’s form of neo-liberalism (Jones, 2011: p.24).

The report proved hugely popular with teachers and others working in education for its general message about the need to reform schools by promoting creativity across the curriculum. Over 100,000 copies were distributed (Schlesinger, 2007) and its chair, Sir Ken Robinson, subsequently became a globally known figure for promoting its core messages in his ‘Do Schools Kill Creativity’ presentation (2006), which gained more hits (over 40 million in 10 years) than any other on the influential ‘TED Talks’ website. The heart of this message is that schools have not developed significantly in over a century, conforming to a one-size-fits-all model of education developed in Victorian times. This needs to be swept aside, replaced by a model that encourages students to develop their own strengths, in whatever field, be that, for example, dance, science or technology. Creativity is thus

constructed as the means to reform an entire educational and economic system *and* to empower individuals to develop their own strengths – with resultant personal fulfillment in terms of self-development, and societal gains in terms of developing the relative strengths of an entire population. The report is keen to differentiate this construction of creativity from the perceived constructions of previous years, stressing that it is not advocating “a return to the progressive teaching ideas of the 1960s” (p.14) and downplaying a link between creativity and self-expression (p.36). Instead it stresses the need to see creativity as practised through a combination of freedom and control (p.6), relating it to “problem-solving” (p.37), “transferable skills” (p.38) and a “multidimensional” curriculum (p.38).

The report was instrumental in establishing *Creative Partnerships*, a programme given £300 million of funding between 2001 and 2010 to enable creative professionals to work directly with students in schools, with the money often targeted at pupils in areas of social deprivation on the basis that they might have less access to creative activities than those in more affluent areas. An evaluation carried out by a leading consultancy firm estimated the net benefit of the project to the wider economy at just under £8 billion (PriceWaterhouseCooper, 2010: p.4). Similar reports commissioned by Scottish and Irish parliaments borrowed the *All Our Future's* definition of creativity and reached similar conclusions (SEED, 2006). Subsequent reports and policy recommendations in England built on the NACCCE's initial work (QCA, 2005; Roberts, 2006). Creativity was embedded in the 2008 version of the National Curriculum in England (QCDA, 2007) as one of its key concepts and just before losing power in 2010, the Labour Party published *Creative Britain: Labour's Cultural Manifesto*, in which it asserted its achievement in having “put creativity back in the curriculum” while continuing to stress that without building on this – specifically by further targeting disadvantaged pupils – “our economy will not thrive globally”.

4.3 New Labour, creativity and English

Significantly for this study, the construction of creativity as educationally important in the New Labour years – be it as a social entitlement, or as a means to boost economic productivity - does not extend neatly to the subject of English. Here New Labour policy is marked by inconsistencies and contradictions. Indeed, this section will argue that in parts New Labour policy actively works to restrict creativity in English.

English does not have a large presence in the *All Our Futures* document (Marshall, 2001: p.63). This is not, in and of itself, particularly remarkable. There is, after all, no hierarchy of creativity among different subjects, and the report seeks to make a point of creativity being applicable to any and all subjects. However, it is worth noting that while the word ‘science’ appears 114 times in the document, ‘English’ appears only 40 times. ‘Music’ (143), ‘dance’ (127), ‘art’ (76) and even ‘mathematics’ (44) all occur with greater frequency than English. The large committee assembled to advise on the document also does not contain anyone working in English teaching at any level or, indeed, anyone working in the production of the written word in general. So while there are choreographers, actors, directors, scientists and television executives, there are no novelists, playwrights, poets or publishers¹.

A close reading of the document suggests that, in part, it seeks to limit the role of creativity in English, even to separate English from the creativity that it applies to other subjects. This is established on its very first page when it quotes from a 1997 white paper, *Excellence in Schools*. This distinguishes between language (and numeracy) learning and broader educational aims as follows:

¹ Poet Benjamin Zephaniah was originally on the committee, but resigned following what he considered to be excessive interference by Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett. (Marshall, 2001: p.63)

If we are to prepare successfully for the twenty-first century we will have to do more than just improve literacy and numeracy skills. We need a broad, flexible and motivating education that recognises the different talents of all children and delivers excellence for everyone.

Here literacy, the process of developing language capabilities, is kept apart from creativity. That which is seen as integral to the ordinary functioning of language (Carter, 2004; Blommaert, 2011; Swann, Pope and Carter, 2011) and language learning (McCallum, 2012; eds. Doecke, Parr and Sawyer, 2014) takes on the status of the extraordinary and the additional (Jones, 2016: p.8). At various points, the report self-consciously seeks to reassure readers that creativity is not a distraction from language learning. For example, it poses the question, “Isn’t an emphasis on creativity and culture a distraction from the core concerns with literacy and numeracy?”, answering by explaining that it is “not advocating creative and cultural education as alternatives to literacy and numeracy, but as equally relevant to the needs of this and future generations” and that “high standards of literacy ... are important in themselves” (14). In another sidebar accompanying the text, Education Secretary, David Blunkett identifies literacy and numeracy as “our top priorities” (18) without which “no child can gain maximum benefit from the rest of the curriculum”. He follows up by saying that “in the workforce of the future, I have always recognised that creativity, adaptability, and communication skills will also be vital”. The report’s separation of literacy and creativity is mirrored by another foundational document of Labour’s policy on creativity, *The Creative Age: Knowledge and skills for the new economy* (Seltzer and Bentley 1999). Published by centre-left think-tank, Demos, this book length treatise asserts the need for a transformation in the way education approaches creativity so that future citizens can thrive in a “knowledge-

based economy”. It calls for a radical restructuring of the curriculum, insisting that “rather than trying to increase skills levels through conventional qualifications, government should take a different approach to educating for creativity”, while simultaneously asserting that “basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and core subject disciplines will continue to be important”.

The inconsistencies and contradictions around the role of creativity in English teaching under New Labour extend into documents outlining and surveying classroom practice at the time. For example, creativity has a prominent place in the *National curriculum programme of study for English* (QCDA, 2007), yet an Ofsted report into teaching that took place under that curriculum, *Moving English Forward* (2012), identifies a lack of creativity in the majority of lessons observed. Thus, the *National curriculum* states that students should be given opportunities to “use inventive approaches to making meaning, taking risks, playing with language and using it to create new effects” as well as “making fresh connections between ideas, experiences, texts and words, drawing on a rich experience of language and literature”; in contrast *Moving English Forward* identifies a lack of invention and risk-taking in the majority of lessons observed. Authors of the report rarely saw lessons where students were encouraged to make or negotiate meaning by shaping language for particular effect; instead lessons observed tended to impose tight constraints within which students were compelled to write. And in reading lessons, rather than holding up texts as sites of exploration, containing multiple possibilities for interpretation, teachers generally directed students to look out for particular linguistic features, while paying scant attention to meaning and possibilities for interpretation and response.

The mismatch between curriculum directives and actual practice is indicative of the contradictory policy messages aimed at English teachers during this period. The practices identified as restrictive in *Moving English Forward* in 2012 are the very same ones promoted

by the *National Literacy Strategy* between 2002 and 2008 (DfES, 2002). While non-statutory, the Strategy's *Framework for teaching English* (DfES, 2002), which promoted a literacy rather than English agenda (Green, 2006), became a *de facto* curriculum, with schools criticised in Ofsted reports if they did not implement it effectively. Far from complementing each other, the *National curriculum* and the *National Literacy Strategy* acted in competition. While there were attempts to align both policies after 2008, this does not seem to have filtered down into actual practice.

4.4 Continuations in creativity policy

This separation of creativity and English (certainly when it is conceived of in terms of *literacy*) indicates a continuation in policy between New Labour and what followed (and, indeed, came before), rather than, as can be taken from the discourse around more general aspects of creativity and education, a change of direction. This is most clear in articulations from both Conservative and Labour education secretaries about the nature of learning English. Michael Gove, education secretary in the Coalition administration from 2010-15 and Tristram Hunt, Labour shadow secretary from 2013-15, made strikingly similar statements which separate the subject from creativity. At first glance, this can appear curious. One of Gove's first actions upon taking office was to end all funding for Creative Partnerships and creativity is not mentioned at all in the redrafting of the National Curriculum, which he oversaw (DFE 2013). Conversely, Hunt (2015), while reviewing Sir Ken Robinson's *Creative Schools* (2015) broadly agrees with the author's critique of an "exam factory" model of schooling that emphasises testing "at the expense of teaching children how to employ their natural creativity". Such comments mark a continuation with

his Labour predecessors. So too, however, do his comments about basic skills and literacy.

He comments in his review of Robinson's book:

... the uncomfortable truth is that there are also large swaths of the English education system that require more not less uniformity. If all our pupils could reach some basic minimum standards of literacy and numeracy by the time they left primary schools, our educational attainment as a nation would be markedly higher.

He extends his qualification in the next paragraph, writing:

Robinson rightly makes the case for the rigour of creative learning ... but we always need to guard against the soft bigotry of low expectations: the worrying trend of play and expression being adequate for working-class pupils, while leaving the tough stuff ... for their better off peers.

In using the phrase "the soft bigotry of low expectations" Hunt is drawing on the discourse of derision used previously by Conservative politicians. The exact same phrase was first used by George W. Bush (2000), and has also been used in policy statements by Michael Gove (Collins, 2013) and his successor, Nicky Morgan (Cassidy, 2015). On one of the rare occasions in which Gove uses the word creativity, he also explicitly separates it from a literacy skills agenda. Asked on BBC's *Question Time* (BBC 2013), "Will the proposed changes to the *National curriculum* stifle creativity and hinder critical thinking?" he replies:

Creativity depends on making sure that you master certain skills, you acquire a body of knowledge before giving expression to what's in you; so if you are musically gifted, or if you want to pursue creativity in the way you write, you need first of all to learn your skills: to be able to secure a foundation on which your creativity can flourish. If you're going to write, if you're going to move, if you're going to persuade, if you're going to inspire, then you need to be able to know how the English language can be used and tuned, in order to move hearts, in order to persuade people. You cannot be creative unless you understand how to construct sentences, what words mean, how to understand grammar.

Both Hunt and Gove construct creativity and language learning within a discourse of control and containment. Expression, the act of giving voice to one's own ideas and feelings, is explicitly to be guarded against, enabled only when brought within state-prescribed constraints and removed from the language classroom. Rhetorically this is dressed up as a matter of social justice: deny students, particularly disadvantaged ones, basic skills and give them creativity instead and they will become academic failures – perhaps even the social delinquents of Burt's Black Paper. There remains the *unsubstantiated* notion of “unchecked creativity” in English classrooms 40 years after it was reported on by the Bullock Report (1975). The opposite is, by and large, the case. A PISA report comparing educational performances across nations, found that the types of activities often associated with creativity in the classroom (such as group work, discussion) are less common in English schools than in other countries regularly cited by politicians as having a more ‘traditional’ approach. For example, students in English schools are more likely to have to learn material by heart and to work towards specific objectives, and less likely to work in groups than those

in Singapore and Hong Kong (McInerney, 2014). The report identifies one significant exception to this trend: “Private school pupils reported higher rates of being asked to express opinions in class, completing group work and having their teacher relate learning to their lives”. The political discourse warning schools against providing students with opportunities for self-expression and working collaboratively would appear to have had an impact: but only on those in the state sector.

4.5 Creativity, performativity and accountability

This section gives an overview of literature that explores the consequences of policy on teaching practices and teacher professionalism and identity. It pays particular attention to the pervasive culture of performativity and accountability in schools, deemed to be a consequence of particular aspects of educational policy. It is included in order to contextualise teachers’ constructions of creativity within the wider educational discourses in which they operate. It also recognises a significant crossover between research into performativity and accountability, and creativity: research into the culture of performativity and accountability often suggests that it places restrictions on teachers’ ability and confidence to draw on creativity in lessons.

Performativity and accountability are words used to refer to a system that judges and holds to account individuals and organisations based on measures of output. In schools this is primarily through examination results and inspected moments of classroom and whole school activity. At a national level, all state schools in England are periodically inspected by Ofsted, a non-ministerial government department that reports to Parliament. Its enormous influence since it was formed in 1994 has resulted in inspections becoming “part of the daily lives of school” (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998: p.2). At a local level, all state school teachers are

regularly observed by school leaders and middle managers in a process whereby each school monitors its own practice in readiness for a full Ofsted inspection. Alongside judgements being made about teachers' performance, the outcomes of Ofsted inspections also depend significantly on the performance of students in national examinations, particularly at GCSE level. Consequently teachers are compelled to teach to these tests, so making forms of national assessment a *de facto* curriculum and leading successive governments to realise that they can control curriculum by structuring tests in particular ways (Marshall, 2017: p.15).

Most private schools are not inspected by the same Ofsted criteria², but are still under pressure to perform in particular ways in response to the market forces within which they operate. Research, however, would suggest that there is a greater diversity of teaching methods and ideologies in such schools (Forbes and Weiner, 2008; Walford, 2009; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2016).

Ball's (2003) critical analysis of "the terrors of performativity" provides a model for thinking about their impact on teacher identity and practice. He explains that the pressure to perform in particular ways in order to produce a defined set of educational outcomes results in a situation in which "beliefs are no longer important, it is output that counts" (p.223). This challenges teachers' ethics and professionalism, leading to a "values schizophrenia" where "there is a potential 'splitting' between the teachers' own judgements about 'good practice' and students 'needs' and the rigours of performance" (p.221). Consequently, on the one hand teachers "are concerned that what they do will not be captured by or valued within the metrics of accountability", while on the other hand they are worried "that these metrics will distort their practice".

² Only private schools that do not belong to associations such as the Independent Schools Council undergo full Ofsted inspections similar to those in state schools. These tend to be smaller private schools, or faith schools.

Performativity seems to over-ride ethical concerns in studies about testing (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998), teacher stress (Troman, 2000), teachers' emotional responses to their work (Hargreaves, 2000) and teachers' professional judgement (*Guardian Education* 09.01.01 in Ball 2003). This inability to teach according to beliefs and ideals in the face of powerful, contradictory institutional discourses, leads in the studies quoted to feelings of guilt, anxiety and inadequacy. It is used as a "means of control, attrition and change" (Ball 2017: p.57), with teachers acting against their best instincts and professional judgements in order to fit in with institutional demands.

Creativity occupies an interesting position in this culture of performativity and accountability. It "speaks to professional longings" (Jones 2015: p.174), at the same time as its promises of something beyond the dehumanising effects of the existing system prove elusive. Thus, its promises at one and the same time can generate inspiration and disillusion (p.175). Hutchings (2015) found that in a culture of high-stakes testing in England, teachers made "less time for investigation, creative activity, play, reflection, stories" (p.46) even as they valued all of these, and that there was "a tendency for lessons to be uniform and not involve creative and investigative activities" (p.66). Her findings are replicated globally. An international literature review for use in the Australian school system found that the dominant conclusion to be drawn from a number of studies was that "high-stakes testing discourages teachers from being creative, and instead encourages didactic teach-to-the-test approaches that reduce motivation" (Lobascher, 2011: p.14).

Researchers into the effects of performativity and accountability on teacher well-being (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998; Troman, 2000) and into creativity itself (Jeffrey and Woods, 1996; Craft, 2000) have subsequently been active in researching the tensions that exist in schools between discourses of performativity, accountability and creativity (Craft

and Jeffrey 2008; Jeffrey and Troman 2013). The crossover shows a general awareness of the double-bind confronting teachers, with performativity, accountability and creativity occupying seemingly irreconcilable discourse spaces.

These researchers tend to construct creativity as an active response to performative culture. Thus, it is used “to counter the dominance of structural and policy led studies”, offering “an alternative common discourse to that of global standardisation” (Jeffrey 2006: 1). It is positioned “as a bulwark against performativity” (Jeffrey and Troman 2013: p.22). Recommendations in the executive summary of a large-scale study into the effects of accountability on teachers and schools (Hutchings, 2015) included the suggestion that “a key measure of a school’s success ought to be whether pupils are learning creatively and happily” and that “there should be a renewed focus on a broadly based curriculum which fosters creativity, curiosity, and enthusiasm to learn” (p.7).

At secondary level the pressures of testing tend to gather principally around expectations of how successful schools are at enabling their students to achieve particular grades in GCSE examinations, at the age of 16 (with considerable, if lesser, pressures also present around A Level results, at the age of 18). The expectations are often so great, and the penalties for not meeting them so severe, that much of school life, particularly in state schools, has become framed by external assessments in what has been termed the “A-C economy” (Gillborn and Youdell, 1999). In this economy, state schools are measured by the GCSE results of their students and placed in a league table with other schools nationally. The overall percentage of students achieving five A-C grades, including English and Maths, is then a key criterion against which schools are judged in Ofsted inspections³. The success

³ The measures against which schools and their students are assessed changed in the period between carrying out the research and writing it up. Where GCSEs were assessed on an A* - G scale, now they are scored on a scale of 9 – 1. Schools are then measured against a range of criteria in an attempt to stop an excessive focus on C – D borderline grades; assessment, though, still remains paramount in shaping practice.

or failure of a school, then, rests to a large part on these results, creating an atmosphere of fear among teachers (Ball, 2017; Powell, 2017) and - particularly pertinent for this study - leads to a narrowing of the curriculum and a lack of creativity in lessons (Hutchings, 2015).

This study seeks to situate itself within the context of this work: to explore the impact of pressures of performativity and accountability on constructions of creativity in English, and to see if what similarities and differences emerge in these constructions in different schools, facing different pressures.

Chapter Five: Methods and methodology

This chapter starts by explaining the social constructionist nature of the research before looking at its orientation in relation to education policy and then providing a rationale for using a case study method. It then outlines the practical details of the research, before concluding with an explanation of ethical considerations.

5.1 Social constructionism

This research draws broadly on a social constructionism. Social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Burr 2003; Lock and Strong, 2010; Silverman, 2011) holds that knowledge is formed through the shared understandings of multiple actors in a particular field. Knowledge comes into being through the various interactions of these actors and the many different forces acting upon them. Berger and Luckmann identify primary and secondary stages of the construction of knowledge: the former is the broad social realm into which an individual is born and grows up, with its particular customs, assumptions and modes of behaviour; the latter is a specialised realm, which contains its own system of knowledge that sits within, but is not separate from, the primary one. It is such a secondary realm that forms the focus of this study. What are the forms of knowledge that coalesce around constructions of creativity among secondary English teachers?

Social constructionism is not without caveats for the researcher, not least in that it must regard the very data produced for analysis as itself a social construction. In the case of this research, what teachers say about creativity is not naturally occurring, but is brought into being – constructed – through the interaction of interviewer and interviewee, with further constructions taking place in my own presentation of the data and, indeed, by

subsequent readings of it. However, such constructions do not themselves occur in a vacuum but are shaped by the *orders of discourse* (Foucault, 2002) within which teachers operate. Discourse refers to a set of social practices and ways of constituting knowledge that occur within social structures (Fairclough, 1989; p.17). The concept of orders of discourse recognises that there are power relations that hold particular discourses in place in relation to one another; these are not inviolable, but are ordered in such a way as to maintain, as far as possible, existing hierarchies. Thus, any discourse of creativity in English teaching must take its place within broader educational and societal discourses, ones which might have a significant impact on its actual enactment. Any construction of creativity in English, then, is both formed and limited by available and prevalent discourses circulating at any given point in time.

Given the impossibility of articulating – or even recognising - all of the discourses in circulation that act on teachers, this research takes a pragmatic approach (Blommaert, 2005) to social constructionism as a methodology. It recognises the piecemeal nature of the evidence presented, and the multiple interpretations to which it can be put.

5.2 Relationship of the research design to policy

This section considers the importance to research design of “the positioning of the researcher in relation to policy research” (Ozga, 2000: p.82). There are two broad orientations which are useful to consider here. On the one hand, the researcher can engage in “implementation research”, which is interested in assessing the impact of research as executed in schools. This is useful for policy makers looking to inform and develop what they do (p.3). On the other hand, the researcher can take a critical stance, seeing the implementation of policy as far too messy and dependent upon particular “situated contexts”

(Ball, Maguire and Brown, 2012: p.21) to be reduced to a simple evaluation of its effectiveness. This is particularly the case with “exhortative” as opposed to “imperative” policies (p.92). The former, which would incorporate policies about creativity, tend to be “writerly” (p.94) in the way that they offer teachers a degree of “creativity and sense-making” in their implementation. The latter, which would include policies directed towards accountability and performativity measures, for example, are rigorously enforced through mechanisms such as state inspectorates and setting targets for students’ assessment outcomes. Imperative policies are prioritised over exhortative ones, making it important for any research to look at both side-by-side: how, for example, do exhortative policies of creativity sit within imperative policies about standards?

The proliferation of top-down policies from central government over the past two decades or so (Ball, Maguire and Brown, 2012) gives policy research a particular significance at this moment in time, but it is important to recognise that policy does not just refer to centrally designed initiatives. Schools have particular interpretations of policies handed down to them and individual teachers, in turn, enact policy in various ways, according to the particular contexts in which they are working. Teachers in the private sector, of course, do this without necessarily having to pay attention to particular directives from central government. Their constructions of creativity, then, are interesting to explore, given that they work within different frameworks of possibility and constraint compared to their state-sector colleagues.

Teachers can, themselves, be seen as “policy makers” (Ozga, 2000: p.3), engaging with policy on multiple levels and offering their own “interpretations of interpretations” (Ball, Maguire and Brown, 2012: p.3) about what they are required to enact. This makes it important to recognise the multiple contexts at play in teachers’ construction of creativity: that they will never simply replicate the aims of policy originators. Government might want

to secure particular outcomes, but policy on the ground is a question of “process ... involving negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups who may be outside the formal machinery of official policy making” (Ozga: p.2). Policy is also only ever a part of what teachers do (Ball, Maguire and Brown: p.6).

Such a view of policy fits in with the general social justice orientation of this research. Ozga (2000) argues that it is important to challenge the idea that policy is something that is done to teachers and to wrestle it from the hands of government policy makers. Consequently she frames social policy research as a matter of social justice (p.44) with the “struggle for teacher autonomy and responsibility ... set against the modernising, economising project for teachers that seeks to guarantee their efficiency by enhancing their flexibility and encouraging them to accept standardised forms of practice”. She regards state-formulated policy as an attempt to exert control over teachers, with contradictions arising in the juxtaposition between what the state wants teachers to enforce and their own “potentially contradictory agendas” (p.15). Creativity is a particularly interesting area to explore with this in mind, given that it is generally constructed as a concept resistant to standardisation, conformity and constraint. How, then, is it constructed, in both policy and broader contexts? And what tensions arise when it is brought within policy configurations?

5.3 A case study approach

The research was designed as “a collective case study” (Simons, 2009: p.29) of secondary school English teachers in three secondary schools, with “sub-elements” consisting of case studies of the three English departments in which they worked. A ‘case’ is a clearly defined, self-contained unit of study (Denscombe, 2010: p.55), “a study of singularity conducted in depth and in natural settings” (Bassey, 2006: p.47). Its “primary

purpose” is “to explore ... particularity [and] uniqueness” (Simons, 2009: p.3). A unit of activity embedded in the real world, it exists in the moment of study and can only be fully understood in its context (Gillham, 2000: p.1). It is particularly appealing to researchers with limited time and resources at their disposal because “it has the potential to deal with the subtleties and intricacies of complex situations” (Denscombe, 2010: p.60) and allows them to make “fuzzy generalisations” (Bassey, 2006) from the data gathered.

A case study approach is open to the criticism that it is insufficiently broad in scope and so any generalisations or claims made lack credibility. However, as Knight (2002) points out when discussing small-scale research as a whole, generalisations do hold validity so long as researchers strive to offer a sufficiently rich response “to help readers make their own inferences about generalisability” and also “situate their work within other relevant examples of research and theory” (p.46).

My design was not fully conceived from the start but was “emergent” (Knight, 2002; p.31), so allowing issues not initially anticipated as relevant to come to the fore and be explored in sufficient depth. For example, issues of accountability and performativity featured strongly in most of my interviews, to a degree that my design had not anticipated.

5.4 My stance as interviewer

Research about the interview process demonstrates that perceptions held by the informant about the interviewer have an effect on the responses given (Denscombe, 2010: p.178). This “interviewer effect” applies in various ways, whether a distanced, ostensibly disinterested approach is taken, or a more subjective, empathetic approach. The latter, particularly popular in qualitative forms of feminist research (Oakley, 1981), has the potential to put interviewees at ease and so draw out more intimate, revealing responses

(Knight, 2002: p. 49; Simons, 2009: p.47). This can particularly be the case if “the aims of the research are specifically to help or empower the people being researched, rather than dispassionately learn from them” (Denscombe, 2010: p.180). While it would be presumptuous to assume that my own research would necessarily be of help to the teachers involved, certainly I wanted to provide them with the opportunity to speak candidly about English and creativity and their wider ideas about the subject and teaching. Consequently, I chose to be open about my own experience and interests, foregrounding my subjectivity in the belief that it would place me on the same side as the informants – someone working in education but separate from the bodies that pass judgement on teachers in a very different way, such as examination boards and the government inspectorate, Ofsted. While this carried the risk of “contaminating” my data, with informants potentially trying to accommodate my own likely constructions of creativity into their own, I believed that it made open disclosure more likely (Knight 2002: pps.49-50), given that, despite my expertise within the particular field, I was positioning myself in a non-hierarchical fashion as an empathetic listener, establishing rapport, giving informants time and space to respond and intervening proactively in ways that kept the flow of conversation going (Simons, 2009: pps.47-48).

One particular risk opened up by declaring my interests at the start of the interview process lay in generating the assumption that I myself regard creativity in a positive way and as important to English. However, on balance I decided that the advantages to this approach outweighed any downsides. First, given the predominantly positive connotations attached to creativity, it would not take a huge jump in logic to assume that someone researching the subject was in favour of it; second, it has so many different uses, even within English, that my own (likely) positive orientation still did not reveal the particulars of my own construction.

5.5 The interview process

The interviews took place towards the end of the summer term of 2013, a time of year when teachers generally have more availability after some students have left school following final national examinations. In each school, a room was given over for the interviews. In the case of Windhover, this was the lower school library, in the case of the other two, a classroom that was not being used. Each interview, allocated 45 minutes, was digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. I also spent some time in and around the schools, getting a sense of routines and procedures and the general conduct of teachers and students on site.

The interviews were semi-structured, each lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. This method was chosen in part because of my own background. During the course of planning the research I became an expert in the field of English and creativity, not just because of my own reading as part of this study, but also because I came to write a book about creativity aimed at secondary English teachers (McCallum 2012). Consequently, I wanted the possibility of being challenged by what teachers told me when conducting research, rather than just having my existing ideas and assumptions confirmed. For this reason I chose *not* to rely on surveys or fixed questions as a method of data collection, which would both have risked locking respondents into my own “theory of what matters” (Knight, 2002: p.52), as well as reducing “their ability to convey the complexity of their experience, perceptions or feelings”. Instead, I opted for semi-structured questioning that would lend itself more to the collection of data based on “opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences (Denscombe, 2010, p.174), and give me potential access to “privileged information”.

The semi-structured nature of the questioning, with flexibility in the order of questions, as well as the scope to ask probing subsidiary questions, was designed to give

interviewees the time and space to develop their thoughts and ideas (Denscombe, p.175). It is a method widely used in social constructionist approaches, revealing in the narratives and stories developed by participants (Bassey, 2006. P.4; Clough, 2002) the multiple positions available within particular constructions, along with the commonalities and patterns that emerge across different responses. In allowing participants to talk over time, they themselves come to construct responses that reveal much about the topic in question, both in terms of what they say and how they say it.

There are risks attached to a semi-structured approach. In order to draw out information from interviewees, open-ending questions tend to be used. This can lead the interviewer to follow the direction taken by their informant, which means that “it is unlikely that any two informants will have been asked the same set of questions, simply because the interviews will have grown in different ways” (Knight, 2002: p.53). It also encourages a rapport between the interviewer and their subject, which can lead to expansive responses, but which also risks “leaving the researcher uninformed about things that might be of considerable research interest but which, in the flow, got overlooked” (p.62). In my own case, a list of prompts (APPENDIX 1) was used as a tick-list in order to avoid any obvious omissions.

5.6 Rationale for using different schools

The three schools were carefully selected as an example of “theoretical sampling”, a form of research

concerned with constructing a sample ... which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation. (Mason in Silverman: p.62)

Thus the schools were chosen for their differences: both in broad institutional terms and in terms of their likely relationship to creativity – albeit with no prior knowledge of how the English departments fitted into the wider culture of the schools. This would allow me to speculate about, for example, how particular institutional frameworks played a part in constructions of creativity and English, or how a general discourse of English teaching might over-ride institutional factors. While my sample was too small to draw definitive conclusions from the interviews conducted alone, when situated within substantial existing research about schools, such a comparative approach gains validity. Such comparative research has been recognised as forming “the backbone of good sociological thinking” (Becker, in Silverman 2011, p.98), whereby

Finding two or more things that are alike in some important way yet differ in other ways, looking for the further differences that create those you first noticed, looking for the deeper processes these surface differences embody – these operations create sociological knowledge of the world and give us the more abstract theories that tell us what to look for next time out.

5.7 Selecting the schools

The schools were identified by reading through different school websites to find suitably different institutions. Once this had been done heads of department were approached to see if they and their teams would be open to being interviewed. Written permission was then granted by their respective head teachers.

The schools were selected to broadly reflect three different institutional and ideological strands prominent in the English educational system: one was a fee-paying private schools, another a state secondary schools with a ‘traditional’ ethos and one more a ‘progressive’ or ‘creative’ types of state secondary. The selection of the latter two had the added advantage that their student bodies drew on students from different class backgrounds. The more traditional school had an intake of students almost exclusively from working-class backgrounds, while the more progressive and creative school contained a significant number of middle-class students, alongside a majority of working class ones⁴. This was intended to provide the opportunity to analyse the data not just in terms of how different school settings fed into different constructions of creativity, but also to make some tentative speculations about the construction of creativity in relation to different student bodies.

5.7.1 The private school

The private school is called *Windhover*⁵ (W). Located in a London satellite town, it is a boys’ school of just over 800 pupils, with girls in the sixth form. It has a selective, fee-

⁴ The research did not seek to explore constructions of creativity according to other variables, such as ethnicity and gender. This was a matter of expediency, given limitations of space in writing up, and time in conducting the research.

⁵ Each school is known by a pseudonym to protect the anonymity of the institution, its teachers and students.

paying intake and pupils have 100% A-C pass rate for GCSEs in almost all subject areas. Its intake is predominantly white-British, from affluent backgrounds.

5.7.2 The ‘traditional’ comprehensive

The ‘traditional’ comprehensive school is called *Bloomington* (B). Situated in an outer-London borough, it has a non-selective, mixed intake of over 1800 students and serves one of the most economically deprived areas in the country. A wide-range of minority ethnic groups are represented within its student body, alongside a majority white working-class population. Bloomington’s students achieve GCSE results above the national average for schools with a similar intake.

5.7.3 The ‘progressive’ comprehensive

The ‘progressive’ school is called *Archford* (A). A mixed comprehensive, it serves a similar mix of students as Bloomington in terms of ethnicity, but it has a more diverse range in terms of the social class and economic status of their families. It is situated in an area of central London in which expensive private housing sits alongside large areas of social housing; its intake reflects this mix, with a sizeable minority of middle-class students attending alongside a working-class majority. Archford’s students achieve GCSE results below the national average for schools with a similar intake⁶.

⁶ GCSE results referred to are for the period when the interviews were carried out. They have subsequently changed, so Archford at the time of writing up achieved results above the national average for schools with a similar intake.

5.7.4 The presentation of the schools on their websites⁷

Of the three schools selected, only Archford used the word ‘creativity’ anywhere on its website. It appeared prominently, in the headteacher’s welcoming message, when he wrote about the school’s mission to develop creative thinkers. This was linked to the school’s wider offer, which promised students a range of arts and sporting activities as part of community life. The headteacher’s words were matched by about twenty images of school life displayed on a rolling carousel on the homepage. These focused on students engaged in arts-based activities, be they drama, painting, dance or music, along with a display of books written by a former student who is now a well-known children’s author. There were no images of students taking part in what might be regarded as formal, traditional learning; in other words, sitting at desks, listening to their teacher. Because the students did not wear a uniform, the images were not immediately marked out as belonging to a school at all: in a sense, the activities selected for display were a continuation of what might go on outside of the school; the students were not badged as belonging to the institution, but were rather engaged in exploring aspects of their own selves.

In contrast, the websites of both other schools suggested a far greater degree of uniformity in the demands placed on the student body, and in the types of students produced. Bloomington’s site had far fewer images and those that did appear on the introductory pages all featured students dressed in uniform, lined up in rows, whether seated in the classroom, or in assembly. A statement about the school’s values prioritised expectations about behaviour, reinforcing the sense of an institution that demanded a degree of compliance. While the students clearly came from a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, the

⁷ While each website offers useful background data to each school, details have been kept deliberately vague in order to preserve anonymity.

function of this school seemed to be to turn them into particular kinds of socially committed, conforming subjects. This was reinforced almost literally in one prominent image on the website, which showed a line of students in uniform waiting to shake hands with a significant member of the royal family.

Windhover's website contained even fewer images. The two most prominent ones to feature students showed them entering the school grounds and working individually in the school library. The headteacher's welcome stressed the diverse nature of the school's offer, taking in both the academic and non-academic, so that it provided a "multi-dimensional" rather than "one-dimensional" education, with academic excellence sitting harmoniously alongside more holistic aims. A page giving details of the school focused on the development of personality and character, emphasising that students were being prepared to play leading roles in the wider world in adult life. Implicit in what was written was the assumption that students from Windhover would become leaders: uniformity here was not in their behaviour but in the expectations of what they would achieve. Development was directed inwards, towards "personality" and "character".

5.7.5 Details of the teachers

The individual teachers⁸ interviewed were those available at scheduled interview times. I was not able, then, to select from a range of teachers in order to create as balanced a sample group as possible, in terms of age, gender and ethnicity, for example, but simply worked with the teachers who presented themselves. Details of the interviewees are set out in the tables below.

⁸ Teachers names have all been changed to protect anonymity

Windhover: independent boys school, 11-18			
Pseudonym	Age	Teaching experience	Additional details
Matt	45-55	20 years	Head of department. Examiner for two awarding bodies, including principal examiner role with one
Alan	55-65	40 years	
Bill	25-35	6 years	
Ewen	55-65	37 years	Examiner for two awarding bodies
Neil	45-55	25 years	Examiner for awarding body
Rowena	25-35	6 years	

Bloomington: mixed state comprehensive, 11-18			
Pseudonym	Age	Teaching experience	Additional details
Lynn	45-55	16 years	
Mark	25-35	8 years	Trained at the school
Paul	55-65	40 years	Interviewed during final year as a teacher before semi-retirement
Stan	25-35	3 years	Also teaches Drama. Trained at the school
Sally	55-65	40 years	Interviewed during final year as a teacher before full retirement. Trained at the school
Simone	25-35	1 year	Leaving to work in Spain at the end of the academic year
Stephen	45-55	20 years	Also teaches Media Studies

Archford: mixed state comprehensive, 11-18			
Pseudonym	Age	Teaching experience	Additional details
Edie	35-45	10 years	Head of Department as part of a job share, works three days a week. Trained at the school
Samantha	35-45	12 years	Recently returned from maternity leave when interviewed
Jane	45-55	25 years	
Lee	25-35	5 years	Trained at the school
Rhonda	25-35	1 year	

5.8 Analysing the data

All of the interviews were digitally recorded. These were then transcribed using broad transcription methods (APPENDIX 2). The texts were then coded in order to find significant patterns, contradictions and gaps in the data that would be useful for analysis both within and across schools. Rather than rely on any particular method associated with the analysis of qualitative data, I instead drew on my undergraduate training as a literature student. This required me to evaluate and analyse large bodies of text, presenting my findings in essay form. Thus, I established my own categories into which to sort the data, cutting and pasting relevant and pertinent sections into discrete Word documents, titled with a word or phrase to identify its focus. Having done this, I then established which categories would sit comfortably alongside each other in my three broadly headed data chapters. The data chapters emerged from the data, rather than fitting into a preconceived system for analysis.

Once the data had been sorted, it was analysed using a critical discourse analysis (CDA) method (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 1999; Blommaert, 2005). Critical discourse analysis explores the ideologies and power relations revealed in discourse, be that in language or other forms of semiotic exchange. CDA is a useful analytical tool for researchers engaged

in work interested in issues of social justice. It recognises that social realities are constructed by and in powerful discourses. It seeks to explore these discourses with a particular focus on their relationship to networks of power. It makes the case that “since different identities and activities are enacted in and through language [and other semiotic resources], the study of language is integrally connected to matters of equity and justice” (Gee 1999: p.13).

One criticism of CDA is that those who use it pay insufficient attention to the ideologies underpinning their own approaches. Widdowson (2004), for example, claims that it is used indiscriminately to make a broad case even when one is not necessarily apparent. He argues that many of those using CDA are not really analysing discourse at all, but instead “fixate on certain features of a text, take them apart, deconstruct their meaning and show that they express a particular ideological position” (p.87). This, he explains, is more akin to practical literary criticism and should properly be labelled “text analysis”, or even “interpretation” rather than “discourse analysis” (p.169).

To avoid offering the form of CDA outlined by Widdowson, I made sure that the coding of this research’s data was rigorous in its identification of significant patterns, contradictions and gaps. Thus, no data was presented in isolation from the broader patterns emerging in what teachers said or omitted to say. This is broadly in keeping with Fairclough’s assertion that no text (or, indeed, discourse) exists in isolation, making this explicit when he writes

So, in seeing language as discourse and as social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes and their social conditions of institutional and social structures. (1989, p.26).

In this, Fairclough invokes Foucault's (2002) *orders of discourse* to argue that discourses always exist in relation to other discourses, and can never be treated as neatly packaged, discrete entities. CDA, in his hands, is not about focusing in on the minutiae, but about positioning the minutiae (and everything else) within as broad a context as possible: that of all the multiple discourses at work in any given situation.

5.9 Ethical considerations

The research was carried out following the ethical guidelines set out by the British Education Research Association (BERA) (2011) and as stipulated by London Metropolitan University (APPENDIX 3). Consequently, before the research took place, I sought consent from the "gatekeeper" (Wiles 2013: p.30), or head teacher, of each school (APPENDIX 4a + 4b), before seeking voluntary signed consent from all of the participant teachers (APPENDIX 5). The consent form made clear what the research was about, why it was being conducted and what would happen to the results. In other words, participants were made aware that the data was being gathered for a doctoral study into teachers' constructions of creativity and its enactment in classrooms. Consent was also given for the work to be used in other publications, such as academic journals and professional magazines, as part of the process of disseminating results. It was also made clear that all the data would be made anonymous, through using pseudonyms for the participants and their schools, and not revealing details that would make obvious the identity of individuals and institutions. This was held to, even though rich data was available that would have been relevant to institutional constructions of creativity. For example, websites contained particular wording that would have added to the thesis, but which could have been traced back to the relevant

schools via search engines. There was also rich visual data available, but, again, it would have made institutions clearly recognisable, so was not used. All data was stored behind a secure password (BERA 2011: p.7).

As well as respecting participants' right to anonymity, I also took care to minimise any emotional risks that might have arisen (Wiles 2013: p.64). This might seem an unlikely occurrence, given the apparent safe nature of the topic. However, I was aware that talking about an aspect of English teaching that is generally held as a positive, might lead to teachers doubting their own practice, should they not meet perceptions of desired practice. Therefore, I minimised any emotional risk by giving teachers the opportunity to situate their practice within wider discourses of creativity and education, thus lessening any individual responsibility for their own actions. The interviews thus were designed to offer an opportunity for self-reflection rather than self-castigation.

As well as considering participants, I also conducted the research within an ethic of respect for knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom (BERA 2011: p.4). Thus, I carried out an extensive overview of English teaching and creativity and developed a methodology and epistemology that, within the constraints of space, attempted to explain my particular approaches for gathering and constructing knowledge. While I drew on particular research and epistemological paradigms to do so, I also clearly recognised alternative approaches and constructions. Consequently my research is offered as adding to a body of knowledge, taking its place alongside and within what already exists, rather than making great claims for uniqueness. I am equally clear that the social justice agenda of the research comes from a belief in the particular efficacies of creative practice for young people in classrooms, and a desire to see this material resource enacted equitably.

Given that a large part of this work focuses on the relationship of creativity to policy, I am also aware of my ethical responsibility to educational professionals, policy makers and the general public. Here I take a critical stance, rather than engaging in “implementation research” that might seek to evaluate the effectiveness of particular policy (Ozga 2000: p.82). I do not offer a total rejection of policy, but am instead interested in how policy positions teachers and students within the educational system, the degrees to which this is equitable or not, and how policy plays its part in maintaining or breaking down existing discourses of power.

The BERA guidelines stress the ethical responsibility to make public the results of research “for the benefit of educational professional, policy makers and a wider public understanding of educational policy and practice” (p.10). I have already begun this process in publishing a journal paper about some of the policy implications of the research (McCallum, 2016), and intend to continue.

The methods and methodology described above were designed to provide data from which conclusions could be drawn about how English teachers construct creativity, and about how they believe it is enacted in their classrooms. They were designed within particular policy contexts, but were not designed to test the effectiveness or otherwise of such policy; rather they were intended to enable an exploration of how constructions of creativity are situated within the interplay of policy, school institutional frameworks, and teacher agency. It is worth noting at this point, that the research design did not pay particular attention to the accountability measures under which schools in England operate. Such measures, however, often came to the fore in the interviews themselves. They did so to such a degree that they provide the main point of focus in the first data chapter that follows.

Chapter Six: English, creativity and accountability

This chapter explores the role played by accountability (sometimes referred to as ‘performativity’ measures) on constructions of creativity in secondary English. Primarily it looks at how creativity was constructed by the teachers interviewed within a culture of “high-pressure testing” (Hutchings, 2015).

The chapter groups responses into two broad categories: those from the private school, Windhover, and those from the two state schools, Archford and Bloomington. It does so for two reasons. First, the state schools were subject to different accountability measures compared to Windhover⁹; second, there was a marked difference in the nature of the responses from the private school teachers compared to the state school ones. Using CDA, the chapter explores what gave rise to these differences: be it the nature of the institutions themselves, the particular student bodies worked with, or the professional identities and experiences of the teachers. Finally, the chapter concludes by relating the data to the epistemology of creativity, constructed in chapter two.

6.1 Creativity and exams in the private school

During the course of the interviews at Windhover, it became apparent that a significant number of its teachers were deeply embedded within the English national examination system. It is not unusual for teachers in both the state and independent sectors to mark GCSE and A Level examination papers, as a way of boosting their income and developing their understanding of the assessment process, but only a few are involved in writing the papers, developing the assessment criteria and moderating the way that they are

⁹ See previous footnote on page 62

marked. Ewen (W37)¹⁰, Matt (W20) and Neil (W25) were involved in all of these activities as examiners for various awarding bodies and examination papers. Ewen and Matt both did such work for two different examination papers. They made it clear that the school management team gave them time to take part in these activities, valuing the insight that it gave them into the system by which their students were assessed. While there is no data available about whether the examination system is dominated by teachers from the private sector, it is likely that schools comparable to Windhover have similar resources available to them to free up staff for this kind of work, while state schools do not¹¹. Certainly, in this instance, it provided for rich data when considering the role of the examination and assessment system in the construction of creativity at Windhover School. This section, then, explores how the insider knowledge that came with being embedded in the examination system played a part in Windhover's teachers' constructions of creativity. The research was too small-scale to make definitive conclusions about whether such constructions would be replicated by English teachers in other private schools, or by other teachers embedded in the examination system, be they in the private or state sectors. Nonetheless, the section makes some tentative conclusions by situating the research in the context of other available data about private and state schools, and systems of accountability. It draws on data from teachers at the school who were not examiners, as well as those who were, on the basis that those teachers were privy to the insider knowledge garnered by their colleagues.

Ewen (W37) was an examiner for one GCSE English Literature and one A Level English Literature paper. In contrast to the research quoted in chapter four about the

¹⁰ Where it aids understanding, and where they occur for the first time, names are followed by the initial of the school, plus the total years served as a teacher by each individual.

¹¹ As a footnote to this observation, during final writing up teachers at two well-known independent schools, Eton and Winchester, were suspended for releasing A Level examination questions in advance to their students. They gained access to the questions through their roles as examiners. (Davies 2017)

limitations placed on classroom practice by the pressures of high-stakes testing (Hutchings, 2015), he confidently expressed a belief that creativity was possible within the examination system and linked this directly to his own involvement in it. He stated that “from the point of view of doing quite a lot of GCSE and A Level examining, creative activity is still there and it will come out in the exams”. His defence of English subject exams was, essentially, a defence of his own practice, as suggested when he went on to say,

I think the exam is actually pretty useful and usually – seeing as I help to devise some of it – is actually quite good and the best answers are the ones that are most imaginative.

Building on his comment, he said that,

When I taught [the exam] in the sixth form¹², I rather hoped that’s the way I taught. I think this was borne out by feedback from them and also the results. It actually made them produce imaginative answers which really engaged with the text, which is what you want as an examiner.

Here he has fused feedback about his own teaching, with his beliefs as an examiner: in effect, he has collapsed any distinction between the two, situating himself within a virtuous loop whereby what he did was good because it was what the examination required, and the examination was good because it was built in his own model of what English should be.

¹² A Level students in the state and independent sectors are often referred to as ‘sixth formers’, though the term is more widely used in the independent sector. At Windhover, the numerical classification follows on logically from their use of first formers through to fifth formers, for students classified as Year 7s to Year 11s in the state sector.

Ewen naturalised creativity, constructing it as offering a common-sense approach to English and exams. He inferred that if you taught English as it ought to be taught (in this case, as it had been devised for national examinations) then it would inevitably involve creative activities and approaches. He, therefore, constructed creativity in a way that he believed was actively encouraged by the examination system. For example, when asked if “the exam system restricts creativity”, he disagreed strongly and in doing so identified creativity as a quality belonging to the best responses. “At its best,” he said, “the examination system produces some superb answers”. He characterised these as “articulate, fluent, well-paragraphed, well informed and imaginative”, with students “getting away from just what they have been taught all across the board”. He became impassioned when offering his response, displaying frustration at students who were not able to respond effectively in their final examinations because “it’s bloody clear when they haven’t read the text and they don’t know what they’re talking about”. He went on to say that “you’ve got to think and feel that text if you are going to answer well”, describing the text as a “springboard”.

Drawing on his experience of marking scripts, Ewen identified different teaching approaches as being evident in the way that different groups of students responded to examination questions. Effective responses, he said, suggested creative teaching approaches, whereas ineffective ones suggested teaching that involved repetition and boredom. Thus, he contrasted “the dull stuff where I can hear the teacher reading them notes” with an approach where “I can hear something come from a discussion they’ve had in class where they’ve really got into it and got enthusiastic about a text”. He went on to talk about the “great fun” he and his students had studying Milton at A Level and how “this sort of thing comes out in the best [examination] answers”. This was in contrast with “where you can see teachers have been teaching a certain sort of bottom level, as it were”. Failure to engage with creativity here was constructed as the fault of teachers. When the teachers got it right, “candidates have

an imaginative response to questions, which would be creative” and “think on their feet while doing the exam” rather than simply responding to what they “remember in the notes”, as was the case when they got it wrong. For Ewen, creativity and exam success went hand in hand, both requiring a demonstration of active engagement with questions and texts, and a move away from too much directed learning in the classroom. “I’m marking a centre at the moment,” he said, “and at their best they are super, really thoughtful, getting away from what they’ve been taught, really engaging with the extract, having some new ideas”. He contrasted this with a different experience of marking “very similar” responses across a whole school. He described this as “very, very irritating” and “reminiscent of marking scripts from Singapore a few years ago where they have almost all of them written the same way”.

Creativity in English was constructed by Ewen as a process of *becoming*, as set out in chapter three’s *epistemology of creativity*. It used texts as “springboards” to generating new, original responses, rather than replicating the words and ideas of the teacher. As such, the teacher had a key role in facilitating creativity. The model was similar to that proposed by Freire (1970), as explored in the epistemology. It rejected transmission, or “banking” forms of teaching, in favour of one in which students made texts their own in a process of “action-reflection” (Freire, 1970). His references to having fun and to having “to think and feel a text” resonated with Freire’s assertion that authentic existence is only possible when people are “engaged in inquiry and creative transformation” (p.65). The version of English offered by Ewen to his private school students with parents wealthy enough to pay expensive fees, then, was one in line with the education Freire articulated as central to the emancipation of the oppressed peasants of Brazil. This is not necessarily a contradictory position, but recognises the possibilities that emerge for all learners when particular approaches to first language learning are used.

Ewen's role as teacher was central in his construction of creativity. He placed himself and what he saw as other successful, creative teachers in contrast with those that offered their students dull, repetitive lessons. His colleagues showed a similar faith in their own ability by emphasising the importance of the teacher. The following data, drawn from interviews with Neil (W25) and Alan (W40), suggests a belief that it was the specific role of English teachers to preserve and promote creative practices in the face of a wider culture that acted to suppress them.

Neil was a principal moderator for one A Level examination awarding body. In this, he played a key role in deciding which grade category scripts should be placed in. He was also an examiner for another A Level awarding body. In contrast to Ewen, Neil did recognise the pervasive influence of examinations, as identified in other studies (Hutchings 2015), stating:

Exams, have become the be-all and end-all through league tables and the growing pressure on university entrance at 6th form particularly, which has driven that even further. And we have seen that tendency over quite a number of years now.

He also recognised that this influence could restrict creativity. For example, in responding to a question about whether he worked in an environment that encouraged creativity, he said:

I think we certainly would like to think that we are a school of creative ideas and creative teachers, and I think that we are but I think the whole assessment drive in education, which we as an academic school have to buy into in certain ways, causes limitations on it at a certain time.

His response then went in an unexpected direction. Rather than talk about the limitations placed on his own practice by pressures to get students good exam results, he related restrictions on creativity to student expectations. Recalling a meeting with his lower sixth students earlier that day, in which they were asked to evaluate the work they had done during the course of the year, he explained that,

a number of them were saying what they actually wanted was to be told all the questions that they were going to be asked before they read the books. So they only have to read them for that particular question and couldn't understand why I thought that was anti-educative. So that ethos of driving through, of 'you've got to get that result', has affected the actual clientele, the students themselves.

In Neil's construction, then, creativity was what a teacher – and an examiner – valued in English work, but which students regarded as peripheral to what he called “the be-all and end-all of exams”. He said this situation was “depressing” and ran counter to his own practices. While he “hoped that the various creative things they had done would have made them see the benefits of broadening ideas”, in conversation with him a large number “thought that the broadening things that we had done, the more creative things, were the things that weren't necessary”. He then added a poignant inversion of the well-known trope of a dull, utilitarian education, the character of Gradgrind, in Dickens' *Hard Times*, who ruthlessly imposed a system of heavy discipline and fact-based learning on the students that he taught. “Gradgrinds in front of you rather than behind you!” he exclaimed.

The analogy of students as Gradgrinds suggested the power of a discourse around the system of assessment and examinations that, at times, transcended the best efforts of teachers deeply embedded in that system to teach according to their beliefs rather than simply to the test. Neil's comments, though, suggested that he was aware of the pressures placed on teachers and students by examinations, even as he felt teaching did not have to be tied down by them. At another point in the interview, he did suggest that teachers as well as students were affected by these pressures, sometimes finding themselves taking contradictory positions. He talked about how on the one hand members of the department identified ways to teach the 14-16 curriculum "which will free up lots and lots of time in the fourth form so you can be much more creative and step beyond the curriculum", while on the other hand they decided

a couple of weeks later we're going to have an assessment task across the year group every week, and you think, well, we're pulling in two directions at the same time.

Accountability pressures seemed to play a part in constructions of creativity at Windhover, then, but the teachers felt able to resist them. Alan (W40), who was not an examiner, made this explicit when he said that "often, if you want to be creative as an English teacher, it has to be in spite of the exam syllabuses, not because of them". He thought that "it's important to circumvent the exams". In his construction, there was an intrinsic contradiction between processes of assessment and creativity, which he articulated when detailing a particular element of an A Level Literature paper that ostensibly encouraged creativity:

it's clear to me that exam boards don't particularly like creative writing or being creative because it's harder to assess. It's a question of fitting something into assessment objectives and criteria that's not naturally suited to it. An example is that they will grudgingly allow in the A level OCR coursework syllabus pupils to make a creative response to something that they've read. But they're suspicious of that to the extent that it doesn't really count unless the pupils write a commentary about what they've read. It's my hunch [the commentary] is really more important to them than actually what they've written.

In spite of this suspicion of the awarding body's intentions, Alan still believed that it was possible for the experience of English to be a creative one for students. He said that "from a teacher's point of view [teaching] is more prescriptive, but I don't think from a student's point of view that's necessarily the case". He said that "it has much to do with how it's presented to them" and that teachers needed to be "skillful about it". In his construction, creativity over-rode compliance to the prescriptions of assessment, and was an entitlement of students that teachers had an obligation to provide.

Matt (W20), the head of department, and an examiner for two awarding bodies, also constructed creativity as an integral part of the English curriculum. In his construction, teachers were deemed not to be doing their jobs satisfactorily if they did not use creative practices to prepare students for exams. Discussing a GCSE Literature question, which required students "to address the cultural aspects of the text", he said that "some teachers are clearly prepared to put in the stuff that really is very much pre-prepared rather than creative", putting this down to "a difficulty in teachers and students perhaps realising that literature is a creative discipline". He acknowledged that other teachers did not necessarily regard

GCSEs in the same positive light as he did, referring to “a perceived irritation in the way that GCSE is taught to a series of quite prescriptive assessment objectives”, but then offered a defence of the system he helped to create. He said that

actually that is not particularly the way that we assess at GCSE. I think that it’s a misconception by a number of teachers about what examiners are looking for. The way these teachers approach GCSEs is counterproductive because it’s not going to result in a high mark.

There is a certain paradox in what Matt said here. Of the assessment objectives set for GCSEs, he said “that is not particularly the way we assess”. In other words, teachers without the kind of privileged access to the examination system that he and his colleagues had were being punished for misinterpreting the objectives. Not only were they unable to offer a creative approach to lessons in the same way as Windhover’s teachers, but their students would get lower grades.

Neil (W25) also suggested that some teachers deliberately avoided teaching certain aspects of exam syllabuses in creative ways. He gave as an example an A Level coursework option that required the study of three texts. It was, he said, “deliberately designed to be freer and more open to interpretation by teachers and students, effectively as an individual research task”. Teachers were encouraged to “provoke, stimulate, nudge candidates to choose what they want, to choose their own texts, the directions they are going to study, the research they are going to do”, resulting in them getting “a sense of academic creativity”. The reality in many schools was, in his judgement, very different.

Of course, a lot of schools won't do that because they see it as dangerous and uncontrollable. Many schools will decide on three texts that they are going to teach and they will teach them and everyone will do the same question.

The phrase "dangerous and uncontrollable" is telling. It suggests that Neil felt that in many schools there was a fear of stepping outside of tightly prescribed boundaries and a general discourse of compliance. It suggests that this was not the case for teachers at Windhover, though: they felt able to challenge the prescriptivism of the accountability system (and of their own students) to offer a version of English that included creativity as a matter of course. It was a version that highlighted their own subject expertise and insider knowledge of the examination system, and which served to differentiate their approach from that of other schools, thus entrenching the types of "relational" differences often established between private schools and others (Ball, 2017: p.169).

6.2 Creativity in an alternative examination system

During the course of interviews at Windhover, it became apparent that the school's students, and many others in the private sector, did not sit the same English examinations at the age of 16 as state school pupils. Rather than sitting GCSEs in English Language and Literature, they sat an International GCSE (IGCSE). Designed by awarding bodies for use in overseas schools following an English medium curriculum, the IGCSE was similar to the GCSE, but with a few specific differences. These made it attractive to private school teachers, looking to offer something with more challenge, variety and creativity to their students. Unlike state schools, private schools could enter students for the IGCSE because

they were not obliged to be measured against other institutions in national league tables. Alan (W40) explained that the IGCSE was one way that teachers at Windhover made sure that exams did not stifle creativity. He cited as an example “an empathy answer” that students wrote in response to a drama text. He said that while such work had in the past been seen as “the poor relation of analytical and discursive writing ... it is well worth doing and not just something you do if you are in the bottom set”. Bill (W6) praised the IGCSE for encouraging the kind of “independent thinking” that he linked to creativity. He mentioned an unseen part of the paper, in which

they can't just pre-rehearse ideas about *Lord of the Flies*, or what have you. 25 per cent of their grade comes from how they tackle a poem or a piece of prose that they've never seen before, so they need to have that resilience and that willingness to form their own ideas because they will never have read it before.

Once again, creativity is constructed as part of a process of demonstrating relational differences. Matt (W20) suggested this formed part of the decision-making behind switching to IGCSE. Asked about whether examinations could limit creativity, he noted that this “is a very important point” and “one of the main reasons why in our school we switched from GCSE to IGCSE” because “in IGCSE we do put a strong emphasis in literary response to what we would call personal response”. Not only, then, was the IGCSE a means for the private school to differentiate itself from other schools, but it was also a means by which its pupils could engage in the exploration of individual agency through “personal response”. This would seem to be an examination that encouraged the process of ‘becoming’ in young people.

Neil (W25) acknowledged that Windhover, in following the IGCSE, was becoming more detached from state schools, and also that the decision to follow this syllabus was, at least in part, because of the opportunities for creativity it afforded – or that GCSEs did not afford. He explained that the IGCSE “has suddenly blossomed” among private schools “because of the huge dissatisfaction with the latest changes to GCSE” and that this was “partly because the breaking down of tasks and the nature of controlled assessment seemed to be running away from creativity”. In his construction, then, there would seem to be a denial of creativity to state school pupils in relation to their private school counterparts, one that had been formalised by examination structures. Neil referred to the IGCSE as “the international”, suggesting that independent schools operated on a global rather than national basis. While the state school curriculum contracted inwards to a narrow band of core texts, in the private sector it reached out across the globe. This resonated with Windhover’s claims on its website that it wanted students to develop their personality and character so that they could take up leading roles in the world. Neil constructed the greater flexibility and creativity offered by the IGCSE as metaphorically allowing Windhover students to travel further than others: “Because our GCSE syllabus is a little bit more open, it’s much simpler and more straightforward and, therefore, there are many more roads to roam”.

The growing popularity of the IGCSE with private schools led state schools to seek permission also to take the exam, and for it to count in league table measurements. Ofqual, the government agency that regulates assessment in England, worked with awarding bodies to come up with a separate version for use in the state sector. Commenting on this process, Neil stated that “there is an English version, which is a bit more constrained but not as constrained as what the home-grown exam boards tend to do”; meanwhile Windhover and other private schools “do the full international version”. Forms of assessment, it seems, and the relative levels of creativity they offer, were not distributed evenly across the school

system. This was also brought to light by Edie (A10) when discussing the private school that she attended as a child and later taught in for one year. She explained that this school had recently opted out of both GCSEs and IGCSEs for English Literature. Instead, it had developed its own Literature exam, which was approved by QCDA (a regulatory authority for examinations and qualifications that was abolished by the Coalition government in 2010), so that it carried equal weighting to GCSEs when students applied for university. Part of this decision was based around a desire to provide a more creative curriculum¹³.

6.3 Creativity and examinations in the state schools

This next section analyses the responses of teachers from the two state schools, Archford and Bloomington, in relation to talk about and around examinations.

As mentioned previously, Edie (A10) attended a private school as a pupil, and taught in that same school for a year before completing a PGCE course in the state sector. She identified differences in the broad educational approaches in each sector, based on the pressures of examinations. At Archford, she explained, “the concerns are more about the results, the attainment of the students”, while at the private school in which she worked, she said that the “concerns were more about the experiences of the students”. She linked this directly to pressures to perform in particular ways in the classroom. At the private school, she said, “everything was a lot slower, more relaxed, there was a lot more time to think about what you were doing”. She said that at Archford, “it tends to be a bit more frantic” and attributes this to “grasping at quick measures for quick results”.

¹³ It is worth noting that the IGCSE adapted for use in state schools qualified for inclusion in league tables between 2013 and 2016. This is no longer the case and so, after a rapid period of take-up by the state sector during these years, it has now been dropped by almost all of them. The ‘full international’ continues to be a popular choice with independent schools.

Eddie's constructions suggested that pressures of accountability were having a direct impact on the form of teaching she offered students, with time pressures equated to a system that limited creativity. Her colleague, Lee, spoke in a similar way. He explained that "the pressure of delivering" restricted creativity in his lessons. Initially he attributed this to "the time issue", explaining that he had "so many creative ideas, but it's about getting the time to use them as I would want to". When asked specifically where these time pressures came from, he linked them directly to the demands of an exam-driven curriculum, which required "delivering units and marking quite ruthlessly. He said that it was "only in the last few weeks of term, when the curriculum's run dry a bit, that you can think for yourself a bit more [and] draw on your own instinct and flair". These pressures seemed to have a physical impact on Lee, and, talking about them, he seemed unclear in his own mind about exactly why they forced him to teach in particular ways. Thinking out loud, trying to work out why creativity did not feature in his teaching as much as he would have liked it to, he said: "I don't know what limits my creativity; it's feeling tired a lot, and sometimes I feel I lack a bit of creativity".

Stephen (B20) cited specific examples of where GCSE requirements limited creativity, as follows:

I've always thought at GCSE the fact that you study so many poems but you can't write about them [limits creativity]. The way that you really learn how to do poetry is by writing it – and I think allowing children to write much more instead of this very formulaic way of writing that we tend to have created would allow creativity. I thought the triplets at

GCSE¹⁴ was a very forced way of looking at it. I don't think people think 'I'm going to write to inform people, I'm going to write to persuade'; nobody thinks like that. It's a very alien concept and I think it actually stops creativity because it forces people to write in this artificial way. So I think there's always been a lot more scope for creativity than we've actually had, as the specifications and the *National curriculum* got quite prescriptive.

Stephen went as far as to suggest that the examination awarding bodies deliberately avoided offering students opportunities for creativity. He said that "creativity gets squeezed out of exams, I think, because it's hard to measure. It's extremely subjective and I don't think they like that". Stephen's use of the third person plural was in contrast to teachers at Windhover using the first person (both singular and plural) when discussing awarding bodies. It suggested that teachers and students at Bloomington were regulated subjects, unable to resist what they saw as restrictions on their practice, passed down by authorities hierarchically above them. In contrast, teachers at Windhover occupied such positions of authority; with several personally embedded in the examination system, they were confidently able to teach as they saw fit, which included drawing on creative practices.

When discussing creativity in relation to the pressures of teaching to exams, teachers at both state schools sometimes talked about alternative systems of assessment and accountability, ones that they either once experienced in their own subject, or that still existed in other subjects. Jane (A25), for example, constructed creativity as playing a more prominent part in teaching and learning at the start of her career in the late 1980s because of

¹⁴ Triplets at GCSE: this refers to sets of writing 'types' by which students were examined at GCSE – writing to argue, persuade and instruct, and writing to describe, imagine and explain.

the relative freedoms offered by the GCSE and A Level examination systems at the time. The former was assessed by 100% coursework, and the latter had a 50% coursework component (by contrast, at the time of writing there is no longer any coursework component for GCSE and at A Level it is down to 20%), with teachers free to choose a large number of the texts and topics for study at both levels. Talking about teaching coursework for A Level when she began her career, she stated that “there weren’t any rules about it, so you could do poetry, you could do prose, you could do pre-20th century, you could do 20th century, you could do whatever you liked”. She then repeated her point that “there weren’t any rules”, adding that “students could really explore avenues of interest” and undertake “coursework which was completely individual”. Jane went on to link the perceived creativity and freedoms of time past to opportunities for “more independent work, more projects, things that are going to stretch them”.

Stephen (W20) offered a different subject to demonstrate his own ideas about creativity and good teaching, one not part of the same accountability measures as English¹⁵. While Stephen qualified as an English teacher and still taught the subject, most of his time at Bloomington was taken up teaching Media Studies, primarily to A Level students. He thought that, unlike English, “Media has allowed the children to be really creative”, and put this down in large part to the 50% coursework component for their final exam, for which “they are able to go off and be creative”. In saying this he constructed creativity as an activity pursued by students with teacher guidance, the end-product of student-teacher collaboration. The teacher “creates some starting point and a framework for them” and then the students worked together to create a media product, such as a short film, or an advertising campaign.

¹⁵ School league tables at the time of the research showed the percentage of students in state schools gaining 5+ A-C grades at GCSE, *including* English and Maths. Given that most students take eight subjects in total, this meant there was less pressure on teachers of subjects other than English and Maths. If their students did not achieve a desired grade, they could still make this up in another subject.

This, Stephen said, was “the bit they’ve enjoyed the most and they get most out of” because they “learn the most from doing ... stretching themselves and thinking, rather than just parroting facts”.

Stephen constructed English in a way that saw it as actively denying students creative opportunities. He did so, in part, because of its designation as one of the ‘facilitating subjects’¹⁶. These are subjects deemed to be more likely to help students gain access to undergraduate courses at prestigious universities, though evidence about university entry does not always bear this out (Tobin 2011). Their importance is regularly promoted at government level, while other subjects, including Media Studies, are pilloried (Buckingham 2009).

Stephen became impassioned when talking about the status of English within the examination system, at times contradicting himself and struggling to develop his argument. He recognised the value of English, particularly when approached in creative ways, yet he also saw the version of English being taught in his school as lacking creativity, and denying students the experience he wanted them to have. Alongside this, he tried to articulate a belief that Media Studies, and other subjects, should be valued as much as the facilitating ones. He articulated much of this through a personal attack on the then secretary of state for education, Michael Gove. He blamed Gove for what he saw as practices that limited what students could do and achieve. There was anger in his voice when he did this, as shown when he started addressing Gove directly.

Michael Gove is the same age as me, so you did your A Levels the same year as I did mine, so you had the same choice and it was those facilitating

¹⁶ The facilitating subjects are English Literature, Maths, Further Maths, History, Geography, Modern Languages, Classical Languages, Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

subjects. That was the choice of A levels for most schools, and I thought, you're just recreating the school experience that you had. Well that's kind of not good enough because there's actually lots of other things out there as well. I did those A levels and I can tell you that other A levels can be just as good, just as interesting, and broaden children's interests and if you just force them to do these restricted subjects they'll get very bored, they won't be creative, they won't produce the good work that they have to do – particularly at A level. I think A levels are challenging for most students and if they're doing things they don't like doing, particularly at 16, 17, because so much is going on in your life, you will not do very well, you will underperform. I mean that's what it was like when he was at school, that's what happened to people and you shouldn't be forcing people into that very rigid, exam driven kind of system. I think it's going to limit – instead of raising standards actually it's going to limit.

Stephen's words suggested a feeling of hopelessness, alongside his anger. In noting that he and Gove were the same age, he was drawing parallels between them; yet it was Gove, who dictated, in Stephen's construction, what went on in schools, and what this meant for creativity. Gove was even given the status of creator when Stephen accused him of recreating the examination system he himself experienced. It was, though, a negative creativity, the bringing into being of a system that limited rather than generated possibilities.

Just as Stephen found some release from the constraints imposed on English teaching at Bloomington through Media Studies, so other teachers at the school adopted ways of escaping from regulatory control. In Simone's (B1) case this involved an extreme measure: at the time of her interview she had secured a teaching job in Spain for the following

academic year. Her motivation was to escape from the restrictions of her work at Bloomington rather than a simple desire to work abroad. She had only been fully qualified for one year and talked about being “disappointed by how much I’ve had to follow a structure”. She also talked about there being “so much data analysis and assessment data” and explained that “a lot of what we do is about ticking boxes” when it should have been about “actually planning lessons and teaching”. Like Lee (A5) and Edie (A10), she felt pressures of time. “I feel like I’m hurrying along,” she said, “that I’m really rushing my students through coursework and through exam skills and it’s just really relentless, so I don’t feel we’ve had any time to kind of breathe and just enjoy it really”. In her construction of English teaching creativity was driven out by the demands of examinations and assessment. She talked about a course she attended at The Globe theatre in London that was “really creative”, with lots of ideas for classroom use. “I would love to have brought a lot of what I learnt that day into my English lessons,” she commented, “but I feel like time has been an issue so I haven’t been able to”.

Stephen (B20) alluded to a more modest strategy for escape used by his colleague, Lynn (B16). He recalled a conversation he once had with her in which he had been bemoaning teaching the same topics in the same way at GCSE, year after year. Lynn revealed to him that she “kind of enjoyed it” and Stephen attributed this to her “teaching in this kind of postmodern ironic way now”. Lynn’s approach suggests that she distanced herself from the realities of what she had to do in order to cope. An aside she made when her interview finished intimated that she also found space for creativity beyond the classroom. As she was leaving the room, she pointed to a newspaper clipping lying on top of a pile of papers and said that if I wanted an example of creativity then I should look no further. It was a picture of her husband playing in the backing band of an internationally famous singer. The picture occupied an entirely different space from what she had described about English at

Bloomington. All kinds of connotations sprang from the image and its place in the classroom. Presumably Lynn had brought it in to share with her pupils. If she could not provide creativity in her lessons, she could at least show what it looked like in the outside world.

6.4 Summary of chapter six

The data explored in this chapter suggests that the examination systems within which teachers in the three schools worked had an important impact on constructions of creativity. Significantly, it showed a substantial difference between how teachers in the private school and the two state schools responded to the pressures of high-stakes testing. The private school teachers saw little contradiction between the requirements of teaching to final exams and bringing creativity into their classrooms; where they recognised the potential distorting impact of testing pressures on classroom activity, they regarded it as their professional responsibility to counter them. They asserted that creativity was integral to successful examination responses, rather than an additional extra. As such, they constructed their lessons as offering their students access to knowledge in ways commensurate to those put forward by various theorists in chapter two's *epistemology of creativity*. In particular, the focus on 'personal response' to texts required students to engage with material on their own terms and to bring it into their own realm of understanding in a process of "becoming" (Freire, 1970).

Several times the Windhover teachers asserted their own agency in teaching in a way that made room for creativity. While there was some recognition by teachers like Neil (W25) that the examination system had the potential to limit the range of practices teachers felt able to draw on, he asserted his own belief in resisting this – even in the face of his own students

wanting him to feed them examination responses more directly. In articulating their own practices, the three Windhover teachers who also worked as examiners, Ewen (W37), Neil (W25) and Matt (W20), talked about teachers in other schools who did not teach in creative ways. In doing so, they established a ‘relational’ difference between their school and others (Ball, 2017). This relational difference was extended further when it became clear that students at Windhover did not sit the same English examinations at 16 compared to those in the state school, being entered for the IGCSE (“the international”), rather than GCSEs.

The schools cited by the Windhover teachers as practising in different ways to their own were not named. They were anonymised as part of the GCSE and A Level examination assessment processes. As such, it was unclear if they were private or state schools. Consequently, no firm conclusions can be drawn as to whether or not this relationality showed a distinction between private and state schools in general, or simply between Windhover and a range of other schools from both sectors. Nonetheless, the constructions of creativity in the context of examinations by teachers at Archford and Bloomington are in stark contrast to those at Windhover. Teachers thought that examination pressures restricted what they could do in the classroom. The restrictions came in the form of time to carry out particular activities, and also the form of activities required by the final examination, such as responding to writing triplets, mentioned by Stephen. There was a sense among the state school teachers that they were not able to teach in ways that they wanted to, or that they regarded as best for their students. As such, several times they constructed creativity as (at the time of the interviews) being a quality lying beyond English classrooms, be it in other subject areas or activities outside the classroom. The absence of creativity in English contributed to a general sense among the state school teachers that English teaching was not what they wanted it to be. Their responses to this could be linked to the affective elements of chapter two’s *epistemology of creativity*. There was a sense of anger about the imposition

of a particular examination system from above, most clearly seen in Stephen's attack on secretary of state for education, Michael Gove, that resonated with Woodward's (2009) construct of "bureaucratic rage"; there was also a general disillusionment with a subject that held out a possibility of creativity that was not realised in practice, what might be seen as a kind of "cruel optimism" (Berlant, 2011).

The next chapter will extend the exploration of institutional pressures acting on teachers' constructions of creativity in English, by exploring responses about the English curriculum.

Chapter Seven: Creativity and the English (National) curriculum¹⁷

This chapter looks at the role institutional policy about curriculum content and pedagogy played in teachers' constructions of creativity in the three schools studied. First it looks at how teachers at each of the schools positioned their teaching in relation to different versions of the *National Curriculum programme of study for English* (DFES 2007; DFE 2013) and other significant national policy documents. It does this by looking at the responses of teachers in each school in turn. This structure was informed by the similarity of responses by teachers *within* schools to questions about creativity and the curriculum, even as there were differences in their responses *across* schools. It then goes on to explore how decisions about curriculum informed the teaching described on the ground. In this, the chapter considers the enactment of creativity by teachers in the different schools.

It is worth pointing out four things before beginning this chapter: first, that independent schools are not under a statutory obligation to follow the national curriculum; second, that during the course of the interview process a draft of a new *National curriculum* was published, which made no mention of creativity (when it had been one of four key concepts in its previous incarnation); third, the interviews were held either side of this publication, so that teachers at Windhover, who were interviewed first, had no knowledge of creativity being dropped from the curriculum at the time of interview; and finally, that concurrent with the new draft of the curriculum was a downgrading of its statutory significance. New legislation made it a statutory document only for local authority controlled state schools, thus exempting the large number of state secondary schools that converted to

¹⁷ 'National' is placed in brackets to indicate that it is not compulsory for all schools to follow the *National Curriculum for English*. At the time of carrying out the research it was statutory only for the two state schools.

academy status. (At the time of the interviews Archford and Bloomington were both still under local authority control.)

7.1 Bloomington School, the *National curriculum* and creativity

Teachers at Bloomington expressed strong feelings about proposed changes to the *National curriculum* that dropped previous references to “creativity”. These were put so forcefully that they might be categorised as feelings of *outrage*: three teachers used the word “shame” in their response, while “appalling”, “unprincipled”, “worrying” and “terrible” were used by the other respondents.

The draft of the new curriculum was published the day before the interviews at Bloomington, so it was unlikely that teachers would have had a chance to engage with it in any significant way. Nonetheless, when informed about the absence of creativity in the new draft, several teachers responded in ways that revealed a politicised engagement with education and the place of creativity in it. Stan (B3), for example, when asked for his opinion about the dropping of creativity, situated his answer within what he saw as a general drift in education policy. “I think that’s the whole government’s policy now,” he said, “being creative isn’t a way, isn’t the best way for them”. Instead, he suggested, that those devising government policy believed in a way of learning in which “you reel off facts”, an approach he found “very worrying”.

Mark (B8) labelled the dropping of creativity as “unprincipled”, and commented that the changes were “very depressing” but “unsurprising”. Like Stan, he situated his response within a broader framework of education policy. He saw dropping creativity from the curriculum as part of an attempt to emulate “particular sorts of East Asian education systems” with their focus on “rote learning and repetition”. He linked this directly to

restricting what education can offer, implying that it was part of a project to limit the thinking that accompanies creativity. He said that “one of the strengths of the English education system” was that it “equips students with analytical tools which are creative, allows them to think about which things are the cornerstone of an education”. To remove that from a curriculum, he said, was “very sad”.

Lynn (B16) also made the point about the curriculum dropping creativity potentially altering how young people were shaped by their educational experiences. She believed that the new curriculum would encourage pedagogical approaches with a trust in the efficacy of rote learning. “It’s supposed to be more factual in the way children are expected to learn,” she said, “and I think that’s appalling”. She explained her thinking as follows: “I think children need to be creative before they can cope with hard facts ... that’s how they make sense of the world”. In her construction, removing creativity from the curriculum equated to removing something that was essentially human. Facts were not so much drilled into young people, as their potential drilled out of them, as suggested by the following:

I just think if we’re drilling one of the most important aspects of human nature out of our children it will have a really detrimental effect on the way that they relate to people and relate to the world – you know we’re not machines and I think we should celebrate the way that people can be creative.

The idea of “drilling ... aspects of human nature” out of young people is worth considering. It suggests a curriculum constructed as actively seeking to remove particular ways of being from young people, as well as drilling a particular kind of knowledge into them, knowledge that, presumably, aims to turn them into particular types of subject. It was an interesting development of Freire’s (1970) ‘banking’ model of education, suggesting an

active desire not just to resource students with particular forms of knowledge, but also to deny them particular ways of being and becoming.

Sally (B40) made an even more explicit link between removing creativity from the curriculum and policy attempts to restrict human potential. She said that the suggested change was “terrible”, and then made an interesting pronoun shift. Instead of referring to the curriculum itself, she commented that “it’s not the way *you* [my emphasis] should be”. In her construction, curriculum fed directly into the production of particular types of young people. To remove creativity from the curriculum, she suggested, was an attempt to deny basic humanity to school students. “Ultimately,” she said, “if you want to be a successful human being and get enjoyment from life you have to enjoy being creative yourself, or actually share someone else’s creativity”. She used ‘you’ as if addressing everyone, and presented her case in a common-sense fashion: this was clearly what *you* – as in anyone listening to her – would do. Yet young people, in her reading of the curriculum, were being denied these opportunities in schools; consequently, they were being denied a key part of what it was to be human – exercising agency over the world in a process of becoming.

It is important to recognise that the comments that the Bloomington teachers made about creativity being dropped from the curriculum did not engage in any substantial way with how it might have resulted in changes to their teaching, either in terms of content or pedagogy, if at all. The comments were made within the context of also talking at some length about how difficult they found it to include creativity in their lessons when teaching to a curriculum (the 2007 model) that did require students to engage with creativity, and the sense of guilt that they felt about this. This will be explored more fully later. Their responses, then, were very much *emotional*, but their emotions were expressed in broadly political terms, ones borne out of frustration at what they saw as the active subjugation of the potential

of their students. They equated the removal of creativity from the curriculum as an attack on the humanity of their students, their potential to be individual, creative subjects.

7.2 Archford School, the *National curriculum* and creativity

In contrast to the teachers at Bloomington, those at the other state school, Archford, offered very different responses when asked for their thoughts about the omission of creativity from the new draft of the *National curriculum*. These suggested a general *indifference* towards the impact of policy changes. Edie (A10) said of the dropping of creativity, “I didn’t really notice its coming and I don’t think I would notice its going. I don’t think that would make any difference to the way that I choose to teach”. Her reasoning suggested a belief that teaching on the ground transcended policy change. “Putting it in doesn’t mean it was more important,” she commented, “and taking it out doesn’t mean it is less important”. She went on to talk about her practice only really being affected by content changes at policy level, such as the texts to be taught. She resisted recognising that policy could bring about significant change at the level of pedagogy, regarding creativity simply as “part of the way that you would want to do things”. She constructed a separation between curriculum content and pedagogy, stating that “the absence of creativity wouldn’t make me make any other decisions about what we’re going to include text-wise, or about how we are going to deliver them”.

While she expressed a belief that creativity should stay in the curriculum, Evie’s colleague, Jane (A25) did not demonstrate the same sense of outrage as the teachers at Bloomington when asked about its removal. Perhaps reflecting her own uncertainty about how to talk about its significance, she commented that she thought “it’s a sort of area where people feel a bit unsure – they don’t know what it means”. Rhonda (A1) showed a similar

lack of in-depth engagement with the question. It did not stir up any particular emotions in her, but rather led her to ponder pragmatically that its removal was “probably because it’s so hard to define” and to replicate Edie’s ideas when saying that she didn’t “think that because it’s not mentioned in the national curriculum, English is going to stop being creative”. Samantha (A12) similarly commented, “I don’t think it’s going to change the way I teach”. Like Edie, Samantha demonstrated a belief in her own agency in the way that she taught. Edie talked about “the way you would want to do things” in the sense that she would continue to do things how she wanted to do them; Samantha’s use of the first person showed her confidence in following a similar line. Both stood in contrast to the Bloomington teachers, who did not feel able to teach in the way that they wanted to, the restrictions placed on their own practice mirroring restrictions that they saw as being placed on their students.

Only Lee (A5) at Archford engaged directly with the political significance of creativity being removed from the *National curriculum*. Even he qualified his response by saying that he didn’t “know that much about the political nature and the connection to education” and approached the topic in humorous rather than outraged fashion, stating that he’d “put it down to the fact that Michael Gove’s [the then secretary of state for education] a - not a particularly nice man – with very poor ideas about education”. He did, however, go on to offer a political rationale for the government’s removal of creativity from the curriculum, stating that “the way that the government pitches education now is sort of stoical” and that “they haven’t really got the liberal sense of mind to think about creativities”. This was very different, though, to the political responses articulated by the Bloomington teachers. Lee, nor any of his colleagues, did not construct the removal of creativity as part of a wider project to limit human potential; rather, it stemmed from the personal orientation of individual politicians – “a sense of mind”. Archford’s teachers, then, did not seem to feel that they or their students were acted upon in the same ways by politicians as their colleagues

at Bloomington. The school itself had a long-established tradition of placing a strong emphasis on the arts and self-expression. Perhaps its teachers, then, held on to a discourse that enabled them to assert their own individuality above and beyond policy directives. It is worth noting, though, that this discourse emerged when talking in the *abstract* about curriculum; it was not reflected in the data in the previous chapter about the impact of examinations on constructions of creativity. Chapter eight will also explore data that also places the actual practice of Archford teachers in a contradictory position to their articulations here.

7.3 Windhover School, the *National curriculum* and creativity

The scheduling of interviews meant that teachers at Windhover could not be asked about changes to the *National curriculum*: they were yet to be published when the interviews took place. However, they were still able to respond to questions about the existing *National curriculum* (QCDA, 2007). Their responses were characterised by what might generally be termed as expressions of *superiority*: teachers at the school felt that they could offer something better than what was statutorily required of state school teaching.

When asked if the presence of creativity in the *National curriculum* made any difference to the planning and teaching of lessons, head of department, Matt (W20), said “not really”, though he did comment positively about its presence as a core concept: “Nice to see it there as a strand”. Neil (W25) referred to what he said was a “mantra” in the department, what he called “National curriculum plus”. By this he meant that “we glance at it, and we do better”. Anticipating that the document would soon be revised, he explained that teachers in the department would look at “whatever marvellous Mr. Gove produces” but that “it won’t determine what we do”. When asked for his thoughts about having creativity

in the curriculum, he commented that “it seems to me a sort of lip service,” with “no actual sense of what it is and why it is useful and why it is a good thing and how to use it”. Here creativity was constructed as being too vague a concept to codify in official documentation. The use of the term “lip service” suggested that teachers at others schools engaged with constructions of creativity that were ultimately no more than presentational extras designed to meet the particular requirements of bodies that set statutory regulations, but which did not necessarily concern teachers at Windhover. Creativity and English teaching was constructed here, then, in relation to the requirements placed on state schools by the state: Windhover teachers were aware of them, but moved beyond them. They were *relationally* different.

7.4 State and private school curricula in relational opposition

This next section builds on what teachers at each school said about the *National curriculum* in relation to constructions of creativity. It explores whether discourse around curriculum identifies potential *relational* differences between how creativity is constructed in the two different sectors (Ball, 2017: p.169).

Bill (W6) compared his experience of teaching English at Windhover with training in a state comprehensive school seven years previously. He explained that students in English at Windhover “are always encouraged to be adventurous and confident with their own opinions and interpretations” and that teachers “are very keen that they don’t become drones [who] don’t want to think for themselves”. He added that teachers in the department “want to inspire independent thought”. These observations were in contrast to how he talked about his time training to teach in the state sector. He recounted a Year 10 scheme of work that he was given to teach to “a middle or low ability set” in which “there was no room for creative thought at all really” and “students would be taught what to think about what to say

about the symbolism in the text and so on”. He compared this with teaching lessons to the same age group at Windhover. There “much more demanding” texts were taught, which were “open to lots of interpretations and stylistically much more complex”, so that they “leant themselves to being much more creatively taught”. At Windhover, he felt that the approach to teaching involved “less railroading”, “less insecurity”, “less scrutiny” and “a high level of trust that you know what you’re talking about”. The combination of challenging texts and trust in the teacher’s judgement enabled teaching “to go beyond the obvious, to look at radical interpretations”.

Bill’s comments about the state school pupils being “middle or low ability” are worth considering. They imply that the greater challenge and increased creativity offered at Windhover were, in part, a result of the students’ ability. Matt (W20) was more explicit about a perceived link between creativity and ability when he said,

it is very important for able students that they are challenged to think creatively and individually in response to literature rather than to feel that there is simply a kind of model that they must follow, a series of quite prescriptive assessment objectives which they need to meet.

He continued by saying that the English department was “lucky because we have bright students to work with and we have opportunities to go beyond the *National curriculum* requirements”. In Matt’s construction, then, his school’s approach to creativity and the curriculum involved moving beyond the *National curriculum* in order better to facilitate the needs of his school’s cohort of able students: being exposed to creative texts and working creatively with texts was, as such, their entitlement.

Ewen (W37) agreed that a creative approach to literary texts was something that the pupils at Windhover were offered. “Some of the best lessons I’ve had,” he said, “are where the students are talking about a reading they have done themselves”. He then described what he called “a creative lesson” in which “a very good set” of Year 10s were working with Harold Pinter’s *The Birthday Party*. The students were asked to produce scenes from the play in groups and then discuss it. Ewen described “simply superb stuff coming out of that, really thoughtful readings” which he regarded as “a creative response ... focused on reading the text and then explaining how they had experienced that text”. This type of work he categorised as “responding critically and personally at the same time”. The juxtaposition of creative texts and approaches with high ability students by Bill, Matt and Ewen suggested an elitist construction of creativity, a quality that was simply there in certain individuals, waiting to be drawn out by exposure to texts of a similarly high quality. Perhaps developing personality and character as specified on the school’s website, went hand in hand with exploring personality and character in literature. Students and texts were worthy subjects of creativity - leaders and future leaders in their fields.

A discourse of superiority was not exclusively voiced by Windhover’s teachers. Teachers at both Bloomington and Archford, who themselves attended private schools as children, made similar observations when comparing their experiences of teaching in the state sector with those of studying in the private one. Mark (B8), for example, talked about attending a private school “where the whole ethos was very liberal and about fostering creativity, the individual, that sort of stuff”. His juxtaposition of creativity with the individual resonated with Ewen’s (W37) comments about “developing personality and character”. They were in stark contrast to his experience of teaching in the state sector, which he likened at times to being “a bit of a sausage factory”. In developing his thoughts, Mark also referenced the part played by ability in constructions of English teaching and creativity.

While the following did not explicitly mention creativity, it was spoken in the context of explaining why he found his experience of learning at a private school a creative one, in contrast to his experience of teaching in a state one:

When I was at private school, apart from anything else, it was selective, so the approach towards national examinations was – ‘oh it’s easy, oh you can do this’. There was almost a competitive laziness at my school where you would never be seen to be working hard. It was always like, oh I studied for five minutes the night before. But at the same time grades were very important. That was the big secret, that everyone was working quite hard. So the whole ethos was ‘oh you can do this, of course you can do this, of course you’re going to get As’ and so we would kind of go through the curriculum quite easily and then kind of do extra stuff and kind of build around it. Whereas here [Bloomington] the ethos is very much this is hard, getting these grades is very, very difficult and challenging. Everything we do has to be focused on achieving that and you’ll be very, very lucky if you manage to get it – so everything is focused on that and there’s a large amount of repetition as a consequence. There’s no sort of sense of breadth beyond it. For me, that focus on examination when I was being educated was the minimum and you went above that – here, that’s the goal.

Mark’s comments link back to chapter six’s exploration of the effect of examinations on constructions of creativity. In a sense, at Windhover, the pressures of high-stakes testing were inseparable from matters of curriculum: they informed the curriculum and reduced its

breadth. Meanwhile, at other institutions, specifically the private one in the data here, the curriculum still maintained a sense of separation from final examinations.

Edie (A10), as mentioned earlier, attended a private school as a student, and taught for a year in the same school before training and working in the state sector. While she found less of a contrast between approaches to curriculum in the state and private sectors than Mark (B8), she still felt that there were significant differences that affected the experience of creativity for students. For example, she commented that at Archford “you are accountable for almost every hour” which “affects the choices you make and means you are less creative”. She attached an interesting emotion to the consequence of this greater accountability, explaining that it made her “scared about a longer kind of learning arc”. By this, she meant that when working in the private sector she was much more confident about letting students have plenty of time to explore a text and issues around it on their own terms, whereas at Archford fear about the consequences of giving too much freedom to students meant that she was much quicker to provide them with information about what she was teaching in a way that she thought was “probably to the detriment of creativity on the students’ part” and which “closes down the options that I give them in terms of the tasks that I choose, or let them choose and also [closes down] exploration time”.

The reflexivity of comments by Mark and Edie suggests the powerful discourse frameworks within which they worked. They were both aware of the creative approaches they benefited from when students at private schools, but did not practice in similar ways in their own teaching careers. Even though they had first-hand knowledge of the relational differences between the two sectors, and spoke negatively about their own uniform and restrictive practices, they gave no sense of being able to amend this situation.

7.5 Creativity, state schools, ability and social class

This section builds on the data from the previous one to explore what state school teachers said about the relationship between creativity, curriculum, and the types of students that they taught, particularly in relation to notions of ability and social class. In doing so, it explores how ideas about cultural capital feed into constructions of creativity for different types of students.

Teachers at both Bloomington and Archford at times contradicted themselves in their statements about creativity and the particular needs of their student intake. They valued creativity, but then found themselves talking about teaching students using strategies that ran counter to their feelings and instincts. In doing so, they then sometimes felt the need to qualify their comments, aware of, and uncomfortable with, the positions they were taking because of the way they advantaged or disadvantaged different students. Rhonda (A1), for example, labeled as “weird” her “thinking that some kids are more creative than others”. In her extended thinking, she plotted a way beyond assigning creativity to particular students. She said that “sometimes I think [creativity] is about being more well-read”. Her reasoning went that this led to a bigger vocabulary and awareness of literary techniques and so “if we do a creative thing, writing a story, it reads better”. However, she then went on to say that such writing was “kind of emulating what they’ve read, so it’s not that creative”.

Creativity as constructed in Rhonda’s initial statement was tied in with outcomes of work, particularly written ones, rather than with process. It suggested that creativity was constructed in a way that tied it in to the value of work, as judged in hierarchical terms, so deeming uncreative the work of students less attuned to the English curriculum and, in parallel, providing those students with a less creative offering from teachers. When qualifying what she said by questioning whether or not the work by the more well-read

students was really creative after all, she was not so much shifting from this position, as questioning the creative merits of a particular piece of work. It suggested a personal unease with how she constructed creativity, leading to a questioning of her own practice. The constraints that she and colleagues worked under seemed to have removed, or limited, constructions of creativity that regarded it as a process of *becoming*: there was the sense that the role that she felt obliged to play did not help students to *become*, but simply to *be* a particular type: to *reinforce* their existing knowledge and ways of being. Perhaps creative if able enough; otherwise not. Her unease was indicative of what might be regarded as an existential crisis for her and other colleagues: that they were implicated in constructing students in ways that they did not believe in but did not feel able to resist.

Rhonda showed further internal conflict when talking about teaching a low attaining Year 9 “bottom set”. She said that their work was less creative than that of other students because “they are more limited in their ideas”. However, she then said that this was “an awful thing to say”. Even if there was a quantifiable difference in the work produced by students of different abilities, she was reaching for a form of practice that acknowledged the benefits of and entitlement to creativity for all students, even as she found this difficult to manage within the system in which she worked. In doing this, she did recall an example of work with this Year 9 class that she deemed creative. She talked about reading a book with them (*I’m Not Scared*, by Niccolo Amanitti), in which the central plot hinged around a dare. She explained that when she asked the students to relate this to their own experience of making and carrying out dares, she felt that their responses were creative. In talking through the contradictions of her own position, Rhonda began to construct creativity in a different way. She moved away from linking it to outcomes, and instead linked it to a particular way of exploring experiences, a generative act of *becoming* as new knowledge emerged in the meeting of knowledge drawn from the text and personal experience.

Samantha (A12) was also contradictory in articulating similar concerns to Rhonda about students from particular backgrounds being limited in their creative abilities. She defined the subject of English in terms that might be deemed particularly creative, seeing it as

about exploring, about talking, about learning, about experiences through texts, through well every sort of text – about giving rein – you know – in written stuff – and in verbal stuff – to your imagination.

Without further questioning, she then went on to explain that the students she taught “haven’t got the content base to create the imaginative sort of work that we want them to”. As well as teaching English, Samantha was also a Head of Year. She continued her response by explaining that in this pastoral role she was “always thinking about widening [students’] opportunities to access content – in the hope that it will feed their imaginations”. She classified these opportunities as “life experience whatever that might be: a trip somewhere, to see something outside their usual life and their usual influences”. She believed that this “will have an effect on their writing in terms of what they can offer: story content, how they respond to other texts, everything”. Samantha constructed creativity as belonging to experiences beyond the everyday, “outside ... usual life”. She reinforced this construction by explaining that if she asked her classes to write an imaginative piece about a journey, then “most of them write about walking down the H – [main local shopping area] Road”. By implication, if the students had a greater range of life experiences on which to draw, then they would be constructed as being more creative. Again, there is a resistance to constructing creativity as a process of *becoming*. These students cannot be creative, her logic goes, because their personal experiences are inadequate to the task. Clearly there is an argument

to be made for more life experiences facilitating creativity because it provides students with more material from which to draw when attempting to bring new knowledge into being. It is a rather back-to-front idea of creativity, though, one that assumes that creativity only comes from certain kinds of experience. If, as Samantha suggested, creativity came from the interaction of new knowledge with existing experience, then there was no logical reason to assume that such an interaction could not take place regardless of the students' existing life experience; it was simply that the new knowledge brought into the classroom must interact with experience outside the realm of what certain constructions of knowledge deemed as valid.

The sense that creativity was linked to ability and to particular kinds of experiences outside the classroom (with the two going hand-in-hand) was reinforced by comments from some of the Bloomington teachers. Simone (B1) felt that "creativity has been pushed back" in her teaching of a lower ability group because she had to make sure they could "go into an exam and know exactly what they're doing and not feel terrified". She also questioned just how creative these students could be because "I don't know if they got a broad range of experience outside of school", adding that "a lot of them seem to be really naïve about things and that's quite shocking to me".

Stephen, at Bloomington, also constructed creativity in a way that linked it to the experiences of his students, in this case specifically the experience of reading. He commented that "the number one problem for the school" was that "the children come with a very restricted experience of reading". For him, reading was a conduit to creativity: "there's reading, and then building on that through creativity". He contrasted the experiences of his own children being taken (by him or his wife) to their local library every week, with the children at Bloomington with "restricted access to reading" and went on to offer the opinion that schools, and the curriculum with which they worked, did not do enough to encourage

reading, a problem when “for some of them the only books they’ve ever read are the books they’ve read at school”. Creativity mirrored hierarchical societal structures in this construction: the degree to which students could be creative was dependent upon their exposure to particular textual experiences and these, in turn, were dependent upon the wider context of their lives.

Jane (A25) also identified a lack of reading with a limited capacity for creativity. In her case, she contrasted her current perceptions of the students she taught with the situation when she began at Archford in the late 1980s, when she felt the school had “brighter kids”. She explained this in terms of social class:

Politically things were different then; there were lots of middle-class but quite left-wing families living locally, who would not have sent their children to private schools even if they could have afforded it. [The school] had a slightly different reputation then and the area has changed so it was a bit more mixed. It was a bit more Bohemian I think.

In Jane’s construction, Bohemian tied in directly with reading widely and having lots of experience outside of school. It also had connotations of personal freedom and a lack of inhibitions. Indeed, Jane gave the impression that while once she had classes consisting of a range of [creative] students, now she taught a relatively homogenous group who “don’t read anything”. She said of her current A Level group that “the bulk of them are hovering around the C borderline, half the class, maybe lower than that”.

Jane’s comments stood out from others in that they addressed the issue of social class directly, rather than referring just to levels of ability. In light of what is known about constructions of ability and social class (Bourdieu, 1990), though, it is possible to make some

tentative suggestions about the role played by social class in constructions of creativity in the two state schools. Bloomington's student intake was drawn almost exclusively from working class families, and Archford's was predominantly so. In this context, references to low-ability groups might cautiously be read as code for references to working class students, particularly when taking into account references to students' lack of wider cultural knowledge. It was understandable that teachers in the study wanted to supplement knowledge lacking in their students, and that this required curriculum time, and a form of content, not needed by other groups of students. However, it did not necessarily follow that such a curriculum needed to restrict creativity. In Freire's terms, for example, in resisting creative approaches to the curriculum with these students, teachers were treating knowledge as "a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (1970: p.53). They were denying students the opportunity to act upon the world, either by working creatively with their own existing knowledge, or the new knowledge brought into the classroom. As such, they were denying students opportunities to *become*, reinforcing their place in existing hierarchies and placing on them the role of "spectator, not re-creator".

7.6 Creativity, curriculum and teacher agency

Data in the previous section suggests that creativity was distributed among different students in different schools based broadly on notions of academic ability, and also of social background and broader exposure to education. This section will explore the different levels of agency experienced by teachers in the three schools in terms of their relationship to the curriculum.

Significantly, Jane (A25) did not ascribe the lack of creativity she perceived in her current classroom as entirely down to the student body, as discussed above. She also reflected on changes to the curriculum. This linked back to her comments explored in chapter six, because she talked about the curriculum largely in terms of examination requirements. For example, she talked about how the GCSE when she started teaching in the late 1980s was assessed entirely by coursework. This meant “there was much, much more control over the curriculum in terms of what the teachers could teach and how they could teach”. To Jane, this offered teachers the freedom to construct a curriculum with a particular class in mind. In contrast, she felt that the GCSE she now taught was “much more prescriptive in terms of what we can teach and how we can teach”. This led her to reflect that the lack of reading experience of the students “must to some extent be to do with what we’re doing in schools”. She believed that the current model “isn’t encouraging students to read individually” and that “the way we teach the lesson is much more formulaic and more regimented”. She talked about lessons at the start of her career when she took students to the library and “students sat around talking about books”. She concluded this part of her response by stating that “you wouldn’t do a lesson like that now [because] it’s not seen as a taught lesson”. There was no statutory requirement for Jane *not* to teach as she once did, but the wider discourse within which she and her school operated – even as teachers at this ‘Bohemian’ school sometimes resisted such discourses in their personal rhetoric – denied her agency to practise in a creative way according to her beliefs.

The lack of agency afforded to teachers in the two state schools relative to former practices was a feature of other responses. Sally (B40), for example, reflected on the start of her career in the 1970s when, she said, “it was literally free. No national curriculum. You went in and you did something you enjoyed”. She gave the example of teaching poetry that she personally liked. The limited number of literary texts mentioned by the Archford and

Bloomington teachers was, indeed, striking. Staples of the then GCSE, *Of Mice and Men*¹⁸ and *An Inspector Calls*, were cited several times, as was an oft-taught Shakespeare play, *Romeo and Juliet*, but little else. There was no sense of teaching something out of personal interest or enthusiasm; rather the texts selected were generally ones commonly taught out of a sense of expediency: they were short, relatively straightforward and well resourced. In contrast, teachers at Windhover mentioned a wide range of texts and poets, drawing from a mix of acclaimed contemporary works and established classics, such as plays by Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard, poetry by Tennyson, Keats, Heaney and Hughes, contemporary novels by Monica Ali and Zadie Smith, Chaucer's *Tales* and *Wuthering Heights*. This was in line with head of department, Matt's (W20), comments about how he encouraged his colleagues to teach what they wanted:

it's important that teachers have got their own commitment to what they are studying. I think an English teacher must make their own choice of texts. I think that I do insist on that remaining the case at GCSE and A level even if the question is occasionally raised by senior management.

The Windhover teachers appeared still to have a great deal of agency over the curriculum they taught, both as a department and as individuals within that department. In theory, there was nothing to stop the departments at Bloomington and Archford adopting the same policy as Matt and teaching just about any text that they wanted to at some point in the curriculum, and a range of texts at GCSE and A Level (budget limitations notwithstanding). As Matt made clear, there were alternatives to *Of Mice and Men* and *An Inspector Calls* on the GCSE

¹⁸ Reports that up to 90% of students studied this novel by American, John Steinbeck, led to direct intervention by Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, to remove it from the GCSE exam syllabus in 2015.

syllabus; it was simply his opinion that the majority of schools did not opt for these alternatives. Teachers seemed bound in terms of both practice and content by Jane's (A25) notion of what was "a taught lesson". Creativity was constructed within the context of what teachers would have liked to do, believed they ought to do, but ultimately felt that they could not do.

At Bloomington, teachers identified such a construction as linked to their school's general ethos. Talking about how she generally could not teach in what she saw as a creative way, Simone (B1) said that "the ethos of this school has really affected my view of creativity and what I'm able to do to be creative". Stan (B3) felt that "students are not encouraged to be creative" at the school and that "it's maybe something to do with the school's ethos on academic rigour". He said that this equated to lessons in which students "write, write, write" in an environment where "there isn't a focus on talking, which obviously I think a lot of creativity comes from ... that's probably not something that's always encouraged enough". Academic rigour was equated with repetitive, silent activity, the repetition of "write, write, write" holding connotations of drilling. It was constructed as the opposite of creativity, which, by implication would not help students to learn, suggesting that the ethos at Bloomington under which teachers operated was constructed within a wider discourse that did not value creativity.

While teachers at Archford made similar comments to those at Bloomington about the lack of creativity in their lessons, they did not attribute this to the particulars of their school in the same way, which meant that their constructions of creativity as applied to English teaching contained more contradictory impulses. The school itself was spoken of in consistent terms as a creative place, even as teachers didn't generally feel able to teach English in a particularly creative way. Like Edie (A10), Samantha (A12) and Lee (A5) both went to private schools as students. Both were attracted to work at Archford by the particular

nature of the school. Samantha said that she “wanted to work in this kind of school” because “I didn’t enjoy my school very much and I think that from the pastoral side, this was the sort of school that I felt would give me what I wanted”. Lee talked about his private schooling as being “quite old-school in that sense in the methods and way I was taught”. He went on to say that

it was pretty much teachers out front, you read a chapter together, a few questions were asked, then you wrote something for homework. It never drifted from that really, it was a very traditional formula.

In contrast, he described Archford as “the sort of school I would have liked to come to when I was a kid”. He expanded on this by contrasting the ethos of his old school with that of Archford:

I didn’t like the traditional ethos of my school where you got in trouble if your top button was not done up. I think that there was no creative ethos to the school at all. If you played a musical instrument, it was violin or trumpet, something quite traditional. You couldn’t play drums, you couldn’t play bass guitar or something, there was no sense of artistic credibility to the school at all, it was just a kind of exam factory really. I think consequently I probably, I did my A levels there as well – I think after that I went through a little rebellious streak where I thought I don’t really like that at all. I felt kind of at home when I walked in here. I remember the kids showing me around that day that I turned up and just seeing some of the wonderful art, artistic bits that had gone up, seeing the music block and all that stuff, and I think that

there was a performance after my interview, I went to see that as well and I just remember thinking straight away that it had a very artistic undercurrent. I was attracted to the fact that kids could wear their own clothes, things like that.

Despite the positive light in which teachers at Archford viewed much of what went on in their school, including its commitment to creativity, their comments about English teaching were not out of step with Mark's (B8) about his school being a "sausage factory". Lee might have implied that Archford was not an "exam factory" (because the school he attended as a student was) but everything he constructed as being creative lay outside of the English classroom. The separation of English and creativity, as witnessed in New Labour policy documentation (NACCCE 1999; Seltzer and Bentley 1999), seemed to have come to pass; there was room in one of the state schools for creative practice, but even then only in particular areas of school experience. In the two state schools studied, its presence in the English curriculum was limited at best.

7.7 Summary of chapter seven

This chapter has shown significant differences between constructions of creativity as it related to curriculum in the two state comprehensive schools compared to the private school. Teachers in the private school, Windhover, felt largely able to ignore the content of the *National curriculum*, drawing on a wide range of texts of their own choice in constructing their own curriculum; in contrast, the state school teachers drew on a relatively small group of prescribed texts. Their practice, though, was not necessarily prescribed by the constraints of the *National curriculum*. The inclusion (QCDA, 2007), or exclusion (DFE, 2013) of

creativity from the *National curriculum* seemed to make relatively little difference to these constructions in the state schools. Teachers at Bloomington, for example, expressed outrage at its omission from the curriculum's 2013 redraft, but at the time of the interviews were operating under a curriculum that did attach high value to creativity (QCDA 2007); under that curriculum they felt neither more nor less able to bring creativity into their lessons. In contrast, teachers at Archford were indifferent to curriculum changes, yet conveyed similar difficulties in bringing creativity into their lessons. The content of lessons in both state schools seemed to reflect examination requirements rather than broader curriculum ones. Creativity seemed to play an important role in the general life of the school, but not in English classrooms.

The different approach towards curriculum in the private school compared to the state ones, suggests differences in the enactment of creativity in lessons with different groups of students. This was widely discussed by the teachers in terms of ability in all of the schools, but by implication, given what we know about the demographic make-up of both schools and the wider context within which notions of ability are constructed, it is possible to give some consideration to the role of social class in this process. This was made explicit in Jane's (A25) comments. There was a discourse among teachers at Bloomington and Archford of students lacking cultural capital. Consequently, they felt that the curriculum needed to focus on content at the expense of creativity. This constructed creativity as a process dependent on existing knowledge, rather than generating new knowledge. It meant that the processes of knowledge generation and *becoming* as detailed in chapter three's *epistemology of creativity* were experienced to a much greater degree by students at the private school compared to the state schools.

This chapter has also touched upon the feelings expressed by teachers when talking about creativity. In reference to the *National curriculum*, it identified feelings of *superiority*

among teachers at Windhover, of *outrage* at Bloomington, and of *indifference* at Archford. The next, final data chapter will explore further the emotional responses of teachers involved in constructions of creativity. It does so with particular reference to the importance they themselves attached to creativity, and to their expressions of what creativity looked like in their classrooms.

Chapter Eight: Creativity - meanings, practices and feelings

The first two data chapters have explored how creativity was constructed within the broad institutional frameworks that govern how English is taught in secondary schools in England. Primarily, they have considered the role played by national examinations and the *National curriculum*, along with the particular demands at work within three different schools. In this, constructions by teachers in the two state schools have often shared much in common, while being significantly different to constructions by teachers in the private school.

The next chapter considers what creativity meant to teachers in each school and what they said about its actual practice in their classrooms. It then considers the emotions that came to the fore in these responses. For clarity, the chapter moves through three headings: *meanings*, *practices*, and *feelings*, though there is some overlap between them. As in the previous chapters, there is a strong element of comparison between the private school and the two state schools.

8.1 Meanings

8.1.1 Creativity and disciplinary English

This section draws on data that suggests how teachers constructed creativity in relation to some of the core disciplinary practices in English. Primarily, this involved teachers from all three schools talking about creativity and English in relation to writing, and the particular role the subject played in the development of the written word.

Lynn (B16) and her colleague Sally (B40) recognised creativity as a quality existing in general activity specific to the English classroom. Sally, for example, stressed that creativity in English was different compared to its occurrence in other subjects “because you’re dealing with words”. Lynn constructed a particular kind of writing as the end point of a creative approach to English. She said that creativity was “a chance to tap into things that children might think and feel and have experience of”, and that this involved using “imagination” and “being adventurous”. Paul (B40), the head of department, commented that in English “you have more opportunities for creativity because you’re not limited by the paint you’ve got or the materials – you’ve got words and you can go where you wish to go”. His colleague, Mark (B8) responded to a question about what creativity meant in English by saying that “the obvious is creative writing, the production of texts”. Another colleague, Stephen (B20), said that “it should be the ability to produce your own stories and poetry”. Alan (W40) said that creativity “means students’ own writing” and his colleague, Ewen (W37) commented that it was “imaginative writing of some kind, whether in a script, a prose, or poetic form”.

Creativity was also constructed as a key component in the production and exploration of modes other than the written word. Edie (A10) stated that “the creativity that the kids engage in” was to do with “thought, or probably writing”. Her colleague, Samantha (A12), believed that creativity meant “giving children the freedom to express themselves in any way”. In similar vein, Bill (W6), commented that “English students need to be able to think independently, think originally, and express those independent and original thoughts”. Matt (W20) identified writing as the mode most associated with creativity but went on to recognise “creativity through talk and presentation and through drama and group activity”.

The discussion of creativity in a range of modes, and their interchange with writing, was extended in some of the examples of creativity in the classroom provided by teachers

from all three schools. At Archford, for example, Edie (A10) talked about a lesson that drew on “visual literacy”. The lesson she mentioned used images as an introduction to aspects of the Gothic in literature. Rhonda (A1) also talked about “visual literacy”. She described how students applied their imaginations to famous paintings in order to come up with ideas for a story. Lynn (B16) identified a lesson in which students “take an extract from a film and then they have to write around it ... imagine what it was like and write a sort of internal monologue”. Simone (B1) described a lesson in which the written word was transformed into dramatic representation. Neil (W25) recounted how he once combined a study of postcolonial literature with “a particular way of reinterpreting English folk songs in very multicultural ways” in what he called “a deliberate act of hybridisation”. In all of these constructions, teachers drew on the generative capacities of different modes of representation, particularly as they interact with language, to enable students to bring new forms of knowledge into being.

Taken as a whole, these responses suggest a construction of creativity in line with chapter three’s *epistemology of creativity*: teachers across all three schools valued it as a concept because of its connotations of originality, independence, self-expression, imagination, adventurousness, and possibility. As a whole, these concepts might be seen to construct learning and knowledge as a process of *becoming* (Freire, 1970). The focus on different modes suggested a construction of learning and knowledge in line with several theorists of language (Williams, 1977; Bakhtin, 2000; Volosinov, 2006) and communication (Blommaert, 2011). The data suggests that teachers saw creativity as having practical applications in the classroom, relating it to particular forms of imaginative and creative writing, along with thinking, presenting and acting.

8.1.2 Creativity and professional longings

The previous section explored constructions of creativity in line with common English classroom activities. This section looks at how some teachers offered constructions beyond such relatively straightforward applications. These constructions might be seen as “speaking to professional longings” (Jones, 2015: p.174) about what creativity could be.

Lee (A5) offered an explanation of what he thought creativity meant that ranged widely across English teaching approaches, different elements of the English curriculum, education in general, and the version of English that he believed students deserved:

I think that it means a few different things. I think that it means developing creative streaks in young people, so nurturing their creative writing abilities, I think it also means being able to give them the tools so that they can do those things and that comes from things like studying literature as well, and broadening their horizons and widening their reading. I think it also involves trying to deliver dynamic lessons that aren't the same. I think kids get bored. I think they like routines to some extent, but I also think that I try not to teach in too much of a one-dimensional way because I think that narrows your audience because I think kids – I think it's been apparent for some time that students learn in different ways. So I think creative teaching as a blanket term is kind of about trying to teach in a variety of ways that as many students as possible can access and I suppose that applies to English. Creative teaching within English itself I think involves using different media too, I hope, especially as KS3 is concerned, makes them enthusiastic about English and all the things it ties in with, so reading, writing, creative writing, analytical

writing, strands of media, and allowing them to feel they understand how all those things are connected and hopefully enjoy them, I suppose.

Creativity was presented by Lee, then, as an umbrella term for the whole of the subject. It was constructed as a process of *becoming* - “developing”, “nurturing”, “broadening”, “widening” – which privileged enjoyment, enthusiasm and dynamism over boredom, one-dimensionality and narrowness. It stood, though, in stark contrast to Lee’s comments featured in chapters six and seven, which revealed how he did not feel able to teach in the ways he described here. In offering creativity as a way to connect the many strands of the subject then, he was perhaps searching for a way to make sense of a subject he did not feel sufficiently connected to in his own practice.

Sally (B40) and Lynn (B16) invested creativity with a level of significance that took it outside the confines of the English classroom and into an existential realm. Sally saw creativity as linking learning to life itself. For example, she said that getting children to think creatively was “the difference between really being alive and just being dead”. She went on to explain that this was because creativity “gives the wow factor, a different dimension to life” and without it young people “are never going to experience the real highs and lows of life”. To her, the opportunity to be creative and to be exposed to creativity was part of “being a successful human being”. Lynn also linked creativity to broader aspects of life. She called it “one of the most important aspects of human nature” and contrasted it with a version of life that metaphorically constructed people as “machines”. Sally and Lynn’s words resonated with Freire’s ideas about “banking” and “problem-posing” forms of education. The former denied opportunities for *becoming*; the latter enabled people to “develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves” (Freire, 1970: p.64). Sally and Lynn constructed creativity as the means by

which young people could find themselves in the world; as with Lee, their aspirational words were in contrast to those quoted by them in chapters six and seven, which spoke of an inability to draw on creative practices because of constraints placed on them by the pressures of high-stakes testing.

8.1.3 Creativity and the past

As well as investing creativity with qualities that took it beyond the classroom and linked it to existence itself, Sally and Lynn also looked back to what creativity meant to their teaching at the start of their careers. Both constructed the past as a more creative time than the present. They put this down, in part at least, to the freedom they felt to draw on their own lives and those of the students in designing lessons. Lynn, for example, talked about the start of her career in the mid 1990s when “teaching was less prescriptive, you had a bit more autonomy about what went on in your classroom and there was more scope for creativity”. She linked this to there being “more trust in the profession in those days” so that teachers were left to get on with their work as best they saw fit. Her examples of being more creative at that time included “taking children out and having a football match and writing it up as a report”. There was a wistfulness in her tone, not just for the way teaching had changed, but for the teacher she no longer was, or never managed fully to become. This was suggested when she talked of the current “drudgery in the job”. She admitted that when she entered the profession she “had quite a romanticised view of what teaching actually was”, but nonetheless thought that teaching at that time was at least closer to her ideals than by the time of the interview.

Sally (B40) shared this view of a more creative past. She talked about the free choices teachers had in what to teach at the start of her career. “If you enjoyed a poem,” she said,

“you could actually go and teach it, talk about it, get the children to imagine themselves ... it was completely free then”. Sally and Lynn, then, both constructed creativity as dependent on freedom from state intervention and prescription.

The past as referred to by Sally and Lynn (and also Jane [A, 25], referenced in chapter six) did not necessarily reflect the dominant form of English as taught in schools at the start of their careers. Writing about English teaching from the 1970s and 1980s showed similar frustrations at English being practised in ways likely to limit what students might *become* (Rosen 2017). There was no reason, though, to doubt that they were personally able to teach in the ways they described. Exam syllabuses did allow teachers to have a large degree of choice in texts taught and less centralised and punitive forms of accountability meant that the ‘the terrors of performativity’ were some way away.

Three teachers at Windhover, Ewen (W37), Alan (W40) and Matt (W20), offered a very different version of what creativity and English teaching in the past meant to them. They were all keen to distance themselves from perceptions of what creativity was in previous periods. Ewen (W37), for example, recounted a class he taught at the start of his career at Windhover in the 1970s. There were no expectations that the students would take a final exam. Consequently, he was free to teach them whatever he wanted. He remembered this as follows:

Down in the 70s when I started there were some loony things going on. I mean when I started there was unexamined English in the 5th form which was a bit nightmarish. That must have sounded like a good idea at the time. What it meant was in my first teaching job I was just dumped in the middle of the 5th form and just told get on with it, do what you like, and I didn’t have a

clue. That was not creative at all. It was deeply unpleasant. It was well meaning but ill thought out stuff.

The notion that “unexamined” English was not creative resonated with his comments in chapter six about creativity being possible within the current examination system. It suggested a construction that saw creativity as part of the formal structures of English, in contrast to the opinions generally expressed in the two state schools, and the specific example of Sally (B40) who regarded teaching in the past as “literally free”.

Alan (W40) linked constructions of creativity in the same period to what he called “eccentricity”. He said of eccentric teachers that “there is a degree of flair to that kind of person but a degree of indulgence as well”. He said that this flair might also be seen as “inaccurate”, a term that constructed creativity – at least by association – as running counter to notions of correctness that were so central to debates about English language teaching. He also talked about teachers who thought of themselves as having flair as often being “impossible”, adding dismissively, “I mean you have to turn up for your lessons don’t you”.

Matt (W20) had a similarly ambivalent relationship with such teachers from the past. He pointed out that when he arrived at Windhover as head of department 14 years previously, there was “a creative writer in charge and there was lots of exciting creative stuff happening”. He added, though, that “the results were pretty poor” and that “an under-performing department needed to be turned round”.

There was, then, a contrast between constructions of creativity that emerged from a number of teachers interviewed in the two state schools compared to the private school. When they talked about English as a subject discipline, there was a level of uniformity from teachers in all three schools about what creativity meant in relation to the broad discipline

of English. However, only teachers at Archford and Bloomington offered constructions of creativity that spoke to professional longings beyond current classroom enactments; similarly, only teachers at the two state schools looked back to a more creative (and by implication better) past, while only teachers at Windhover equated the past with a form of creativity that resulted in negative experiences, poor working practices, and underperformance by students. The comments were perhaps indicative of different levels of satisfaction with current practices in relation to how teachers felt able to teach according to their own pedagogical beliefs. The next section will explore this further by looking at the examples that teachers gave of their own creative practices.

8.2 Practices

8.2.1 Creative practice in the state schools

Teachers in all three schools were asked during the course of their interviews to provide examples of creative practice in their own lessons, and in those of others. This section will explore the responses of teachers from Bloomington and Archford. They are grouped together because of the difficulties teachers in both institutions had in thinking of examples.

Mark (B8) visibly winced when asked to describe a lesson he recently taught or observed that was creative. “It’s a tough one,” he said, “give me a minute ... it will be really hard to think of one.” His colleague, Sally (B40) to the same request, simply said, “I can’t”. Jo (A25), also failed to come up with anything: “I’m just trying to think, I’m a bit blank on that,” she said. Edie (A10) was visibly panicked. “Okay, let me think about that for a minute,” she said. “Oh God ... Oh God ... I don’t think this is going to be particularly

creative but ...” Edie did eventually come up with her own example. However, the examples drawn on by three of her colleagues, Rhonda (A1), Samantha (A12) and Lee (A5), were all from lessons that they observed others teach or taught themselves a long time ago. Rhonda, for example, described a lesson that she taught more than 12 months previously, while she was a trainee teacher. Lee described an A Level lesson taught by a colleague, and Samantha recounted her role in supporting another teacher’s creative writing lesson. In a similar act of displacement from everyday practice, Stan (B3), drew on a taster lesson he taught to primary school students visiting his school as his example. As such, this lesson was not subject to the school’s usual requirements about teaching in a particular way. He talked about the freedom that came with this, articulating it as “knowing that we don’t have to get any work out of them at the end of the day” and being confident that “that’s allowed”. Consequently, the focus of the lesson shifted so that “it’s more about the experience”.

It is worth unpicking Stan’s assertion that “we don’t have to get any work out of them”. By this, he meant that there was no expectation that the students had any work written down at the end of the lesson. They could engage in what he considered the creativity of talk-based activities and, in the process, benefit from the *experience*. By implication, experience was removed from mainstream lessons, a peculiar avowal, but one suggestive of the extreme pressures placed on English teachers to produce lessons of a particular kind. It is worth contextualising his comments about expectations of written work being produced in lessons. At the time when he was interviewed, it was a requirement of Ofsted that students demonstrated evidence of progress in individual lessons, largely through written work.

Constraints placed on creative practice seemed to be stronger in English compared to other subjects. Simone from Bloomington, for example, said she felt that “I’ve got more freedom in my drama studio because it’s a creative subject and we don’t sit at desks and things like that”. Stephen, from the same school, commented that “media has allowed the

children to be really creative”, a sentiment he did not express about English. Such responses suggest that the generative capacity of language might have been suppressed in some English classrooms in the state sector, with lessons conforming to a ‘literacy’ model (Green 2006), as discussed in relation to policy constructions of the term in my chapter four. In this model, the focus is on replicating standard forms of language rather than pushing those forms through creative exploration.

8.2.2 Recreative practices in the private school

This section explores the significance of teachers at Windhover citing examples of ‘recreative’ work when asked for examples of creativity in their own practice. ‘Recreative’ or ‘transformative’ writing (Pope 2005; Knights and Thurgar-Dawson 2006) involves students showing their understanding of a text by rewriting a particular passage. They can do this in multiple ways, such as switching the person in which the passage is written, writing from the perspective of a different character, or writing it in a different genre.

Bill (W6), for example, talked about how, when students were studying Wilfred Owen’s war poetry, “along the way they wrote their own war poems from a particular perspective” and, similarly, retold Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* “from a modern perspective – the Dustbinman’s Tale and things like that”. Rowena (W6), talking about teaching the novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, explained how she guided students “to do activities where they had to write from the mother’s perspective, or from the father’s perspective at the end of the story, or even write as Christopher after the end of the story”. Ewen (W37) described a lesson that combined reactivity and experience. Students were encouraged to “respond critically and personally at the same time” to a production of *Hamlet*.

This involved “taking various aspects of the play and then developing them in terms of what they could have experienced or they could have imagined”.

Discussions by teachers about recreative approaches at Windhover fitted in with their confidence in the examination system being compatible with creativity in English, as explored in chapter six. An interesting development in the assessment of English at school and university level in the decade or so prior to the research being carried out was the use of *transformative*, or *recreative*, writing. Rather than being assessed through critical essays, students show their understanding of a text by rewriting it in some way. For example, they might choose to write a passage from a different point of view, create an alternative ending, or explore a ‘gap’ in the narrative. They are assessed against their ability to demonstrate an awareness of the original source text through using its key stylistic features and tropes in their own work. Often this is accompanied by a commentary, explaining how their writing reflects on the original. Research suggests that assessment through this type of work affords students new insights into texts (Knights & Thurgar-Dawson, 2006) and liberates them from some of the formal limitations of essay writing (English, 2012). It is regarded as a particularly creative form of literary response, as it engages students’ imaginations at the same time as it requires serious reflection on the literary qualities of a text.

Recreative writing was a form of assessment spoken about enthusiastically by teachers at Windhover. Matt (W20) said that “we’re very keen to maintain recreative responses as a way of responding to a literary text”. Neil (W25) talked about an optional recreative task at A Level, which he had “been pushing schools towards for a long, long time, but meeting quite a lot of resistance”. This arose, he said, because of a perception among other teachers that ““oh, you can do that because you’re at a very academic school””. Yet, this was an instance when creativity was not constructed as being more suited to able students. Neil explained that through his work as an examiner he had seen good examples of

recreative work “through the mark range from E to A star, and you can see the engagement with the activity at E and D for that level just as much as for the Bs and the As”.

Teachers at Archford and Bloomington did draw on recreative practices. For example, Paul (B40) recalled a lesson on the play, *An Inspector Calls*, in which students “were able to use the body of knowledge they had about the play and take it further in a creative way”. They did this through being hot-seated in a role-play activity, taking on the persona of different characters to explore their lives beyond the text itself. In doing this, Paul explained, “they were able to use their imagination, develop it”. They provided fewer examples, though, and none entered their students for the recreative elements of their GCSEs or A Levels. It is perhaps significant that Paul’s example referred to teaching a GCSE text. Even when his pupils were performing different identities, then, they were still ones linked to the official curriculum. The students at Windhover were much more likely, it seemed, to be offered opportunities to take on a range of voices from a variety of texts. Thus the children of parents with sufficient money to pay considerable school fees took on the role of dustbinman, among others. Thus they were able to develop the “capacity for semiotic mobility” that Blommaert (2005, p.63) identified as being important if individuals were to exert a level of agency over the powerful discourses within which they lived. Drawing on recreative practices, enabled these students to bring knowledge into their own sphere of being, rather than passively accepting existing formations (Freire, 1970). Significantly, they were permitted to do this on a larger and more consistent scale than their state school counterparts. Creativity, it might be argued, was constructed here as the means by which one social group reinforced its privileged position by enabling its young people to engage with a wide range of linguistic resources – an important form of social and cultural capital - while, relationally, those in the two state schools were denied choice and experimentation.

8.3 Feelings

8.3.1 Private school superiority (revisited)

Chapter seven argued that talking about the curriculum produced feelings of superiority in Windhover's teachers as they positioned themselves 'relationally' to those working in other institutions. Their superiority was both literal (they could ignore the *National curriculum* and teach to their own "National curriculum plus") and figurative (they displayed a conviction in their own practice not replicated by teachers in the two state schools). This section looks further at the feelings of superiority expressed in responses from the private school teachers. Specifically, it explores the positions they took in relation to the concept of creativity itself.

While, as seen in previous chapters, teachers at Windhover generally expressed a belief in the positive role creativity has to play in English, several felt the need also to qualify its significance. For example, Bill (W6), in the middle of talking about what creativity meant in English, broke off to say that he thought "there is a danger of becoming obsessive about creativity and a danger of trying to reinvent the wheel". A few minutes later, in response to a question about how he made room for creativity in his own lessons, he repeated this almost word-for-word, saying that "often I find there's a bit of an obsession around it and I find that people are reinventing the wheel". He pushed his ideas slightly further this time, adding that these people are "in fact, coming up with something that isn't quite as effective but is in the kind of, you know, standards, or typical Ofsted way – all bells and whistles or something a bit different". Teachers in England's state system are judged against these 'standards' (Qualified Teacher Standards, or QTS) and its schools are inspected by Ofsted. Bill was, then, setting himself apart from the creativity of state schools which, he implied, was

imposed from above and became a kind of performance rather than an integral part of good teaching. In contrast, at Windhover the types of activities that might be deemed as creative were done “off the bat, just naturally anyway, because the English department is a team of very talented, bright individuals who would never fall into a pattern of repetitive teaching”. Implicit in Bill’s words was a criticism of the state system and of the teachers within it, as well as a judgement about the authenticity or otherwise of approaches deemed as creative in the state as opposed to the independent sector. There was also an implicit desire to naturalise the practice of teachers at Windhover as *the* way to teach English: in dismissing attempts to “reinvent the wheel” of the subject twice, he seemed to be suggesting that the subject needed no such change, but simply needed to stay the way that it was taught at his school.

Ewen (W37) and Matt (W20) showed similarly ambivalent feelings towards creativity in some of their comments. Ewen, for example, while generally positive about creativity, also hedged against embracing it too emphatically. “I find the word very vague,” he said, “it’s a good buzz word”. Like Bill, then, Ewen had doubts about the authenticity of the word and suggested it was, in part, linked to a kind of performance of teaching.

Matt also distanced himself from creativity in a way that linked to the superiority implied by Bill. Towards the end of his interview, he was asked if there were “any restrictions to what English teachers can do in terms of creativity”. His answer did not deal with creativity at all, instead focusing on what appeared to be his core beliefs about the subject, as follows:

There are restrictions in terms that you have a set of – and I’m going to sound terribly old-fashioned when I say this – but of – my vision of English is that there are a series of practical skills that you need to develop, these are pragmatic skills, they are important skills for life, and that’s why we should

be teaching English language and ... in my view there is an academic discipline that we can deliver in a school like this, which is the academic discipline of English literature which as I say is the only subject we do at A level and that we think communicates through our teaching here because that is our specialism in the department. There are other ways of looking at English as a subject, but that's not particularly my concern, and not of this school.

Matt's qualification about sounding old-fashioned mirrored Bill's concerns about teachers trying to reinvent the wheel. In actively resisting "other ways of looking at English as a subject", he was implying the superiority of Windhover's way. He did not want to see English becoming something other than what it was at his school; thus helping to preserve the *status quo* and his school's superior position in relation to other schools with lesser resources.

8.3.2 State school rage

The dominant emotions in responses by teachers from the two state schools were in marked contrast to those from the private school. Chapter seven referred to feelings of outrage from teachers at Bloomington and indifference from those at Archford when asked to comment on the removal of creativity from the *National curriculum programme of study for English* (DfE, 2013). Underlying both emotions, it is perhaps possible to identify feelings of frustration and confusion: teachers valued creativity, could see its pedagogical value, but by-and-large, did not draw on creative practices in their classrooms. The confusion was most clearly seen in Lee's (A5) meandering construction of creativity as an umbrella term for the

whole of the subject, even as he did not feel he himself taught creative lessons. It was also present in Samantha (A12) trying to reconcile denying less able students access to creative practices, even as she believed they were entitled to them. The frustration was most clearly felt in Stephen's direct address to Michael Gove (chapter seven) about the new A levels.

This section brings to an end the data chapters by looking at one teacher's expression of rage at what, she felt, English teaching had become during the course of her 40 year career. It does so because her words bring together several areas that have been explored: the meaning of creativity, the role of policy in creativity, the distribution of creativity among different groups, and the links between creativity and wider educational discourses.

Sally (B40) was one week from full retirement from teaching when she was interviewed. As documented previously, she invested creativity with existential properties that took it beyond everyday classroom settings, identifying it as marking "the difference between really being alive and just being dead". She said this in the context of finding no opportunities for creativity in her own lessons, in contrast to the situation when she began her teaching career. She linked creativity closely to the wider social ideals of that time, talking about a much bigger focus on "ethics and values", arguing that "people were less materialistic" and explaining that they went into teaching "to actually change society in a way ... to introduce new thoughts about society and how we relate to each other". Her vision of education, then, was one that valued social justice, with creative explorations of subject matter linked directly to ideas about personal development and social change. She commented:

I think you should be encouraging children to think for themselves, to see things from other people's perspectives, which is where your imagination comes in – if you're just reinforcing *the status quo* you're not getting – I

mean sometimes it's uncomfortable getting kids to challenge things, but I think ... you're not going to get a just society, a democratic society, by just feeding kids ideas about what they should think and how they should react to things. I think there is too much prescription.

Sally recognised that “there are rudimentary things you've got to teach children”, by which she meant the ability to use language accurately within standard conventions, but she felt that the excessive focus on aspects of correctness, on “functional skills”, was part of a process of deliberately restricting the potential of particular groups of students. The current focus on education, she felt, was on “the mechanics of life” rather than offering students “a different dimension to life”. She used a literary allusion to end her interview and to illustrate this point, drawing on novelist E.M. Forster's *Howard's End*, with its edict to “only connect the poetry and the prose” to make a comparison between what she saw as the soulless policy drive in English teaching and one of the families in the novel who saw the world only in functional terms:

I really don't want all Wilcox's in this world and the Wilcox's are on the increase particularly in Conservative Britain. They're not interested in the other things of life really, and what makes it more enjoyable. No one thinks about that, what is an enjoyable experience, and for children often when they're creative that's when it's most enjoyable... they're creating something. They love Drama because it's creative. If you drive creativity out of the curriculum – and that's what people don't understand with English in particular – just this functional thing, I mean what world do those people live in where they think those sorts of things are useful? They're almost saying,

you know, this is what we want, functionally literate people for our society.

But do we? I suppose they do because they don't want people to think. But it's not an enjoyable life in my view.

The force of her words demonstrated the depth of her feeling about working in a system that she felt controlled teachers and students: in spite of all her ideals when she set out, in spite of all of her years of experience and her belief in the need to make English enjoyable and creative, she left it with a sense that it was anything but.

8.4 Summary of chapter eight

Woodward's (2009) terms "bureaucratic rage" and "statistical panic" come close to describing the emotions contained in Sally's words. Certainly there was rage at the bureaucratic state machinery that imposed accountability measures she felt compelled to subscribe to, even as felt this was to the detriment of her students. Panic was not an emotion explicitly brought to the fore, but exam statistics did lie at the core of where her rage came from. Perhaps a phrase capable of summing up the affective response produced in Sally and other state school teachers when talking about English teaching in the context of creativity would be *regulated rage*, the anger that emerges when compelled to practise within state-sanctioned constraints.

It is interesting that such strong negative emotions emerged when talking about creativity, a concept that itself garnered positive emotions in one form or another from all participants in the research even as this was qualified by some. Teachers did not reason explicitly in their interviews about why, when asked to talk about creativity they also ended up talking about their frustrations about the state of English teaching, even when they were

not necessarily directed to do so. Their *regulated rage*, then, might be indicative of alternative formations coming together around the concept of creativity, as yet unspecified and seemingly unattainable alternatives that, nonetheless, are tentatively there within ‘structures of feeling’ (Williams, 1977). The emotions were similar to those expressed by teachers in other studies into testing (Jeffrey and Woods, 1996), teacher stress (Troman, 2000), educational change (Hargreaves, 2005), performativity (Ball, 2003; Jeffrey and Troman, 2013), and accountability (Hutchings, 2015).

It is important to recognise, though, that the responses were not just emotional. Sally’s ideas were highly polemical. She clearly linked her thoughts about English teaching to a wider democratic commitment. She, and others, felt that they had little agency over how they taught English to their students, even as they maintained the ability to reason and express strong commitments to ideas of equity and social justice. This is where ‘structures of feeling’ becomes a particularly useful epistemological term. For the teachers’ rage did not seem to have any particular target beyond a government bureaucracy. The Secretary of State for Education at the time of the interviews came in for direct criticism from Stephen, but on the whole the rage and other emotions, such as despair and hopelessness, had no clear targets beyond the general system of assessment. They suggested a powerful discourse at work, which acted on teachers – regulated them – even as they could not identify fully where the discourse came from or, at least, how to move beyond it. Notably teachers did not even mention the management structures within their own schools as being responsible for the particular state they found themselves in.

The very different orientation towards English teaching expressed by the Windhover teachers when talking about creativity seems in part to have come from the particular status of their school. Behind their words could be seen a desire to maintain the *status quo*, and so to protect their own position. Thus, at times they qualified their positive attitude towards

creativity; perhaps showing a wariness of a concept that could challenge their particular position.

Constructions of creativity in the three schools studied, then, suggest hierarchies at work in education, which serve to control and ration the enactment of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990). This does not just include cultural capital as it relates to subject content in English, but as a way of *doing* English (Applebee 1996). Creativity is integral to this way of doing. Not only is it of pedagogical value in linguistic and literary learning, but it also serves as disciplinary marker about what it means to be an English student. The regulated rage identified in the responses of some of the state school teachers, then, perhaps stemmed from frustrations about not being able to *do* their subject, or let their students do it. This did not make sense to them, given their commitment to creativity, even as they did not put their commitments into practice: they were left, though, with *structures of feeling*, an incipient awareness that something was wrong with the state of English.

Chapter Nine: Conclusions

This research set out to explore how secondary English teachers constructed creativity. It also wanted to gather data that would suggest how, according to teachers, these constructions were enacted in classrooms. It did so as a matter of social justice, wanting to find out whether or not opportunities for enacting creativity were present in equitable measures across different kinds of schools, catering for different student bodies.

A summary of what emerged might read as follows: that creativity is a material resource that teachers regarded as a valuable pedagogical tool in all three schools; that this was in line with the dominant constructions of creativity in English at tertiary level; that the “terrors of performativity” (Ball, 2003) and pressures of “high-stakes testing” (Hutchings, 2015) restricted the ability and confidence of teachers in the two state schools to embed creative practices in their classrooms; that such restrictions were not present in the private school; and finally, that constructions of creativity in secondary English played a role in reinforcing existing educational hierarchies, as exemplified in the case study schools.

The following conclusions will try to add detail to this summary, as well as reflecting on the research process as a whole. It will begin with reflections on methods and methodology, and on epistemology, in order to consider how the data itself has been gathered, put to use and constructed as knowledge. It will then present the key findings before reflecting on implications for future policy, practice and research, as well as issues of social justice, and then, finally, making a case for the research’s contribution to knowledge.

9.1 Reflections on methodology and methods

Social constructionism, as broadly outlined by Berger and Luckmann (1966) provided a useful frame within which I was able to explore the forms of knowledge that coalesced around creativity among English teachers. I was able to draw some broad conclusions about the shared nature of some of their constructions, but also to theorise about why different constructions might have arisen given variations of context. In this my case study approach was useful, both in treating the teachers interviewed as individual case studies, but also in grouping them together as “a collective case study” (Simons, 2009: p.29), and in viewing each school as “sub-elements” within an “overarching case”.

The “emergent” (Simons, 2009: p.31) nature of my design also proved useful. Much of the most significant data, such as material about the impact of accountability on constructions of creativity, was not foregrounded in the planning, and ended up being given considerable space. The semi-structured nature of the interviews helped in this process. In particular, it allowed teachers to speak at length not just about creativity, but about a range of different contextual factors, all of which were integral to its construction. That is not to say there was no “interviewer effect” (Denscombe, 2010: 178) in the way that teachers responded. While the positive orientation (at least in the initial stages of interview) towards creativity suggested that teachers did genuinely see its value, the qualifications later expressed by some teachers, particularly at Windhover, might imply that as the interviews progressed, they overcame any conscious or unconscious desires to accommodate my own views into their own.

The most significant issue to emerge in working with my methodology was how to present the differences across the three schools. My decision to treat the three schools comparatively seems to have been justified, in that the data was broadly consistent with what

could be surmised about the hierarchical nature of the English school system before the research began (Reay 2006; Maxwell and Aggleton 2016; Vincent and Maxwell 2016; Ball 2017). The uniformity of responses within schools and the differences across schools, particularly when placing the independent school next to the two state schools, made for an interesting comparative case, albeit one with caveats about the small size of the sample still in place.

My methodological approach to policy also proved useful, particularly as it related to ideas about “imperative” and “exhortative” policies (Ozga 2000: 92). The imperatives of assessment and inspection regimes, particularly in relation to policy constructions of English, trumped exhortations to be creative.

There were drawbacks to my approach. First, only interviewing teachers at three schools limited the claims I might have been able to make, particularly about the role played by social class in the construction of creativity, and the part played by creativity in maintaining class structures. While there were references to social class (e.g. Sally [B40], Jane [A25], Stephen [B20]), teachers more often categorised students in terms of ability. The schools themselves were different in terms of the background of their students, but there was insufficient difference between the intakes at Archford and Bloomington to be able to draw conclusions about whether differences between construction of creativity in these two schools compared to Windhover were because of the class background of their students, or because of the different institutional frameworks at work in each.

If designing the work again, I would look to include data from a state school with a predominantly middle-class intake, preferably a grammar school. Second, I would push teachers further to comment about their enactment of creativity with different types of students, specifically raising issues about social class and other potential factors, not explored in the data here, such as ethnicity and gender. Finally, I would build in more direct

focus on creativity in the interviews. At times teachers digressed and their focus was not directed back to talking about creativity. Nonetheless, as already pointed out, such digressions provided much rich data about the context within which creativity was constructed.

9.2 Epistemological reflections

The decision to construct an *epistemology of creativity* gave this research an inbuilt reflexivity: the knowledge that emerged was not just *about* creativity, but could be analysed through the lens *of* creativity. This epistemology drew on a wide range of sources from different traditions, which all proved useful. For example, Freire's (1970) ideas about 'banking' and 'problem-posing' forms of education helped in exploring the relationship between pedagogy and creativity; linguistic work by Ricouer (1981), Bourdieu (1991) and Blommaert (2005; 2011) aided reflections on the creativity of different classroom approaches to language learning; theories of affect (Woodward 2009; Ahmed 2010; Berlant 2011) enabled a rigorous exploration of the powerful emotions that were produced when teachers talk about creativity; and Williams' (1977) concept of "structures of feeling" helped bring these different ideas together, with its focus on both the material-linguistic and the affective – the "known and the unknown"

9.3 Findings from the research

The two primary research questions were as follows:

- How do secondary English teachers construct creativity?
- How is creativity enacted in English teachers' lessons?

The following is a summary of the findings from the research, keeping these two questions in mind.

9.3.1 Attitudes to creativity

Teachers in all three schools generally constructed creativity in positive terms. They felt it was an important part of English and had pedagogical value. Their constructions tended to blend ways of *doing* English with the *materiality*, or *content* of the subject. In subject specific terms, this might be summarised as *doing things with words*; so there was a particular focus on creative writing and on working on texts, particularly through the application of recreative and transformative approaches (Knights and Thurgar-Dawson, 2006). They focused less on the creativity of language as it acted on readers, though they did talk about personal response and reader response reading strategies (Rosenblatt, 1978; Iser, 1978; Fish, 1990). This suggests that teacher constructions of creativity were broadly in line with constructions of creativity in the wider fields of literature and linguistics (Attridge, 2005; Swann, Pope and Carter, 2011), even as they did not themselves make these connections explicit.

Not all constructions of creativity were positive. Some teachers at Windhover, for example, constructed it as part and parcel of their general practice and so dismissed constructions that saw creativity as an extra, or as something that required particular attention or methods of teaching.

9.3.2 Different constructions in state and private schools

Creativity was constructed differently by teachers in the two state comprehensive schools compared to those in the private school. Teachers in the two state schools generally constructed creativity along similar lines to each other. The differences between constructions in both sectors seemed to result from two factors: the different accountability pressures acting on each, and the different student intakes.

The accountability pressures of high-stakes testing (Hutchings, 2015), under which teachers at Bloomington and Archford taught, superseded almost all other concerns in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. It resulted in a gap between the value teachers attached to creativity and its actual use in their classrooms. No such gap was present in constructions by teachers from Windhover. They constructed creativity as an integral, but ordinary, part of their practice. They actively spoke of resisting pressures brought about by high-stakes testing to narrow the focus and scope of their lessons. The stance taken by Windhover teachers was aided by their insider-knowledge of the examination system, which came from three of their teachers, who also held roles with awarding bodies. It was also in line with research about the relational stance taken by private schools to distinguish themselves from state schools (Ball, 2017: p.169).

Creativity was constructed by teachers at all three schools according to the ability of their students. This was linked to constructions of creativity being dependent on prior

knowledge, rather than as a process to be applied to new knowledge. Thus students with more limited linguistic resources, or what were perceived as more limited resources, were taught more infrequently using creative practices and were given fewer opportunities for experimentation, self-directed learning and recreative writing tasks. Examples of these restrictions on practice were provided only by teachers in the two state comprehensive schools.

9.3.3 Creativity and policy

Policy constructions of creativity had little impact on creativity as it occurred in English lessons. This seems to be because of the “exhortative” (Ball, Maguire and Brown 2012) nature of policy that featured creativity, and the powerful discourses created around “imperative” policies linked to accountability measures within which they sat. These were usefully framed within what Ball (2003) terms “the terrors of performativity”.

Policy constructions of creativity were, by and large, in conflict with those of English teachers. In large part this was because of the way that such constructions marginalised creativity and English (which itself is reframed as literacy) (NACCCE 1999), even as it was seen as valuable by English teachers. While the statutory (for state schools) 2007 *National Curriculum Programme of Study for English* (QCDA) included creativity as one of four key concepts, in failing to link it directly to subject content, or assessment frameworks, this element of the curriculum can be seen as having largely remained “exhortative”; this was generally backed up by its relative absence from the lessons of teachers required to teach to this curriculum (Ofsted, 2012).

9.3.4 Emotional responses to creativity

While positive emotions accrued around creativity when teachers talked about what it meant to them, a range of other emotions emerged, generally negative, when engaging in such talk for a sustained period of time. These emotions were generally directed, in the case of the state school teachers, at the regulatory authorities (Ofsted, examination awarding bodies etc.). They revealed a feeling that regulations were forcing teachers to construct the subject of English in ways that they did not agree with and that, ultimately, they did not feel were beneficial for their students. That they did not feel able to resist these regulatory pressures added to these negative emotions and also reinforced the strength of the discourse around regulation in schools. These negative feelings generally clustered around expressions of outrage at Bloomington and of indifference at Archford. In contrast, teachers at the private Windhover school demonstrated feelings of superiority compared to their state school counterparts, part of a process of establishing relational differences between the two sectors (Ball, 2017: 169).

9.4 Recommendations

These recommendations are made in reference to schools, policy, research and next steps.

9.4.1 Recommendations for schools and educators

- Teachers recognise that creative practices are compatible with success in public examinations.
- English departments in all schools look for ways to include creative practices in their lessons as a matter of social justice.
- English teachers assert the integrity of disciplinary practices that are fundamental to the subject, including creativity.
- Managers in schools recognise the right of English teachers to draw on creative practices as an integral part of the subject's discipline, and as a pedagogical tool to develop their students' competence in linguistic and literary study; they put in place measures that enable their English teachers to resist the restrictive practices that are often put in place as a result of the pressures of high-stakes testing.
- English teachers in state and private sectors work in partnership to develop creative practices that promote learning in their subject area.
- Teachers are given opportunities to liaise with academics working on the creativity of language and of literature in the tertiary sector in order to develop their subject knowledge.
- Greater attention is given by Initial Teacher Education providers to the *discipline* of English: what the subject means beyond narrow curriculum and assessment definitions. This should include opportunities to explore teaching that provides

opportunities for creativity in the same way as demonstrated by teachers at Windhover, without detracting from the final examination results of students.

9.4.2 Recommendations for policy makers

- When drafting new policy, policy makers should take into account the impact on the teaching of secondary English of the regulatory frameworks by which schools are held accountable.
- Policy should be reoriented in ways that allow teachers to exercise their professional judgement to teach aspects of English, such as creativity, in ways that are fundamental to its practice as a discipline (Applebee 1996).
- Drafting of the next incarnation of the *National curriculum programme of study for English* should include a discussion about the place of creativity in the subject, with contributions from teachers and academic experts in the field of creativity as it relates to the study of language and of literature.
- Policy should address the teaching of *English* in secondary schools without conflating it with *literacy*.
- Policy should look at how awarding bodies recruit and appoint examiners. As part of this, examination awarding bodies should be required to publish data about the schools that examiners are drawn from, particularly principal examiners; if there is an over-representation of teachers from a particular sector then action is taken to redress this.
- Policy should require awarding bodies to work with schools to show English teachers how they can structure the curriculum to work towards final examinations without losing key elements of the subject discipline, such as creativity.

9.4.3 Recommendations for researchers

- Further research is commissioned and carried out into creative practices in English teaching among all groups of students; the research should look to produce data that evaluates whether or not creativity is enacted equitably among different groups of students.
- Further research is commissioned and carried out into the enactment of creativity in secondary English classrooms through a series of lesson observations across a statistically significant number of independent and state sector schools in order to cross-reference data obtained from teacher interviews with classroom activity on the ground. The research should look to focus on a broader range of institutions than those looked at in this study. For example, grammar schools, single-sex schools, free schools, academy schools.

9.4.4. Next steps

- Look to publish key aspects of the research in various research journals. (A process already begun with publication of one article (McCallum, 2016).)
- Integrate research findings into practice as a teacher educator.
- Explore opportunities to work with schools not currently doing so to integrate creative practices into lessons.
- Promote creative practices as a matters of disciplinary importance, pedagogical value and social justice in work that brings me into contact with teachers, school management and policy makers.

9.5 The research's contribution to knowledge

The gaps in knowledge around English teaching and creativity identified at the start of this research can be summarised as follows:

- There was relatively little research into creativity as it related to secondary English teaching, and where this did exist (Myhill & Wilson 2013; Doecke, Parr and Sawyer 2014), it did not focus on the subject as a whole.
- I was unable to locate research into the impact of policy on constructions of creativity in secondary English in England.
- There was little research drawing links between current theory about creativity and language prominent in the tertiary sector (Carter 2004; Pope 2005; Swann, Pope & Carter 2011) and secondary English teaching practice.
- There was little research drawing links between current theory about creativity and literature prominent in the tertiary sector (Attridge 2004, 2011; Swann, Pope & Carter 2011) and secondary English teaching practice.

I feel that the research has addressed all of these gaps to a greater or lesser degree. In its focus on creativity as it was constructed by secondary English teachers, it has produced data that burrows down to the level of subject, rather than treating creativity as a general concept across subjects. This has given an insight into the range of influences that need to be taken into account when investigating a concept as complex as creativity, such as constructions of academic ability, type of school, and national and local policy.

The research has added, to knowledge about the role that policy plays in constructions of creativity – and the enactment of creative practices by teachers. It shows the

importance of distinguishing between ‘imperative’ and ‘exhortative’ policy, and the distorting effect the former can have on the latter (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012).

The research also generated valuable additional knowledge about the material enactment of creativity in classrooms: and how this was constructed according to notions of ability. This focus on the materiality of creativity, I believe, provided the most interesting data for subsequent researchers to work with. Constructing creativity as a valuable classroom resource has allowed the research to explore how this resource was drawn on by teachers, and so construct creativity as an entitlement along lines of social justice. It showed that there were large disparities in the distribution of this resource across different schools. In particular, it suggested that constructions of creativity play an integral part in the maintenance of relational differences between state and private sector schools.

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APPENDIX 1 Prompt Record sheet for interviews with teachers about creativity and English

What is creativity? What makes a creative teacher? Do you consider yourself to be a creative teacher? Do English teachers have to be creative?
Teaching for creativity – how important is it for students to be creative in your lessons? What would this mean? What kind of lessons lead to creativity?
Learning and creativity – do you think creativity helps young people to learn? If so, how?
Restrictions on creativity in the classroom – do you feel you are able to be creative in the classroom? What restrictions are placed on creativity?
Subversiveness – do you ever deliver material or teach in styles that you consider creative even though it is not encouraged in your school? If so, how and why?
Creative students - are some types of student more creative than others? What makes a creative student? How can you help students to develop creativity?
Compared to other subjects – do you think English offers an approach to creativity not available to other subjects?
National Curriculum – one of the key concepts in the National Curriculum is creativity. How, if at all, does this affect your teaching?
Language – do you think there are particular links between language and creativity? If so, what are they?

APPENDIX 2 Example of transcript

Windhover interview

Ewen

1.6.13

AM I thought I'd start with a very broad question and ask what creativity means to you.

IM Yeah, again, I think it's a totally vague word with some, I suppose if you asked me to define creativity, I would be thinking OF imaginative writing of some kind whether it would be in a script, a prose, or a poetic form and, erm, er, I think from the point of view of teaching I would be emphasising the word form and that some sort of er structure behind things rather than just going into a class and saying write down something interesting cos they won't – or can't – erm it's certainly giving people a structure within which to express things would be the way I would do it or have done when I've done this sort of thing in the past. What I have found with the GCSE that we run at the moment, in terms of doing things quite specifically, for example, its like composition, getting people to write imaginatively, using things like long and then contrast with very short sentences is very useful and actually makes for better reading as well, makes the stuff that they write much more interesting. SO when I have done this in the past that's where I've started from. And I remember when I first started teaching a long long time ago now there was a book I used quite extensively lower down the school where they gave a series of forms which you then combined into one long poem and that was a kind of two or three or four weeks work and they produced these poems which were then – well this was before word processing – which were then illustrated and stuck up on display.

AM Do you regard yourself as a creative teacher?

IM Again I find that word very vague. It's a good buzz word. You like to feel you're creative and so in that sense yes I would, but it is not by any means – I regard it as an important part – er creative I suppose for me has something to do with ones own attitude as well as what you're trying to get pupils to produce and so in terms of creative I would say I am because I tend to spend a lot of time preparing stuff and thinking up new ideas for classes or different ways of presenting books that I am familiar with or building up on past experience.

AM How about the pupils? Do you find that they are creative in their responses?

IM Yes, very often they are, particularly lower down the school and I think when you get to the middle school where you've got exams coming up – I try to get the creative stuff over but at the same time it seems to me that you actually have to be focusing on what the demands of the exam. The demands of the exam are actually certainly with things like the composition where creative response would be most apparent, it's actually quite helpful to get them to produce good work. Now in terms of something like literature, now again a creative response to literature, that's a very vague word again, but that's, you're engaging with your imagination with a work of art. And that seems to me pretty much where it's at. There are forms within which you express that, but engaging with it creatively ie. Thinking about it, feeling with it, is something certainly our guys are very good at vocally. Some of the best work, best lessons I've had is where they are talking about a reading they have

done themselves. A thing that springs to mind is one of the really superb set of lessons which I would describe very much as creative – it was after their exam with the guys in this years 5th form, this is the end of the 4th form and – they were a very good set – and we had a set of erm Pinter’s play The Birthday Party I think it was, I can’t remember the name for the moment, and so I set them to produce scenes in groups and then discuss it and there was some simply superb stuff coming out of that, really thoughtful readings of it where they have got themselves into the parts and also got themselves into discussion. And that would be a creative response for me, focused on reading the text and then came out of them how they had experienced that text when they had talked about it. Another really good one I’ve had recently is with my 3rd form with Hamlet, who talk like quite a lot of the school better than they write, though they write quite well, and their response to a very good production of Hamlet that I showed them was absolutely excellent, really lots of engagement and focus erm.

AM What kind of things were they doing?

IM Responding critically and personally at the same time. Relating to the situation. It was the one with David Tennant in it. Relating to the situation, relating to the production, and sort of taking various aspects of the play and then developing that in terms of what they could have experienced or they could have imagined.

AM Interesting they say they get less creative as they move from lower school to GCSE. Why is that?

IM I think it’s a combination of age and the exam system. There are certain aspects in the exam system which I think do foster creativity. And going back to the composition, the GCSE, but also I think in terms of the literature as well. But there are certain forms that these have to be done in and ,er, the exam obviously does dominate and my experiences in the 4th year and 5th form certainly the creativity is less apparent.

AM You’ve taught for a long time. Do you think that is something that creativity has been squeezed out over the years?

IM I don’t know. I don’t think so. I think it’s partly the age group and it’s partly the pressure of exams. It’s not just English exams, it’s happening all across I think maybe that does tend to extinguish it a bit. Though what I hope and this is from the point of view of doing quite a lot of GCSE and A level examining, that the creative activity is still there and it will come out in the exams. I don’t want to denigrate the exam. I think the exam is actually pretty useful and usually – seeing as I help to devise some of it – is actually quite good and it’s the best answers are the ones that are most imaginative – and in some sense certainly when I taught it in the sixth form, I rather hoped that the way I taught – and I think this was borne out by feedback from them and also the results, actually made them produce imaginative answers which really engaged with the text, which is what you want as an examiner. It’s not the dull stuff where, yes, I can hear the teacher doing that, reading them notes. I can hear something come from a discussion they’ve had in class where they’ve really got into it and got enthusiastic about a text.

AM Are you involved with an exam board then?

IM Yes I’m doing GCSE for OCR. And I mark the A2 for OCR as well.

AM What about the tension between creativity and having to learn stuff for exams?

IM I've no problem with rote learning in terms of learning stuff off by heart I mean certainly for the A2 you have to do that and erm we used to do towards the end of the exam, towards the end of working for the exam, we used to recite stuff and we had great fun doing play readings of Paradise Lost Books 9 and 10 – that was enormously enjoyable. And this comes out, this sort of thing comes out in the best answers where you don't find – you can see the teachers have been teaching certain sort of bottom level as it were – these things will be referred to – but the candidates have had an imaginative response to the question. And that would be creative. They are not thinking Arggh, yes I remember this in the notes, they're thinking, yes this is an interesting idea, I'm going to jot down some responses because I'm thinking about this on my feet while I'm doing the exam. So that for me would be creative as well I suppose.

AM Are there any patterns in the way things are being taught in exam responses?

IM Yes, very definitely, one can see, I mean the best centres that I've marked are the ones where they candidates engage actively with the question and use the question to develop their own ideas. The weaker ones are the ones that reproduce usually faulty historical knowledge, which I find very irritating, obviously, history is my kind of hobby, and you're getting an awful lot of falsehoods taught as if they were fact just to tick the box. Whereas there are imaginative ways, certainly at A2, of using very few historical and theological ideas succinctly and interestingly rather than ploughing them out because you have been taught this is what's going to happen.

AM I suppose from the exam scripts you wouldn't be able to tell what kind of schools the exam scripts are from?

IM No, no you can't.

AM. So you wouldn't be able to say schools in certain types of areas tend to do really mundane stuff, or not.

IM. Well what I can say. This is going back to GCSE now, you can obviously tell what kind of school they are up to a point, because if it is an all boys school and they are pretty articulate and they're all boys, then it's likely to be independent. If it's a vast number of scripts with mixing, then it's likely to be a state school and the ones who write least well are the ones doing the foundation rather than the higher tier. Now, what I've found I'm afraid with the foundation tier is that quite often they're very dull, with not a lot written. Now with the higher tier – I'm marking a centre at the moment – at their best they are super, really thoughtful, getting away from what they've been taught, really engaging with the extract, having some new ideas. At their weakest you can recognise, oh my god, this is pretty similar, this is pretty similar. But, going round, this is last year, this was a very good school, very articulate pupils, in fact it was definitely an independent school because one or two of the names suggested it. But they had all written almost the same thing, which was very very irritating, because it was all very good, but it was all pretty well the same and it reminded me of marking scripts from Singapore a few years ago where they have almost all of them written the same way.

AM You made a comment there about good ones were where students were getting away from what they'd been taught. What are your thoughts on that?

IM I think you've got to teach content, very much so, especially given A levels where you require historical content, that has to be there because they won't have come across it before. They might have come across something like it in RS, they might, mostly my sets when I did Milton they knew about free will, they knew what Calvinism was, but you had to give that as a kind of basic set up and then you encourage them to use the poem to develop from that, perhaps even break away from it, but to develop from it I think.

AM Very interesting that you're involved in examinations. The thing that comes up again and again is whether the exam system restricts creativity.

IM I don't agree with that. I think that at its best the examination system produces some superb answers and that's not necessarily at the best schools either. Again, I'm thinking of a centre I just finished marking this morning it's quite clearly a state sector, it's got an enormous number of candidates, we've got the foundation tier and higher tier, and at their best their higher tier stuff is really articulate, fluent, well paragraphed, well informed and an imaginative response to the paper. What I think distinguishes the better candidates and I think it's difficult to say these are from different kinds of schools. I think in an independent school you can rely on most of the pupils writing in an articulate way whereas in a state school you can't necessarily rely on that. So in the independent schools there will usually be full-stops in the right places, whereas in the state schools, certainly in the foundation tier, but also some of the higher tier, hardly a full stop there, but you are still getting this approach that gets away from just what they have been taught all across the board I would find. So I wouldn't regard the exams as a constriction. They're – if you think of I've got to include this in my answer then they are – if you're looking at it – the question says explore, it doesn't say what are – then erm that is an invitation to do exactly that and bring what you read to bear on the question. If I can just say one other tiny think about that. It's bloody clear when they haven't read the text. And they do not know what they are talking about. And they are relying on what they can vaguely remember the teacher said. That is where an exam in a constriction. If they have read the text, which you have got to do, you've got to think and feel that text, then you are going to answer well. The text is a springboard.

AM. Has English got a particular status in terms of creativity?

IM I think by definition it does. Because that's where you write stories, it's where you write descriptions, it's where you write poetry, so yes it does.

AM Has the status of English teachers changed over the 40 years you've been teaching.

IM That would be difficult to say. I know from friends of mine who are English teachers, I'd say the status of English teachers is pretty much the same, but that would be a guess.

AM What about the popular culture view of the English teacher as the maverick, the eccentric, the outsider.

IM Well possibly, I don't know whether we're all eccentric now. Down in the 70s when I started there were some loony things going on. I mean when I started there was

unexamined English in the 5th form which was a bit nightmarish. That must have sounded like a good idea at the time. What it meant was in my first teaching job I was just dumped in the middle of the 5th form and just told get on with it, do what you like, and I didn't have a clue. That was not creative at all. It was deeply unpleasant. It was well meaning but ill thought out stuff. I mean when I had an interview with the head of department, he was really happy, I mean, the fifth form, do what you like, whereas the other year I knew what to prepare and where to begin from. The fifth form I didn't have a clue. I actually did something entirely unsuitable because my previous school I'd actually done something that was ok there, but here it was awful.

AM What about the students themselves? Are they differently creative to students in other schools because of the nature of the student body?

IM Well I think what I find about the school here, because I don't have any experience of others, is a the really impressive quality of the music and the drama that they do and that does carry forward into English lessons so for example, if you are doing, you remember that thing I mentioned with the 4th form, doing that Pinter play, if you can spread a few of the Drama pupils around groups that makes a big difference and they are used to that sort of thing, they can think on their feet, they can improvise, and they can usually encourage other people to do the same.

AM Do you do a lot of group work?

IM I wouldn't say I do a lot, I prefer not to, but sometimes it's good to do it. Certainly with the GCSE there is an oral component, one of them is with group work. At the moment, with my 4th form, again this is in our post exam period, I'm working on group presentations of Sherlock Holmes stories, and updating them so we watched Sherlock, which they like, and it's brilliant, and they are now updating Sherlock Holmes stories.

AM And are they as ... are their adaptations as removed from the originals as the TV?

IM Well lets set you an example. I set them a story as a group to read, The Greek Interpreter. And one bloke, not the brightest, came up with a brilliant title, he called it The Geek Interpreter. That's brilliant, why don't you go with that and see what ideas you can come up with. Another one was The Seven Orange Pips. How about The Orange Pills. Super. So they are sparking off some ideas off words, which is very good, and if they carry that through, and I know one or two of them have written the beginnings to quite decent scripts to base improvisations on, that's going to be good.

AM Are they removed from the originals?

IM Well they are removed from the originals. Well I wanted them to like this series. Half of them hadn't seen it. But then the spin off was read one or two Sherlock Holmes stories. Now one or two of them haven't actually read the stories. Those that have read them have said yeah I really like these, I want to read some more, so it's been very encouraging that way.

AM One final thing. I asked you if you regard yourself as a creative teacher. Are there any creative things that you do outside of the classroom that you bring into the classroom?

IM Well, I suppose yes I mean, my interest in History, that comes in all the time. And like all of us in the department we have quite extensive knowledge of History. Mark Pedroz and I are very interested in the 18th century, which I don't think anybody else. And certainly things like theology and that's become incredibly useful with doing things like Faustus and Milton when I did 6th form teaching. The other that's been really interesting is when I did Treasure Island and my interest in the 18th century navy. That came to bear very much on that one. Lots of good nasty anecdotes, the horrid history approach, I don't like the programme at all, but it gives some nasty stories and they were what! And that builds into studying things like Treasure Island, which I haven't done for some time now.

APPENDIX 3 University Consent Form

University Research Ethics Review Form – Staff and Postgraduate Research Students

This *Research Ethics Review Form* can be submitted at the same time as, or after, the related *Research Ethics Review Checklist* for this proposed research project is submitted. However, this *Form* should only be completed if both: (i) a *Research Ethics Review Checklist* for the proposed research project has been completed and submitted to the Faculty-specific Research Ethics Review Panel with the most appropriate discipline-specific expertise; and (ii) the *Research Ethics Review Checklist* identified that a University *Research Ethics Review Form* needed to be submitted (some research projects do not need additional ethical review beyond the *Checklist*, others may require ethical review from a UK- or country-specific external research ethics service – these are identified by completing the *Research Ethics Review Checklist*).

In the case of staff research projects, this *Form* should be completed by the member of staff responsible for the research project (i.e. as Principal Investigator and/or grant-holder) in full consultation with any co-investigators, research students and research staff.

In the case of postgraduate research student projects (i.e. MRes, MA by Project/Dissertation, MPhil, PhD and DProf), this *Form* should be completed by the student concerned in full consultation with their Director of Studies and supervisory team.

Further guidance on the University's Research Ethics Policy and Procedures, along with links to relevant research ethics materials and advice, can be found on the Research & Graduate School Research Ethics webpage:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/the-graduate-school/research-ethics/home.cfm>

Further guidance and training on specific research ethics issues (including: informed consent; research involving students and pupils; and the 1998 Data Protection Act) can be found on the Research & Graduate School Staff Training webpage:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/the-graduate-school/the-research-office/staff-research/staff-training.cfm>

1.3 Please provide the name and email address of the salaried or honorary member of staff at London Metropolitan University who is responsible for the proposed research project (either as Principal Investigator/grant-holder or, in the case of postgraduate research student projects, as Director of Studies):

Staff name: Jayne Osgood	j.osgood@londonmet.ac.uk
Anthea Rose	anthea.rose@londonmet.ac.uk

1. Background information (please type your responses within the boxes provided)

1.1 Please provide a descriptive title of the proposed research project for which ethics approval is requested:

Title: Who gets to be creative in English? The construction of creativity in secondary English lessons.

The main aims of this project are:

- To identify secondary English teachers' discursive constructions of creativity.
- To identify different versions of creativity in English at school, local and national level.
- To carry out a critical deconstruction of creativity as constructed in English.

I plan to carry out semi-structured interviews of 5-6 English teachers in each school, along with two other key players. I also intend to spend extended periods of time in each of the schools making general observations about the culture of the institutions. Additionally I will attend any available extra-curricular events specifically linked to creativity, such as poetry readings, plays and author visits. This will all be placed within the context of a close analysis of key policy documents.

It will advance existing knowledge through linking creativity to social justice, by making a case for creativity as an entitlement and commenting on how teachers see it as being distributed and accessed in the classroom. It will also explore creativity as an evolving process, constantly under construction and existing concurrently in a range of models. Additionally the work will identify possible tensions between official and unofficial constructions of creativity.

1.1 Please indicate the anticipated duration (in months) of the proposed research project:
18 months (six months research, one year writing up)

1.4 If the proposed research project is a postgraduate research student project, please provide the name and email address of the student concerned:

Student name: Andrew McCallum andrewfrancis.mccallum@londonmet.ac.uk

2. What are the potential risks of the proposed research project?

Please use the following checklist to identify any potential risks posed by the proposed project (please underline YES or NO as appropriate):

2.1 Are any of the people involved in collecting or analysing data for the proposed research project not employed (on formal or honorary contracts) or not enrolled/registered as students by London Metropolitan University? NO

(If you have answered YES, you will need to apply for honorary contracts for each individual concerned to ensure they are covered by the University's professional liability insurance, and attach confirmation that such contracts have been approved by Human Resources to this application. Applications for honorary contracts – comprising a letter explaining why the honorary contract is required, for what duration and accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae for the person concerned – should be submitted to the Chair of the Research & Development Committee, Julie Hart [julie.hart@londonmet.ac.uk] for Chair's action and subsequent processing by Human Resources).

2.2 Does the proposed research project involve any foreseeable legal risks? NO

(If you have answered YES, you will need to consult the University Secretary, John McParland [j.mcparland@londonmet.ac.uk] detailing the potential legal risks concerned, and attach to this application confirmation from him that these risks have been addressed).

2.3 Does the proposed research project: (i) involve exposing human or animal participants to any abnormal or painful physical or sensory stimuli (including auditory, visual and olfactory stimuli); (ii) involve any risk of physical, psychological or social distress to staff, students or participants (including questions or interviews on topics that do not appear, at face value, to be potentially sensitive)?; (iii) involve exposing staff, postgraduate research students or participants to topics or issues that might cause offence (including exposure to controversial, offensive, sensitive or illegal ideologies or material); or (iii) require human or animal participants to undergo abnormal physical, psychological or emotional stress (including dehydration, exercise, sensory deprivation, confinement or sleeplessness)?

Yes: teaching for creativity is a relatively emotive topic in that it is seen by most as a positive aim yet is not achievable for all teachers or in all classroom contexts. Discussing creativity, therefore, might make some people uncomfortable.

(If you have answered YES, you will need to: provide full details of the exposures concerned under section 3, below; explain why these exposures are necessary and justified under section 4, below; provide details of the measures you have taken to minimise the potential ill-effects of these exposures [including: obtaining informed consent; providing appropriate levels of confidentiality/anonymity; and applying an appropriate level of care when storing, managing and transferring data as required by the 1998 Data Protection Act] under section 5, below; and provide details of the measures you have taken to deal with any potential untoward consequences of these exposures [including: referral to appropriate medical, counselling or other support services] under section 6, below).

2.4 Does the proposed research project involve the collection of data through the direct or indirect observation of human subjects? YES

Yes, within the general context of being present in a school setting and making general observations about the culture of the school. However, this element of data collection will not make reference to any individuals and will ensure that no individuals are identifiable in what is written up.

(If you have answered YES, you will need to: provide full details of the data collection methods proposed under section 3, below; explain why these methods are necessary and justified under section 4, below; provide details of the measures you have taken to minimise the potential ill-effects of these methods [including: obtaining appropriate levels of informed consent from appropriate authorities responsible for the contexts in which observations will be made; providing appropriate levels of confidentiality/anonymity; and applying an appropriate level of care when storing and transferring data as required by the 1998 Data Protection Act] under section 5, below; and provide details of the measures you have taken to deal with any potential untoward consequences of these methods under section 6, below).

2.5 Does the proposed research project involve deceiving participants? NO

(If you have answered YES, you will need to: provide full details of the nature of deception concerned under section 3, below; explain why deception is necessary and justified under section 4, below; provide details of the measures you have taken to minimise the potential ill-effects of this deception [including obtaining appropriate levels of informed consent and

providing appropriate levels of confidentiality/anonymity] under section 5, below; and provide details of the measures you have taken to deal with any potential untoward consequences of this deception under section 6, below).

- 2.6 Does the proposed research project require the disclosure of private or confidential information without the informed consent of participants? NO

(If you have answered YES, you will need to: provide full details of the disclosure concerned under section 3, below; explain why the disclosure is necessary and justified, and how this complies with the 1998 Data Protection Act, under section 4, below; provide details of the measures you have taken to minimise the potential ill-effects of this disclosure [including obtaining appropriate levels of informed consent and providing appropriate levels of confidentiality/anonymity] under section 5, below; and provide details of the measures you have taken to deal with any potential untoward consequences of this disclosure under section 6, below).

- 2.7 Is the proposed research project likely to lead to the potential disclosure of illegal activity or incriminating information from participants? NO

(If you have answered YES, you will need to: provide full details of the potential disclosure concerned under section 3, below; explain why the potential for disclosure is necessary and justified, and if appropriate how this complies with the 1998 Data Protection Act, under section 4, below; provide details of the measures you have taken to minimise the potential ill-effects of this disclosure [including: the suspension of data collection and notification of the relevant authorities] under section 5, below; and provide details of the measures you have taken to deal with any potential untoward consequences of this disclosure under section 6, below).

- 2.8 Does the proposed research project involve participants who are potentially vulnerable or may be unable to give informed consent (including: children under the age of 18, people with learning difficulties, people with cognitive disorders and people with debilitating illnesses)? YES

(If you have answered YES, you will need to: provide additional details of the participants concerned under section 3, below; explain why the involvement of these participants is necessary and justified, and how this complies with the relevant legislation concerning the involvement of such individuals in research studies, under section 4, below; provide details of the measures you have taken to minimise the potential ill-effects of their participation [including: obtaining Criminal Records Bureau clearance certificates where appropriate, and appropriate levels of informed consent and facilitation from guardians and/or advocates] under section 5, below; and provide details of the measures you have taken to deal with any potential untoward consequences of involving these participants under section 6, below).

- 2.9 Does the proposed research project require the staff and/or students involved to have undergone a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check? No: I will be in the presence of other teachers while in the school at all times and will not be interviewing students directly. As an occasional visitor to a school, this means I do not have to obtain a CRB. Nonetheless, I do have one in the course of my full-time job.

(If you have answered YES, you will need to obtain a Criminal Records Bureau clearance certificate for all of the staff and/or students involved and include a copy of these certificates with this application).

2.10 Does the proposed research project involve the collection, collation and/or analysis of existing data, artefacts or performances that are not already in the public domain (i.e. that are not published, freely available or available by subscription)? NO

(If you have answered YES, you will need to obtain written permission(s) from the owner(s) of the data/artefacts/performances, and include a copy of these with this application).

2.11 Does the proposed research project involve the collection of data and/or the direct/indirect observation of individuals in their capacity as members of staff, clients, members, students, or pupils of an external or internal organisation (including staff and students of the University)?, YES

(If you have answered YES, you will either: [i] need to obtain written permission(s) from the appropriate authorities within the organisation(s) concerned, and include a copy of these with this application; or [ii] explain why it is inappropriate or unnecessary to request such permission under section 4, below; providing details of the measures you have taken to minimise the potential ill-effects of not obtaining such permission under section 5, below; and providing details of the measures you have taken to deal with any potential untoward consequences of not obtaining such permission under section 6, below).

2.12 Does the proposed research project involve payments or inducements (in cash or kind) to participants (including: travel and/or subsistence costs; entry into a prize draw; or access to services)? NO

(If you have answered YES, you will need to: describe the nature of the payments involved under section 3, below; explain why such payments are necessary or appropriate under section 4, below; provide details of the measures you have taken to minimise the potential ill-effects of these payments under section 5, below; and provide details of the measures you have taken to deal with any potential consequences of such payments under section 6, below).

2.13 Does the proposed research project involve any potential conflicts of interest (including: the evaluation of any materials, products or services provided free of charge to the research project; funding from parties likely to benefit from the research project; the involvement of participants who are colleagues, staff, friends, relatives, students or pupils of any member of the research team)? NO

(If you have answered YES, you will need to: describe all of the potential conflicts of interest under section 3, below; explain why these conflicts of interest are unavoidable under section 4, below; provide details of the measures you have taken to minimise the potential ill-effects of these conflicts of interest under section 5, below; and provide details of the measures you have taken to deal with any potential untoward consequences of these conflicts of interest under section 6, below).

3. What are the specific methods that the proposed research project intends to adopt?

Please provide a detailed description of the specific methods the proposed research project intends to adopt, and organise this under headings that are numbered with reference to each of the potential risks identified under 2.1 to 2.13, above.

I will interview 5-6 teachers and two other key players on-site in each of three schools. I will also make general observations around the school, focusing on the culture of the school. This might involve looking at displays, spending time in the staffroom, watching extra-curricular activities and noting the conduct of pupils around the school.

The potential risks identified will be dealt with as follows:

2.3

I will make it clear that any information given is done so anonymously. I will make it clear that if the interviewee feels uncomfortable at any time (be it in interview or while being observed) they have a right to withdraw from the project.

2.4

The consent forms attached make the nature of the research clear. All identities will be kept anonymous.

2.8

The nature of the research means I will indirectly be observing young people in schools aged 11-16, simply by being a presence in the school over a period of time. I will seek the consent of the school head teacher and individual teachers (see attached forms). Attention will not be drawn to any individual students in the final thesis.

In keeping with BERA (2004) guidelines on working with young people, I shall ensure Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nation Convention of the Rights of the Child are upheld. This means that all research will keep the best interests of the child in mind and, where possible, will allow students to express their views freely in matters affecting them. Students will not be interviewed or asked to take part in anything specifically related to the research. Therefore consent from the teacher and school in the role of “responsible other” is sufficient and additional consent from parents or guardians is not required (BERA 2004. Point 16).

2.11

The identities of teachers interviewed will remain anonymous. They are not being questioned about performance or competence, and care will be taken not to discuss their responses with other members of staff. Teachers will be made aware from the start that I am not examining their teaching.

4. Why are the specific methods that the proposed research project intends to adopt necessary/justified?

Please provide a detailed explanation as to why the specific methods the proposed research project intends to adopt are necessary/justified, and organise this under headings that are numbered with reference to each of the potential risks identified under 2.1 to 2.13, above.

2.4

Creativity forms a significant part of the National Curriculum for English. However, it is not possible to see how guidelines on creativity are applied by teachers in schools. A case study method using semi-structured interviews allows me to gather data on different constructions of creativity that might draw on or oppose what is constructed in official policy discourse.

2.8

General observations around a school will allow me to relate what I am told by teachers in interviews to the general context of their specific institution. Simply by being in a school during term-time, I am bound to come across young people. However, I will take care not to involve them directly in the research, and not to identify any individuals should I comment on anything I observe.

2.11

I decided to interview teachers rather than observe lessons, given the unreliability of gathering data from lessons without being based for long periods of time in a school. Given I am trying to find out how creativity is constructed by teachers, a logical approach is to interview them directly.

5. What measures have been taken to minimise the risks posed by the proposed research project?

Please provide a detailed description of the specific measures the proposed research project has taken to minimise the potential risks posed by the project, and organise this under headings that are numbered with reference to each of the potential risks identified under 2.1 to 2.13, above.

All data gathered will be stored securely and anonymised so that participants are not identifiable to others. Permission will be sought from headteachers of schools and participating teachers. The research will adhere to the Data Protection Act in accordance with BERA guidelines and the university's ethical guidelines..

2.4

All data to be anonymised and stored securely. I will also seek informed consent before reproducing any information.

2.8

While I will be in a school, I will only be interviewing adults. I will be accompanied by adults at all times and have a CRB check.

2.11

All data stored securely under a password and anonymised. – in addition no interviews will take place without full consent having been granted beforehand. I will also have informed consent from the school as well as teachers.

6. What measures have been taken to deal with the potential consequences of the risks posed by the proposed research project?

Please provide a detailed description of the specific measures the proposed research project has taken to deal with any potential consequences of the risks posed, and organise this under headings that are numbered with reference to each of the potential risks identified under 2.1 to 2.13, above.

I will be working with schools and teachers who have given their full consent. I have been CRB checked, though technically this is not necessary when making intermittent visits to a school under teacher supervision. I do not anticipate sensitive material emerging from the interviews, but if it does, teachers have the right to withdraw at any time. Interviews will be carried out on school premises in a private area of each teacher's choosing. They will have full access to the thesis once it is complete.

Attached consent forms apply to 2.4, 2.8 and 2.11. In addition the attached information sheets will be made available to teachers and the school head. I will also inform pupils of my presence and how many times I will be watching their lessons.

7. Checklist of attachments submitted with this application

Please indicate which of the following additional materials you are submitting in support of this application (please underline YES or NO, as appropriate):

- 7.1 Confirmation from Human Resources that Honorary Contracts have been granted to all external staff and/or students involved in the proposed research project: NO
- 7.2 Confirmation from the University Secretary that any foreseeable legal risks associated with the proposed research project have been addressed: NO
- 7.3 Information sheets and informed consent forms for research participants, their guardians and/or advocates (covering all of the issues raised in:
http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/londonmet/library/a88360_4.ppt): YES
- 7.4 Criminal Records Bureau clearance certificates for all staff and/or students involved in the proposed research project: NO
- 7.5 Written permission from: (i) the owners of any data, artefacts and/or performances to access/analyse these; and/or (ii) the appropriate authorities responsible for any contexts in which direct/indirect observations will be made: NO
- 7.6 Written permission from appropriate authorities within the organisation(s) from whose staff, clients, students or pupils observations and/or data will be collected: See attached letters asking for permission.
- 7.7 Copies of the research instruments (including: interview/focus group topic guides and questionnaires) that will be used in the proposed research project: YES

7. Submission

This *Form* can be submitted at the same time as or after the related *Research Ethics Review Checklist* for this proposed research project is submitted. In either event, please submit this *Form* as an email attachment to the Chair/Administrator of the most appropriate Faculty-specific

University Research Ethics Review Panel and copy in all of the staff and students who will be involved in the proposed research.

See: <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/the-graduate-school/research-ethics/home.cfm>

Please note that research ethics approval can be granted for a maximum of 4 years or for the duration of the proposed research (as detailed in 1.2 above, whichever is shorter), on the understanding that:

- 7.1 The researcher has accurately and honestly completed all the questions on this *Form* and the associated *Research Ethics Review Checklist*; and that the proposed research, once approved, is conducted in line with the information provided in this *Checklist* and in any related research ethics applications;
- 7.1 The research complies with UK legislation governing research (including that relating to health and safety, human tissues and data protection);
- 7.3 The researcher complies with the University's *Code of Good Research Practice* (see: http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/londonmet/library/z51254_3.pdf);
- 7.4 The researcher will inform their Research Ethics Review Panel of any changes to the proposed research that alter the answers given to questions in this *Form* or the associated *Research Ethics Review Checklist* or the information provided in any related research ethics applications (particularly where these changes would require a revised research ethics application to be submitted to an external research ethics committee); and
- 7.5 The researcher will apply for an extension to their ethics approval if the research project continues beyond 4 years.

Research & Graduate School

References

BERA (2004) *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* at <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/> accessed on 31/7/2011

APPENDIX 4a Example of letter to head teacher

Weds 16 May, 2012

Dear XXXX,

I recently contacted your English department to ask if a small group of teachers would be interested in taking part in research I am carrying out as part of a doctorate in education. Full details are available in the attached information sheet. Essentially I would like to interview four or more English teachers, plus a senior teacher with close links to the department, to find out their views about creativity. The head of department, XXXX, expressed a willingness to take part, as did members of his team.

The research should cause a minimum amount of disruption to the department. It simply involves a one off 30-60 minute interview for each teacher involved. I would aim to do this towards the end of this term when most teachers have fewer lessons after classes have taken their exams. All interviews would be carried out on school premises at the convenience of teachers. All responses would be kept and recorded anonymously.

Before I can begin any research I need to present written evidence of consent to my university's board of ethics. If you are happy for your English team to take part, then I would be most grateful if you could provide confirmation on school headed paper that I can pass on. I am happy to answer any specific questions you have in person, by phone or email.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew McCallum,
Course Leader, PGCE Secondary English with Media/ Drama,
London Metropolitan University,
Education Department,
166-220 Holloway Road,
London, N7 8DB
020 71332640
07595 322682
andrewfrancis.mccallum@londonmet.ac.uk

APPENDIX 4b Example of response from head teacher

(School masthead and head's name deleted for anonymity)

Mr A McCallum
64 Allison Road
London
N8 0AT

8 May 2012

Dear Mr McCallum

I read your request to carry out research with our English department into creativity with interest. I am happy to give my consent for this to go ahead.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 5

English teachers and the construction of creativity

Consent form for participating teachers and other educational professionals

I have read and fully understand the information sheet outlining the research into English teachers and their perceptions of creativity.

I give my consent for any information disclosed to be used in the research. I understand this information will be made anonymous and that I have the right to withdraw from participating in the research at any point without prejudice.

I understand that the research will form part of a doctoral thesis in Education. I also consent to any information disclosed being used in anonymised form in any additional articles, book chapters or publications linked to the research.

Name:

Address:
.....
.....
.....
.....

Contact phone no.:

Email address:.....