

Enactive Agnosis

The playful use of form as a bodily activity of (not) knowing

An epistemological and methodological exploration of physicality, metaphor and not-knowing in the context of Life, Work and Healthcare change.

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Abstract

This is an action research inquiry that takes place within the National Health Service in the UK. I am an NHS consultant, working primarily clinically, who has been involved and interested in change and improvement since 2010. I embarked on this doctorate with the intention of knowing how to do change better, to enhance the impact of conversations about change, and to undertake second-person action research that would impact on how we improve care in the NHS.

Early in the doctorate a move of cities and organisations revealed the challenge of context and how it shapes and constrains any possible inquiry. COVID-19 was then added into the mix a couple of years later and what emerged in response was first-person inquiry into my own epistemology. An exploration that resulted in a markedly altered understanding of 'knowing' and 'not-knowing' or perhaps more appropriately 'not-knowledging' and a focus on methodology.

This thesis is about coming to recognise the challenge and importance of 'not-knowing' in the context of change and healthcare, the importance of physicality and metaphor, of knowing versus knowledge, of playfulness as a mindset and of a pragmatic, realistic 'ish' positioning. About weaving these ideas into the overarching concept of enactive agnosis.

Enactive agnosis is offered as a methodology and a mindset in the realms of action research, arts-based research and healthcare change. A pragmatic, realistic, playful approach that recognises, enables and enacts ‘not-knowing’ and ‘good enough’ within the context of inquiry and change. A process of bodily active metaphorical knowing that holds and values the space of not-knowing long enough to make sense differently, to know, to change.

Keywords

Enactive cognition, metaphor, change, action research, relational change, first-person, individual insider, inquiry, poetry, healthcare, method, form, arts-based research, epistemology of practice, epistemology, methodology, physicality, body, play, playfulness, ignorance, pragmatic, ‘ish’

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Introducing



Chapter 1. Contents

This thesis describes action research inquiry that takes place within the National Health Service in the UK, by someone who works within the context; an insider. I am an NHS consultant, working primarily clinically, who has been involved and interested in change and improvement since 2010. I embarked on this doctorate having completed an action research masters degree at Ashridge with the intention of knowing how to do change better, to enhance the impact of conversations about change, and to undertake second-person action research that would impact on how we improve care in the NHS.

Early in the doctorate a move of cities and organisations revealed the challenge of context and how it shapes and constrains any possible inquiry. COVID-19 was then added into the mix a couple of years later and what emerged in response was first-person inquiry into my own epistemology. An exploration that resulted in a markedly altered understanding of ‘knowing’ and ‘not-knowing’, or perhaps more appropriately ‘not-knowledging’, and a focus on methodology.

The core concept of this thesis is that change requires the ability to not know. To support this it positions knowing as distinct from knowledge, as an active bodily process, rather than something that is held onto or possessed. It describes how knowing as a process can be used through methods of form and metaphor, to hold and make safe the space of not knowing and to delay the jump to familiar knowledge, so that this space can be used to make sense, to generate knowledge, to change.

The format of this thesis is designed to show you the evolution and impact of this concept through a variety of chapters that both show and tell, mix theory and practice, and that use and describe form and metaphor. The chapters are woven together to shape and evidence the conclusion and offer of this thesis – **enactive agnosis**.

I am using **enactive** to mean learning, thinking, making sense through bodily activity and interaction. It is derived from *enaction* meaning learning by doing and is aligned with the concept of enactive cognition.

I am using **agnosis** to mean ‘not-knowing’ or ‘not-knowledge’. It is derived from *gnosis* meaning knowledge, but with the prefix ‘a’ meaning ‘without’, following similar lines to agnology used to describe the study of ignorance.

One of the biggest challenges for me in writing this thesis has been how to weave the key themes of form as method, knowing as bodily activity, metaphor and not-knowing together. How to shape the interlocking threads, the jumble and tangle of ideas and practice into a coherent cloth; a cloth that makes the non-linear, messy, confused, multi-layered, active process into a static, linear-enough form to enable the concepts, ideas and offer to be accessible, for a pattern to be visible. This is made more complicated by the fact that the final pattern – enactive agnosis – wasn’t visible to me either for quite some time.

There is also additional challenge in making the shape of this thesis congruent with its content.

If as Leavy says "*The word shape speaks to the form of our work but also to how the form shapes the content and how audiences receive that content*" (Leavy, 2015, p. 2), then the form or shape of this dissertation needs to speak to the form of the ideas and theories it contains.

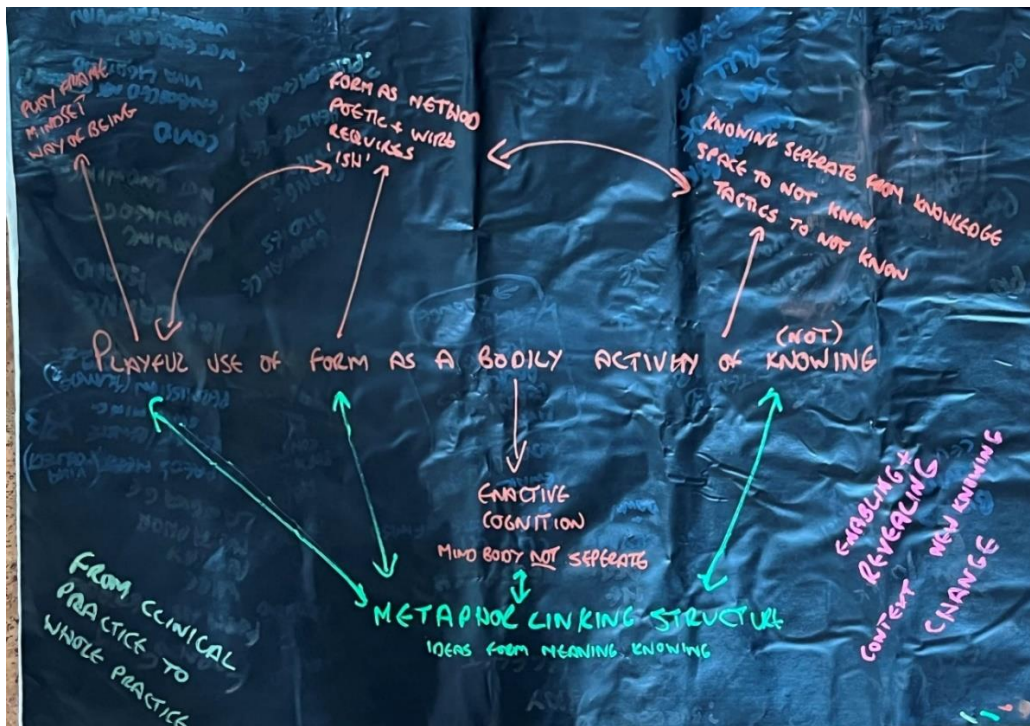
- It needs to take into consideration that the three-dimensional active physical process of knowing will be represented in a two-dimensional thesis
- It needs to represent the visceral, uncertain, curious process of inquiry in a coherent and ordered way
- It needs to demonstrate that how I know and not-know is interactive and playful, whilst being a static form
- It needs to enable you, the audience, to receive the content in the way I intended, or at least closely enough

My first attempt found me putting the threads together into discrete samples and letting you, the reader, put the pieces together in whatever order you liked; interacting, playing and discovering in your own way. Whilst the idea appealed, the repetition of concepts and definitions and associated cross-referencing, ended up diluting the ideas, blurring the pattern; making it less rather than more coherent, confusing rather than facilitating.

I then attempted to replicate the timeline of the inquiry through a more linear approach, but it lost flow, included too much and not enough at the same time, and the pattern emerging was still blurred and only just visible.

This attempt is built around a single sentence. I had decided to rewrite a section of my second draft about the theory and conceptualisation of play and playfulness, appreciating that it was one of the ‘too much and not enough’ sections. I was aiming to follow the format of academic papers which I perceive as telling you what the answer is and then showing you how they got there. As I tried to sum up in a few lines what I was trying to say about play, so that I could then direct the writing to tell the story, I started to see how all the concepts and ideas of the thesis could be woven together.

I wrote a few phrases, which evolved into a sentence, and then added arrows and brackets linking more ideas and concepts together. I started scribbling on a bit of paper, moving onto blackboard paper and wipeable chalk markers to play around with the idea a bit more, writing over the top of a previous format I had tried.



‘Playful use of form as a bodily activity of (not) knowing’.

I think this may be a way to show you the pattern, the final cloth, although what you then choose to make with that cloth is up to you. I am not sure whether this is going to work but if this sentence is in the final thesis then it probably has.

This thesis is shaped into four sections.

Introducing is designed to frame the rest of the thesis. It starts with this short chapter, followed by a larger chapter on context and then a chapter that explains how metaphor is a linking structure of this thesis.

Playful use of form as a bodily activity of (not) knowing focuses on the key informing concepts of this thesis in chapters entitled *Playful, Form, Bodily knowing* and *Activity of (not) knowing*. These combine theory with method, and ideas with practice, in separate but linked chapters where metaphor is a thread that is woven throughout, holding them all together as they work to reveal the pattern of enactive agnosis.

Making sense then shows how I have used enactive agnosis to make sense of action research, change, power and position, as well as starting to consider 'What next?'

Concluding will summarise the previous chapters and then suggest what enactive agnosis might offer to the canon of action research and change practice.

Alongside the format outlined above, different writing forms are also used to give this thesis shape. The different forms use their own fonts, and the spacing and size of the font is intentionally varied. The main body of content is double-spaced, the additional forms often single-spaced with the addition of **bold** or underlining to highlight fundamental concepts or experiences.

Italics denote quotes from literature or people

Handwriting style is for my journal entries, and /or Calibri light for additional writing

This more childish font and spelling is for Jak and their related ideels

The section title pages also include a montage of photographs intended to give additional visual form to some of the ideas within that chapter as well as to make my physicality, a key concept in this doctorate, tangible.

I remain anxious that I haven't entirely resolved the shape and form challenge so am placing this here to ensure that you, the reader, are aware of this and the fact that it has not gone unnoticed.

Chapter 2. Context



and I am lying on the road, on top of my bike, on a different part of the junction than the way I should be going to work. I feel a bit disorientated and discombobulated and my right calf is heavy and throbbing, it feels like it's been hit by a van – oh – that's because it was hit by a van or, rather, I was.

I'm standing in an empty resuscitation bay with trolleys half open, seven monitors in varying states of alarming, leads and packets strewn across the floor – feeling like I've been knocked off my bike.

I was riding in the middle of the lane, wearing bright colours, not jumping any lights, being sensible and visible. I have commuted to work by bike for years now, I know how to ride, I know the highway code, I've got good situational awareness for cars pulling out of side roads, car doors opening, children running across the road – and yet I still got knocked off.

I have been a Paediatric Emergency Medicine consultant for over eight years and been doing paediatrics for 17 years so far. I know how to run a resuscitation, I know how to look after a child with a head injury and yet I am standing here after what feels like a car crash pondering the medical equivalent of 'Do I really know how to ride a bike?'

It is towards the end of a 10-hour shift, just under two weeks into my new job and we get an alert call from the ambulance service that they are bringing in a child with a head injury. I take note of the information the ambulance crew give us and expect the child to come round to Children's ED rather than into the resuscitation bay, which has a shared space for adults and children. When the child arrives, however, the nurses are worried, they see fewer children here than I am used to, so they want to assess the child in resus just in case they need high level care. It is the safe decision. I go round to see the child and things start to unravel.

There are seven monitors in the bay with a variety of leads and yet the child has not had any monitoring put on by the nurses and they can't seem to find the right leads for the right monitor. Eventually they connect leads to two or three different monitors for the different observations as a full set of leads for one monitor doesn't seem to be available.

Thwack.

I feel unsettled that the routine of monitoring and observations hasn't been done in the way that I have always had done by nurses, to the point that I don't even think about it, but I move on.

I am back in my comfort zone after examining the child; they are sleepy but are interacting with their parents and their Pokemon toys. They need a scan of their head but they are awake enough and stable enough to have this without an anaesthetic. I start to phone the X-ray department to request the scan, the way I have in every hospital I have ever worked in and get told that we can't request scans by phone; we have to go to the X-ray department to find the radiologist responsible for scanning and request it in person.

Thwack.

This seems incredibly disrespectful and wasteful of consultant time, but round I go with a colleague to show me the way, to ask for a scan that is nationally mandated.

We get back to the department and I start to get ready to take the child to the scan when a consultant colleague says anaesthetics do this and they have already been called. Before I get a chance to reassess the child a grumpy anaesthetic registrar arrives and pushes past me to get to the child. I am thrown by the attitude – my handover isn't great and I don't clearly introduce myself. What follows is no eye contact, muttering under their breath, refusing to speak to me, demanding drugs and lines and calls for the senior anaesthetist to attend.

THWack.

I put a cannula in the child on the first attempt and the child cries and pulls away showing they are too awake to need an anaesthetic, but this is ignored. More attention is placed on the fact that I don't know where any of the equipment is to put in a cannula, the nurses don't help without very clear instruction, the monitoring is not on properly, no-one can find the right leads for the monitors, no-one can find the right bits to help me secure the cannula, no-one knows my name and I don't know theirs. I feel small, I lose authority, I shrink back, retreat and let lots of people I don't know take over.

THWack.

I disagree with the anaesthetic registrar when they demand the parents are removed as the child is put to sleep, this is not how it is done in paediatrics, parents have been present in every resuscitation I have ever been in – and yet there is so much shouting that I take them out. I then discover that the nurses are asked by the registrar if I need a chaperone to explain things appropriately to the parents.

THWACK.

I have been explaining difficult things to parents for longer than the registrar has been a doctor, what is going on?

I return to resus after talking to parents, apologise loudly, directed to the registrar, but audible to all, that it appeared that things were not under control when they arrived, but they look away, will not respond – I don't try again. I let them anaesthetise the child and take them to scan. I let them do two scans instead of just one. I let them leave the parents behind. I am left in an empty bay feeling angry and stupid, I didn't manage the situation, I let myself down, I let the department down, I let the child down, I let the parents down. Do I even know how to be a consultant?

THWACK

For the next few weeks, I really struggle – questioning my own skills, knowledge and actions. I had been a doctor since 1998 working in multiple hospitals, departments and countries – changing jobs and roles every six months for 11 years until my first consultant post. I knew how hospitals worked, how Emergency Departments worked, how nurses check equipment and monitoring and are always restocking. I knew about being a consultant, I knew about managing juniors, I knew about working with other specialities, about the respect given to consultant position and expertise. Except I didn't seem to know any of this here.

I undertook a variety of cycles of action and reflection on the event; writing it from the perspective of the different people involved, focusing on expectations, on not finding equipment, on the impact of environment on confidence and competence. I changed to introducing myself as “the new to here paediatric EM consultant”. I took a comment I made in supervision – “I know how the kid works but don’t know how any of the rest of it works” – and reframed it as a story for change. If I can’t function due to the environment and processes with my level of experience, how can anyone else, particularly colleagues who are less experienced or less familiar with paediatrics? I used this reframing to have conversations with nursing staff and ED colleagues about the resus environment and unstocked trolleys. I worked with the ED nurses to minimise the monitors and sort out the leads. I worked with anaesthetics and paediatrics to standardise the resuscitation trolleys and minimise the anaesthetic equipment in the space. Lots of positive changes took place in response to the event but trolleys still don’t get restocked, monitoring still doesn’t get put on, leads don’t get replaced. It takes me a while to realise that I am trying to treat the symptoms as if they were the cause.

I don’t know the cause.

It takes me a while to realise that what I didn’t know was the context.

I didn’t know that context matters.

I did not know that inquiry and change is about what is necessary and possible in context (Coghlan, D., 2011).



Dropping into Context

This chapter started by dropping you directly into writing without any explicit framing or signposting. My guess is that you will have made some assumptions about the writing to come, knowing that the context is an opening chapter in a doctorate. My intention is that this initial writing was not what you were expecting. This was a deliberate attempt to convey through form, what it felt like for me to land in my new context, to discover context. To generate the uncomfortable, bewildered, confused, unsteady state that I found myself in.

Whilst it may seem naïve and disingenuous to read that someone undertaking an action research doctorate in organisational change didn't know that context matters, it was true.

Whilst I had read about culture and context I hadn't viscerally, physically, known or understood the difference. I understood culture as "*the way we do things around here*" (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007, p. 61); as the shared customs, feelings, norms, ideas and behaviours of a social group or an organisation. I appreciated and recognised being part of particular cultures – rugby, LGBTQ+, Ashridge, medicine – but I hadn't really understood context as distinct from culture, nor that context includes a wide variety of variables including time, place, people, organisation, culture, politics, ethics, education and history.

Although I worked in multiple hospitals during my training, my experience was that different hospitals were similar enough for me to assume that any differences I noticed were to do with the new role, new speciality, new level of seniority, or maybe a slightly different culture. In each new post until I became a consultant I was focused on the clinical learning that I needed

to do, the knowledge, skills and expertise in diagnosis and management that I needed to develop. I did not pay attention to context or how it was shaping the ways of working, the processes, the interactions, or any changes taking place. I didn't really get involved in or feel curious about change until I was a consultant, established in a particular place, inculcated into the culture, expecting to stay there for years, not paying attention to context. It was only when I shifted context but kept the same role, finding the culture familiar and therefore expecting and assuming – but not finding – similarity in behaviour and interaction, that I was suddenly hit by the realisation and understanding that context matters.

Although I had started the doctorate six months before this event I now see that this experience in resus was the catalyst for the direction of this inquiry, the start of the many threads that weave their way through it. Context is one of these threads, a thread that has become stronger, brighter and is now woven through many more layers, ideas and disciplines than I previously knew were there.

I recognise now that context matters, not just in terms of what was possible in this inquiry, but also in terms of how I present this thesis to you. Context can also be used to describe the parts of writing or speech that precede and follow a word or passage contributing to its meaning. As I was going through the second draft of this thesis with my supervisor, I was assuming that I had managed to convey how for me this event in resus felt like being hit by a train and completely derailed for a few weeks. From the shake of her head I realised that the writing hadn't landed. I hadn't put the event in enough context for it to convey how catastrophic and catalytic it was.

The first few drafts did not include the experience of being hit by a van, or **THWACK**.

I was making assumptions, however unconsciously, that it was obvious to the reader through the clinical scenario alone that this was the case. I was assuming that my context would be familiar to you, as it is to my partner (also a doctor), my sister (grew up in a medical family) and my supervisor (who has read and heard all of the background stories, angst and woe for the last five years) – the only people reading the drafts to date. That placing the event in my writing without anything to give it context was enough. I suddenly realised that the readers and examiners of this thesis don't know me or my context; therefore the context of my work and the context in which I choose to place it in my writing need to be visible. I need to convey how context has shaped the ideas and conclusions of my work. My context needs to be explicit but at the same time familiar enough to resonate, to be accessible and relevant enough for the ideas and contribution of this thesis to land.

My intention of exposing the changes to this thesis is to show how the thesis itself now acts as evidence that the context of the writing has shifted, that the form has altered. In a doctorate about form and epistemology in context, I am intending to build understanding with you by paying attention to my shifts in knowing, my choices about form and the impact of context, enabling you to see and experience these too.

Context...

As I assert both that context matters and that I didn't know that context mattered, I am struck by a slight nagging feeling that I don't really know what context means. When I actually stop to examine it, I sort of know and sort of don't at the same time. It's a word that I use, that gets used frequently within action research and change texts, but as Savard and Mizoguchi (2019) point out it is a word that is used with the assumption that we know and are sharing the same meaning, although it is rarely defined. To test this I randomly pull 10 books off my study bookshelf about action research and change and search the indexes for *context*. I find it in only one of them, and even then there is no definition. I am left wondering how we put knowledge into context or consider the influence of context on change or even pay attention to the contextual variables if we are not sharing the same understanding of the concept itself. So what does context mean? A quick Google search of 'context definition' gives me a variety of online dictionary derived suggestions;

"the circumstances that form the setting for an event" or "the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs" (<https://www.languages.oup.com>)

"parts of speech or writing that precede and follow a word or passage and contribute to its full meaning" (<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/context>)

"the underlying concepts and information needed to understand an idea or statement" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/context>)

"the situation within which something exists or happens, and that can help explain it" (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/context>)

“the facets of a situation that inspire feelings, thoughts, beliefs in groups and individuals” (Heckmann, 2021)

In “Context or Culture: What is the Difference” (Savard & Mizoguchi, 2019) the authors use an ontological linguistic framework to define both context and culture with reference to distance learning and education. They define context as a set of circumstances that frame an event or an object which must include one (or more) of participant, environment and event; additionally, one of these must be the focus, otherwise there is no context. The idea of a singer in a concert is used to illustrate this definition. A singer sings in a concert event, the singing action is performed in the context of the concert, but if we are not focused on the action of singing, then the concert is just an event: *“context emerges only when we focus on an entity”* (Savard & Mizoguchi, 2019, p. 7). I suddenly feel less confused as this quote shouts at me, enabling me to realise why I did not notice, appreciate or understand context *until* I was focused on an event. Focusing on the event in resus enabled the context to be revealed.

Context requires a focus.

In the same paper, referencing a review of 150 definitions of context to determine the main components, they conclude that as almost all the definitions define the ‘*context of an activity*’ which means that not only does context require a focus – it also requires an action (Savard & Mizoguchi, 2019, p. 6).

For this idea to be revealed – that **context requires an action focus**, physical or cognitive (whether these are distinct will be discussed later in this thesis) – sparks off connections and links between other ideas and perspectives that shape this thesis. I see how it is relevant to the

concepts of enactive cognition and an epistemology of practice which will be discussed in later chapters, and to the philosophy of action research which I will touch on here (and elaborate on later).

Action research is about generating actionable knowledge in the context of practice. This focus on context within action research, of knowledge generation in a particular context, can be seen in both a positive and a negative light. Huang (2010), in a discussion about what determines good action research, points out that the tendency to privilege context of practice over theory – which then impacts on the generalisability of findings – is a key criticism of action research (Bradbury-Huang, 2010, pp. 93, 105). As I reread some of the introductory papers I have on action research whilst considering context (Bradbury-Huang, 2010; Coghlan, 2011; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014; Coleman, 2017; Marshall, J., 2016a; 2016b) I start to wonder whether focusing more on context and contextual variables may help to improve, rather than worsen, generalisability.

To make sense of what these variables are, Savard and Mizoguchi (2019) divide context into external and internal factors. Internal factors reference the individual involved and their context, external factors reference everything else and are further subdivided into generic and specific factors:

- Generic factors – environment, religion, education, politics etc
- Specific factors – where an event is specifically located in time and space

I think that if these contextual factors are made visible, even the specific ones, then it becomes easier to see what is generalisable from the actionable knowing developed in that context. It allows you, the reader, to determine where contextual factors are similar enough that the

research conclusions and theories have value to you too. It starts to make sense of the research that is shaped by and emerges from context. It also enables the contextualisation of the methods used within that research. As Buchanan and Bryman (2007) describe with reference to organisational research:

“the choice of method is not only shaped by research aims, norms of practice and epistemological concerns but also organisational, historical, political, ethical, educational and personally significant characteristics in the field of research”

(Buchanan & Bryman, 2007, p. 483)

Method choice, particularly in the context of the ‘*paradigm soup*’ and ‘*epistemological eclecticism*’ that can be associated with organisational research (both phrases that I want to co-opt into this thesis!) evolves as the research project unfolds. Data collection methods are a creative process responding to both the technical skills and knowledge, as well as the personal interests, preferences, biases, prejudices and creativity of the researcher (Buchanan & Bryman, 2007, p. 496). I take this to mean that how I collect data, the method I use and the choices I make are determined by context – but for any of those to be valid, accessible, generalisable, then the context needs to be visible and the choices discussed. This is one of the intentions of this thesis.

Another metaphorical representation of context that has helped me to understand it and to begin accepting that my context might need to shift for me to enable change (as will be discussed near the end of this thesis) is that used in *Living Leadership* (Binney, Wilke, & Williams, 2009), the only book I pulled off the shelf that had *context* in the index, the authors describe context as the weather in which the yachtsmen (leaders) are navigating and sailing.

The yachtsmen rarely complain about the weather or see it as the problem and themselves as the solution. Instead they acknowledge that the route may need to change, or that there is little that they can do to go forwards at this time, or that they may need to harness the winds, tides and currents differently to take them where they need to go (Binney et al., 2009, p. 62).

They go on discuss that contexts shape leadership to the extent that none of the leaders they studied achieved the result they originally had in mind, and that some sorts of leadership resonate in context, whilst others fail – not due to the leadership but due to the context (Binney et al., 2009, p. 67). Some yachts will make progress in a storm whilst others will not. Not making progress in some contexts seen as not being a failure – this is a perspective that I understand, but one that I am only just coming to know.

Having defined context as *'the set of circumstances that frame a focus activity, that must include at least one of participant, environment and event'*, then in the context of this thesis, who I am, how I got here – my individual position and context – needs to be disclosed. This inquiry is the focus activity that needs framing by context, within which there will be further focus activities where the context will need to be re-revealed. Describing my context also places this inquiry firmly within the paradigm of action research as already partly discussed. If I do not share details of who I am and where I am, of what drives my life and work, then as McNiff (1997) says, how do I as the writer, or you as the reader come to understand what I am doing, or why I am doing it? Without context how is it generalisable to you and others? In undertaking action research, I am not separate from my research, not an outsider neutrally observing, but instead I am a researcher, an intervention, a clinician, a scholar and a

practitioner, and my positioning, choices and conclusions with reference to these multiple contextual factors need to be visible.

Over the next few pages, I intend to make visible the individual contextual factors that frame this inquiry.

Family and Education

We will start with my childhood and education. I am a middle-class, white, female assigned at birth, British-born and -educated doctor. I grew up in England, I have medical parents (Dad a doctor, Mum a nurse then health visitor) and a younger, non-medical sister. I went to a private girls' school, failed to get into Oxbridge and went to a non-London medical school. In just three sentences, I have outlined the significant privilege, opportunity and power that my social circumstances afford me, and I do this to make visible the implications this has for my research in terms of what agency I have and what choices I can make. I am very aware of this privilege and that so much of what I have, and others do not, is because of birth and social circumstances, not individual potential.

I am reminded daily through the children and families I meet that my social circumstances (in comparison to many of theirs) are associated with a longer life expectancy, with less heart disease, obesity, smoking, alcohol or drug misuse, with better health and better access to healthcare provision. This repeated exposure to inequality has developed and continuously reinforced my belief that we should treat people based on need, not on how they access the system, and this makes equity in the access and provision of care hugely important to me. This belief is behind many (if not all) of the changes to care that I have been and continue to be involved in and I am sure is a belief that has developed in part in response to knowing and seeing my own privilege and opportunity.

My middle-class upbringing, parents' backgrounds and private education have also given me a need to behave, to follow the rules, to respect hierarchy, and, as I am now coming to

understand, a narrow and negative view of power and politics. A view, described by Lukes (2007) as the commonest usage in everyday and academic life, that of a restrictive, asymmetric perception of power “*in which power is over another or others*” (Lukes, 2007, p. 60). This view has meant that I have struggled with having power and being political and have had to come to terms with the reality of both during this inquiry. A struggle that is discussed more in the chapter *Power* (page 184), as are the interactions power has with knowledge, both its production and with whom and by whom it is shared.

After two years at medical school, I became unsure of whether medicine was the right trajectory for me. I dropped out, studied philosophy, played my cello at a college in America, I travelled, I washed up in a restaurant, and I came out as ‘not straight’. I returned to medical school a year later, met my partner whilst I was still a student and graduated in the late 1990s.

Not being heteronormative also introduced me to using language to cover up or misdirect; I spent years playing the pronoun game to hide that I had a girlfriend – “What does your boyfriend do? My *partner* is a doctor, *they* work in a GP practice in...” I also started to see how language is not fixed, how it can have different meanings in different contexts, how it can enable connection in a specific group or exclude others, and how these multiple meanings may be known or unknown.

Family can mean my parents and sister, or it can be a question “Family?” meaning are they gay too? Breeders is usually used to refer to people who breed animals, but in the LGBT community when I was at university, we used it as a slightly derogatory term for heterosexuals.

This varying use of language gave me a visceral understanding of the idea of language as socially constructed (Gergen, 2015), before I knew that this existed as a concept. One I now understand as describing that the meaning generated in the use of words is dependent on that use in context and in relationship, a concept of language and meaning that informs this inquiry.

Medicine and Change

After my first year as a qualified doctor, I nearly dropped out again, but during an Accident and Emergency job that included some paediatrics I found my niche. I trained as a paediatrician subspecialising in Paediatric Emergency Medicine (PEM). In 2009 I got my first PEM Consultant post and within three months I became Lead for the Children's Emergency Department. Up to this point I don't think it is generalising to say that all my education, training and knowing was based in a Cartesian paradigm, a positivist, evidence based, scientific method perspective. I understood knowledge as something to strive for, possess or attain (Cook & Brown, 1999, p. 382). The idea that *how we know* might be important and influence *what we know* was never mentioned, and not-knowing or uncertainty had negative connotations associated with risk management and mitigating missed diagnoses, rather than being a reality of clinical and non-clinical practice.

My knowledge base started to alter about six months in to being a consultant, when I was asked to get involved with a pilot project trialling an improvement methodology, that if successful would be rolled out across the hospital. I learnt about PDSA cycles, Lean, stakeholders, data for improvement. I learnt about the importance of communication, engagement and working with others. We made some significant successful changes to the Paediatric Emergency Department, which then led to improvements across the whole acute and emergency pathway for children and young people. I got really interested in change and improvement, wanting to get better at leading change and to learn how to make change more successful and sustainable. I got onto Generation Q (Ashridge Masters in Leadership for Quality Improvement in Healthcare), took on an additional role as Head of Medical Leadership

Development, a role that was positioned within Organisational Development (OD) and Improvement, and got involved in change and improvement work across the whole hospital and local healthcare system. Through Generation Q and working in OD I became aware of alternatives to just 'book knowing' or propositional knowing (Heron & Reason, 2008); of the importance of interaction and relationships in change (Myers, Hulks & Wiggins, 2012) and quickly became a convert to the idea of complexity and emergence in change and the idea of conversing as organising (Shaw, 2002; Stacey, Griffin, & Shaw, 2000). I was also introduced to action research as an alternative research paradigm.

My change practice started to shift away from ED and improvement methodology directed change, to change based on and in conversations. I started this shift in practice by using conversations as a method to look at medical leadership development and undertaking conversations about the challenges of medical leadership with medical and non-medical individuals and groups across the organisation. At the same time as having the conversations, I was inquiring into and reflecting on how I could have conversations differently, and experimenting, reflecting, and experimenting again. I shared the findings of these conversations with the executive team, and what resulted were changes to job plans across the organisation that essentially increased the value of medical leadership roles and a bespoke multidisciplinary (rather than doctors only) leadership programme. These changes specifically addressed concerns raised in conversations with colleagues such as: minimal time for leadership; no training in management, finances, HR; separation from rather than training with allied health professionals.

I was excited about the potential that action research had to make change happen, naively interpreting action research as a toolset that worked (rather than an approach and philosophy, as discussed later) in a context I was taking for granted and not noticing. With hindsight, as the resus event shows, I had completely missed the fact that action research is about practical knowing that is “*contingent on the particular situation*” (Coghlan, 2011, p. 64). It is knowing that is always incomplete and is in response to and dependent on the context. I now appreciate and intend to demonstrate that once the context changes so does the research and the knowing.

I had developed a perspective on change firmly situated in the realms of Stacey (Stacey et al., 2000; Stacey 2011, 2012) and Shaw (2002) where organisations are seen as complex responsive processes of relating. In this construct of an organisation, meaning is made together through gesture and response, in relation, through conversations.

“The way we think and talk shapes the gestures we make to someone else and what we notice of how the other person responds. This then impacts on the meaning we make from that interaction, which may confirm or disconfirm our original meaning. As this is an ongoing process, this, in turn, shapes the next move we make or comment we utter” (Wiggins & Hunter, 2016, p. 15).

Changing the gestures made, and / or the conversations being had, therefore alters interactions and ways of relating. This may in turn, through differing responses and further conversations, result in the emergence of novel ideas and change. Whilst change in this model cannot be predicted, it can be directed through choices about conversations and gestures – about who, what, how and when. At the time I was almost evangelical about this perspective – I had experienced positive and sustainable change from within this paradigm.

Except it wasn't all positive. I had repeated conversations and interactions focused on '*Consultants are difficult to engage*'. Although I was a consultant working with colleagues who had proved that change could happen through conversations, I came across colleagues who, despite almost all sharing the aim to provide good care, varied hugely in their willingness to change and learn. I started to be curious about what was getting in the way.

If conversations can work to make change happen, then maybe it was how we were having conversations that was switching people away from change?

2015 and Moving

In the spring of 2015, my dad gave what he called his ‘disaugural’ lecture as he retired and became an emeritus professor. In this lecture he discussed nocebo, something I had never come across before (Greville-Harris & Dieppe, 2015). Nocebo is essentially the opposite of placebo, and at its most basic definition means ‘*I shall harm*’ as opposed to placebo ‘*I shall please*’. In medicine we use these terms to describe the positive and negative effects of treatments or interventions that are seen when the treatments or interventions themselves have no positive or negative qualities (Häuser, Hansen, & Enck, 2012) .

What I discovered was that nocebo can occur in consultations, with no medication and irrespective of the intent of the clinician (Benedetti, Lanotte, Lopiano, & Colloca, 2007; Enck, Benedetti, & Schedlowski, 2008) – just the words used and the process of the consultation causes the patient to be less well. I wondered whether we were doing something in conversations around change that could be having a similar effect. I put in an application for Ashridge Doctorate in Organisational Change (ADOC) and was accepted with a start date of spring 2017, expecting to look at nocebo and change conversations in this familiar organisation, to focus on complexity theory and relational change and to do this through second-person action research, staying away from that “*navel gazing*” first-person stuff (Dieppe, C., 2017). This is not what happened.

In January 2015, my partner’s dad was knocked over by a car and hospitalised. From then until he died seven months later, we travelled 150 miles each way most weekends and some

weekdays to visit. This travelling continued after his death due to a want and need to be nearer my partner's mum and triggered my decision to look for a job closer to her.

It is still relatively uncommon for doctors to move once they have a consultant job – it is a strange contrast that during training you move every six months for eight to ten years, but then once you are trained you get a consultant post in the same place, for life. More consultants are moving, but it is still very much in the minority, and to go out and look for a job, presenting your skills to places to see if they would or could have a job for you is even less common, but this is what I did. I had never considered working in a small department before, but when I got a response to my 'would you have a job' email, found I could live by the seaside, that the Paediatric Emergency department needed a lot of work and that they wanted to do emergency pathway changes like those I had just done, it seemed like a perfect fit - we moved that Autumn.

As I write this almost five years after the move and the event in resus that started this chapter, things are very different. The house we moved into and expected to refurb ended up being knocked down and rebuilt as a passive house with all the associated uncertainty of cost, planners and decisions. COVID-19 has altered the context in which I provide care significantly and possibly irreversibly. My inquiry isn't the second-and third-person, us and them, healthcare change shifting, examination of nocebo in conversations that I intended. Instead, it is what has been possible and necessary in context, and I am much more empowered and able because of it.

Work has changed – from a Paediatric Emergency Department (ED) only open 18 hours a day with one adult nurse covering the area and no dedicated consultant shifts, to a Children’s Emergency Unit open 24/7 with two paediatric nurses per shift and dedicated consultant shifts most days of the week. The shared pathway and workforce I had intended hasn’t happened and may not as we, like many teams from different specialities, are less aligned now than we were pre-Covid.

Covid has also altered the context in which we all provide healthcare - the NHS across the UK is struggling to provide the care we want to for patients, to retain staff, or to manage the unimaginably long waits we are encountering across the whole healthcare system, impacting on the safety and equity of care everywhere.

The ability to effect change in this context has been much, much, much harder than I ever expected and both the changes to Children’s ED and attempted changes in adult ED are still on very shaky ground. Undertaking this inquiry has enabled me to recognise that I may need to move out of my clinical context in order to continue my change practice.

Body and Gender

In this chapter so far, I have described my work, family and educational context but not as yet my body or physicality. The crucial role for me of physicality and body in my epistemology will be described in the later sections, but for that to land, the difference (or similarity) in context of my body from yours needs to be described. It would be incongruent to consider body and physicality as a way of knowing without considering what that body is in its context; to consider whether my body-as-object impacts on the possibilities of my body-as-subject, the power that it has, the access and interactions that are available and the value placed on the knowledge or knowing subsequently generated. As Burkitt (1999) says, we are '**bodies of thought**':

“productive bodies capable of activities that change the nature of their lives...
communicative bodies with the power to symbolise through gestures, metaphors and speech... *powerful bodies*, with abilities and capacities that can radically alter conditions of life... [and] *thinking bodies*” (Burkitt, 1999, p. 2).

Confronting my gender positioning and presentation has been an important part of this inquiry, but also a potentially distracting part. There is currently a lot of politics, opinion, anger, distrust and hostility surrounding the sex / gender /sexuality debate. I have intentionally removed a section that was in the first draft of this thesis expanding on my understanding of gender in response to reading feminist and trans references such as Butler (2007), Martin (1994), Fletcher (1999) and Feinberg (1997), as this is *not* a dissertation on gender.

It is however a dissertation in which **body knowing is crucial**. One that recognises that bodily knowing and interaction is shaped by that body's context, how it is presented, seen and responded to, and that needs to be described. The following story is intended to illustrate how this body is presented, seen and responded to, with possibly the best description of it to date.

I was catching her eye in the mirror. I've never really understood why lifts have mirrors. I was wearing the majority uniform of junior doctors – smart trousers, shirt, top button undone, stethoscope and ID badge around the neck – white coats now a thing of the past. I was distracted – it had been a long and busy week, I was going out to dinner later...

She tugged on his sleeve – *“Dad, is that a boy or a girl?”*

I recognised her from the ward, one of our regular attenders, about 6 years old I thought, although I couldn't remember her name, didn't know if she recognised me.

“Shhh that's rude”

“No, it's OK..... What do you think?”

“You've got short hair”

“So have you”

She stopped and looked a bit puzzled, her dad looked embarrassed, she continued

“You've got trousers on”

“So have you”

More puzzled faces and then silence – it's surprising how long a 5-floor lift ride can seem – still catching her eye in the mirror. That slightly awkward moment when we all get out of the lift on the same floor, at the same time – Dad stops to check her shoelaces, I head off to handover.

I hadn't been on the ward all that long – maybe 2 months, maybe 3, the best bit was the Children's Assessment area – the GP referrals came here, that mixture of well and not so well, difficult to be sure, quick, interesting, challenging. The nurses were great, knowledgeable, supportive, fun – I seemed to have earned their trust and felt I was finding my feet.

“Are you working this weekend”

“No – you?”

“Yeah – you up to anything on your weekend off”

“Out to dinner tonight with my partner – what about you?”

“Not sure yet – what does your partner do again?”

“They're a GP”

So I was still playing the pronoun game, hadn't worked out how to be out at work, hadn't met anyone else who was out. That background nagging – will 'partner' trigger anything or not, will I get tripped up, how should I talk about stuff outside work – talking about rugby was easier.

The day got busy, lots of GP referrals, I'd forgotten the lift ride, I was immersed in seeing patients, writing notes and then.....

“He's A Girl” she shouted, pointing at me.

My fellow lift traveller had spent the day on the ward receiving antibiotics and clearly thinking, she had made her way to the assessment area of the ward, all on her own, right into the midst of it, to announce her answer. That moment of thundering in the chest, rushing in the ears, feeling hot and thinking I must be going red – they're going to know, there are parents, and children and nurses here.....

Smiles all round and a bit of delighted laughter, an offer to take her back to her bed space, then business as usual.

She was the first patient to ask me whether I am a boy or a girl, she wasn't the last, but the conclusion was the best so far. In fact, I still think this might be the best description of me.....

He's A Girl. A true story. May 2017

I started this inquiry with a naïve academic understanding of feminism and gender, but a much more developed embodied understanding that I had not articulated, nor had I appreciated was potentially very different from those of colleagues on my doctorate, or in my profession. This naivety was encapsulated in an early piece of writing that had me hitting back at a push to read feminist literature, and to repeated conversations about the ‘shared’ experience of women in our doctoral cohort in terms of expectations about what to wear, how to behave, how to be heard etc. My initial writing rant was because these were not my ‘shared’ experiences, and I described this at the time, as being because I felt and saw my body as a doing body, never limited in what I have been allowed to do because of gender, and that ‘everyone else’ was speaking about their body as a being body, limited by expectations and rules.

It is true that I haven’t ever felt limited by being female, but I now realise this is because my embodied understanding of gender is not binary. This doesn’t mean that I don’t (now) see, recognise and understand the male dominated constructs in academia, literature, media or organisations and how they impact on female (and male) representation. Instead, I recognise that my gender or body positioning and understanding is more fluid and based on a spectrum rather than a binary construct. This means that the limitations and boundaries for me are different from colleagues for whom the construct is binary. This matters in terms of the agency I feel I have, the way I interact and how this may be perceived. If change is relational and communicated through gestures and responses, the fact that my presentation, conversation and gestures are made from a non-binary ‘He’s a Girl’ experience and expression of gender will alter the impact, subsequent responses I get, and the change that occurs.

Gender can be argued to be biopsychosocial and dynamic, a shifting combination of biological, psychological and social factors (Scheele & Barker, 2019); what the shape, size and aptitude of our body allows will influence the forms of masculinity or femininity available to us; what interests and activities we participate in and how that is 'gendered' will alter our perception of gender. The gender norms and stereotypes we see and do will "*write themselves onto our bodies and brains through the repetition of actions and through processes*" (Scheele & Barker, 2019, pp. 34-45).

Gender is habitual and contextual, and for me has been written into my body and brain through factors that include height, weight, musculature, exercise, interests, experience and expectations. Gender is not the only aspect that defines my body, but it is one that is visible, assumed, and one which I present or perform as non-normative. Right now I present a version of female masculinity in clothing, gestures, confidence, physicality, use of language and interaction.

There have been occasions over the last few years where this presentation has varied, where I have considered changing my pronouns and identifying as non-binary. There were occasions when we lived in Australia, with a lot of queer friends and a large trans scene that I contemplated defining as trans and whether I would feel more 'me' on testosterone. What I am sure about is that I have never felt limited by being female, I have never not been given access, not felt I could speak up or not taken part in something because I am female, but this may be because of my particular non-binary embodiment of being female. I am not offended by female pronouns, nor am I offended by being called Sir, or asked 'Are you a boy or a girl?'.

I am clear that presenting and being seen as non-heteronormative is important to me, probably even more in work than out of work. In every job, every month, if not every week, I see children and young people presenting with self-harm in which one of the issues they are struggling with is either gender, or sexuality or both, and I hope that seeing someone 'other' succeed within the establishment of healthcare offers them a glimpse that it is OK to be other, that other is out there, that they are not on their own. I have also discovered that this presentation has enabled nursing colleagues and juniors to 'come out' at work for the first time, when they see that other is an accepted and respected part (and in charge) of the team.

I am aware that this chosen and (for me) congruent body presentation and physicality may at times limit or restrict my access and agency in very binary, normative contexts. During my training there were two key events that have remained lodged in my memory, that I have interpreted as examples of the 'challenge' that my body can provoke.

The first was early in my paediatric training, I wasn't 'out' to senior colleagues, but I was dressing similarly to how I do now (trousers and a shirt) and wanting to be visible to children and families as 'other' if they were looking. I was working in a department run by a female consultant and at the end of a shift I was taken aside.

"You do know short women, with short hair, looking like you won't progress in medicine."

I had no response, I struggled even to compute the comment, particularly as it was delivered by a short woman, with short hair, who I had assumed was a lesbian, successfully running a

department. With hindsight I can kindly assume that this was an attempt to warn me that it was difficult not being heteronormative, from someone who themselves was not heteronormative, but in reality I have no idea.

The second happened near the end of my training, by which time I was completely out, in terms of sexuality, at work. Two of us were taken aside to discuss our clothes. Every day I wore suit trousers and a shirt, flat shoes, no makeup – the same as I had since starting paediatrics. My colleague wore combat trousers and a shirt every day, had long hair in a ponytail and was more ‘alternative’ than most trainees. He was told off for wearing combat trousers, I was told off for having more than one earring in one ear – we were both warned that we were presenting unprofessionally. In direct contrast another trainee at the same level as us, who daily wore high heels, short skirts and blouses only buttoned to the level of her bra, who could not run to an arrest in her heels and who visibly had parents and some patients paying more attention to her physicality than her advice, was not chastised or told she was presenting unprofessionally. My assumption is that we were taken aside for challenging the norm, rather than for being unprofessional.

Whatever the reality of the thought behind these interventions, I was left with the perception that the position I choose in terms of how non-normative my presentation is, may affect the agency I have, both positively and negatively.

How I currently present works for me now, but I know that I might choose differently in another context, or in this context at another time. For the time being however ‘He’s a Girl’ suits me just fine.

The aim of this chapter has been to make visible the context that I bring to this inquiry. An opening that threw you into context to give you a visceral sense of what discovering context felt like for me. This was followed by my understanding of context and what I mean when I refer to context in the rest of this thesis. Finally I made visible some of the individual contextual factors that frame this inquiry. By making these visible my intent is that you are able to make sense of the findings with reference to your own context, what is relevant and what is not, responding to the assertion that making context intentionally more visible will enable the contribution of this thesis to be more rather than less accessible.

Chapter 3. Metaphor

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I see metaphor as the linking structure for this thesis, the weft thread that all the warp threads are woven through to make the finished patterned cloth. The aim of this section is to show how I have reached this conclusion based on an understanding of metaphor as a cognitive rather than ‘just’ a linguistic device.

This chapter starts with describing embodied metaphor, a concept from Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), before moving onto the conceptual theory of metaphor and how metaphors function as bodily, cognitive and philosophical devices, with particular attention paid to the work of Cornelissen (2006, 2011, 2012), Küpers (2013, 2014, 2017) and Zwicky (2014, 2015). This theoretical beginning is then followed by an example of a ‘hidden’ metaphor within the context of my organisation to help make these ideas, and this conceptualisation of metaphor, tangible.

Metaphor will be revisited in further sections, particularly in form and bodily knowing, through which I intend to reinforce my premise that it is the linking device of this thesis.

Traditionally, metaphor is defined as a linguistic device or figure of speech. It compares two things by stating that one thing is another to explain an idea, make an unexpected comparison, or for rhetorical and poetic effect. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest that metaphor is instead a cognitive device that shapes our actions and thinking.

This understanding of metaphor starts with looking at most of the concepts we use in everyday life in language, literature, politics and science, and considering that they are actually metaphorical concepts that we use without being aware of them or the role they are playing. To help to cement this point and to act as a building block for the rest of the book, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) use *'argument'* as an example. An argument is often described and discussed using words and phrases like winning or losing, attacking or defending a position, beating the opposition – all terms based on a metaphorical concept of argument as war; however, instead of being conceptual it has become literal:

"we talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way – and we act according to the way we conceive of things" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5).

In contrast if we used dance as a metaphor for argument, we may be more likely to act in ways that aim for balance, give and take, offer support and are more fluid.

Further examples of how metaphorical concepts become systems of understanding are then given to reinforce this point. One that resonated for me is *'time is money'* – I had not appreciated that phrases like *'wasting time'*, *'spending time'*, *'running out of time'*, *'living on borrowed time'* can all be derived from conceiving of time as a commodity through the use of the metaphor *'time is money'*, and that this shapes how I feel and think about my *'use'* of time.

To help navigate metaphor, and their conceptualisation that thinking is based on and shaped by metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest there are three metaphor categories: structural, orientational and ontological.

- 'Time as money' is an example of a structural metaphor, where one concept is structured in terms of another.
- Oriental metaphors organise concepts in terms of spatial relations and ideas of value and hierarchy like up and down, in and out, front and back. Moving up or reaching the top in employment are examples of phrases that sit within an orientational metaphor in which up is good, down is bad.
- Ontological metaphors structure events, activities, emotions or ideas as entities or substances, thereby allowing us to quantify, compare, respond and interact with them. Inflation is offered as an example of an ontological metaphor – if we see inflation as an entity, a substance that we can interact with, then we can use language like rising, lowering, combating, to help us respond to an otherwise difficult-to-grasp idea. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

One of the fundamentals of all three categories of metaphor is that physical knowing forms the basis of the metaphorical concept. The metaphors are based on direct interaction with objects and structures, or on physical experience and spatial understanding. This is where the start of my interest in enactive cognition began and is also the beginning of my assertion that metaphor is the underpinning linking structure of this thesis.

Metaphors, in this construct, shape our knowing and our thinking and are all derived from physical interaction.

- **knowing is based in physical interaction and metaphor**
- **metaphorical knowing and structuring of thinking is therefore enactive cognition.**

This fundamental conclusion that all metaphor has a physical basis has been further developed by the authors independently, and together (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff, 2014) into a ‘conceptual metaphor theory’. This theory suggests that there are a relatively small number of primary metaphors all derived from spatial physical interaction which are then combined to produce complex conceptual metaphors. Balance, verticality, centre, force and temperature are all known experientially, and have fundamental and structural associations that lead to primary metaphors. As an example, being able to stand upright and having balance means that we can walk, run, use tools, function. This means that we understand – from an enactive metaphorical concept – that balance is good, imbalance is bad, or up is good, down is bad.

It isn’t just our bodies’ physical interaction but also the interaction of our senses and emotion that inform metaphorical constructs. Emotion metaphors, Lakoff (2014) argues, are derived from sensory-motor embodied experience. Anger is physiologically associated with increased skin temperature, increased blood pressure, loss of fine motor control and narrowing of visual fields – this physical experience of anger has resulted in metaphorical concepts that match the physiological state such as boiling mad, exploding with anger, blind with rage.

Lakoff (2014, p. 1) summarises this conceptual theory of metaphor in just three lines which I find encapsulate my understanding of enactive cognition and which will be built on further in the *Bodily knowing* section.

- **The mind is body**
- **Mental functioning is bodily functioning**
- **Ideas are objects of bodily functioning**

Lakoff (2014) has extended this initial embodied cognition understanding of metaphor into a neural theory of metaphor, where neural mapping and embodied experiences are linked together when considered through the lenses of linguistic and cognitive neuroscience research. My simplistic understanding of this model is that all thought and understanding is physical, carried out by neural circuitry, in a brain where concrete concepts and abstract concepts have the same basis; that brain is structured by thousands of embodied metaphor-mapping circuits, largely functioning unconsciously, firing in patterns, allowing reasoning from one brain region to apply to another. Lakoff (2014) suggests that this means that metaphors not only have an embodied basis, mapped to the brain, but that metaphorical framing might actually affect behaviour due to neural linkages across brain regions. He lists a variety of studies on primary metaphors to support this theory and these also offer a novel way to consider influencing change.

- ‘affection is warmth’ – if subjects are holding a warm drink, they are likely to be nicer to strangers than if they are holding a cold drink
 - Could ensuring conversations around change take place with warm drinks in a warm room result in a more positive outcome?

- ‘important is heavy’ – if students were told a book was important, they judged it to be heavier than one they were told was less important
 - Could giving data around change that supports a particular position in a heavier package result in it being given more importance than other data?

Metaphors in this construct exist as physically derived conceptual systems structuring the language we use around common concepts, to the extent that we may not even notice the primary metaphor. Such metaphors most often use physical knowing to describe the non-physical and concrete knowing to describe the abstract, affecting our understanding, as well as our behaviour and actions. Using this construction of cognition, we can then create metaphors to improve or generate new understandings and maybe even to alter behaviour.

Cornelissen (2006) builds on the idea of ‘conceptual metaphor theory’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; 1999; Lakoff, 2014) to look at how ‘effective’ metaphors function in research via ‘conceptual blending’, by suggesting that metaphors can be used both to represent something and to enquire into it; metaphors as both a source for theoretical representation and a vehicle for imagination (Cornelissen, 2006, p. 1582). Effective metaphors work by doing more than ‘just’ transferring properties from one thing to another, from one epistemic sphere to another – for Cornelissen (2006) an effective metaphor blends two concepts or ideas together, forcing ‘semantic leaps’ that transform the properties in both spheres to create new meaning or understanding.

Organisational metaphors are used as an example – the familiar metaphorical representation of an organisation as ‘*a machine*’ enables lots of meaning and understanding to be made about how the organisation functions – drivers, cogs, greasing the wheels. In contrast an organisation represented as a ‘*soap bubble*’ doesn’t really increase our understanding of either. An effective metaphor enables us to blend concepts together to create a new understanding that is greater than the initial concepts independently.

Cornelissen (2006) describes this process of conceptual blending as having three phases:

- *Composition phase*, which involves attributing a property from one concept to an element or elements of another
- *Completion phase*, where some structure in the composition matches up with information in the long-term memory; the pattern matches up, it makes sense
- *Elaboration phase*, where the target concept is run through the pattern of the composition and “*the source concepts are not only collapsed into one composition, and transformed and completed, but also elaborated on in a mental or imaginary sense so that a new emergent meaning is established*” (Cornelissen, 2006, p. 1586)

This idea is also described more poetically, tangibly and for me more clearly by Zwicky (2014):

“To understand a metaphor is to recognise that if one context or conceptual constellation is laid over another just so, aspects or outlines will spring into focus, a common pattern will be discernible – one that makes a difference to our grasp of the individual constellations or contexts separately” (Zwicky, 2014, p. 24)

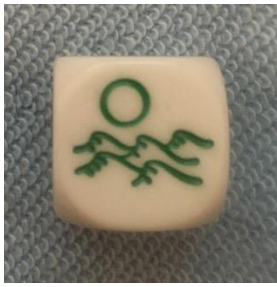
Metaphor Experiment

In a phase of my inquiry where I was trying to develop playful interventions (see *Playful* chapter page 66) and was using story cubes¹ to facilitate this, I experimented in a doctoral workshop with the idea of metaphor based conceptual blending.

I started with an initial framing around how language and metaphor shapes thinking and action, with the use of the ‘argument as war’ versus ‘argument as dance’ as an example. I then invited participants to roll three cubes and to choose the one that they liked best. Once they had chosen, I asked them to use it as the basis for a metaphor about the concept we were discussing – power.

Choosing the image they liked, rather than one they thought would work as a metaphor, was important and done intentionally in response to work by Cornelissen which describes seven ‘optimality’ principles that make a metaphor effective at conceptual blending. My understanding of these principles is that if a metaphor makes something abstract concrete, makes some sort of relational sense but is distant enough to shift thinking, and if in unpacking the metaphor the pieces of the concept can be interpreted and elaborated and integrated into it, then it is more likely to be an effective metaphor (Cornelissen, 2006, p. 1588). I hoped that choosing the image first would result in a more distant, unexpected source concept, that it would generate a metaphor with significant distance between domains in order to optimise the potential for conceptual blending and the emergence of novel ways of thinking.

¹ Dice with pictures instead of numbers, rolled three at a time if the instructions are followed, with the intent of generating stories.



One group derived a shared metaphor from the above pictures, developing a metaphor from the idea of playing in the sea, with a ball, and then drying off and warming up by the fire afterwards. Playing with power, passing it around, letting it go, catching it, letting it float, floating in it, being warmed by it, as something to be enjoyed. Much more positive and shared descriptors of power than we had experienced in the workshop prior to that.



This cube led to a metaphor based on a chameleon that can change its colour, poke out its tongue, climb. Power obtained by climbing with claws, extruding power to others by extending the tongue, hiding within power by changing colour, staying put, digging in. More traditional ideas around power that may have been too already present as overwhelming perceptions of power, or a picture that led to a metaphor that was too close, not distant enough, to shift thinking.

A whole economic system was developed from this picture that was interpreted as a scarab beetle. 'Shit Economics', a power system turned upside down, where individuals who do the more menial work like collecting shit are rewarded, and those that make the most shit are penalised. This generated a lot of volume, laughter and a surprisingly entertaining and positive shift in the discussion from a group that had been very clear about the negative associations of power before this session.



As this experiment demonstrated, the conceptual blending process recognises that not all metaphors are created equally; some will be more effective than others at enabling transformation of properties and the emergence of new understanding or an improved grasp of the base concept. In a subsequent paper, the seven optimality principles were simplified into the two axes of conceptual blending – the effectiveness of a metaphor at conceptual blending depends on where it sits between the axis of similarity within domains and the distance between domains (Cornelissen & Durand, 2012). The ‘playing in the sea with a ball’ metaphor transformed the understanding and discussion of power more than the ‘chameleon’ metaphor as it was further away from power but not too far on this axis.

This idea of metaphors working through conceptual blending as a way of using imagination and generating meaning is also discussed by Küpers who writes from within a phenomenological and embodied paradigm:

“Through an iterative process of “seeing-as” metaphorical language sets up a creative and novel correlation of two concepts, which forces semantic leaps to create an understanding evoking the imaginative capacities and finding new emergent meanings” (Küpers, 2013, p. 510)

Again I prefer the more poetic and visceral metaphor-based description of the same idea from Zwicky:

“Lyric thought is a kind of ontological seismic exploration and metaphors are charges set by the seismic crew. A good metaphor lets us see more deeply than a weak one.”

(Zwicky, 2014, p. 44)

Küpers (2013, 2014, 2017) also describes metaphors as embodied, and as effective and affective because they are of the body, as well as evoking '*bodiliness*' through their use (Küpers, 2013, p. 496), resonating with the idea of a physical basis of metaphor from Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) and the ideas of enactive cognition that will be discussed further in the *Bodily knowing* chapter. Küpers (2013) also discusses the role that metaphors can have in shaping and changing organisations, through what are described as four main functions of metaphor.

The descriptors that Küpers uses are given below, but the interpretation that follows each is my summary of what I found lengthy and at times convoluted explanations in the original paper (Küpers, 2013, pp. 498-502).

- *Expressing senses and sensing implicit knowing through metaphors*

By making something abstract concrete, by presenting concepts symbolically, metaphor enables those concepts to become tangible, approachable, shareable. Metaphors can also function as vehicles for embodying the unconscious or expressing feelings that are difficult to express. Using imagery and language derived from our sensory interactions, the articulation of emotion, new understandings, challenging situations and painful truths is enabled. By making accessible a difficult-to-express experience or concept, metaphors can help foster a shared understanding across cultures, or provide a 'conceptual glue' that keeps a culture together.

- *Explaining sense-making, mediation and proto-integration of metaphors*

Metaphors function as *“linguistic steering devices that guide both thinking and actions”*

(Küpers, 2013, p. 499). They enable conceptual blending and the integration of different elements and constructs, contextualising events and experiences. They function to make sense of and direct change, by making tangible and knowable the shift from something familiar, to something new.

- *Exporting transformation and innovation*

Metaphors offer new ways of understanding things we thought we already knew, by being less fixed than literal language – they allow a flexibility of meaning, novel interpretations and invite experimental thinking. Metaphors can be seen as a *‘poetical utterance’* opening up new meanings of words; shifting understanding, they *“change reality by shattering language”* (Küpers, 2013, p. 501).

- *Exposing ambivalence and limitations*

Metaphors bring some things into focus, whilst obscuring others. They can help to see things anew, to reinterpret and act as a diagnostic or investigative tool, but they can also mislead. The flexibility of language and its multiple interpretations that may be useful in some circumstances can at other times cloud rather than clear the view. Metaphors can be used to reinforce the status quo, inhibit us from seeking alternatives and offer protection from critical analysis, by shaping, structuring and maintaining thinking, by being embedded in the language used. They are also context-dependent: not only does the meaning of a metaphor change if

the context in which it is used changes, but the same metaphor can be used in different contexts to generate different effects.

These theoretical understandings and positioning of metaphor suggest that, instead of a linguistic tool, metaphor is a much more complex and complicated device. It is enactive and embodied and it has the power not only to describe but also to shape how we think and feel. It can enable us to share and create meaning, to develop theories, to shape change or alternatively to hide and obscure possibilities, to maintain the status quo. I have discovered that for me metaphor is an enactive cognitive device that underpins the forms and methods I use to know.

Hidden Metaphors

As described above in the four functions of metaphors in organisations (Küpers, 2013, pp. 498-502), metaphors can be used to enable new ideas and understanding, but they also have the potential to constrain and hide possibilities. Metaphors themselves may be visible in language and in use, but they can also be hidden from view, shaping and limiting what is possible without us even being aware of them – as I hope this experience from my organisation will demonstrate.

As I started to try to make sense of my new work context, one of the things I heard repeatedly at almost every meeting, in every conversation about change, by clinical and non-clinical colleagues alike, was the *'big organisation'* I was a part of. What I noticed, however, was instead of facts and figures about the size of the organisation I was hearing phrases like:

"This organisation is too big to meet targets like that"

"We don't have the same sort of patients as them – we're a much bigger organisation"

"We don't compare to them, we're much bigger"

"We don't have any peer organisations, we're too big"

On first glance, these could be seen as purely descriptive phrases, but they can also be seen as articulations from within an orientational metaphor system (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) used about the organisation. A metaphor system that brings with it a whole set of conceptual

relationships and inferences that are subsequently shaping, limiting and constraining the context and change.

- big is heavy; difficult to move, tricky to shift, unwieldy, uncompromising
- big is special; different, without compare, uncategorizable, targets don't apply to special things
- big is valuable; we have value as we are, we don't want to lose or change things of value
- big is important; we are important, we have the power, this is the most important organisation, we are in control

In considering 'organisation as big' as a metaphor and conceptual system, I can make sense of and know my organisation differently. If I view what I initially considered a description as a metaphor instead, then with it come implied relationships and associations. It is much easier to consider the power it has to shape not only the conversations within the organisation, but the subsequent behaviour, actions, and thinking around what is possible and appropriate. As described by Küpers (2013), 'organisation is big' could be considered as a part of the conceptual glue of the organisation, keeping the culture together and maintaining the status quo, offering protection from critical analysis of the validity of the statement and its assumed associations.

This unseen power of metaphor to shape culture and context may not just be because a metaphor is hidden, but also because when a metaphor is considered true, it is no longer seen as a metaphor. In a co-inquiry conversation with a doctoral colleague about metaphors I used 'food as fuel' as an example, and the response was *"Well, I don't see food as fuel"* I initially

thought this was about interpretation of metaphor, that the nature of metaphor to be ambiguous and context-dependent shaped this response. Now, however, I interpret this response to be about an assumption that the metaphor was true, that food is fuel. Unless the language, imagery and conceptual blending from metaphor used to shape understanding is named as such, it risks *becoming* the understanding, constraining not just an organisation but the conversations within it. The metaphor is no longer a live device; it has died, as have the opportunities for new learning and meaning-making.

“A live metaphor is a linguistic short-circuit. Non-metaphorical ways of speaking conduct meaning, in insulated carriers, to certain ends and purposes. Metaphors shave off the insulation and meaning arcs across the gap.

A dead metaphor is one in which this arcing between gestalts no longer occurs. Its energy has been diverted into and contained by the cultures linguistic grid.”

(Zwicky, 2014, p. 68)

I also discovered that naming the words used and the implied associations was not enough to shift the rhetoric or the understanding. I used multiple conversations around change and improvement as opportunities to highlight the tendency to describe the organisation as big, and to articulate the associations of special and difficult to change, but this didn't alter anything. I now recognise that at the time I was bringing it up, I was working under the construct that 'organisation as big' was a description or framing, rather than a metaphorical system. This meant that removing 'big' and 'special' without replacing the metaphor allowed the conceptual relationships and associations, the glue, protection, and status quo to continue to exist in the shadows.

This chapter has introduced, and I hope demonstrated my understanding of, metaphor as a complex, conceptual, cognitive device. A device derived from primary embodied knowing, that uses physical concepts to describe the non-physical, and that may even be part of the neural mapping of the brain in a way that affects our behaviour and thinking. Metaphors, whether seen or unseen, may be enabling new thinking, emergent meaning and change, but they may alternatively be limiting, controlling and preventing change. Descriptors, language, and phrases that we use routinely and regularly in organisations may in fact be part of a metaphorical conceptual system, the structural and relational implications of which make the landscape for change vastly different from one in which an adjective alone needs to be altered. Metaphors allow concepts to be seen as, seen differently, laid over each other *just so* – all ways to generate different understandings and multiple meanings.

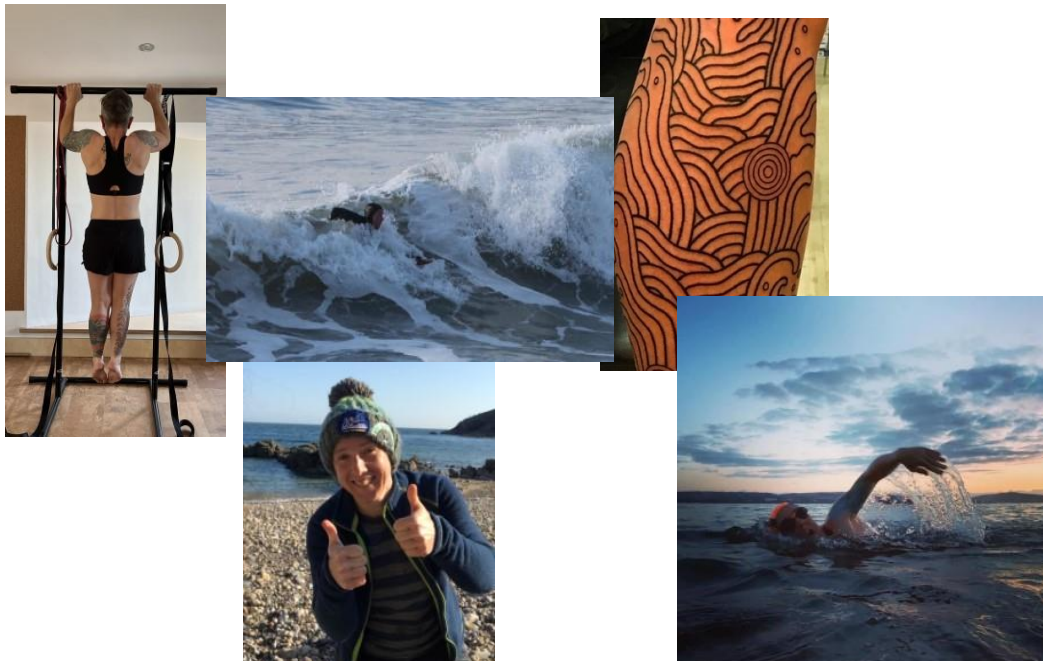
In subsequent chapters I will demonstrate the role metaphors derived from my environment and my own body have in knowing; in the forms and methods I use; in the process of knowing and not-knowing; in language. As a prelude to those chapters and to keep the idea of metaphors as physical cognitive devices front and centre, I am going to end this chapter with this short illustrative piece of journal writing.

I'm running a bit late, I rush in to get my bike, cross the road onto the cycle path, clip my right foot into the pedal, push down and fall over onto the path – the rear wheel has come loose. I feel like an idiot, sore and annoyed – why didn't I tighten up that new rear skewer more when I cleaned the bike and changed it yesterday. I start riding tentatively and feel frustrated and stupid – and then I suddenly realise I understand the role of the rear skewer to the bike completely differently. I now viscerally, tangibly know that without the quick release, a seemingly small, rarely checked bit of the bike functioning properly, the wheels will fall off. I've been doing basic servicing to my bikes for a while now, done a couple of bike mechanic courses, but now I know something fundamentally differently than I did before about the forces transmitted through the rear wheel, the pressure exerted, the extremely impressive functionality of each bit of a bicycle however small. My mind then starts to wander as I ride – do I know what those small, rarely checked but crucial, fundamental little bits in systems, processes, organisations are? How could knowing the 'rear skewers' and checking them, paying them attention, help work systems or processes function better?

(Journal entry, November 2017)

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Playful use of form as a bodily activity of (not) knowing



This section is about the key ideas and concepts of this thesis and how I have been able to weave them together as a final cloth, rather than presenting them as separate threads. Although I have already written about context at the start of this thesis, I recognise that for these ideas to land then you need to be given some specific context in terms of my inquiry. What I mean by this is that where I started this inquiry, what I wanted to research, and how that informed the first steps I took, needs to be visible, so that how those steps then became leaps in a different direction makes sense.

As described in the first chapter, when I applied to do the doctorate, I was interested in change conversations – could we alter the way we have these conversations to decrease the likelihood of colleagues being put off change or being resistant to change? The rhetoric about consultants (doctors, not change practitioners) being resistant to change was looming large in the organisation and in change and improvement conferences I was attending at the time. I was also intrigued by the idea of nocebo – that in clinical consultations, patients can leave less well than they arrived, not because of drugs or procedures. but in response to the consultation conversation itself (Dieppe, P., 2015; Greville-Harris & Dieppe, 2015).

When unpicking this idea further, I was struck by the potential similarities between consultations and change conversations. In both we are trying to work out what is going on, to diagnose an illness or a problem. Perhaps the same mechanisms that are causing harm in a clinical conversation are causing harm in change conversations?

It felt like the first step was to understand what I do in a clinical consultation.

- How do I diagnose?
- How do I know?
- What techniques and ways of interacting do I use, and do they cause or mitigate nocebo?
- Is there anything different that I do to diagnose because my patients are children and young people, not adults?

At the same time, how I interact and my physicality had also started to be of interest to me – as this excerpt from my inquiry paper in 2017 shows:

“I do tend to give away what I am thinking with my facial expressions, to be very animated, and to gesticulate a lot in conversations. During doctoral supervision being childlike and enthusiastic has come up many times, alongside other paired descriptors – ‘mischief and mayhem’, ‘eye rolling and big smile’, ‘adult and childlike’. These strike me as being related to physicality of gesture, facial expression and interaction. I have also in the past described my role in maintaining enthusiasm for change work as ‘jumping around’ and I realise that I am also quite physical and animated in consultations with the children that I see. In consultations, the physicality of interaction works by gaining a child’s trust – the response of a smile, laugh, or them lifting up their t-shirt so that I can listen, all signifying that the tickling, pulling faces, sitting on the floor that I have done has worked to gain their and therefore their parents’ trust.”

This led me to consider whether there was some way in which I was allowed to have conversations differently because of how I interact and present physically. Maybe being more child-like than adult-like in how I have conversations and use language was more enabling? I decided to really take apart what I do in a consultation and inquire into it, to look at the interactions I use and investigate how these were helping me to diagnose, to know.

Chapter 4. Playful *use of form as a bodily activity of (not) knowing*

Not only did I think at the start of this doctorate that I knew what it was going to be about, I also thought it was going to have a ‘thing’. A thing I would generate as method or intervention, a thing that I would use with others in inquiry, a thing that would make conversations about change work better!

I spent a lot of time in the first year or so thinking that the ‘thing’ was play, and then maybe instead it was playfulness and the play frame. Over the next few years, I discovered there were a lot more ‘things’ I got excited about; a lot more jumping onto an idea and then off again, and a lot more getting lost and not-knowing what I was doing before I got anywhere near a ‘thing’.

I put ‘play’ and ‘playfulness’ down after I couldn’t find or create a playful ‘thing’, but what I now appreciate is that the exploration and curiosity about the ideas and the ideas themselves have influenced this inquiry, the directions taken and where I’ve ended up. Although where I’ve finished seems at first glance to be a significant distance away from the start line, I realise it hasn’t been a linear journey, that I’ve looped around and doubled back and in fact these two (and lots of the other stops or ‘things’) are now not that far apart. The threads really are interwoven, and all have an important part to play in the pattern being created.

Taking apart my consultation practice is where this started. A consultation is a process that involves finding the problem, making a diagnosis with investigations if needed, and prescribing

a treatment. This has similarities to the processes that take place in change – finding the problem, undertaking trials or investigations, implementing a solution. Perhaps the processes I use to know and make sense in clinical practice, once I understood what they were, could also be used in the non-clinical realm of change practice?

As I started unpicking my consultation practice trying to work out what processes I use as part of my examination practice, the fun bits like tickling, pulling faces, or ‘blowing out’ torches (that are used to look in ears) seemed like maybe they could be the ‘thing’. In discussing my examination practice with my doctoral supervision group, it seemed to them and to me that I was playing; that I was using play to diagnose, to know. Perhaps play was an aspect of my practice that was limiting harm (still considering nocebo as a focus) and that could be used in change practice. After spending some time looking into play, I rejected it and moved on to the related concepts of playfulness and the play frame. This chapter will track this rejection and point towards the subsequent jumps I made towards form, body and knowing, all of which will be discussed and built on as we move through this section.

I will start with a discussion of the definitions and conditions ascribed to play, and the contradictions between play and what I do in a consultation. I will then look at the two positionings of playfulness as either a personality trait or a mindset, and my preference for the mindset understanding, before moving onto the concept of a play frame.

I now consider that approaching my methodology with a playful state of mind – entering into it playfully – is crucial to how it works and to how it integrates with all the other ideas and concepts in this section. Hence, despite putting it down early on in this inquiry, it is important

to pick it up again here, so that the progression of ideas and development of method is visible and makes sense to you, as well as to me.

Play

We all recognise when children are playing; and use the term to describe multiple and diverse activities including hide and seek, a professional rugby match, scratching out a tune on an instrument or the movement of light and waves. But what is the actual definition of play? How do we really know whether something is play or not?

Many, but not all, definitions are based on the central theme that play is an end in itself, that it is autotelic: “*that play to order is no longer play*” (attributed to Huizinga, 1955). Play is something that is entered into voluntarily, with no intent, with no goal other than to play; it is not prescribed, or ordered, or part of work; in fact it is often defined in opposition to work (Petelczyc, Capezio, Wang, Restubog, & Aquino, 2018; Statler, Roos, & Victor, 2009; Tökkäri, 2015; West, 2015). These two aspects – *not work* and *autotelic* is where my dissatisfaction with ‘play’ began – clearly for me, I undertake fun interactions intentionally, as part of work, to make a diagnosis – this means these activities don’t align with this conceptualisation of play.

Although other features of play (see table 1) – such as it being interactive and fun (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015), about meaning-making and creativity (Tökkäri, 2015) and about being present and absorbed in the event (Suorsa, 2015) – all resonated and felt congruent, the intention of my examination practice meant that I viewed it as sitting firmly outside this definition of play.

Table 1. Features of Play

(Jonson, 1999)	(Statler et al., 2009)	(Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015)	(Tökkäri, 2015)
Voluntary	Autotelic	Goal of amusement and fun	Being-in-the-world
Superfluous	Imaginative	Highly interactive	Meaning-making and enactment
Not ordinary or real life	Ethical	Enthusiastic and in-the-moment attitude or approach	Creations
Limited by time, space and rules			
Contains tension and uncertainty			

Whilst not all the definitions of play embrace the autotelic feature, the majority do, or they use some form of semantic trick to get around it. For example, play is used with intent in organisations; in fact many of the papers I read were about the value and role of play in organisational development and change. The “paradox of intentionality” was described by Statler (2009) and the term “serious play” was referenced by Tökkäri (2015), both attempts to blur the autotelic defining feature of play. The first suggests that as long as we enter play expecting it to influence the desired goal, rather than with the goal as an intention, then it still counts as play (Statler et al., 2009, p. 99); the second suggesting that using playful behaviours with the intention of meeting work-related ends also still counts as play (Tökkäri, 2015, p. 88). I found myself dissatisfied with in effect rubbing out a fundamental tenet of play and instead found my curiosity sparked by the mentions of playful activities and playfulness. Maybe instead playfulness is what I use in a consultation?

Playfulness

Unfortunately, my first jump into literature on playfulness found me equally disgruntled as I came across the most common definition of playfulness, that it is a personality trait or set of characteristics. This conceptualisation is supported by a variety of models of playfulness, with scales and questionnaires designed to rate playfulness based on possession of a variety of traits or characteristics.

Table 2. Characteristics of Playfulness

OLIW Proyer, 2017	APTS Shen et al., 2014	Barnet 2007	Adult Playfulness Scale Osgood, 1962
Other directed	Fun-seeking motivation	Gregarious	Spontaneous
Lighthearted	Uninhibitedness	Uninhibited	Expressive
Intellectual	Spontaneity	Comedic	Fun
Whimsical		Dynamic	Creative
			Silly

Whilst I recognise and may possess some of the characteristics described in table 2, some of the others really don't sit comfortably for me, like being uninhibited or gregarious. I suspect that discomfort with some of the specific traits in part pushed me to question the personality trait perspective; however, the most challenging aspect of it for me is the assertion that if playfulness is a trait then it is fixed. Playfulness in this construction has little value as something to experiment with or build into change practice – it cannot be increased, decreased, altered, encouraged or used if someone doesn't have it. The perception of

playfulness as a personality trait also tends to be aligned with a definition of playfulness that equates it with humour, meaning that if something isn't humorous then it isn't playful. Again this felt incongruous – not all my playful interactions are humorous and they are certainly not designed to provide me with entertainment.

“the predisposition to frame (or reframe) a situation in such a way as to provide oneself (and possibly others) with amusement, humour, and / or entertainment” (Barnett, 2007, p. 955)

Yet something in this definition started to spark ideas and links, particularly the frame or reframe suggestion, which meant I didn't step away from the idea of playfulness as definitely as I had with play. Instead I read further and discovered both an alternative more congruent definition of playfulness and the concept of a play frame.

The alternative definition of playfulness is that it is a state of mind or attitude that is about mental openness (Pichlmair, 2008), flexibility in thinking (Youell, 2008) and a positive mood state (Bateson, P., 2015), all of which enable an individual to take risks with ideas and interactions, protected from serious consequences.

“playfulness is an attitude of exploration... we need a playful attitude to learn without smarting from our own mistakes” (Pichlmair, 2008, p. 210)

Here was a definition that not only felt more congruent, but also started to connect with ideas about knowing – learning without smarting from mistakes, taking risks with ideas, flexible thinking. If action research is about generating actionable knowledge (a perspective I will discuss later), and successful knowledge creation requires open, critical, reflective, risk-taking behaviour (Suorsa, 2015), then playfulness as a state of mind or attitude not only makes sense

as an epistemological practice in examinations but also as a part of inquiry and change practice.

Considering playfulness as a way to look at knowledge creation (Suorsa, 2015) made me aware of a more philosophical or hermeneutic perspective on play, which also started to feel more congruent with the reciprocal physical interaction that takes place with children and young people as part of the examination aspect of a consultation. In discussing the Gadamerian perspective on play Suorsa (2015) describes play as “*the movement between at least two elements*” with interacting a core element in creating knowledge (Suorsa, 2015, pp. 507, 515). I get excited by the suggestion that knowledge creation is an activity based in interaction with something, or someone else; that knowing is an active process. This feels like what I do in a consultation, how I know in playful interaction with a child. Another discussion of the hermeneutic perspective of play as a ‘*to and fro*’ in interaction, an oscillation between knower and known (Martin & Fonseca, 2010), makes me consider that perhaps this could describe an oscillation between doctor and patient, and as I will come onto later between knowing and not-knowing.

Although I didn’t recognise this at the time, I now appreciate that these perspectives and conceptualisations of play and playfulness have lingered, informed and permeated my ideas of epistemology and my use of form, as I will demonstrate through the rest of this section.

Play Frame

Sullivan (2011) describes how learning and creativity can be enhanced by the ability to shift between the dual modes of seriousness and playfulness. Another idea of oscillation or shifting between positions that is encapsulated in being playful. This idea of shifting between serious and not-serious or, perhaps more specifically from my experience, the use of non-serious playful interaction in a consultation as a serious way to know, is encompassed by Bateson's concept of the play frame.

In a visit to San Francisco Zoo in 1952, Bateson reports witnessing two monkeys playing. They were using the action of biting each other as would be seen in a fight, but Bateson writes that it was clear to the zoo visitors and the monkeys themselves that this was not a fight but play. He concluded that "*play is a phenomenon in which the actions of play denote, other actions of 'not play'*" (Bateson, G., 2000, p. 181).

Which means '*this is play*' establishes a paradoxical frame in which signals are real and not real at the same time, where activities that are serious or 'not-play' are treated as not-serious or play, and I infer vice versa. The following diagram is used to illustrate the idea of the play frame and the paradox it contains:

All statements within this frame are untrue I love you I hate you

(Bateson G., 2000, p. 184)

I enjoy how the form of this simple text box illustrates the play frame idea, as well as the concept of framing itself – one of the features of playfulness.

The idea of framing and reframing can be brought into focus using photography as a metaphor. A photographer, by choosing the frame of the photo, emphasises a particular aspect, a point of view, a story – they direct the viewers' attention. Framing as a linguistic tool does the same thing; it directs the audiences' attention. By altering what is paid attention to in an experience, dilemma, meeting or conversation it can be used as a sensemaking or 'sensegiving' device (Wiggins & Hunter, 2016, p. 122), as a way to articulate problems (Dewulf & Bouwen, 2012) and surface assumptions (Torbert, 2001). Bateson (2000) suggests that frames are also a psychological tool that delimit a class or set of messages or actions; they include and exclude. This means that they can be used to direct focus either to what is included or to what is excluded, impacting on the meaning we make. For example, a picture frame includes the picture and excludes the wallpaper, which implies not only that the picture is art, but that the wallpaper is not (Bateson G., 2000, pp. 184-190).

A frame is about directing or redirecting attention, a way to linguistically and cognitively manipulate how something is seen and made sense of. The first time I appreciated this broader function of framing I was struck by the similarities with metaphor – a way of seeing something as something else, a way to manipulate a concept cognitively and imaginatively, a way to make meaning. Both alter what is seen, and function as a way to know. Whilst the link between framing and metaphor may feel tenuous to you, in this thesis it was substantial, like a link on a bicycle lock rather than a necklace. A link that started to bring the early theories and concepts of this inquiry into touching distance of the later ones.

The intention of this chapter was to outline a variety of definitions and conceptualisations of play, playfulness and the play frame; to show how this line of inquiry emerged from unpicking my consultation practice, and to hint at how, although I left the concepts to one side, they have shaped my subsequent inquiry and its core methodology.

It is an active choice not to include any discussion about the role, impact or implications of play or playfulness on organisations and change; to avoid discussions about the design of playful interventions or the experiments I undertook trying to be playful. At the time of inquiring into play I was not yet able to be uncertain, to not-know. I became fixated on the need to have a playful product, a playful method, a 'thing' and, with this, the playful state of mind that would have enabled playfulness disappeared. I considered my 'inability' to do playfulness at work as a failure, a demonstration of my lack of ability to do action research, or to make change happen, rather than, as I now see it, an expression of the impact of context. I hope, however, that what this section has shown is that whilst playfulness may not be the 'thing', it did become embedded as one of the threads of inquiry, although at the time without me even realising.

As a segue between this section and the next, you are going to meet Jāk who will give you an alternative perspective on my playful examination practice. I hope this will help to make sense of and contextualise the concepts you have just read about, as well as moving you towards the realm of form.

Jak

Well, it was the day when we do singing, I remember cause Sam, my friend, had a really runny nose and was coughing a bit and said singing was ouchy, and then it was the next day and I had a runny nose, but only a bit, so I went to school, but then I was feeling poorly and the nurse said I had to go home and Mummy had to leave work to come and get me.

Mummy was cross about stopping work and was asking me where it was hurting, and I told her that it hurted all over, because it did – well my head hurted, and my tummy had a headache, but mostly it was really ouchy when I was trying to eat and drink. Mummy asked me if I had a headache so I said yes, and she asked me if the lights hurt my eyes, and I wanted to go to sleep and I think that's what she meant so I said yes and then she looked a bit worried and not cross anymore. Mummy phoned up somebody and they were asking her lots of questions – well I think they were cause she kept saying yes or no and not much else and then she said that the phone person said that we had to go to the hopsital to be seen. I'd never been to the hopsital before, but I know that there are lots of bits to a hopsital so I asked Mummy where we were going and she said to the imaginecy department. I don't know what that is but it sounds like it might be fun.

When we got there it just seemed like one big room full of lots of growed ups who looked like they hurted too, and some looked cross and tired, and some were lying on the floor so I think they were the really, really tired ones, and some were a bit scary cause they had blood on things and bandages, but Mummy said don't worry. I was feeling poorly bad now, so I just sat with Mummy and tried to sleep, but Mummy kept prodding me and saying no which made me feel cross like some of the growed ups, but not as scary or loud as them. Then somebody shouted my name, and Mummy took us into a room and was asked lots of questions, again, by somebody in pyjamas and then

we went back to the growed up room. We were there for hours and hours and hours and it was yucky rainbow as there was only shouting names, and the growed ups, I didn't see any other people like doctors and nurses that are supposed to be in hospitals, and I didn't know what we were waiting for. Then somebody in different pyjamas came and said that we were going to the Childrens imaginecy bit and I wanted to ask why we hadn't already been there as I was a children, but I was feeling too poorly bad to say anything so I just went with Mummy. In the childrens bit there were no scary growed ups, just people with their childrens and some toys and some pictures and it was betterer and I wanted to ask again but I didn't.

Then we got called into another room by the same person who getted us from the growed up room and I thought they were going to ask Mummy lots of questions again, but they didn't. They said Hello to me and said their name was Clare, and that they were the doctor, and how was I feeling, and who had I brought with me? So I said I was poorly bad, and that Mummy was with me and then Dr Clare said they would ask Mummy some questions but kept checking the answers with me to make sure that Mummy had got it right. I was watching Dr Clare when they were talking to Mummy and I needed to ask Mummy something and she didn't seem to notice so I just asked anyway – Mummy is that a boy or a girl? Mummy looked at me all red in the face, but Dr Clare didn't and asked me what I thought – I said I didn't know cause there was short hair like a boy, trousers like a boy, shoes like a boy, earrings like a girl and a girls name. Dr Clare said that the thing is that girls can have short hair and boys can have long hair, and that boys and girls can wear trousers and earrings. Dr Clare then said that he was a girl. Then there was a bit more chatting with Mummy who was giving me cross eyes.

Then Dr Clare said that it was time to have a look at me and see which bits were poorly – this wasn't like when we went to the other doctor near the house who does extaminations, it was more fun. First of all Dr Clare wanted to know if I was tickly and then had to check, and I was on my tummy, and even though it was a little bit hurting it was still tickly, and then she was asking what I had for breakfast and seeing whether she could find it or guess it from feeling my tummy and she wanted to know if I had

had frogs – NO I don't eat frogs, but it was funny and my tummy was feeling a bit betterer while she was checking for frogs. Then she had to have a listen to see if she could hear the frogs croaking or see what else she could hear but she let me check the thing that she listened with first so I knowed that it wasn't hurty. After listening at the back and the front she wanted to know if I liked magic. I do like magic, so I said that I did and she showed me that she could blow a light out, she REALLY did. Then she said that if she used this special light to look in my ears and my throat then I could maybe get enough magic to blow the light out too. I don't think this is the same light that the other doctor has at extaminations. She looked in my ears, and then she asked me to open my mouth wide and say ahhh, so I did and she said ergh yuk when she looked which made me and Mummy laugh. Then she said shall we see if you are magic, and I blowed the light and it went out and she was really surprised and said how did you do that, it was fun. Then she made me Chase the light around looking up at the sky and the floor and the sides and then almost at the end of my nose, and then she put it away. Then she did some splaining to Mummy and told me that I had poorly throat and that was why I was feeling yucky, and why it was hurting to eat and drink, but that some special spray would help. She said that if I took some medicine and the spray and did some drinking, that when she comes to check me again I can probably go home. Mummy looked less worried.

The spray wasn't very nice, but then Dr Clare gave me a tiptop instead of a drink and I got to play with some of the toys. And there were lots of other childrens and Dr Clare seemed to be seeing lots, but also coming and going lots as it looked like she kept have to go and find things, and then helping other people in different coloured pyjamas do things too, and see the childrens they had seen, and then find more things and write some things.

Then she came to see me again and I told her I didn't hurt anymore and I had done some drinking. And she said well done, and tickled me again to check, and then did some talking with Mummy, but it was OK then. It was a bit funny though cause I think Dr Clare was quite silly and not really growed up, but mummy seemed to think that she

was a growed up as she was properly listening and also looked betterer like I felt betterer.

So then we went home and even though it was after days and days and days when we went through the big room full of growed ups there were still some of the same growed ups who had been there when we first came, and I thought that they looked even more tired and even more hurty than before and I wanted to tell them to go to childrens imaginecy, but Mummy said no.

Jāk Deconstructed

Jāk is placed here as a link between the chapters on playfulness and form. Before we move onto form, however, I am going to describe how Jāk emerged, and deconstruct the writing above to emphasise the data and knowing it contains.

About a year into this doctorate with the concepts of extended epistemology, my own physicality and playfulness at the forefront of my research, I was challenged by my supervision group about form. At the time I was using writing as inquiry (Marshall, J., 1999) – the process of writing in order to know, in response to an event or to literature – as my main method and form of action research. My colleagues pointed out the contradiction of inquiring into playfulness without a playful method or form, a discrepancy I had already become acutely aware of, wondering whether I could legitimately be inquiring into playfulness without a playful method or practice?

On my way home from the workshop where I had been issued the challenge of ‘writing more playfully’, I stayed with family overnight before driving the rest of the way. As I was sitting and chatting with my nephew Ben (aged 12 at the time), I took the opportunity to ask him if we could have a conversation about the ideas in my inquiry. After his enthusiastic permission to record and potentially use his words in my dissertation, we started to chat. As we discussed the ideas of playfulness, child-like interaction and learning through physical interaction, Ben suggested using things a child might say in my writing could work:

“You could like, deliberately mistype or something, cause if you’re a child you probably can’t say some things properly”

(Excerpt from recording. Conversation with Ben, May 2018).

This idea of adding things a child might say into my writing accompanied me the following morning on the long drive home as I listened to a Radio 4 podcast of *Word of Mouth*. This episode titled “Snotrils and Jumpolines” (Rosen, M. & Wright, L., 2016) discussed how children develop language, how they apply rules around past tense absolutely, and how the cross-over of sounds and concepts whilst they process language results in new words. These new words either sound like the original but are not quite right, like *snotrils*, or they smash concepts together to result in a more tangible or visceral understanding of the intended meaning, like *jumpolines*. This smashing together of words is something that Roald Dahl used frequently in his writing, particularly in *The BFG* (Dahl, 1982), and it even has its own definition ‘*gobblefunk*’ which can be found in the *Oxford Roald Dahl Dictionary*:

“if you gobblefunk with words you play around with them and invent new words or meanings” (Rennie, 2016, p. 102).

I started to respond to the challenge of writing more playfully by putting together a list of key words and themes in my inquiry at the time, and then considering what those words might be changed to if children were saying them, or if they were communicated via *gobblefunk*:

ideels – idea and eels, illustrating ideas that are slippery and difficult to catch

play-full-up – like mishearing playfulness, but also something full to the brim with playfulness

fizziCality – misspelt physicality, but in a way that suggests bubbles bouncing up and down in a fizzy drink, or me jumping around

imaginECy department – misheard emergency, but with so much potential, almost like smashing together what is and what I would like within my work context

I then discovered that the years of interacting with children and hearing their versions of why they are at the hōpsital had given me a blueprint for a child narrator: starting the story in a seemingly random spot, honest dialogue with no etiquette filter, limited or no punctuation and a non-jargonistic embodied descriptions of ideas. I started to imagine the story a child would tell about their visit to the Emergency Department, how the process, interactions and consultation would be described. How would they experience the wait, the unstocked trolleys, the adult side of the department and me?

Although JāK was written in a single sitting and has had very minimal editing since May 2018 this is because it emerged from and represents hours and hours of data and attention.

JāK is a collection of all the amazing, funny, ill and well children I have seen over the years as well as an embodiment of the kid's voice I can hear when I tell my partner about an entertaining child I saw on a shift. When I was asked at interview for my current post if I could tell them about a particular child that I have seen and why, I answered, truthfully, that on every shift there is a child that I remember, have fun with, make feel better or diagnose something significant – JāK is all those children.

A culmination of thousands and thousands of consultations with children and their families; years of noticing the system, pathways and processes; months of struggling to understand the impact of context on me and the care I provide. An articulation, for the first time, of the way I consult, present, and examine, the dual focus and attention on the child and their carers, and the serious intentions that sit behind the playful interactions.

This is an early example of **form doing epistemological work of its own**, a concept that I will come back to and build on in the *Form* and *Knowing* sections, but what I mean is that the act of writing was itself an activity of knowing, an epistemological practice. Through JāK I discovered how I undertake a consultation, what I was struggling with in the department and the impact of my physicality.

I have debated with myself about how much of JāK to take apart to evidence the hours of data, inquiry and attention that informed the piece. Part of me wants to place the writing and step away, allow it to just be. At the same time, I appreciate without making the context, references and ideas visible, the work that it did as a practice of knowing and a form of evidence may be lost.

What follows is a deconstruction of the sections of JāK undertaken much later in the inquiry process than the original writing, therefore referencing later ideas and shifted understanding; what I knew from JāK at the time as well as what I know from JāK now.

Mummy was cross about stopping work and was asking me where it was hurting, and I told her that it hurted all over, because it did – well my head hurted, and my tummy had a headache, but mostly it was really ouchy when I was trying to eat and drink. Mummy asked me if I had a headache so I said yes, and she asked me if the lights hurt my eyes, and I wanted to go to sleep and I think that's what she meant so I said yes and then she looked a bit worried and not cross anymore. Mummy phoned up somebody and they were asking her lots of questions – well I think they were cause she kept saying yes or no and not much else and then she said that the phone person said that we had to go to the hospital to be seen

This section is about the process of accessing healthcare. The anxiety, sometimes appropriate, mostly not (as in this case) of responding to public health promotion advice designed to improve the recognition of presentations like meningitis and sepsis. The difficulty of interpreting health advice if you have no medical background or experience. The challenge of phoning 111 and going through a series of predetermined questions designed for the call handler, not the caller. Questions aimed to rule in any potentially significant symptoms as needing to go to hospital, but which rule out reassurance and understanding for the caller of the still low risk of those symptoms actually being something significant. The difficulty of making healthcare access decisions one step removed – as the parent or carer rather than the patient. It is about the context of the consultation – what is being brought into the room that as a clinician you know nothing about.

When we got there it just seemed like one big room full of lots of grown ups who looked like they hurted too, and some looked cross and tired, and some were lying on the floor so I think they were the really, really tired ones, and some were a bit scary

cause they had blood on things and bandages, but Mummy said don't worry. I was feeling poorly bad now, so I just sat with Mummy and tried to sleep, but Mummy kept prodding me and saying no which made me feel cross like some of the grown ups, but not as scary or loud as them. Then somebody shouted my name, and Mummy took us into a room and was asked lots of questions, again, by somebody in pyjamas and then we went back to the grown up room. We were there for hours and hours and hours and it was yucky rainbow as there was only shouting names, and the grown ups, I didn't see any other people like doctors and nurses that are supposed to be in hospitals, and I didn't know what we were waiting for.

This is the start of describing the impact of poor flow on waiting times as well as the effect of not having a children's area with a separate reception or waiting room, or one that is open 24/7. I also really noticed for first time the way we make assumptions that different coloured scrubs are understood by patients and families as uniforms that differentiate between doctors, nurses and allied health professionals – realising as I wrote that they may well just be read as pyjamas and therefore as if nobody professional has seen you yet. The way we fail to explain the process to the people the process is for...

Then we got called into another room by the same person who gotted us from the grown up room and I thought they were going to ask Mummy lots of questions again, but they didn't. They said Hello to me and said their name was Clare, and that they were the doctor, and how was I feeling, and who had I brought with me? So I said I was poorly bad, and that Mummy was with me and then Dr Clare said they would ask Mummy some questions but kept checking the answers with me to make sure that Mummy had got it right.

In departments I worked in previously, the waiting room was part of the children's department. This opening line is about the strange-for-me process of walking out of the children's area, through adult ED, into the adult waiting room, to get a paediatric patient and move them to the Children's area and then switch into seeing them as a clinician. The impact of working almost single-handedly, compensating for process, space and organisational issues, taking on roles often done by nurses or nursing assistants. Writing with no judgement of the process, just a wondering about how it is seen from the other side.

It is also about where my focus sits in a consultation. As soon as the consultation starts, my focus is on the child, no matter how old they are. This is firstly to develop a rapport with them and secondly to show the parents that I know how to communicate and interact with children. It is about reassuring everyone in the room that they can trust me.

I was watching Dr Clare when they were talking to Mummy and I needed to ask Mummy something and she didn't seem to notice so I just asked anyway – Mummy is that a boy or a girl? Mummy looked at me all red in the face, but Dr Clare didn't and asked me what I thought

This is about the refreshing honesty of children, the embarrassment of parents, my enthusiasm to be honest in response and the *He's a Girl* story you have already read.

Then Dr Clare said that it was time to have a look at me and see which bits were poorly – this wasn't like when we went to the other doctor near the house who does examinations, it was more fun. First of all Dr Clare wanted to know if I was tickly and

then had to check, and I was on my tummy, and even though it was a little bit hurting it was still tickly, and then she was asking what I had for breakfast and seeing whether she could find it or guess it from feeling my tummy and she wanted to know if I had had frogs – NO I don't eat frogs, but it was funny and my tummy was feeling a bit betterer while she was checking for frogs. Then she had to have a listen to see if she could hear the frogs croaking or see what else she could hear but she let me check the thing that she listened with first so I knowed that it wasn't hurty. After listening at the back and the front she wanted to know if I liked magic. I do like magic, so I said that I did and she showed me that she could blow a light out, she REALLY did. Then she said that if she used this special light to look in my ears and my throat then I could maybe get enough magic to blow the light out too. I don't think this is the same light that the other doctor has at extaminations. She looked in my ears, and then she asked me to open my mouth wide and say ahhh, so I did and she said ergh yuk when she looked which made me and Mummy laugh. Then she said shall we see if you are magic, and I blowed the light and it went out and she was really surprised and said how did you do that, it was fun. Then she made me chase the light around looking up at the sky and the floor and the sides and then almost at the end of my nose, and then she put it away. Then she did some splaining to Mummy

Here I get to describe what I actually do in a consultation and the intention behind my playful physical practice. Playful interactions are intended to gain trust, relax children, distract and enable examination in order to diagnose, while also articulating how I know whether a child is sick through physical interaction and physical knowing. The in-action use of a play frame – using something silly as something serious, silly techniques as serious examination that allows me to know - also frames the interaction for parents in a way that I hope enables them to see and experience the wellness or illness of their child.

It was a bit funny though cause I think Dr Clare was quite silly and not really grewed up, but Mummy seemed to think that she was a grewed up as she was properly listening and also looked betterer like I felt betterer.

It was also an opportunity to acknowledge that actually most paediatric Emergency Medicine consultants don't interact quite this playfully, that other doctors doing examinations are often more serious even when paediatrics is their speciality. Writing JāK was the first time that I owned and validated my own particular playful, physical way of consulting as a way of knowing. Seeing what I do as more than just fun whilst doing an examination, but actually as an epistemological practice.

And there were lots of other childrens and Dr Clare seemed to be seeing lots, but also coming and going lots as it looked like she kept have to go and find things, and then helping other people in different coloured pyjamas do things too, and see the childrens they had seen, and then find more things and write some things

Now we shift back to process, the impact of trolleys not being stocked, equipment not replaced, running around trying to find things, helping other people find things, supporting the nurses, reviewing patients for the juniors. What I imagine me doing everything might look like, certainly what me doing everything feels like.

So then we went home and even though it was after days and days and days when we went through the big room full of grewed ups there were still some of the same grewed ups who had been there when we first came, and I thought that they looked even more

tired and even more hurty than before and I wanted to tell them to go to Childrens imaginecy, but Mummy said no.

And then back to the reality that, at least when I am there, the waiting time for adults is much, much, longer than for children and that this impacts how people feel and how they subsequently interact. It also subtly nods to my drive to improve care across the system, one of the reasons I moved, and one of the things that has worsened rather than improved.

Why doesn't the imaginecy department work well for everyone all of the time?

I really enjoyed the process and form of JāK. I felt that I had gained a new voice, a new way of knowing and of presenting my thoughts and ideas – that perhaps JāK would be a regular guest narrator in my thesis. I used JāK in my transfer paper, to articulate the concepts, ideas and themes that were shaping my inquiry and it didn't work. The snippets felt forced, I didn't know anything differently after writing them and they landed less well for the reader too. At the time I didn't really understand what the lack of success of the extra bits of JāK was about and so I didn't write anything more as JāK.

As you will discover in the next section on form, however, I now understand why this second use of JāK didn't work – it is about intention of use and outcome.

Chapter 5. *Playful use of form as a bodily activity of (not) knowing*

JaK has, I hope, introduced you to the idea of form as method, an idea that will be built on in this chapter. I will describe my understanding of form and how ‘ish’ positioning (Reynolds, 2005) – a good enough not-art positioning that echoes and resonates with playful mindset and a play frame – gives me ‘permission’ to be creative and to use form. I will also discuss how I position my use of form within the context of arts-based research. Although I have primarily used two forms as method in this inquiry, the focus in this section will be on the poem-ish writing and associated physically-derived metaphors. The intent is that this builds on the previous sections on metaphor and playfulness and leads into the subsequent section on bodily knowing, which will include wire structures, the other form that I use as method.

The format of this chapter is showing more than telling, in that it includes poem-ish writing and the knowing derived, actions taken or shifted understanding that resulted from these forms in the foreground, with theory positioned a little more in the background. How form works specifically as an activity of knowing and as a practice of negative capability, as a way to not know, may be mentioned but won’t be discussed until the *Activity of (not) knowing* section.

To contextualise my use of form and my understanding of arts-based research I need to confess to a belief or positioning I hold. I am someone who defaults to anxiety and to thinking that I am not doing enough, not doing it right, not good enough, failing or letting myself and

others down. This extends across all aspects of my life and includes competency. For example, I would rarely if ever describe myself as a cyclist or a swimmer although I do both regularly and reasonably, including years of taking part in events. There is something in a title that for me confers expert and success – a title means I should be really good at it – so naming myself as such can inhibit, rather than give me permission to do things. I am also someone who, when faced with paper and pens, or paints and brushes and told ‘do art’ in masters and doctoral workshops, is filled with dread to the extent that any possible knowing or knowledge generation is drowned out by anxiety. This may stem from a teacher throwing one of my pictures in the bin during an art class at school – who knows – but I am very clear that I can’t do art, that ‘doing art’ or ‘being artistic’ is inhibitory and negative rather than freeing and positive. It is from within this perspective and positioning that form as method emerged.

As mentioned in *Jak*, writing as inquiry or writing form as method was my main go-to at the beginning of this doctorate, which included throwing words at a page, needing to get them down, knowing they didn’t make prose or that prose didn’t fit the embodied or enactive experience I was trying to convey. At the time I considered these ‘collection of words’ to be poems without considering what a poem is for, or what I intended it to say. I was aware that a different form of writing was enabling different knowing, but not always slowing down to pay attention to how the form itself was working as a method of inquiry, or even what the form was. A physically-derived metaphor from swimming helped me to revisit some of my ‘poems’ and to develop my understanding of poetic form and form as method, to use an understanding from physical form to enhance written form.

This evolution in form and understanding will be shown over the next few pages starting with *sea and tide*, an early experiment with poetic form, then moving through *Freya* to *swimming* and the revisiting and relearning poetic experiment that followed. The poems, the interpretation, the shifted understanding of context and impact on practice are all intermingled in these next few pages.

A Sea and Tide Metaphor

We hadn't been here long, the evenings were getting dark, cycling home with the wind buffeting, the rain threatening and the light fading, I get to the bay. The tide is huge, great white horses are dancing across the bay, waves are crashing over onto the cycle path spraying me as I ride, bringing with them shells and seaweed and salt. I've never ridden through sea spray before – I find myself laughing and smiling tasting salt and sand, thoroughly enjoying myself despite the hard work and slow pace cycling against the wind. The excitement, power, enthusiasm of the high tide, high wave and high wind combination is infectious. I am almost home and see Emily standing on the seafront, shifting her focus between the water and the path to make sure I make it home against the wind but also mesmerised by the sea. I get to her grinning ear to ear and we just stop watching the waves, feeling energised and spell bound until we realise we are very wet and move indoors.

The infectious enthusiasm of this high tide, high wave cycle home has stayed with me since that ride, and living with the sea across the road, amplifies and maintains the viscerality. The sea can be crashing on the steps, or so far out it's hardly visible; we can be nipping across the road for a swim, or walking for miles through sand, mud and stones. As I got down to the reality of doing my doctorate, I started to find that I had days full of enthusiasm, writing, reading, generating ideas, and then days sitting at the keyboard easily distracted feeling worried and anxious that I wasn't doing enough – that the enthusiasm was gone for good. Looking out of the window at the ever-changing bay shaped by the highs and lows of the tide, remembering the excitement of the ride home, I started to develop a metaphor that helped me to understand, reconsider and manage this anxiety. I saw the doctoral process, the 'how' of working and writing like the sea – there are high and low tides, waves and flat water, ups and downs – but whatever it feels like at low tide, the sea will always come back in, the enthusiasm will always return. The metaphor enabled me to understand that for me inquiry was like high tide, the enthusiasm deafening, the waves crashing with new knowing, and the

periods of less inquiry were just the tide being out – although it felt like enthusiasm ebbing, it was just low tide, a calm distant sea that will return, as will inquiry.

And then there was a storm.

Not a slight drop in pressure and unsettled weather but a depression² with anticlockwise winds, clouds, rain, huge waves and severe weather warnings. Early 2019 saw an accumulation of drops in pressure – feelings of being lonely both in and out of work; Paediatrics backing out of a year-long work project on a new shared service; the healthboard youth forum³ doing a mystery shopper style visit to the department, finding it shut and writing a very negative and upsetting report sent directly to Executives; resignation of the second paediatric nurse appointed due to having to work in the adult side of the department; the senior team no longer supporting ED advertising for more consultants, one of which was going to be paediatric; feeling tired, unfit, fighting off a cold, slow on the bike, only commuting, minimal swimming. I'm feeling broken, resilience gone, struggling to just turn up at work and struggling even more to enquire.

I'm wondering at the sense of doing the doctorate. Sitting at my desk I look out of the window again.

² Forecasting term for area of low pressure

³ Group of young people who visit and report on areas that provide care to them within the health board to advise on appropriateness of care for young people, and any obvious gaps in provision.

The sea is rough, rolling, tumultuous, the wind causing ripples, and swirls and patches on the uneven surface, the grey brown water churning, almost bubbling, wind whipped waves crossing the tide-driven waves to cause shapes like squashed circles or ovals to appear and then disappear, the white horses dancing in all directions that bit further out, the other side of the bay is obscured by the clouds and mist and rain – storm Freya has hit the bay.

I realise that although high tide, wild weather seas can be exciting to watch, to be drenched and blown around by, the weather and waves can sometimes be so fierce that it is safer to retreat, to get warm, to hunker down, to catch my breath, to stay dry. That once the storm has passed, the wind and waves will have altered the shoreline, the pebbles, beach, view will be different, ready to be re-discovered.

I realise that, when I make wire structures containing found objects, these are not found when the tide is high, they are found when the tide is low. That at high tide, swimming from the steps across the road can be tricky, as the stones and shells underfoot hidden by the water can be uncomfortable, painful, difficult to navigate; the same hazards revealed as interesting shapes, potential finds, ever-changing easily navigated patterns when the tide is out.

The initial tide and wave metaphor helped me manage some anxiety around ‘not working’ but it also constrained my focus of attention in inquiry to the high tide, large wave, non-storm weather conditions. The storm enabled me to broaden my focus, to extend this metaphor, and a sudden shift takes place in my thinking, in my inquiry, in my resilience. There is additive knowing from the smaller waves, from the smashed objects, from when the tide is out. That whilst the high tide, exciting waves may be where key ideas of this inquiry such as playful

mindset and physicality have emerged from, these ideas don't disappear when the tide is out. Whilst I might not be able to swim at low tide, I can build sandcastles, paddle in rock pools, find flotsam and jetsam or hunt for treasure. There is different knowing and inquiry possible at low and high tide, in good and bad weather. Storms leave things revealed that weren't visible before, ideas emerge that are different from those at high tide. Expanding the metaphor enabled me to recognise that the beginning of 2019 made possible a broader understanding of my inquiry. The shift in thinking giving me the awareness that I can respond and act both when the tide is high and when it is low, and that change is happening as a result. That when I'm hunkering down away from a storm or exploring at low tide, if I pay attention to enquiring here too then I might find insights into when and why interventions and conversations don't work, what spectrum of interventions might be possible and when it is OK to just stay inside and keep warm. I start to understand the context of this inquiry differently and that my agency and ability to inquire or undertake change is dependent on context. I recognise that whatever I can manage to do within the storm, and changing weather conditions is OK, that it may be first-person action research is all that the weather allows, that second-person co-inquiry isn't feasible in a storm. I relax into this understanding, and own it, rather than berating myself about not doing second-person enquiry, and my resilience improves.

This metaphorical conceptual understanding came first from a figurative and literal form – *Freya(re)Framing* is a poem I wrote as an attempt to convey this shift in knowing, the meaning derived from this metaphor – a form that shares the physicality, the shifting thoughts, the shifting sea. To use poem-ish form to explore and extend a metaphorical understanding of work and change, to follow the sea, to make weird patterns, to be wild, unruly and unexpected, to break out and then to recover.

Freya (re)Framing

Message in a bottle

Window view

Rolling, brown, turbulent

Howling, battering, powerful

Childlike shapes squashed circles and wavering lines emerge and submerge but only if you watch

Waves fight white horses from different vantages and depths

the bay has disappeared there is only boiling, churning, grey-brown merging to a grey mist wall

drenching, challenging, blustery,

you don't swim in that – do you?

Hunker down, watch from a window, wrapped up, warm, recuperating after the storm

Retracing your steps

Computer screen

Grey, static, mechanical

Misled, ignored, disappointed

Children commenting on poor service, dull décor, pain and frustration but only if you listen

Priorities competing around power and position and visibility

the plan has receded leaving resignations, individuals, wasted hours, pointless papers

frustrating, challenging, battering

you don't work in that – do you?

Fail to write, distract in games and gadgets, woolly hat on inside, recovering from the week



Puffing cloud

Sky clearing

Sand, pebbles, driftwood

Reshaped, sculpted, inviting

Changed after the storm, flotsam and jetsam, shells, sea glass; treasures but only if you look

Findings for playing, for scrabbling, for wire sculptures

the bay is back, the view elongated making visible blue sky, hills, wind turbines, horizon

You swim in that – don't you?

Cold, challenging, refreshing

Back in the sea, on the bike, planning the week, the events, the next few months

X marks the spot

Apathy clearing

Ideas, plans, shifts

Recoup, reframe, rethink

Freya has left, context now changed, different voices, alternative perspectives but only if I notice

Opportunities for alliances, visibility, ownership, change

the plan is a fledgling one, progressive but pragmatic, colourful not grey

you work there – don't you?

challenging

Back on the bike, back in the zone, writing the next iteration, organising meetings, offering hope⁴



⁴ In terms of method, looking out the window, rolling some story cubes, writing the first verse of the poem came first, then the awareness of how this related to work, the broadening of the metaphor and the subsequent verses of the poem happened. I then did a piece of writing as inquiry about my altered understanding from broadening this metaphor, which evolved into the writing in this section.

Swimming Form

Never have I had to concentrate so hard on relaxing. There are so many things to remember, notice, correct all at the same time. Each stroke I do, I seem to get one thing right, and forget the rest. Floppy hands and relaxed no effort arms above the water and then high elbow pulling and final push away, all the power used in the water not above it. Don't take my hands past my hips with the push as otherwise it's wasted effort, then up with the elbow, not hand or arm, otherwise it impacts on my shoulders and is inefficient. Stroke rate needs to decrease – no long distances will be achieved whirling like a dervish. Aim to go slower, remain relaxed, focus on breathing – in from stomach not chest, then trickle the breath out to keep buoyant whilst timing the breath in so that it doesn't slow the stroke or cause over rotation. If I generate enough forward momentum there will be a bow wave that I can breathe in, so I can keep my head up a little when swimming, looking forward more and seeing my arms glide in front, so that I don't have to shift my position as much in the water to site where I am going. As I concentrate on my arms I forget my legs, but to float and glide and keep an on the surface body position I need to kick – a bit in the sea, but a lot in the pool as otherwise my legs just sink. A shallower kick, less depth, more power, heels on the surface of the water, fast in the pool, slow in the sea. Trying to kick with opposite leg from arm, maintaining the helix, the corkscrew power through the water. My arms need to enter in front of my shoulders, no crossing – watching until the bubbles dissipate, the end of the glide then pull, swimming strong not fast, swimming relaxed not tensed. I am absolutely in my physicality – concentrating on movements, subtle changes, how the water feels, how my momentum feels, how will I know if I've got it right? Then suddenly, for a few strokes I feel powerful, effortless, relaxed, fast – and then it goes again, but my body knows and tells me when I've got it right. I swim lengths of the bay, concentrating on all aspects, forgetting to site, noticing the waves a little but mostly just noticing the feel of moving through and with the water. I swim lengths of the pool, focusing on drills to dial in the new movements, looking at the time, frustrated about being slower but trusting I will get faster again, noticing the water less, noticing my movements more. I look out the window wanting to swim, mostly wanting to swim, to practise, to feel the water, to get that effortless, powerful, relaxed form again.

A friend is teaching me front crawl – or more accurately I am relearning front crawl. I learnt to swim as a child, but front crawl was never that successful, then a friend at university gave me some pointers and I got the hang of it a bit. I've since swum as part of triathlon clubs, doing drills, learning to breathe bilaterally, doing more drills and sprints. I've had stroke assessment on a triathlon holiday and one-to-one sea swimming coached session both offering advice on what to work on, what drills to do, but how I am learning now feels completely different. A shift in focus, slow down, relax and only apply power where

it is useful, swim strong not fast, focus on breathing, focus on position – learning an overall physical form that will enable enjoyable, efficient, long-distance swimming.

As I swim I am completely in the swimming, in the water, in my body – learning anew something I already knew how to do. Taking apart some bits, building on others. After an initial frustration of getting slower, aching, struggling, the few moments of feeling like I've got it, feeling relaxed and powerful in the water are building up, I want to do more, I want to be swimming, I want to be practising, I want to be in the sea. I am enjoying slowing down.

This journal writing, in which I focused on the physical form of swimming, allowed me to see that there is power and value in going slower to go quicker, of efficient and effective form. This realisation enabled me to respond to a repeated challenge around my writing and to develop a method of revisiting and rewriting that has revealed new and different knowing.

The pattern of throwing words at a page, needing to get them down, hoping they made some form of poem, and then moving quickly on, that I described earlier, was often replicated in my writing about theories and ideas – throwing them at the page, hoping they landed, reaching a conclusion without showing my working and moving on 'bish-bosh'. There have been multiple times during this doctorate when I have been told by my supervisor to go slower and to revisit my writing and thinking, and I have struggled to heed that advice, to shift my focus, to go back and revisit, to understand what I was being asked to do, or why. Yet through swimming my understanding shifted.

I realised that taking apart something I have done, or learnt to do, building on some bits, removing others, did not negate the initial activity or learning; it instead resulted in more learning, greater knowing, more distance. I wouldn't be able to be refining my stroke if I hadn't

already learnt how to swim; I wouldn't be able to learn how to undertake change differently if I hadn't already been undertaking change work; I won't be able to give my writing more power and my inquiry more depth without revisiting ideas and rewriting.

Developing a metaphor of writing as swimming blended concepts in a way that enabled me to see the value in revisiting my writing in order to develop a more refined form, to create more power by going slower. It was also the start of understanding form as method.

Using swimming as a metaphor for change practice also helped me to see things differently. In attempting to undertake improvement at work there are always discussions about needing thinking space, head room and time to undertake change, whilst at the same time worrying that taking the time and slowing down is wasting time and minimises our previous work. I could use swimming in this context; talk about slowing down our current stroke to understand it better, to remove flaws, to build on strengths. To do some drills that allow us to practise some new aspects of the stroke, so that we can go slower, to go quicker, to become more efficient, waste less effort – rather than switching to an equally or maybe even more inefficient backstroke or breast stroke, or maybe even butterfly – trying to learn something completely new, splashing everyone in the room, but not getting to the end of the pool any quicker, wasting our power reserves, being inefficient.

As I started to think about revisiting my writing I realised that alongside academic texts I had been reading a variety of books, not obviously related to my inquiry, and that it was the ones not written as traditional prose that have really stuck with me; *Croak* (Sampirisi, 2011), *Attrib. and other stories* (Williams, 2017) and *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* (Porter, 2015) all in

poetic form, and *The Living Mountain* (Shepherd, 2011), *Wisdom and Metaphor* (Zwicky, 2014) and *Consolations* (Whyte, 2015) probably more appropriately described as poetic prose.

In reading them all, I have experienced being told less and being asked to interpret and extrapolate more. I fluctuate between confused and intrigued and find myself more physically involved than I do with prose, grappling with meaning, involved with the words, not always enjoying but always immersed in the writing. I have a different interaction and meaning-making experience with these types of writing than I do with prose. The form not only enables me to know differently in reading but may enable me to know differently in writing and in articulating my own ideas for others.

I take a week that I had put aside for writing to experiment with this relearning, revisiting ideas using previously written poems (and one discrete ranting piece of writing) as forms I can take apart and potentially make more effective for myself and others.

Revisiting and Relearning Form

I started this rewriting experiment by reading the equivalent of a beginner's guide to poetry in the form of a short ebook (O'Neill, 2014), alongside browsing a few poetry websites, to understand some of the fundamentals of the form. Poetry, I now realise, is about the use of imagery and figurative language to describe and communicate something much broader than the words on the page might suggest. It is written with the intent of being spoken aloud, often using a congruent metaphor or theme throughout the poem. I learnt that poetry is enabled via specific linguistic tools like metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia, contrast, symbolism and repetition, and traditionally structured as either free verse (no rhyme or metre) or formal verse (rules about both rhyme and metre). Other structures are described like poetic prose and mixed forms, but whichever is used it should be shaped with pauses and line breaks that enable it to be read and performed.

I realised that very little of the poetry I had written either fulfilled these criteria or was written with these criteria in mind, so I went through all my saved writing, rereading the poems and some short pieces of writing and choosing a few to revisit and rewrite. These were chosen on feel, trusting my physical response to my own writing – they didn't land or convey what I had hoped on rereading, they didn't fulfil any of the criteria above, and I felt that they could, or I was struck by there being something new I could know by revisiting from a different perspective in terms of time, method and understanding.

I have chosen to share three examples. The first two, *Circus* and *Visiting*, are based on earlier poems and are shown with the original versions; the third, *James Bond and Beatrix Potter*, was based on a short piece of writing about gender and feminism and only the poem is shared. A discussion on form follows, which will include the shifted knowing and impact on my understanding of both the subjects in the writing and on my use of form as method.

Expectations (3/8/17)

Small but big
 Really Loud with your behaviour
 Look at those shoes
 Are you really a doctor?
 Genuinely listen and interested
 Time for everyone and anyone
 Always know where you stand – positive and negative
 high level of energy all the time
 modulation of voice and gesticulation
 high expectations
 bring others up – except if you are down
 different and expected to be
 sexuality very visible
 you are different, you are not the norm
 consultant confers intellectual expectations
 consultant brings power and influence
 ED brings provenance
 Licence to go places and have conversations that others cannot go
 Visually deceiving – energy makes you big
 Sitting forward, looking down, breaking eye contact – what does this mean?
 Have you already decided? Are you still interested?
 How do you show that you know?
 Process really quickly – already moved on
 Imagine the power in more visible validation of others
 Imagine the power in being wrong.....
 Not what expected – takes time to get used to
 Is this what it seems?
 Need time to trust the difference
 Don't do recognition well
 People remember you when they meet you
 Create conditions for more productive conversations that a typical, traditional doctor
 don't worry about the crook of the neck or the roll of the eyes
 Passionate, knowledgeable, say it as it is
 on the face of it quite scary but not at all really
 you are certainly one of a kind
 don't tolerate crap care and expect a lot from people
 Open, honest, straightforward
 some consultants who know their stuff "but don't share their toys" you are not like that
 putting your hand on my shoulder and asking are you happy
 engaged with the patients and family all the time, never switch that off
 Straightforward and prepared to say the controversial difficult stuff
 Say stuff that other people don't and you're allowed to
 Confident, commanding, decisive, direct, supportive, efficient, committed, credible
 Listen to everyone, respect all levels
 Not afraid to say don't know
 Same standards for doctors and nurses
 Confidence and trust
 Say it as it is

Circus (12/11/19)

Hush descends and incredulity takes over as a diminutive figure walks into the middle of the tent. The shoes are the first thing we notice – shiny, large, colourful – and then the expressions, the movements, the pure physicality bouncing off the sand and the canvas – small but big, loud behaviour – the initial impression of size must have been a trick of the lights

Walking around the audience, everyone matters – tall, short, boy, girl, serious, silly, young, old - Magic tricks with lights and frogs are shown and shared, enthusiasm spreading, until someone doesn't engage – the room quietens and shivers as if snow has fallen – then it melts with a laugh, smile, eye roll and we are all taking our coats off

Rules seem different – stage, audience, sex, gender, expert, novice all blurred – unexpected truths and difficult questions when we came for answers and entertainment - yet we hang on every crook of the neck, every shrug of the shoulder – suddenly contact is broken, the eyes are down, and we know we just failed to meet expectations – there are some rules after all

The lights dim, the backdrop changes, the tent replaced by a meeting room, a hospital corridor, a waiting room, a bedside – yet the toys are still shared, the energy infectious, the expectations high, the interest real, the message honest – we're still at the circus and the power of the performer is palpable – to the audience at least

Visit as a Conversation (22/5/17)

Will I be able to park?
 Don't worry you won't get a ticket
 No parking at anytime
 Can I help you?
 I'm always in the way
 I've never been here before
 It's one big family
 You've brought the sun with you
 Don't worry I'm early
 Why would you want to work here?
 No kids on the bus
 Do you want coffee?
 Whatever happened to Andi Peters?
 Why would you want to work here?
 I love coming to work
 I don't know what this room's for?
 I guess I can't see past the workforce challenge
 Why would you want to work here?
 Someone who fits in
 We're really diverse
 If we don't have the staff I'm not moving
 Well you get my vote
 We need you more than you need us

Visit (14/11/19)

Here is the Graveyard of ambition
 Yet went I of my own volition
 "Well you get my vote" pre-interview quote
 What role other than just clinician?

 "We need you much more than you need us"
 Driver shouts "no children on the bus"
 Trolleys never stocked; no corridors blocked
 "I always do it, no one else does"

 Digging new graves in an old bone yard
 Change requires cuts leaving old ground
 scarred
 "If we don't have staff, I'm not moving past"
 Deserve much more than such disregard

 "Understand this hospital is special"
 "Fitting in matters", dislike a rebel
 Unique, unusual, context is all
 "We're a family", sharing a vessel

 Have I become a politician
 Or more scarily a mortician
 Why would you want to work here? To renew
 Tradition or new ambition

Visiting

(15/11/19)

We need you more than you need us, sounds like something that might be said on a deathbed, not at an interview. A deathbed, a trolley, a mortuary corridor, a cemetery, somewhere where time stands still.

Why would you want to work here? You do know that here is the graveyard of ambition, right? A graveyard, a headstone, a place of remembrance, somewhere that offers sanctuary.

But it is not just remembrance, or sanctuary or the past, it is change and moving on and what comes next. Deep holes are cut, and then filled anew, new stones are carved, new flowers brought.

The mortician makes nice what is broken and old, but it is a facade, to placate and reassure. A face on a transition that must happen, that is onerous and troublesome yet known and recognised

To soften the adjustment old habits are maintained, security in trappings of the familiar, yet they must be removed too. We provide great care, we are special, we've tried that before, I do it no-one else does

Safe blankets to wrap around themselves when the reality starts to creep in at the edges, they need to be discarded in order to move on. Like taking the blanket from a shivering child, when the perception of being cold is an illusion caused by a fever.

Broken tombstones, lost carvings, overgrown weeds and brambles – the burial ground becomes buried itself if development is resisted. Unstocked trolleys, leaderless, broken and lost equipment, carelessness

Make a shift from graveyard to lifeguard, from mortician to expedition, from decomposition and decay to new conditions in which to play. Relearning new habits, based on but not constrained by the old, evolve, a haven not a shrine.

James Bond and Beatrix Potter

I want to be James Bond when I get older

Playing rugby at Twickenham

Convert a transit to campervan

Prepare and train, a battle-ready soldier

A punch bag and weights for muscle-bound shoulder

Are the adaptations in your plan?

With your affliction you sure you can?

Being pushed outside, no coat, getting colder

Languages will need some work, but I do well at school

I do my own bike maintenance, ride mile after mile

Drink espresso, make martini – I have the ability

Fitness from bodyweight, cycling and hours in the pool

“I’ve not been disabled by.....” or is that just denial

Of constraints placed on me by the maleness of society?

Form...

In the online Oxford English dictionary *form* is defined as both a noun and a verb:

Noun – *the visible shape or configuration of something, the particular way in which a thing exists or appears*

Verb – *to bring together parts, to combine to create something, to make into a specific shape or form* (<http://english.oxforddictionaries.com/form>)

Within poetry and writing, form is defined as the structure within which the words are placed, functioning to give power to the words on the page and to create meaning through the combination with content. The revisiting relearning experiment gave me a visceral, embodied, felt understanding of how form shapes and creates meaning. Using limited words, imagery, rhyming and metre impacted on the word choice and made those choices matter. From the seemingly simple choice of a single word which can completely alter how a line sounds or what it conveys, to how the metaphors used shape thinking. The form of poetry forced me to choose differently, and this impacted on what I knew from the process and about my inquiry.

The *Visit* series of poems, the original of which was based on snippets of conversation heard during a pre-interview visit, have helped me to see how language can shape thinking. The original snippets were subsequently overlaid with comments and phrases including here '*is the graveyard of ambition*' (wrongly attributed to Dylan Thomas, author unknown) with the negativity and challenge of undertaking change that I was feeling at the time, playing into imagery around graveyards and death. The formal verse structure I used additively shaped the imagery and the messaging and ultimately revealed knowing. I had never previously considered a graveyard as a metaphor for work and as this emerged I felt that it needed a bit

more exploring, which is where the second free-form poetic prose came from. I found the metaphor full of contradictions which helped me to appreciate the juxtaposition of poor performance and presentation of great care, the paradox between the data and the rhetoric. 'Graveyard' positions my colleagues in mourning, holding onto the past. This perspective gave me a more sympathetic understanding of their actions, and of my potential interventions. I had really struggled to understand and work within the contradiction of extremely poor performance, sometimes poor outcomes and a belief in the provision of good care. I now have an altered way of seeing, of how it matters having something familiar and 'good' to hold onto in order to turn up, so this alters my choices about change. Leaving alone processes that enable turning up, approaching processes that are instead just a comfort blanket. If providing lunch to patients enables colleagues to cope with the fact that they are in the department so long that they need lunch, then lunches isn't the thing to try and change. I also wondered, conversely if sometimes I had been too gentle, whether I had been trying to take off the equivalent of a plaster really slowly, trying not to cause pain, but with this action every little pulled hair is felt, the plaster focused on, removal feared – perhaps instead I should just pull it off quickly, revealing the healing wound underneath so we can see what we need to deal with rather than fearing the reveal.

In *Circus* the language and imagery has altered the sense I make of my own power and physicality. *Expectations*. the original poem, was written from snippets of conversations and feedback I had from colleagues when I left my first consultant post – I had asked colleagues what they expected of a consultant and whether I met or challenged their expectations. On rereading I noticed lots of phrases about my physicality, my openness, my straightforwardness – but also about how my mood impacted on the mood of everyone else and the high expectations I had of myself and others. A line about my shoes jumped out, and I started to think of a clown in a circus, a tent, circus performers, and developing a poem with a circus

theme. As I wrote, the impact of the performers and their power as seen from an audience perspective emerged, shifting my knowing and understanding of my own power and presentation, and how that might translate into work. In keeping with the idea of a consistent theme in poetry, and the potential to hint at a greater question, the last verse suggests work as performance, hospital as circus, and power as problematic.

The theme for the third shared poem, *James Bond and Beatrix Potter*, came from two lines in a ranting piece of writing I had done in response to a push to read more feminist literature and to assumptions made about how being 'female' feels. The idea of the title came from a quote attributed to Beatrix Potter – "*I have never myself suffered the disabilities assumed to arise from my sex*" – and from the role I had as a child in my dad's made-up bedtime stories as 'Kadoody Rabbit', an adventuring, strong, hero and I realised that my aspiration as a kid (one that I still may harbour) was to be James Bond. Linking the idea of not being able to be James Bond, due to disability of sex (although the most recent Bond film does challenge this assumption), led me to ideas of what is required to be a spy, as well as how disability is about impairment and the impact of societal factors on that impairment – society limiting what is possible, rather than the impairment itself. Perhaps in response to this idea of limitations, or as a way to amplify it, I also decided to write in a set sonnet form that prescribed the rhyming and syllables used. I didn't quite stick to the syllable number, but otherwise found that the constraints were additive to the process; I was more considered about my word choice, about how to set the scene and deliver the punchline within these limits and the ideas changed, shaped by the need to rhyme. I came away smiling, my body relaxed, having enjoyed the experience, and written something quite different for me. I also felt I had conveyed the naivety of my earlier rant with a knowing raised eyebrow and that subsequently I know this naivety and the complexity of my gender positioning anew. I was enabled to enquire further into my

body and gender, which I wouldn't have done if I hadn't done this revisit, rewrite or used poetry form as method.

In *Circus*, telling the story from the position of the audience allowed me to see that I have more power and impact, particularly in my physicality, than perhaps I am comfortable with, and more than I have chosen to present or articulate before. I now appreciate the impact that even simple physical gestures that I make and am not always aware of such as the raised eyebrow or the lack of eye contact can have. This perspective opens the possibility of inquiry into the impact of my physicality, or at least the opportunity to pay more attention, to notice and to make choices about my physicality and gestures. I recognise that what knowledge is shared and the form it takes will impact as much on how it is received and understood as the content of the knowledge itself does. Altering the language, access and shape will shift what can be or is known, and then what is possible in terms of change. Writing in poetic form alters knowledge through what and how it is shared.

As the examples I hope have shown, for me poetic writing is often based on physicality, on interaction, 'in relation' – all aspects of my understanding of change and my understanding of bodily-knowing, as you will come to discover. I find I feel comfortable with the descriptions of poetry as embodied, as being written with the intent to evoke physicality and emotion, to convey visceral experience. Faulkner (2020, p. 11) defines a poem as a construction that employs devices of embodiment, to *“achieve an ontological state, a mode of being”* and quotes Fairchild as saying that *“when poetry moves away from the body it atrophies”* (Faulkner, 2020, p. 140).

This idea of poetry shrinking and withering if it is not rooted in the body and physicality really resonates for me; it captures how I now understand that I know and make sense of the world. As I read this quote I am also reminded of the idea of the *“total movement of speech”* described by Cunliffe (2002) writing about social poetics. That poetry or poetic writing is a way to capture this total movement of speech; the words, sounds, rhythms, gestures, physicality, touch, movement, metaphors, articulation, sensing and silencing that occurs in verbal interactions. She describes the idea of language as ontology similarly to Faulkner’s (2020) description of poetry, as a way of being, as embodied speech, as what I interpret as an interaction of words with body: *“meaning is created as language plays through us, as words, sounds, rhythm and gestures evoke verbal and emotional responses”* (Cunliffe, 2002, p. 129).

The idea that poetic form is more than just words on a page, that it is a form that is based in and represents physicality, that it is a physical form in itself, is an aspect of poetry and poetic knowing that links it to the ideas that follow on bodily knowing, and is I think an important part of why I find it a congruent form to use as method. The ideas of enactive cognition, the encapsulating term for how I understand bodily knowing, will be discussed more in the next two sections.

There is also something relational and therefore physical for me about writing using poetic form and ideas; it is about knowing in relation to something, to an idea, to an experience, to a conversation, to limits. Ramsey (2018) writes about poetic practice and mindfulness in a way that speaks to this idea of poetry as being relational when she positions writing a poem as similar to having a conversation:

“It is quite possible to doodle three or four alliterations or jot some notes down in iambic rhythm, choosing your words as much to fit the form as express the content of

the thinking. In these ways, poetic form provides a conversational partner who can shift a reflector's attention to surprising issues, shake the power of long held assumptions or highlight a previously unconsidered course of action" (Ramsey, 2018, p. 99).

This description of poetry also speaks to my understanding of change as relational, in interaction, in conversation. That a conversation with myself, through poetic form can result in change even if it is only through shifted thinking and sense-making.

*Impossible irrelevant
Defaults demonstrated
Boundaries bulldozed*

I found myself repeating words and linking alliterative phrases, like the ones above, during my daily cycle to work on the post-apocalyptically empty roads in April 2020 as I tried to make sense of the extremes of emotion, exhaustion, enthusiasm, behaviour, decisions and interactions that had taken place over the previous two weeks and culminated in the setting up and running of a new Children's Emergency Unit in just 10 days. I found that poetic form was functioning as a way to process – as a form of conversation with myself whilst cycling – that allowed me to place, let go, recognise, own and order my responses. As a way to make sense and to know.

*Pedal stroke promoting poetic processing
Revolving reflections
Cycling sanity*

This reinforced that for me poetic form is a physical form that when used as method enables and shapes understanding and change. A physical form that also involves the use of metaphors, the warp thread of this thesis. For me these metaphors are often physically-derived, making poetic writing a form that incorporates the concept of enactive metaphor into method, or as Leavy describes poetry involves “*metaphor as method*” (Leavy, 2015, p. 83).

'Ish'

Messing around with words is also playful, making poetic form an activity that comfortably sits within the construct of playfulness as a mindset, a mindset brilliantly captured in 'Ish' (Reynolds, 2005). *Ish* is an illustrated childrens book about Ramon who loves to draw, that is until his brother laughs at his drawings. After this criticism he tries and tries to get his drawings 'right' but 'fails', so he stops drawing – a response I am very familiar with. After the picture in the bin incident, I never drew again and came away with the firmly held and entrenched belief that I wasn't arty or creative. Luckily for Ramon, his younger sister saves all his drawings. When he discovers them on her wall and she comes up with the idea that his pictures are 'ish' (a picture of a vase is described vase-ish), he is then freed up to draw again:

"Ramon felt light and energized. Thinking ish-ly allowed his ideas to flow freely... His ish art inspired ish writing... And Ramon lived ishfully ever after" (Reynolds, 2005, pp. 22-30)

In a paper that uses 'ish' (Reynolds, 2005) as inspiration, the idea of playing with words within a non-serious or 'ish' framing is described, a description that resonates with the concept of playfulness and the play frame. In discussing using 'poem-ish' writing in research, the authors (Lahman, Richard, & Teman, 2019) define the idea of 'ish' as "a *safe space in art for growth and good enough creations*" (Lahman et al., 2019, p. 216); a space in which:

"researchers should be allowed to "get their toes wet" and play around with words instead of being asked for "poetic credentials". Playing around is how we all naturally learn something new" (Lahman et al., 2011, p. 895).

I love this description of using poem-ish form to learn, to know, as a method for research. That not taking something seriously allows a serious outcome (play frame), that being playful, open, flexible, allows me to take risks with ideas. By not being a poet, by not trying to write poetry as

a product but by using poem-ish form as method, I can playfully explore context, ideas, change practice and use metaphors to know differently. I can safely create without any label of creativity, which allows me as the section on *Knowing* will expand on, to safely not-knowledge.

Another overlap in ideas between poetic form and playfulness is found when considering constraints. In his paper on the value of playfulness to creativity, the digital artist Pichlmair (2008) describes interacting playfully with constricting interfaces as a way to develop and focus imagination, and of playfulness as an exploration of limits or boundaries that can manifest in any act where there are constraints – that playing is “*the free space of movement within a more rigid structure*” (Pichlmair, 2008, pp. 208-209).

One of the features often ascribed to play is that it has rules or limits, that it takes place in a restricted or protected context or environment. Poetic form is similarly constricted by limits of rhyming, metre, syllables, structure. What I discovered in my experiments with poetic form is that the constraints were additive not restrictive, that my creativity increased; I played with words I wouldn't normally reach for, I was more considered about my word choice, about how to set the scene and deliver the concept within these limits. Ideas changed, shaped by the need to rhyme, to have rhythm. This also made me curious about enhanced creativity within constraints outside the realm of poetic writing or playfulness – I was reminded of shows like *Grand Designs* where architects working within very constrained sites often design much more amazing and innovative buildings than those with no limits.

My experience of change in healthcare is one where we are all too often focused on removing constraints, on the challenge of limitations rather than on the opportunities they offer. This idea of being enabled rather than disabled by constraints is one that I think may help to

encourage change, that in fact significantly constrained environments like the Emergency Department or aspects of care where there are process limitations may lead to more creativity and ideas providing that we have a playful way (or method or form) to interact with those constraints.

Poem-ish writing is one way I use form as method; wire structures are the other, building in increased physicality to the process. However, before I move on to showing you this other form, I recognise that I need to clearly position **how I understand form as method, rather than form as representation**. How this potentially creates a conflict in 'showing' these forms to you, the reader and, although I am using what could be described as artistic practices within research, the discomfort I feel with labelling what I do as arts-based research.

Arts-Based Research

As a starting point, just defining what the use of arts within research is called is complicated.

Leavy (2015) lists 28 different options in a 'partial' lexicon of terms for arts-based research that include: arts-based enquiry / inquiry /research, arts-informed inquiry / research, poetic science, living inquiry, aesthetic based research, a/r/topography and scholartistry amongst many others (Leavy, 2015, p. 5). Her offered resolution to this confusion is to use the term arts-based research or ABR to encompass "*the use of artistic practices as methodological tools within research*" (Leavy, 2015, p. 6), recognising that they may be used in some or all the different phases of research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation and representation.

If the defining feature of ABR was artistic practices as methodological tools, then my use of form could sit comfortably within this, and whilst this is the broad definition that Leavy gives, she also goes on shortly afterwards to suggest a dual function of arts in research – that of shaping and generating knowledge *and* communication and representation to an audience (Leavy, 2015, p. 3). This audience-related function then informs her evaluation criteria of ABR that although it includes methodology and usefulness also includes aesthetics and audience response (Leavy, 2014, 2015). Leavy does acknowledge the tension that exists in these quality criteria and in the potential contradiction between two questions that are often asked of ABR output:

- "*Is it a good piece of art?*"
- "*What is this piece of art good for?*" (Leavy, 2015, p. 273)

However, she responds in a way that maintains this contradiction – suggesting usefulness is the most important criteria initially and then stating that aesthetic quality, aesthetic power

and artfulness are central to the audience response and evaluation of ABR (Leavy, 2015, p. 276).

Developing the necessary skills and techniques to use art to effectively represent and communicate research findings are also central to Eisner (2008) and Knowles and Cole (2008) in discussion of arts-informed research; research that is influenced by but not based in the arts, that uses alternative processes and representations as forms of inquiry *and* to reach audiences (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 59). In fact Knowles and Cole (2008) write that a defining element of arts-informed research is that it relates to the audience through engagement and reach. Although I use form and, it could be argued, artistic form as method I really struggle with, in fact I go so far as to reject, this dual role of form in my inquiry.

I discovered, through trying to use J&K to represent findings, rather than as a method to know, that my ability to use form was inhibited, it didn't work, it didn't land. Similarly in my doctoral transfer viva I remember feeling incensed at the suggestion that my wire structures were art. Having listened back to the recording this is not what was said, but the overwhelming entrenched understanding I have that a 'title' means expert, good, profession, coupled with the fact that I cannot 'do art', means that if I were to think of my use of form as art, or if I engaged with form with the intent to represent something rather than as a method of discovery or sense making, then I would not be able to create anything at all.

I am also acutely aware that this positioning is paradoxical – there is an inherent contradiction in choosing to position form as a process, not an outcome; and then in the subsequent discussion of the process and what emerged, showing the resulting form as output. In including poem-ish writing and photographs of wire forms I could be seen to be presenting

them as objects or artefacts or even art, and with that comes the potential for them to be scrutinised, considered and judged. My way to manage this contradiction is about intent; I do not undertake the activity with an intent to create art or poetry, I undertake it with the intent of using the process of creating as ‘a way to know’ and as will be discussed later as ‘a way to hold not-knowing’. The resulting creations are a demonstration of the process and in presenting them, whilst I recognise they may be considered as a standalone object or artefact, this does not negate the process; it potentially offers opportunities for additional knowledge or knowing (what do you and I know differently when you’ve read a poem or interacted with a made object) should I choose to take them.

It is this reluctance or rejection of being artistic that the ‘ish’ playful framing speaks to, supporting the idea that not having artistic credentials or skills does not negate the value and role of creating as method, a framing that gives me permission to be creative, to use form.

Despite my misgivings towards the label of ABR, there are a number of ways in which a focus on form resonates well within this research perspective.

“form is the main defining element of arts informed research. Choice of art form that will guide inquiry processes and / or representation involves a consideration of form in its many manifestations” (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 62)

Manifestations of form include:

- *Form as genre or medium* – a way or mode of presenting texts or concepts
- *Form as method* – art form as creative inquiry process
- *Form as structural element* – the literal or metaphorical arrangement of theoretical constructs, narratives, experiences or representations
- *Form as technical element* – in the design and appearance

- *Form as communication element* – for audience and research purpose
- *Form as aesthetic element* – how the work should ‘look’
- *Form as procedural element and emergent phenomenon* – elements may change over time as inquiry matures or develops and ideas evolve
- *Form as reflection of the qualities of goodness of the inquiry* – form and research congruent (Knowles & Cole, 2008, pp. 62-64)

Form works not only as method, but also to shape the content of this thesis for you, the reader, in terms of structure, layout and content, changing and shifting as the inquiry and ideas emerge and evolve, yet remaining congruent with the concepts at the core of this inquiry.

Similarly if as Leavy suggests ABR is a philosophy that offers a “*holistic approach to research processes emphasising interconnections between epistemology, theory and methods*” (Leavy, 2015, p. 2) then I may have to review my discomfort with the label of ABR whilst maintaining my rejection of the labels of ‘art’, ‘artist’ or ‘poet’.

This chapter has introduced you to my understanding of form, of its role as method in my inquiry and of how form is interwoven with metaphor and playful mindset. It has also positioned my understanding of my poem-ish writing and (as you will discover in the next chapter) wire structures in the context of ABR. It has made visible my focus on method and my step away from the presentational, representational and communicational functions of form often associated with the use of artistic methodology. I have offered examples of how physically-derived metaphors play a role in my poem-ish writing, and how I consider poetic form as at least partly physical. The next chapter builds on the importance of physicality and body to how I make sense of the world and how that has been reflected in the emergence of an even more physical form as method.

Chapter 6. *Playful use of form as a* **bodily activity of (not) knowing**

From the beginning of this thesis, I have been mentioning that physicality and bodily knowing are fundamental to how I make sense, to how I learn, to my epistemology – so this chapter is about evidencing that assertion.

This chapter will clarify what I mean and understand by enactive cognition and how it is related to the concept of embodiment. It starts where this inquiry started with my clinical consultation practice, and how paying attention to what I do in a consultation, as shown by *Jāk*, revealed the importance of physical interaction to how I make a diagnosis. The concept of embodied enactive clinical reasoning (Øberg, Normann, & Gallagher, 2015) is discussed as a theoretical perspective which places examination within embodiment to make sense of how I know. The required shift away from the Cartesian mind-body duality paradigm towards instead a “*brain-body-environment*” (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015) understanding and to the idea of “*bodies of thought*” (Burkitt, 1999) is then described, a paradigmatic shift that has links back to the conceptual metaphor theory and the work of Johnson (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980,1999).

In order to evidence this theoretical understanding, I will then shift from telling to showing through an exploration of the wire structures I make. These will be presented in a similar style to the poem-ish writing section with the structures, metaphors, knowing and impact intermingled together.

Enactive Cognition

My academic introduction to the concept of ‘body’ was in medical school, where essentially the focus is on how the body is built, in order to fix it when it goes wrong, a **‘body-as-object’** and perhaps even a ‘body-as-impediment’ perspective, where the focus is on illness rather than wellness. This is a construction of the body that sits within the Cartesian paradigm, where the body is a biomechanical mechanism from which the mind is a separate subjective epiphenomenon (Øberg et al., 2015, p. 244), a body that can therefore be understood and fixed by collecting and collating third-person objective facts. This paradigmatic perspective was so pervasive in medical school that I understood it as a truth, not a construct at the time; in fact Mehta (2011) argues that western medicine is only possible because of this mind-body duality positioning. If body is object only, an unthinking biomedical system that is separate from the subjective biproduct known as mind or consciousness, then we can cut open, study, and treat the body. If we envisaged them as one unit, then the damaging surgery and harmful drugs would not only affect the body, but the mind and the soul too. Maintaining separation has enabled huge advances in biomedical science, surgical techniques, invasive treatments, damaging yet curative medicines, but it has also resulted in mind-body disconnection and associated scepticism in both doctors and patients. If pathologies (or concepts like placebo and nocebo) cannot be explained by this ‘body-as-object’ model, then *“they appear unreal, illegitimate and unscientific in nature”* (Mehta, 2011, p. 205).

Perhaps it is no surprise then, that it took some unpicking for me to understand and own using an epistemological practice, developed in clinical consultations, which sits outside this paradigm.

An alternative positioning to 'body-as-object' is '**body-as-subject**', a phenomenologically based paradigmatic perspective, where "*one both has and is a body simultaneously*" (Merleau-Ponty & Davis, 2008; Merleau-Ponty & Landes, 2012). This is a positioning where there is both an object body and a lived body; we perceive our body and can view it objectively, whilst at the same time being the living body that is doing the perceiving.

This construction or understanding of body as subject, as being a body, is the basis of the concept of embodiment – in that embodiment in this sense doesn't mean the physical manifestation of body, to give a body to an idea or quality or feeling, but actually **being a body** that then interacts, acts, knows, does, feels and has ideas.

It is from within this paradigmatic positioning that the concept of embodied enactive clinical reasoning (Øberg et al., 2015) sits, a concept that makes sense to me, that resonates, that feels congruent with what I do. I know whether a child is sick or not by how they interact with me, how their body feels, how they respond – through knowing that is physical, bodily, in-relation with their body. Embodied-enactive clinical reasoning legitimises and values this way of knowing.

I had previously understood physical examination in a consultation from within the hypothetic-deductive or pattern recognition models of clinical reasoning, both of which are described in a paper about clinical reasoning in physiotherapy (Øberg et al., 2015). Clinical reasoning is the thinking, decision making and action that takes place within clinical practice. In the hypothetic-deductive model information is collected from and about the patient, in terms of signs and symptoms that are then used to either confirm or refute a hypothesis about a diagnosis. The pattern recognition model is similar but takes into account that a clinician's reservoir of

knowledge can act as a source of intuitive or immediate recognition of a 'pattern' of signs and symptoms that fit a specific diagnosis. Both models consider body-as-object and examination as a way to gather third-person facts about that body to make a diagnosis. The authors argue for an alternative understanding of clinical reasoning, that considers both the clinician and the patient as 'body-as-subject' in which making a diagnosis is an ongoing process between these embodied agents, where examination is a part of the communication used to make a diagnosis, communication that includes words, gestures *and* physical interaction (Øberg et al., 2015, p. 246).

Neither the clinician nor the patient are separate brains and bodies, but instead they are perceiver-thinkers, combined body as subject and object experiencing and interacting with the world and others. They are embodied individuals for whom sensory-motor and affective processes from body-mind-environment interaction shape sense-making (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015, p. 393).

“Whether by putting hands on, feeling for tension and resistance, or simply reaching and grasping, pointing or gesturing expressively, the brain partners with the hand and forms a functional unit that properly engages with the PTs’ [physiotherapists] environment. Rather than a top-down regulation of movement, brain to hand, or a bottom-up energy of rationality, hand to brain, neural processes co-ordinate and can be enacted by the hand movements forming a single integrated cognitive system”
(Øberg et al., 2015, p. 248)

In this enactive construct, cognition is not something undertaken by neural processes isolated in the brain, but instead cognition is undertaken by a brain and processes that are embedded in a living body interacting in the world (Di Paolo & De Jaegher, 2012, p. 3).

“Cognition, as embodied and enactive, is not exclusively the result of neural processes in the head. It is something accomplished in a dynamic set of interactions between brain and body, and between body and environment. The correct physical unit of analysis for understanding cognition is not the neuron, or the neural representation, or the brain, but the brain-body-environment in their dynamic interplay” (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015, p. 394).

I understand this construction and paradigmatic positioning to mean **embodied as being a living body** and **enactive as this body in action, in relation**. That embodied, enactive cognition is me as a body, making sense as an active process through and with my body, in relation with environment and others.

Making sense is therefore an *“inter-event”* (Küpers, 2014) – it always takes place in relation, between, in continual interaction. In the book *Bodies of Thought*, which discusses and describes an embodied, relational, powerful, active alternative to the mind-body duality, Burkitt says:

“‘mind’ only exists because we have bodies that give us the potential to be active and animate within the world, exploring, touching, seeing, hearing, wondering, explaining; and we can only become persons and selves because we are located bodily at a particular place in space and time, in relation to other people and things around us... the ‘mind’ is an effect of bodily action in the world” (Burkitt, 1999, p. 12)

Or alternatively, in a description you may remember from the metaphor section:

“The mind is body; mental functioning is bodily functioning; ideas are objects of bodily functioning” (Lakoff, 2014, p. 1).

Before I go on to demonstrate how I use this concept of enactive cognition, of bodily knowing as method through wire forms, I want to reinforce the links between metaphor, enactive cognition, and knowing or learning.

Ben: *“We have science two or three times a week with a teacher who is a lot less physical, like he’ll explain something to you and get you to write about it – but the other one – like we were learning about waves as like um soundwaves and we – I know the different types of waves, but I can’t remember what they’re called – but like some of them, we were acting as the particles in the waves, stood around the room – one wave we bob up and down, the next wave stepping to the side, the next wave squashing together”*

Me: *“Did that make you understand the waves differently than reading them in a book?”*

Ben: *“Yes because you think a wave is like this (waves arm up and down) but they’re not, there are loads of different ones and it makes you understand it easier”*

Transcript from conversation with Ben, aged 12, May 2018

In part of the same conversation with Ben that triggered **J&K** I asked about whether they used their bodies to know at school. Ben described a science lesson above, and what I now understand as the concept of enactive metaphor, as helping him to understand the physics of waves.

Gallagher and Lindgren describe **an enactive metaphor** as one *“that we put into action or one that we bring into existence through our actions”* (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015, p. 392)

So instead of conceptualising or seeing something as something else, ‘we act-as-if’ which enables a fully embodied engagement with the concept. They use examples, very similar to Ben’s, of teaching physics and the movement of asteroids by having students be an asteroid, acting out its movement in a planetary system, and learning about the principles of gravity and force through their own kinaesthetic feedback. They demonstrate that in post-lesson testing, children who had learnt through enactive metaphor had developed a better understanding of the core concepts than those who had not (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015, p. 397). They also describe examples of how the use of gestures, associated with describing their understanding of maths concepts, enables children to perform better than remaining still – that even though this isn’t an enactive metaphor as such, bodily involvement or embodied action helps cognition.

“Higher-order cognitive functions, such as reflective thinking or deliberation, are exercises of skilful know-how and are usually coupled with situated and embodied actions” (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015, p. 393)

In a series of essays about the role of the body in teaching and learning in *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds* (Bresler, 2004), multiple examples are described of the value of and improved learning associated with integrating physical knowing or embodiment into education.

Embodiment is defined in the prelude as:

“the integration of the physical or biological body and the phenomenal or experiential body” a matrix that *“integrates thinking, being, doing and interacting”* (Bresler, 2004, p. 7)

This is a definition aligned with the discussion on embodied-enactive cognition and enactive metaphor and expanded on via concrete examples in essays on philosophy, knowing, somaesthetics, exercise, being a child in Japan, dance, music and art. The focus is not only on

how bodily engagement improves learning, but on how paying attention to embodiment also improves teaching.

The aim of this theoretical section has been to explain how I use form as method, and to give some conceptual support to my assertion that I know through and with my body. It shows that being physically engaged, either through enactive metaphor or as an active body, is enactive cognition – that bodily involvement is fundamental to reflective thinking, decision making, sense making and understanding.

I am now going to show you my use of wire form as method. This will start by dropping you into a physical experience from which a metaphor was brought into existence, and then move into how I used poetic form and then wire form to know differently. Following on from that, I will demonstrate and describe the emergence and evolution of the wire forms, intermingling the knowing and impact on practice that occurred in response.

Disconnected

I can't do a pull-up – nothing works.

The warmup went well, the first exercises have all been fine – a couple of corrections in form, variations to try but all manageable or something to work towards. Then we get to pull-ups – now I can do pull-ups, not very many as I haven't been doing any bodyweight work for a while, but I can still do them. I demonstrate a couple and Leigh spots that I seem to be relying on my shoulders and arms and not using the power in my back. He demonstrates a way to engage my lower back before starting the pull-up, expecting this to make them easier and then it's my turn. Hands on the bar, legs slightly in front, tuck 'tail bone' under, engage lower back and start the pull-up – except nothing happens, I cannot pull up at all, there is absolutely no movement – it's like switching on the muscles in my lower back has switched everything else off. Intrigued and slightly puzzled we do a couple of other exercises and what starts to become clear is that I don't link movements across my whole body – my arms and shoulders, upper back and anterior core appear to work in isolation from my lower back and legs. The lack of linkage in power across my whole body becomes really noticeable the more we look – I punch with just my arms, not my whole body, when I swing my arms my hips stay absolutely still, when I do a bear crawl my lower back just doesn't work at all. The lack of rotational power is something Leigh has spotted in my swimming but hadn't really got to the root of until now. There are exercises that I can do that should be using these muscles, but it seems my shoulders, upper back and core have taken over these movements, become stronger compensating for the lack of lower back use. Despite being reasonably strong my body is disconnected, it doesn't all work together and we need to work out how to remake those connections in order to move further with strength work and swimming. Apparently, there is a whole additional layer of power I could have if I can get things connected up and working synergistically rather than antagonistically.

I start training with Leigh in a response to feeling 'hurumphed'. Although there have been lots of positive things happening over the last few weeks, I am not feeling positive. I have had a week off, we have employed more paediatric nurses, appointed a Paediatric Emergency Medicine consultant colleague, I have been out on my mountain bike with a friend for the first time in over a year, I have bodysurfed with my own handplane and yet still I'm not really

feeling it. I haven't been training on the bike properly for about a month, I haven't swum as much, I'm not very enthusiastic about work and I'm feeling fat, unfit and fed up. It may be because none of the swimming and cycling events I had planned have gone ahead, that the week's holiday designed around camping for a sea swimming event was derailed by the event cancellation only four days before, and then a few days of torrential rain. It may be that post-wave one of Covid I'm tired and that working one out of three weekends is too much – but I'm not sure these are really answers and I don't quite know how to get out of the *hurumph* and move on. What has worked for me before is getting back to exercising, getting back into my doing body, and trusting that will get me back on track. Leigh, who I swim with, as well as being a swimmer, lifeguard, bodysurfer, A&E nurse and a paramedic, is also a highly respected martial artist who travels the world to teach martial arts and calisthenics. After a particular grumpy moment my partner suggests that I could ask him to train me... I realise that having someone else making the decisions, telling me what to do, helping me get stronger and enabling me to just focus on my doing and being body is exactly what I need.

So it is against this background of *hurumphed*, that I find parts of my body are disconnected from each other, inhibiting rather than enabling. That unknowingly some of my muscles are compensating all the time, and I default to those compensations even though they may not be the most efficient, or effective and in fact may be preventing me from what I want to do. That it was only in trying to increase my physical strength and power that it became clear that things weren't working together and some not working at all. Yet again, physicality is enabling new knowing via metaphor. The disconnected muscles with inhibitory, rather than enabling, pathways as a way to discover new knowing about myself, my colleagues and my context.

The disconnected muscle groups and compensatory defaults, only revealed when trying to increase power, converts into a metaphor that works well for me to try and make sense of the last six months of work. The uncertainty of Covid and the need to alter care and work together suddenly and at pace has revealed behaviour that has been antagonistic and has inhibited change. It has seen me working my muscles harder, engaging more muscles, trying to generate more power, unable to overcome the disconnect that is being revealed. I have been behaving, responding, doing and not doing differently at work within the increasingly uncertain context, and with the ideas of this doctorate informing my thinking; but I have struggled to write more than journal entries, to understand what I have been trying and why it hasn't been working. As I write I realise, or perhaps more accurately acknowledge, that one of my defaults is assuming that my muscles are strong enough to overcome the disconnect myself, that it is only my muscles that need to be engaged, that I just need to engage more, work harder and the power will increase. An alternative perspective could see me as the shoulders and arms, overcompensating at times, often successfully, until the Covid-driven attempt at single point of access⁵ revealed the disconnect between the shoulders and the legs (or Paediatrics). That, unless we both get involved in engaging the lower back muscles to increase our connectedness, we will struggle to improve the power and effectiveness of our work, and will potentially continue to work independently, or worse, stay stuck in the 'no longer able to do a pull-up' phase as we are currently.

Perhaps it is this disconnection becoming more visible, no longer being compensated for by my defaults that is the *hurumphedness* I'm feeling. The tangibility of weaker muscles, inhibitory pathways, antagonistic behaviour, lack of power. Maybe the way forward is about engaging different muscles, together, to limit the compensatory defaults, to connect differently to improve.

⁵ Single point of access refers to all children and young people coming to the hospital via one entrance in ED irrespective of whether they come by ambulance, walk in or are referred so that they are seen based on need not on route of access.

Disconnection 1

Discovered a disconnection

A gap, a hole, a division

Discovered an illusion

Of strength, connection, solidity

Recognised a weakness

To train, build, overcome

Recognised a default

To limit, inhibit, restrict

Seen through shared assumptions

To honesty, listening, truth

Seen through hidden collusions

To anxiety, need, collaboration

Revealed a new understanding

Of engagement, power, connectivity

Revealed a different exercise

Of smaller, careful, increments

Disconnection 2

I discovered a muscular disconnection and with it a sense of detachment. A pull-up engaging muscles not normally involved exposing a dissociation between my lower body and upper body that limits the generation of power. One small action revealing years of successful compensation, mitigation but also limitation

I retrieved a rusted metal net from the sea, marvelling at its retained strength in folded form. A bend of aluminium intended to incorporate it into a sculpture disintegrating the solidity, broken sections scattered across the floor. One small action revealing the illusion of durability, instead fragility & frailty

A collaboration of a few years dismantled in a few weeks. The end goal becoming an own goal, a nail in the coffin instead of a championship cup. I struggle to make sense, I continue to compensate, to mitigate.....

A retirement offering respite rather than regret, but also detachment, disconnection. Partnerships derailed by assumptions and collusion. Solidity and strength of teams revealed as myths and illusions.....

I thread the wire slowly, carefully, delicately, a few pieces were lost but most of the lattice remains, it is easily strong enough if care is taken, attention paid to the different pace and form required.

I become intrigued by and enjoy training differently, wondering at what it might mean for my power and strength if the connections are made, if more muscles can be engaged

I organise a meeting, altering the pace, taking care, revealed are assumptions, confusion, exclusions, illusion. I don't compensate or mitigate; I wait to see which muscles we can activate

A sense of detachment remains as does some disconnection. Maybe this is necessary and part of a realisation that my compensation may be a limitation, that my muscles alone are not enough mitigation, that others are required to engage for us to salvage the situation. A pull-up as a shake-up, a close-up, a way to reframe and make up.



Wire Form

The reference to threading wire through a piece of found metal netting in *Disconnection 2* above and the picture gives you an introduction to the wire forms I use. These forms emerged, a bit like *J&K*, in response to the discrepancy between idea and method of inquiry. The mismatch of undertaking an inquiry into physicality and physically-derived knowing without a method that used physical interaction to know. Whilst most of the metaphors that have informed this inquiry have been derived from physical interaction, writing or poem-ish form alone as method didn't feel hands on enough – like I was missing the examination bit of a consultation.

During the third taught doctoral workshop we were tasked to represent the ADOC community via a choice of clay, posters, photography, or making something out of piping, cable ties and rope. As my identification with Ramon in 'ish' (Reynolds, 2005) and the discussion about arts-based research has shown I am clear that I am not able to 'do art', always worried and anxious about how 'rubbish' the output will be, disabled rather than enabled by the process. Unusually however, against this backdrop of dread, I was immediately drawn to the piping and excited about the possibility of constructing something. I discovered that the constraints of the materials, the resistance and rigidity of the piping helped rather than hindered the process. They offered boundaries and limitations; they contained the space in which to not know and to experiment. The physical nature of the materials influenced the final product and limited what was possible rather than what I see as my lack of artistic ability, linking with the ideas of the conditions required for play and the creativity found using constrained poetic forms. The inherent physicality of the activity also seemed to remove my usual anxiety and I got immersed in the act of making something abstract.

I discovered that I knew differently about our doctoral cohort through this physical act; the fact that what emerged was in part due to the materials involved made more tangible for me how the ideas, attitudes, behaviour and interests of colleagues in the community shape the community. As the materials impacted on the shape emerging – we left bits out, our plans changed – I understood how our community is changing, losing and gaining things in response to us as individuals and our interactions. I also noticed that the discussions amongst the three of us making the pipe structure were less heated and less awkward than usual, that the changes to the initial plan were easily and readily accepted – perhaps being engaged physically helped us to embrace new ideas and change.

As I reflected on this activity, I realised I had undertaken inquiry physically, I had generated knowing through a discrete method of physical interaction. I wondered whether I could develop something similar that I could continue to use in my own inquiry, resolving the challenge of not having a physical method to use to inquire into physical knowing.

Taking the idea of the piping, but scaling it down, I got some modelling wire and started to make abstract structures with it. The form and complexity of these structures has changed, as has the frequency of my use of this method. I found myself using wire and making structures regularly for six to nine months during 2018; and then my need for this method faltered, or maybe I started to develop a lighter hold allowing myself to put something down knowing I can pick it back up, rather than considering putting something down a failure. Midway through 2019, trying to find my way into the concept of soul for one of the doctoral workshops and to meet the request of the organising group to bring an artefact, I revisited wire and created a larger and more complex structure than I had before, using the form differently, knowing differently. 2020 saw a couple of further experiments and then another gap without wire forms. Although I am not sure of the frequency or the trigger for using wire form as method

again, I am sure that this method will endure as a physical way for me to make sense, as a method of bodily knowing, as an embodied enactive process.

The method for making wire structures, although it has evolved, has remained consistent in the sense that it involves making with no other distractions, then reflecting and journaling whatever comes to mind from the making. It might be the process and the resultant structure, or ideas and concepts triggered, or just about how I feel – no conclusions are necessary, no carefully crafted prose, just writing immediately whatever needs to be written to capture the experience. A physical method to trigger a different awareness and knowing – partly reflective, partly meditative, always physically derived, often linked to environment via found objects, but not always. Sometimes larger bits of writing follow, sometimes it is the journal entry and nothing else, but the form and the entry are kept as data and can be revisited independently, or together, or perhaps more honestly not at all. My understanding of how the method works, or what it is doing, has evolved as the structures have, and I now understand it as bodily action, knowing in doing, in relation, with the intent to create in response to a question, or a problem, or an idea and see what happens.

It is a way, as will be discussed in the *Activity of knowing* chapter, for me to give myself permission to not know and be in that space for longer than usual, to see what I know differently about the idea, concept, question or problem at the end of the making. It has never been about the final structure being a piece of art, being on show, being 'good'. It is this aspect of no intent, of non-serious playful positioning, of full body engagement with wire and objects without a need for them to be art, or to act as a way of communicating or representing that enables me to use form as method, to pay attention to my bodily knowing.

I have chosen to share five structures, although at the moment there are twenty-three sitting on the shelves in my study. The first four are prefaced with the journal entry written at the time as it demonstrates and prioritises the ideas and knowing generated in the activity of making, rather than the object. The final object is accompanied by more written content and context to give a more experiential perspective on how the process of knowing from making wire forms impacts on my practice.

Wire 1

Playing with the wire – just started wrapping it around my fingers – noticed the pressure of bending it over my fingers, the irregular way the bends formed, a slight twist giving a different dimension. The thinner wire feeling tighter and then less solid. I find myself wanting to join the shapes but not sure if I preferred them separate? Maybe I don't always have to join the ends. Form emerging just from bending over fingers, no more than that. Power of hands and shapes to shape knowing maybe?

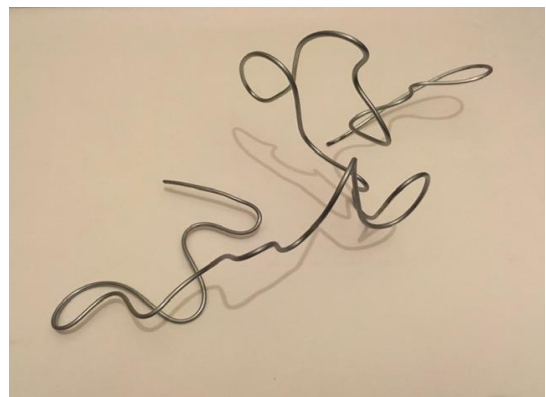
Noticing the discarded pieces from unwrapping the wire – why should they have any less value than the wire itself – bending them separately into something hanging, that is given a place more easily than the original form. Reminder not to throw ideas away yet – might have a place in the final structure.

Noticing I like some forms and not others. Taking it apart – not being worried – feeling like it should connect but liking the overall form better when it doesn't. How different it is from various angles and resting on different sides – more to see and find out when it didn't connect. Struck by my need to close things up / finish things off / have a neat edge but also enjoying the more abstract, less known, less determined – realising there is more to discover of myself in doing and reading and activity. Be less afraid to bring this into writing and work....

Also with the thinner wire – see a shape and then in the process of connecting / moving the original shape is lost. Is this like holding onto ideas too tightly or like allowing things to emerge and change?

Noticed thinking differently about form / ideas / writing / hands whilst making and playing with something physical.

(Journal extract, first wire structure 3/2/18)



Wire and Found

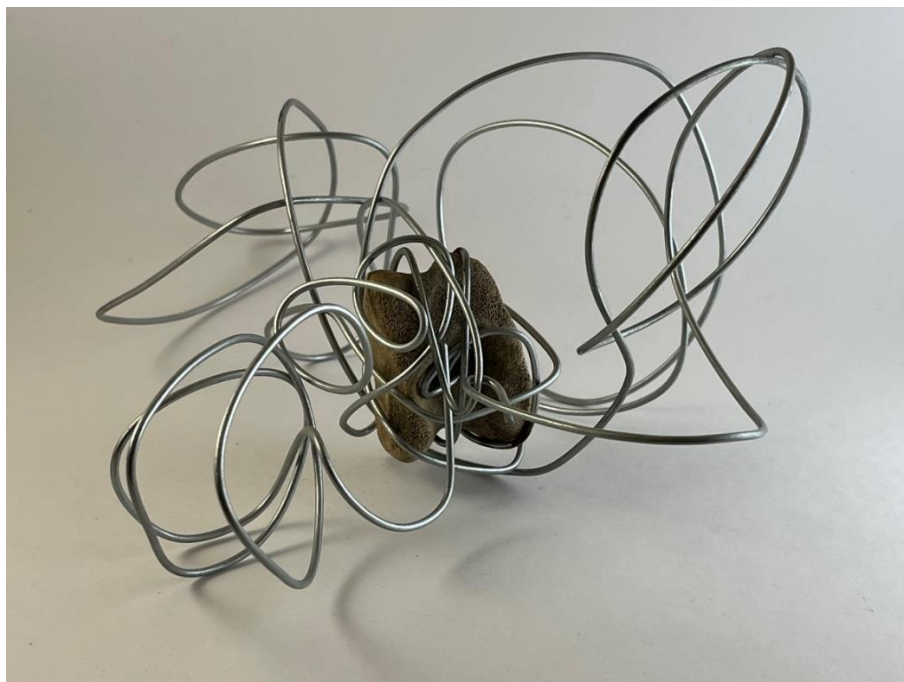
I was running along the beach and something caught my eye such that I ran back to get it. It was a piece of bone, probably a vertebra – worn down, misshapen by the sea and the sand. It sat on my desk for a few days and amidst a headache and not getting things done the idea of representing medicine as a starting point and things branching off it with the wire came to mind.

I started by cutting the final coil of wire into 2 pieces and fitting one as a start into a hollow on the bone then after a few wraps I just wrapped it around my hand for a bit but left the end unfinished. I then found another hollow for the second piece and did something similar but already the first wire was affecting the other, the strands not moving independently but in reaction to and interaction with the other – a bit like my career development from clinical medicine to.....?

It was difficult to get the two different wires and four different loops to work with each other, sometimes bits moved where I wasn't sure was right in order to fit with the next piece / another bend or loop. I had sort of imagined the bone grounding the structure and things coming up from it, but it ended up more in the middle of twists and loop and maybe that is more congruent with where clinical sits for me, still very much at the centre but I spin away / alongside / in loops with improvement, change, leadership, inquiry etc.

No idea which way up this structure goes either and I think I am feeling a bit like that at the moment, juggling / balancing / twisting back again. Maybe it's OK to come at something from lots of different angles and just wait and see. Perhaps I need to hold onto that – rather than going for the shiny thing, the shiny thing maybe too much structure and perhaps good not to have found it yet.

(Journal extract, first wire structure with found object 31/5/18)



Wire Soul

The sea, waves, cycling, connection, flow, stuff that washes in, nourishes, grounds, connects. Evolving, emergent but founded in family, physicality. Not separate, not ending, consciousness embodied in my body. Shaped and shifted by interactions – physical, mental, people, environment – ageing and changing – Soul

Waves felt important, the sea felt important – combining that with cogs to represent activity, physicality. The structure emerged grounded in a round metal object, incorporating cogs, the 'eye glass' from Torie, knitting from Emily, driftwood, shells.

Pondering what soul is and means as the structure emerges. Am I representing my soul or what nourishes my soul? Do I believe in soul or more a consciousness of and part of body, not separate, won't last after my body, a soul that is because of the nerves, muscles, synapses, interactions and therefore shifts and changes.

Felt good to make / connect/ think / be in doing – missing physicality with no 'outside' cycling for 6 weeks. Aware of me / being present in knowing through doing again. Also of sense of playfulness, not too serious, not holding too tightly, allowing stuff to emerge, develop, not be perfect

(Soul, journal extract, 2/6/19)



Light Wire

Felt like I wanted to make a wire structure. Something to help me know conversational form. The interplay between the sea and inquiry, of the to and fro, of the way conversation is shaped by those in it and how they react with each other, by context, by moment – will probably be different each time. The balance will change at different times, shifting the viewpoint of the structure is like revisiting and looking at a conversation from different perspectives, different times;

different shapes are visible
 which wood section has more power shifts
 how I see the shape, the interplay of the form is altered
 Abstract or a boat?
 Wire / wood the key structure?
 Differently known when held suspended or rested down
 Shadows cast differently – outcome different

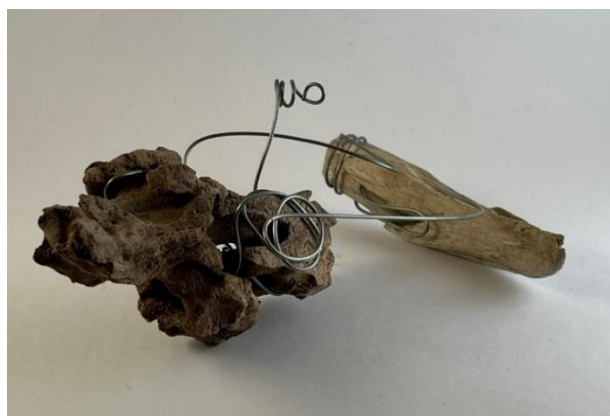
I didn't make something that stands a particular way up or is supported – perhaps this illustrates a more nuanced, more flexible, less one thing more options? Shaped by the wood – delicate / careful not to break bits off, keep the shape, understand and work with it – shifting understanding of context maybe? Working with what's there more carefully?

What is this method doing? It enables me to focus indirectly on concept and idea and then to free flow write based on the making / shapes / product – it opens up ideas around the concept differently maybe more widely. Good to revisit, re-know, relearn method. Know more and differently about how and what I know and how it works for me as a method.

Weathered wood – one from Ashridge, one from here. Both very light, breakable. Form of tree changed hugely by weather / water / time. More delicate structure in general than others I have made. Is it more careful? More considered? Accidental or intentional? Is it a product of what was available and of the context of where I am with inquiry / ideas – perhaps representative of change stuff. Change is context dependent – including individuals, environment, thinking, perspective, time.

I enjoyed the making / thinking / writing. Sitting here with a light smiley feeling about the method, the object, the ideas emerging and being articulated. Physicality telling me it makes sense as method and ideas make sense and articulated more delicately

(Journal extract, 1/1/20)



Artful Tension

I'm sitting cold and shivering, white and purple tinged fingers hugging my knees into my chest, voice wavering as I speak, on the edge of tears – a physicality more associated with spending slightly too long in the water than a work meeting. Not much about this meeting has been usual however, so perhaps this is an accurate embodied representation of the mood and interaction in the room.

We are three weeks away from Paediatrics pulling out of our shared Children's Emergency Unit (CEU), the vision we had been working on for three years, and that had been up and running for the first three months of the Covid pandemic. I have spent the last two weeks feeling upset and angry, not writing much, not reading anything, feeling fed up, unmotivated and slightly lost. Mostly lost in how to reconcile the rhetoric of 'we want CEU, we fully support CEU' and the actions of pulling out of the shared service – of what I perceived as no negotiation, no transparency with the rota, inequitable meetings, disrespectful behaviour. I attempt to get back into inquiry and feel like words are not visceral enough – I am angry, physically tense. I have no idea what to do, how to write, how to move things forward. I am floundering and for the first time in a long time grab some bits of wire and found objects hoping that making a structure will offer a way back in and a way forward.

A few weeks before I had changed all the components on my single speed bike and had some lengths of brake cable left over. I decided to use these instead of modelling wire along with three irregular, flattish objects – one of stone, one of wood, one of concrete and metal – that I found on the beach but that have been sitting on the windowsill for months. Angry was the emotion that was flooding me as I started creating something, an unusual emotion for me particularly at work – I am often struck by a sense of injustice, or inequity which triggers a response to want to right the wrong, but I am rarely angry and discovered that all anger had

done so far was evoke inactivity, incredulity and ranting – none of which were very constructive.

I started with the two heavier objects, attaching one to each end of the length of cable with a loop made of wire, resembling a hangman's noose. I then tried to loop the cable around the objects and sit them on top of each other – the tension in the cable was huge, it was causing the objects to spring off, twist and bend away from each other – I couldn't hold them together with just my hands, I had to use my feet to hold them in place and still that wasn't keeping them together – my hands were getting dirty, some small bits of the concretey lump were breaking off, and the wire I was using to maintain the loops was digging into my fingers. Every time I thought I had a configuration that worked, they sprung out – two separate pieces connected by a cable, but not able to co-exist on their own – even the weight of each wasn't enough to keep them together against the tension. I added another bit of cable to the lighter wood piece and realised that if I wrapped this around the other two then it might hold them together – I was closer but still the objects all bounced off each other; when I got a shape that felt coherent I couldn't hold the tension in the cable long enough with one hand to fix the loop, even using my feet and some pliers wasn't enough; it all bounced apart again. I made another loop in the end of the second cable, got the objects into some sort of configuration that worked and finally found a thin piece of silver wire was all that was needed to hold the whole shape together – something much finer, lighter and unexpected keeping the whole structure together. As a reminder to myself I added a bead to this small piece of wire as a feature, making it visible, not hidden.



As I worked, I realised how unwilling I am to ask for help. Emily (my partner) was at home and would have been extremely happy to help me hold the objects together whilst I wrapped the final cable around them, but I didn't want to ask. Despite hurting my hands, using my feet, changing the shape, it all springing apart repeatedly, I didn't ask.

As I reflect afterwards on making the structure, I am struck by the realisation that not asking for help, to the detriment of myself and the final outcome, is a default for me. Whilst this realisation is not something I have interrogated in depth, I recognise that whilst I accept that my ideas and plans change, emerge and shift in response to context, I am less comfortable with explaining those evolving ideas to others enough to let them in during this process. I realise I am often worried about the ideas (and therefore me) being exposed as silly before I have had a chance to determine that myself. I find myself wondering whether I am doing this at work with CEU and single point of access (SPA)?

I also noticed that I wouldn't give in to turning the concretey bit over, even though that would have made building the structure easier; that I wanted to hold onto this piece this way and I start to consider what I might be holding onto too tightly at work? It may be that some things are important to hold on to, but that others are just making the whole much harder to achieve. As I make the structure, I see myself and my paediatric colleague as the two heavier objects, connected by a shared idea, but the inherent tension we both bring from what we are holding on to, our contexts, our thinking, means that we are not strong enough to stay together on our own.

I also start to think about the gap between – the gap between me and my colleagues, held together by the idea but not able to come together and stay together, and maybe it is because

the idea isn't strong enough. Strong isn't right – the cable was definitely strong enough, it is just that there was a lot of tension, and perhaps that is the crux – the tension is there because it isn't the right idea after all. The gap between what is being said and what is being done may be being maintained, because the idea of SPA and shared working isn't the right idea for this place. That whilst it matters to me and to one paediatric colleague, it doesn't matter enough to the paediatric team, it isn't important enough. That knowing that it should be the right idea, that it makes sense intellectually isn't enough – if it doesn't fit the people, ways of working, priorities and culture of the paediatric team it is never going to be the right solution.

This shift in understanding is an example of my use of form as method, of knowing in bodily activity, of physically-derived metaphor enabling me to know differently about my work context. The active doing process of making a wire structure enables the use of non-analytic, non-linear processing to shift how and what I know. The visceral experience enabled me to see firstly that I am potentially holding on to SPA to the detriment of providing good care; secondly that perhaps it is the mismatch between intellectual and embodied knowing that is the gap between what is being said and what is being done. That for the paediatric team, whilst the intellectual, theoretical, analytical knowing says this should be the right thing, they may have an embodied, visceral knowing that it doesn't matter enough. That this embodied knowledge comes from a way of knowing that isn't often recognised or valued within medicine and seems incongruent with logically derived knowledge. This means that in order to rationalise away the embodied and contradictory knowing, we get stuck in arguing about why we can't do it now (and it's always now), rather than considering whether, irrespective of the logical argument, it doesn't feel like the right thing for them. This experience left me with the sense that for this paediatric team acute and emergency presentations are not the priority – other aspects of care such as chronic conditions, outpatients and potentially their own ways of working matter

more. I have yet to confirm if this is their reality, but even considering that it might be helped me to make sense.

As I accept that maybe I need to let go of SPA I realise my anger has gone. I also realise that now I have noticed a potential elephant in the room I feel a responsibility to show it to everyone else. So how do I take this new knowing into work, into practice?

As shown by the disconnect enactive metaphor and the 'not asking for help' tendency revealed in the making of this structure, I have a default to try to fix it, to be strong enough, to do it on my own. To 'jump around' and be relentlessly enthusiastic, to berate myself and blame myself if change doesn't happen rather than to stop and really consider the context. Having appreciated that I need to ask for help and that I can't do it all on my own, having recognised that perhaps this isn't a solution that fits the ways of working – that the context is not conducive here – I realise I need to put these defaults aside and show up differently in a meeting.

The agreement for the meeting was that a maximum of eight of us would meet to really understand the challenges, particularly the rotas. To work together to see if there were any other ways we could free up more ED and paediatric resource to keep CEU going, with the suggested logic being that the rota was the reason that we couldn't do SPA *now*. This was the third attempt at this meeting – and the third time the meeting had been changed without letting me know. Yet again I walked into a meeting that had been opened up more widely, this time to include over ten additional paediatric consultant colleagues joining via Microsoft Teams on a huge screen on one wall of the room. Again, we had no information about the

rota, available sessions, fixed requirements – just a presentation of their final decision to pull out.

I felt like what I imagine an examiner for a maths exam does when they must mark an answer that makes no sense, one where the candidate was supposed to show their working but instead there is a blank space, so it is impossible to understand how they have got from the question to the answer. Feeling bemused by the logic or seeming lack of it and at the same time wondering what has been deliberately rubbed out or hidden.

For the first time in these meetings, I had colleagues from ED with me, and I had a different intent – not to be the solution, but to name the elephant I could see and offer the option for others to see it too. After an introduction by the manager of Paediatrics that we were there to look at solutions, and an interjection from one of the paediatric consultants on Teams that they had already decided to pull out so there was no need to consider solutions, I asked to speak. I had planned what I was going to say, and as I couldn't record it, I hope that this is a fairly accurate recollection of what I said.

“As many people are probably aware, I have been very upset and angry about what seems to be a gap between what is being said, i.e. we want single point of access, and what is being done, i.e. pulling out of the service. I have been trying to work out what is going on, and I wonder if this gap is there because this isn't the right answer. That perhaps for here and the paediatric team, the reason this hasn't happened for ten years is because single point of access isn't the right way forward, that it doesn't matter enough, other things matter more. To make it work for the next few months doesn't need everyone to work differently, it just needs a few people, to do an extra on call, or an extra ward week to free up some sessions for other colleagues to give to CEU. If, however, no-one can, maybe that tells us that it doesn't matter enough. This isn't wrong, or bad, it just means that single point of access isn't the right solution.”

I will be devastated if we lose CEU and all the gains we have made for patient care in terms of senior decision makers, nursing team, less admissions, but if it isn't the right thing we need to stop pretending it is."

I realise now that I don't really know what the impact of this was – I can only describe how I was impacted by the reactions in the room at the time.

- I heard incredulity that I suggested that they didn't want SPA
- I saw a continued inability to show their workings and that this had been recognised by the service director of the hospital, who in response demanded that Paediatrics present the rota and workforce information the following week and concluded that any discussions of pulling out would be delayed for another week until the data had been seen
- I felt an increased level of support from my ED colleagues, and from the department itself
- I appreciated the honesty from senior management about the fact that we can't keep the footprint, or the idea if Paediatrics are not on board to support it, and if we lose it now, we won't get support for another go from the executive team
- I sensed a realisation from the head of Paediatrics that this is an inevitable and appropriate response from management to the situation given the pressures of Covid, but at the same time saw and heard accusations from paediatric consultant colleagues that they were being held to ransom
- I experienced a real willingness to try to make it work from the service director of the hospital and from my clinical director of ED; and yet no offer of compromise / negotiation / flexibility from any of the paediatric consultants

The meeting culminated, for me, in being accused of not understanding in-patient paediatrics by one of the consultants joining in virtually, and then being shouted at by the lead paediatric colleague in the room, that I was suggesting that they didn't want SPA despite collaborating with them on this idea for the last three years. I left the meeting, just managing to hold back the tears until I got out of the room.

I had meant to say other things, I had meant to be calmer, more considered and less emotional; I hadn't expected the room to be freezing and to be sitting curled up, cold and shivering, but perhaps that was just an appropriate physical representation of how this whole process had been making me feel. Perhaps it was an example of metaphor affecting behaviour – a cold room making us less agreeable than a warm room. I suspect, however, that if I had been more enthusiastic and optimistic, I would have been jumping up and down to keep warm, chatting, getting a hot drink, not responding to the temperature by folding in on myself getting smaller and colder. Despite all of this, responding differently, showing up differently, framing it differently, making a potential (even if imagined) elephant visible felt important and necessary.

Making a structure enabled me to use my hands to shape my thoughts and make them visible (Seeley & Thornhill, 2014, p. 29), to be a thinking body (Burkitt, 1999), to escape from my usual cognitive limitations and assumptions. I was able to consider that letting go of SPA may be necessary to provide good care, that it is OK if it doesn't matter enough to Paediatrics, and that the gap between what is being said and what is being done may be due to the contradiction of logical processing recognising one way forward and embodied knowing refuting this.

I may not have articulated it well enough to be heard, or in a way that gave permission for us to move on and discuss the future differently, but I do know that knowing through making a wire structure enabled me to articulate it at all, and for me to show up as something other than the relentlessly enthusiastic solution.

This aim of this chapter has been to define my understanding of **enactive cognition, of bodily knowing as an active in-relation process, undertaken by an embodied individual – a body as subject and object**. To tell and show this understanding through a mix of theory and wire structures, as well as building on the previous chapters, sections and ideas to show how metaphor, playful mindset and form are interwoven with enactive cognition. The final chapter of this section of the thesis builds on these interwoven threads to describe what I understand as knowing and perhaps more importantly, as has been briefly hinted at in this section, the importance of enactive cognition and form as method to enable not knowing in order to know.

Chapter 7. *Playful use of form as a bodily activity of (not) knowing*

This chapter aims to complete this central section of the thesis by describing my understanding of knowing as an activity and the importance of not-knowing to change. It is also about bringing the concepts of playful, form and bodily knowing together with ‘knowing as an activity’ and ‘not knowing’ in order to position and justify that the methodology of this thesis is **‘the playful use of form as a bodily activity of (not) knowing’** or what I have termed **enactive agnosis**.

To do this I will be discussing epistemology including Heron’s extended epistemology (Heron, & Reason, 1997) and sitting within this what Seeley describes as “*suspending*” (Seeley & Reason, 2008; Seeley, 2014). The concepts of epistemology of practice and possession as described by Cook and Brown (1999) that differentiate between knowing as an activity and knowledge as a possession, and how these have helped me to make sense of how I know as a bodily activity, will be central to this discussion and to cementing my understanding of knowing. From knowing we will move to the realm of agnotology or ignorance studies (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008), to not-knowing and the potential to develop skills or tactics to hold this space – a concept known as negative capability (Crossman & Doshi, 2015). This will then be linked back to form and to the conclusion that, for me, form based in and on bodily knowing is actually a method of **bodily knowing how to not-know(ledge)**, a tactic of negative capability.

Before we start I want to own up to the fact that the idea of bodily not-knowing came fairly late on in this inquiry process and emerged in response to a throwaway comment in my progression viva where one of my examiners said *“Maybe you are doing embodied not-knowing”*. As I listened back, reflecting on the experience and the conversation, I realised that not-knowing was exactly what I was doing, what I had been struggling with and what I had been developing ways to manage and ultimately use. This conversation was itself an example of knowing in relation and the importance of not-knowing to change.

I did not know I was doing not-knowing until in conversation, in action, in relation with another embodied individual, this idea emerged and my understanding, of my thesis, my method and its importance to change, changed. I now consider being able to not-know safely and playfully is crucial to being able to change, to develop new knowing, to be flexible, to let go and to shift. I hope that some of the examples of form shown already have begun to illustrate this. with more to come in the final sections of this thesis once I have shared my theoretical understanding of knowing and not-knowing.

In order to evidence the comment that I did not know I was doing not-knowing, or what my thesis was about, this section is going to start with a poem-ish form about epistemology and the associated writing as inquiry that I did before progression, using the relearning, revisiting idea you have already been introduced to, to show where I was before the viva comment.

I will then show a one-page summary I put together for a doctoral community showcase in November 2021 where in 15 minutes I presented my ideas around epistemology for comment and critique. The single page is shared firstly to evidence that my thinking and understanding

has shifted, and then, through separating and expanding on the three paragraphs, as a form to navigate the concepts and ideas within them.

A wet play day exploring epistemology

At the start we are go-karting
But as the wheels fall off, we skid into
Clambering around an obstacle course.
Dangerous lava making us careful and slow,
Explorers in a
Futuristic alien world.
Gathering pace in cardboard spaceships,
Hiding behind planets
In time for a snack and rest before
Jumping out into forward rolls,
Limber like gymnasts.
Muscles pulling us up and over,
No time wasted as we race through
Obstructions. Practicing moves ahead of
Pugilistic battles.
Questioning the winner like a
Reporter.
Superheroes suddenly,
Taking flight carried away by clapping.
Unexpectedly changing our outfits to
Vestments more fitting for the wet
Weather. We look around with
X-ray vision finding the wheels. And with
Yucky, mucky hands we are back in the
Zone, racing our mended carts.

I am much further through my inquiry process now, the workshops are over, I'm in the 'writing phase' but I feel that I'm still struggling to know what I am doing, to articulate how I know and what I know. I go back through the notes that I've made from relistening to recordings of my doctoral supervision group and individual sessions, picking out words and phrases that seem important, that shape the exploration of how I know. A version of the relearning, re-knowing, new-knowing process that I have used before.

This time, however, it results in five pages of words and phrases that I struggle to make sense of or use to know differently. I feel slightly overwhelmed by the volume – it has taken me a full week to listen to all the recordings, revisiting the emotional ups and downs, the enthusiasm and devastation, the endless searching for a 'thing' that my doctorate was about. It has enabled me to see that what it has been about is an epistemological process rather than the discovery of a package of knowledge. Yet, I feel equally galvanised and annoyed by my repeated patterns of all or nothing. I appreciate there is value in this way of being and doing to drive action, of the anxiety of not being good enough, but there is also an exhaustion in not being able to be in the middle ground. I veer off into thoughts of training and exercise, how this is middle ground between unfit and an event and stop to put this fledgling metaphor onto paper.

The following day I come back to the five pages with a slight sense of dread, wondering about the utility of my method of revisiting and poem-ish form. I go back over the five pages and write a shorter list of the most compelling words or phrases, and I end up with a single page of 56 entries, mostly single words, a few two- or three- word phrases). I then look again at this shorter list and...

- The first entry is *wheels* – taken from a quote I made in supervision⁶; the second is *trolleys* and I am reminded of the trolley races that happened in medical school, everyone dressed up, running through the city pushing hospital trolleys to raise money for charity.
- The next few words I notice are *physical, challenge, boundaries* and these coalesce into ideas of going through gates and climbing over obstacles.
- Then *pace*, and I am reminded about how this revisiting is about going slow in order to go fast, about my tendency to want to run or cycle rather than walk, to not go slow.
- Then there are phrases that evoke physicality and movement; *squaring up, holding on, letting go, letting down, all or nothing*, and an image of 1920s moustached boxers in their all-in-one suits is in my head.

I shift from trolleys to go-karts alongside ideas of obstacle races and dressing up, and I start to think of kids playing – pretending, interacting, not having a destination but responding to events and ideas, enjoying the process of not knowing, of acting in relationship with and response to their context and each other. The day starts with a plan to race go-karts, but the wheels fall off and so it becomes an obstacle race and then... I consider the various moments of the last four years and I see explorers, aliens, superheroes, gymnasts, hide and seek, stopping for a rest, changing pace, holding on and letting go – all things that could happen in a day, an hour or even minutes of play. I look up rhymes and poetic forms and the alphabet form⁷ seems to fit with children, school, knowing and knowledge, and *A wet play day exploring epistemology* (page 159) is written.

⁶ *'the wheels fell off, I lost the wheels, but now I've found the wheels and they are in the same room as the frame, they're not attached, but they are at least in the same room'*

⁷ every word, or every line starts with a letter of the alphabet, all only used once, in or out of order

Writing helps me to recognise it is OK and necessary to have a break, to have a rest, to resource with a snack and maybe even to hide! That altering plan, pace, understanding, direction is all part of the reality of change practice; it doesn't negate or invalidate effort or impact, it is about interaction, relational knowing and context. I recognise that my intent to improve care has never been lost even when the wheels fell off, when I've felt like an alien on a strange planet, when I'm thrown off course by unseen assumptions, or when I choose to act differently or not to act at all. The idea of kids playing, of make believe and pretend, of jumping between scenarios and personas made me smile and see the fun that I have had in this doctorate, the excitement of playing with and discovering ideas, the enjoyment I get from learning, the leaps that have been made in improving care.

I notice that I was smiling when the poem was written and that I feel enthused and resourced to keep going – both in writing and in work. I wonder whether the positivity and playfulness of the poem is a response to being in a more grounded, reflective, appreciative place in terms of inquiry and work, of being at the point to write up, of maybe having found the 'thing', or more of a reaction to the value of a break, of a week off work, eating fun things, getting back in the sea and focusing on inquiry. Perhaps it is a combination of all of the above, a form that also shows and represents the conditions and resourcing I need for inquiry.

Showcase

My doctorate is about epistemology and method

About physicality and metaphor

When considering how I know I struggled with Heron and Reason's (2013) 'extended epistemology'. The reality of different ways of knowing resonated but my initial interpretation of the four parts as distinct and hierarchical meant I was dissatisfied with this framework. This dissatisfaction enabled me to look again and differently at my own ways of knowing and to discover the importance for me of physicality and metaphor.

Knowing as an epistemology of practice

Knowledge as an epistemology of possession

I came across these distinctions from Cook and Brown (1999) relatively recently in this inquiry process, but they have really helped to make sense for me of knowing and knowledge as distinct yet overlapping concepts. Knowing as an active, doing process, one in which physical interaction can be doing epistemic work of its own. Knowledge as something that you own, possess, a tool of knowing, that is *about* but not *in* the world.

Knowing how to 'not-know(ledge)'

Developing negative capability

I spent a lot of this doctorate worrying that I didn't know what I was doing. Then a single throwaway comment at my progression viva enabled me to see that in fact what I have been doing is 'enactive not-knowing'. I have developed methods that resonate with how I know through physicality and metaphor, or enactive cognition (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015) to push away familiar (safe) knowledge. Methods that allow me to stay in the uncomfortable space of not-knowledge long enough to know differently. This ability to stay in the space between knowledge and not-knowledge, to have tactics that enable holding uncertainty long enough to generate new knowledge can be described as having negative capability (term attributed to Keats, 1817).

Summary written for EDOC / ADOC doctoral community Showcase, November 2021

Extended Epistemology

When considering how I know I struggled with Heron and Reason's (2013) 'extended epistemology'. The reality of different ways of knowing resonated but my initial interpretation of the four parts as distinct and hierarchical meant I was dissatisfied with this framework. This dissatisfaction enabled me to look again and differently at my own ways of knowing and to discover the importance for me of physicality and metaphor. (Showcase p.163)

Epistemology is defined as the theory of knowledge, and includes not only consideration of how we know, but also how we validate that knowing and what counts as knowledge⁸ (Coleman, 2015). My exploration of epistemology started with Heron's (Heron & Reason, 2013) concept of 'extended epistemology' – extending knowing past the traditional scientific, empirical, fact and language based (written and spoken) knowing that I was inculcated with by school and medical school.

As I have already touched on in the previous chapters, the traditional positivist paradigm that I had been primarily educated within stems from Descartes – "*I think therefore I am*" – placing a rational, detached, analytical thinker, with a body-as-object at the centre. In this paradigm knowledge is acquired through reason, methods and experiments, importantly removing any interference from the doubtful, fallible senses. The real, separate, objective world is out there and can be understood and explained through analytical reasoning, minimising the subjective impressions and clouding influences of our senses, separating mind from body. As I discovered once I started to inquire into my consultation practice, this Cartesian paradigm didn't explain how I know in a consultation or what the roles of physical examination and

⁸ Issues of power associated with who generates knowledge and which knowledge is valued are discussed in a later section

interaction are for me, and so I started to look for alternatives to this paradigmatic view of the world, and how and what we know within it.

The framework of extended epistemology was my introduction to alternative ways of knowing. A framework that delineates four ways of knowing that involve more than just the separate thinking mind. Ways that are naturally employed by everyone, but that can be undertaken with intentionality in research as both process and outcome (Heron & Reason, 2008).

I have to confess, possibly heretically within the context of an action research doctorate that has epistemology as a core concept, that I really struggled with this framework. I have read and reread a variety of discussions of this conceptualisation of ways of knowing (Heron & Reason, 1997a, 1997b, 2001, 2008; 2013) and, although each time I feel a little more engaged, I have still struggled to wholeheartedly embrace it into my understanding of my epistemology. Instead the initial dissatisfaction I felt with it enabled me to focus more on physicality and metaphor and to develop my understanding of enactive cognition. What I now realise, however, is that these ways of knowing are foundational to the concepts and ideas that have informed my understanding of my own epistemology, and it is therefore important to share and discuss 'extended epistemology' here before moving on.

- *Experiential knowing* is by being present with or by direct face-to-face encounter with person, place or thing. It is knowing through the immediacy of perceiving, through empathy and resonance. Its produce is the quality of the relationship in which it participates, including the quality of being of those in the relationship.
- *Presentational knowing* emerges from the encounters of experiential knowing, by intuiting significant form and process in that which is met. Its product reveals this

significance through the expressive imagery of movement, dance, sound, music, drawing, painting, sculpture, poetry, story and drama.

- *Propositional knowing* 'about' something is intellectual knowing of ideas and theories. Its product is the informative spoken or written statement.
- *Practical knowing* is knowing how to do something. Its product is a skill, knack or competence – interpersonal, manual, political, technical, transpersonal and more – supported by a community of practice. (Heron & Reason, 2008, p.367)

Independently all these ways of knowing resonate for me, particularly at this later stage of my inquiry – the experiential in-relation knowing, the use of form in presentational knowing, the intellectual knowledge encompassed in propositional knowing, and the skill and know-how of practical knowing. What I struggled with initially was a perception that what was being offered was an alternative hierarchy of knowing, placing practical knowing as the pinnacle in comparison to the prioritisation of propositional knowing that I was used to from my medical training. Although the four ways of knowing can be interpreted as a cycle or an up-hierarchy (Seeley, 2008, p. 4), as someone already challenged by and potentially rebelling against one hierarchy of knowing, I interpreted this model as another hierarchy, and felt I didn't need another one where:

the grounding of all knowing is experiential, from which presentational knowing emerges as a way to express it, enabling subsequent understanding through theories and propositional knowing, for it then to be ultimately expressed in practice as practical knowing

As I now review my understanding of the flow of the four ways of knowing, I feel like it makes sense and is even congruent with my own epistemology. However, back in 2013 when I first came across it in my masters, and then again in 2017 at the beginning of this doctorate, I had a very literal, positivist, achievement-focused interpretation. If I wasn't doing all the steps in the

process, or I wasn't doing them in the right order, or I wasn't achieving all the aspects described, then I wasn't doing extended epistemology. If presentational knowing was about presenting findings as art, then I wasn't and wouldn't be doing that! If practical knowing meant developing a specific skill as an aim, rather than using the knowledge gained in practice – which is how I would interpret it now – then this doesn't fit. I felt that if I wasn't doing this model as (how I interpreted it) had been prescribed, then I wasn't doing knowing, and therefore I needed a different model. My default at the time was 'needing to know', getting things right, doing things properly; the understanding that 'not-knowing' is acceptable, useful and generative was a long, long, long way away from being part of my ontology.

What followed were the experiments I have already shared with methods and form; the curiosity and excitement about the ideas of playfulness and physicality; using metaphor, poem-ish writing and wire structures to help me make sense. All of these informed my understanding of how I know, and my development of method, without me really understanding exactly how they were working or what I was doing. Instead, I often found myself extremely frustrated that I didn't know, wondering whether I was doing anything at all, or if I had any idea what my thesis was about? At the same time as experiencing this overwhelming doubt I was also able to appreciate that I must be doing something, as undertaking inquiry was helping me manage and continue in my work context. Then I came across the concepts of epistemology of practice and epistemology of possession (Cook & Brown, 1999) and my inquiry started to make sense. I realised I had been *doing* something and I began to see how the threads might even get woven together.

Knowing as an epistemology of practice and Knowledge as an epistemology of possession

I came across these distinctions relatively recently in this inquiry process, but they have really helped to make sense for me of knowing and knowledge as distinct yet overlapping concepts. Knowing as an active, doing process, one in which physical interaction can be doing epistemic work of its own. Knowledge as something that you own, possess, a tool of knowing, that is *about* but not *in* the world. (Showcase p.163)

This alternative positioning of epistemology from Cook and Brown (1999) is from a paper that also looks to challenge the positivist Cartesian paradigm of valuing specific types of knowledge more than others. The authors differentiate knowledge from knowing, as an epistemology of possession or practice, and discuss the implications of this perspective for work in organisations. They describe four categories of knowledge, presenting them as two related spectrums:

explicit and tacit

individual and group

They also use riding a bike as a metaphor to describe the explicit / tacit spectrum which may have influenced why I enjoyed the paper! I am going to borrow and extend this metaphor to demonstrate my understanding of these four categories, as well as the difference between knowledge and knowing.

- *Knowledge (four categories) as something one owns – an epistemology of possession.*
- *Knowing as an action, the process – an epistemology of practice.*

(Cook & Brown, 1999, pp. 382-383)

Knowledge – explicit and tacit

Explicit knowledge is equivalent to propositional knowledge, the spelled out, formalised, facts, data, theories – the physics of riding a bike. There is also tacit knowledge – the ability to stay upright on a bike, to actually ride the bike, to know which way to turn the handlebars so you don't fall off. You can possess both these bits of knowledge – they are still owned when you are not riding the bike, but neither can be turned into the other form of knowledge; knowing the physics won't enable you to ride a bike, riding a bike won't give you the understanding of gyroscopic momentum, but they can work in aid of each other.

Knowledge – individual and group

As a cyclist I have both tacit and explicit knowledge of my own about cycling, but there is also a body of knowledge that is greater than my individual knowledge that I can draw on, e.g. when I am part of my cycling club, or as a member of British cycling – group knowledge that is possessed alongside individual knowledge.

Knowing

What they then go on to describe is that, whilst these four categories comprise knowledge, they do not comprise knowing. In this metaphor knowing is the **action** of riding the bike. It is not the knowledge possessed; it is not present when you are not riding the bike (unlike knowledge, which is); **knowing is only present in the riding, in the doing, in the action;**

“the act of riding a bicycle does distinct epistemic work of its own... By ‘knowing’ we do not mean something that is used in action or something necessary to action, but rather something that is a part of action... ‘Knowing’ refers to the epistemic work that is done as part of action or practice, like that done in the actual riding of a bicycle or the actual making of a medical diagnosis” (Cook & Brown, 1999, pp. 386-387)

Suddenly, enactive metaphor and cognition became clearly interwoven with physical interaction as knowing and made sense – **it is the action of interacting, of doing, of my body actively in relation with something that is doing the epistemic work.** Doing a pull-up does epistemic work of its own, making a wire structure does epistemic work of its own, constructing a poem does epistemic work of its own – all of the actions are a process of knowing, a process that only exists in the action, in the physical engagement, in, with and through my doing body. Knowing *as* action using knowledge as a tool *in* action, not competing but mutually enabling (Cook & Brown, 1999, p. 383).

However, the authors make clear that for them it is not *all or any* action that results in knowing, it is “*action as behaviour imbued with meaning, in context, in practice*” (which they define as the coordinated activities of individuals or groups in context) that constitutes knowing (Cook & Brown, 1999, p. 388).

Wrapping some wire around my fingers and putting it down would not be an activity of knowing; wrapping wire around my fingers as a method, as an activity given meaning, in the context of my inquiry means it is doing epistemic work, and it is an activity of knowing. **The intent of the activity matters, the intent of my use of form as method, makes the activity one of knowing.** Reflecting on physical experiences like falling off my bike or relearning to swim, bringing into existence an enactive metaphor in the context of inquiry also gives meaning to this bodily knowing such that these are also examples of an epistemology of practice.

The threads had started to come together, but the pattern still wasn't clear. How did I still not really know what I was doing or what it was that I now knew from these activities of knowing? And then there was that comment in my progression viva.

Not Knowing

I spent a lot of this doctorate worrying that I didn't know what I was doing. Then a single throwaway comment at my progression viva enabled me to see that in fact what I have been doing is 'enactive not-knowing'. I have developed methods that resonate with how I know through physicality and metaphor, or enactive cognition to push away familiar (safe) knowledge. Methods that allow me to stay in the uncomfortable space of not-knowledge long enough to know differently. This ability to stay in the space between knowledge and not-knowledge, to have tactics that enable holding uncertainty long enough to generate new knowledge can be described as having negative capability. (Showcase p.163)

I had started this inquiry with a confused and essentially false perception of myself as someone who likes uncertainty and change. Whilst it is true that I really like being involved in change and improving care, and that I am comfortable with the solution emerging, not being fixed, responsive to conversation and interactions, this is because I like knowing how to do things, to make things better, to learn what to do. **I do not like not-knowing and the uncertainty associated with that.** To then be faced with the suggestion that perhaps I was doing '*embodied not-knowing*' was a surprise and quite challenging; however, as I started to read around not-knowing, uncertainty and ignorance, it was like gears that have been misaligned clicking into place. Not just for my use of form as method and this inquiry, but also for my understanding of context and change.

The first aspect of not-knowing that grabbed me was the idea that "*all knowledge has its inescapable origins in unknowing*" (Gross & McGoe, 2015, p. 26) – an idea that is attributed to Socratic wisdom, or "**knowing by not-knowing**".

This means that education is about ‘learning’ things we don’t know or don’t know how to do, that *“learning arises from working at the edges between knowing and not knowing”* (Simpson & French, 2001, p. 54).

Suddenly I was able to see that the image I had of myself as someone who likes not-knowing was flawed. I am in fact someone who likes learning in order to know, not someone who likes not-knowing. However, I can’t learn unless I don’t know, or unless I am prepared to not-know enough so that I am able to know something new. **I have to not-know in order to know.**

And yet if not knowing is the basis of knowing and learning, and I like learning then why is it so difficult for me to do, or admit to not-knowing?

(Journal entry, July 2020)

The second aspect of not-knowing that resonated with me and answered this question is the recognition that not-knowing is difficult and often hidden or pushed away rather than valued, that *“an assumption exists there is something wrong in not-knowing”* (Crossman & Doshi, 2015, p. 2). The negative associations and descriptors of not-knowing such as confusion, doubt, unfamiliarity, feeling lost, ignorant and uninformed certainly felt much more familiar to me than any positive ones. I felt, as Crossman and Doshi suggest many of us do, that I had been *“conditioned by being praised for knowing and criticised or reprimanded for not knowing”* (Crossman & Doshi, 2015, p. 1).

That often not-knowing was, for me, a place of significant anxiety that inspires “*a sense of incompetence and loss of control, and can obliterate all sense of role identity and of the task in hand*” (Simpson & French, 2001, p. 69). The feelings of not knowing what I was doing, not doing enough, not knowing how to make change happen, not having a ‘thing’ that this doctorate was about, that I carried around for the first few years of this inquiry, fit this description perfectly. A sense of feeling scared, challenged, silly or stupid or a combination of all of these. These feelings were worsened by my perception that as a senior clinical consultant and researcher in organisational change I was supposed to know, that being found to not know would be catastrophic (like the experience in resus). that I would be revealed as ‘naked’, to borrow a metaphor found in *Learning at the Edges* (Simpson & French, 2001), and wanting to respond by quickly covering up with the familiar clothing of safe ideas and knowledge.

Dispersal is a term used to describe this need to move away from not knowing (Crossman & Doshi, 2015; Simpson & French, 2001), to take “*flight from the anxiety of the meeting with the unknown into explanation, emotion or physical action*” (Simpson & French, 2001, p. 70). Both Raab (1997) and Crossman and Doshi (2015) discuss the role that defence mechanisms have in this dispersal response, mechanisms that I have briefly summarised in table 3.

Table 3. Defence mechanisms in response to not-knowing

Denial	Refusal to acknowledge not knowing; concealing not knowing and cultivating a false sense of certainty instead; being silent - not engaging, not discussing.
Displacement	Indulging in emotional outbursts or behaviour arising from the anxiety about not knowing, not necessarily in circumstances related to the not-knowing
Identifying	Copying others, behaving how others behave when you don't know something to avoid admitting or being seen to not-know
Substitution	Drawing attention to proficiency in another area to distract away from not knowing
Skilled incompetence	The unacceptability of not knowing results in continuously avoiding the difficult and searching questions and therefore failing to learn
Oversimplifying	Breaking issues down into manageable parts, changing something that's easy to change rather than what needs to be changed
Structure	Reliance on process, model, improvement science, package of methodology – any sort of structure to avoid not knowing
Dependency	On an expert, on an external consultancy firm, on knowledge we already have
Control	Do what we've always done, maintain the status quo, stick with what we know even if it isn't working

Based on Raab (1997) and Crossman and Doshi (2015)

As I read about all these possible responses employed to avoid not-knowing, I found I could correlate them with behaviour and interactions taking place within my current context – a broken healthcare system that we don't know how to fix.

I started to see that the: dismissive attitude of specialities towards each other; the entrenched siloed behaviour and ways of working; an overwhelming focus on small processes that are going well whilst ignoring the failure in flow across the system; repeated use of expert consultancy firms; a switch to the latest improvement methodology; breaking down system-wide issues falsely into small speciality issues as a way to be able to change something; doing what we've always done and avoiding the difficult questions - could all be manifestations of trying desperately to avoid disclosing and admitting that we don't know how to fix our healthcare system.

(Journal entry, September 2020)

More importantly, however, I realised that if as an individual or an organisation you are unable to not know, then you cannot learn, know anything new or change.

Being able to not know is critical to change.

Not knowing is also, I discovered, much more than just anxiety and discomfort. It is curiosity, excitement, wonder, creativity (Fridmanova, 2013; Jones, 2009), something that can be enjoyable, stimulating and fruitful (Simpson & French, 2001), a place or state where I (and we) learn, develop knowledge, attain practical wisdom (Nascimento Souto, 2019), and change. A place or state worth exploring and staying in, a staying-in that is made possible via the

concepts of negative capability and of not-knowing as a state of mind. Both are concepts I consider as overlapping and integrating with the ideas of playful mindset, form, enactive cognition and knowing as action, as I will now describe.

‘Negative capability’ is a term attributed to Keats in 1817, used to describe a poet’s capacity to wait; to tolerate the emotional experience of waiting in the space of not-knowing; “*capable of being in uncertainties*” (Simpson & French, 2001, p. 71). Crossman and Doshi (2015) also describe it as the way in which individuals experience and respond to states of not-knowing, suggesting that it includes reflective inaction – the curious ability to not do something, and suspension of the intellect - holding back from that rush to familiar knowledge (Crossman & Doshi, 2015, p. 2). As I read this description, I was immediately reminded of Seeley’s (2008, 2014) work on the presentational aspect of Heron’s extended epistemology, and to how ‘suspending’ might make sense of my use of form as method or explain the suggestion that I am doing ‘embodied not knowing’.

Seeley (2008) explores presentational knowing, particularly focusing on the movement between experiential-presentational and presentational-propositional knowing, and subdivides this into:

1. *Sensuous encountering: using all our ways of sensing to experience the world directly with a whole-body sense of curiosity and appreciation for the glorious mundane*
2. *Suspending: hanging fire with fresh rounds of clever intellectual retorts in order to become more deeply acquainted with the responses to experience of our more-than-brainy bodies to the more-than-human world*

3. Bodying-forth: inviting imaginative impulses to express themselves through the media of our bodies without our intellects throwing a spanner in the works and crushing those responses with misplaced rationality or premature editing and critique

4. Being informed: becoming beings whose living and actions form and are informed by the rich experiences, surprises, provocations and evocations of presentational knowing, both as perceivers and as creators

(Seeley, 2008, p. 7)

Having earlier on in this section described how I pushed away Heron's concept of extended epistemology, this breakdown of presentational knowing brings me back towards it with descriptions that evoke my own methodology:

“whole body sense of curiosity, hanging fire with fresh rounds of intellectual retorts, our more-than-brainy-body, through the body without intellect throwing a spanner in the works” (Seeley, 2008)

In response to these phrases I consider that my use of form is knowing as an activity, with and through my body. **A bodily activity of knowing that enables me to 'not-knowledge' in order to know.** That the enactive process of creating form enables me to *suspend* or hold back the rush to cover my nakedness with familiar knowledge long enough to find some new clothes.

Seeley (2008) describes the idea of choosing how we respond in this space of presentational knowing as allowing our attention to be *“caught by something out there through a child-like receptivity of being spoken to by the thing”* (Seeley, 2008, p. 10). I start to weave in the ideas of playful mindset, child-like non-expert beginner's mind, 'ish' positioning and the concept of *'not-knowing as a way of being'* or mindset as described by Nascimento Souto (2019). This

mindset description suggests that not knowing is “*an active space within practice*”

characterised by

- *a non-interfering way of being-in-the experience*
- *mindfulness and an awareness of the embodied, context-dependent and practical dimension of knowledge*
- *being comfortable in uncertainties and the blank spaces*
- *the adoption of a non-expert position of not-knowing which is related to tolerating uncertainty* (Nascimento Souto, 2019, p. 57)

Again these descriptions resonate with how I feel I use form; being completely in the creating, no distractions, focused on being and doing, no certainty or intent about the outcome other than as a process, not being an artist or a poet or an expert in the form, holding a playful ‘ish’ positioning to not-know and tolerate uncertainty.

Integrating all these ideas and concepts enables me to conclude that my **methodology is a tactic for not knowing** (Cocker, 2013), **an enactive practice of negative capability**, a method that provides a contained safe space in which I may “*encounter something new or unfamiliar, unrecognisable or unknown*” (Cocker, 2013, p. 127). A way to hold this space of not-knowing and its associated anxiety long enough for me to know something new – that indeed I have been doing ‘not-knowing’!

Cocker (2013) proposes that not knowing is not an experience or activity without knowledge, but one instead where knowledge is questioned, shaken up, made restless (Cocker, 2013, p. 131). I like this idea and how it links back to the ideas of epistemology of practice and possession, to knowledge as a tool used in knowing (Cook & Brown, 1999). That perhaps I don’t always grab the right tool or use it in the right way and that part of the activity of not-knowing is about being able to look at the tools, to reconsider or reconfigure them. That in fact

the feeling of being lost, being adrift, being unable, being questioned associated negatively with not-knowing is also part of the generative aspect of not knowing. Recognising and being open to the unknown makes it possible for new knowledge, for the “*as yet unthought*” to emerge (Jones, 2009, p. 4) and getting lost, letting go, giving away the need for control is part of what is required to not know.

Interestingly these are also descriptions of using arts-based research given by Knowles and Cole (2008, p. 32), yet another overlap and interweaving of the ideas and concepts in this thesis.

I realise that instead of being inhibited and held back by not-knowing, I have instead been developing **methodology and expertise in knowing how to not-know, to not-knowledge.**

As I embrace this shifted perception, I realise in itself this has led to change – a change in how I understand this inquiry, my contribution, and to how I make sense of what is possible, or not, in context. That I am beginning to enact the idea that it is acceptable to not-know, that not-knowing is important, useful, generative, necessary and that I have developed a methodology that enables me to do this. That not-knowing includes getting lost and letting go of some ideas or solutions, like for example single point of access, or potentially the possibility of change in some contexts. That not-knowing may also mean not doing everything by myself and maybe even asking for help!

Raab (1997) describes a similar shift, a reframing of teaching from expert in knowing to expert in not-knowing, to a profession that supports learning as ‘*the struggle with not-knowing*’. To

enable this shift she describes key strategies to employ in order to develop expertise in not knowing:

- *using embodied knowing as data*
- *tolerating and staying with anxiety through the creation of safe spaces in which to think differently*
- *becoming self-reflective* (Raab, 1997, p. 172)

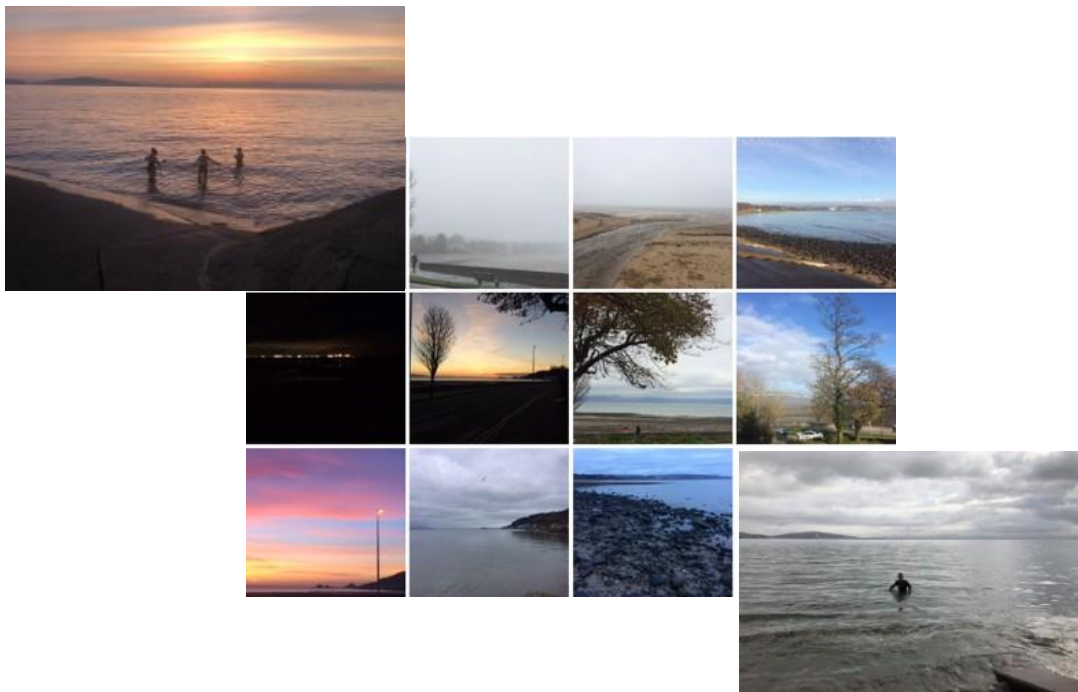
These, I realise, are strategies that are incorporated into my methodology and therefore strategies that could be employed in change through using this methodology, through offering enactive agnosis into the space of change practice. Instead of focusing on creating the conditions for change, we could be discussing creating the conditions for not-knowing, or how we develop the 'know-how to not-know' in order to change.

The intent of this chapter has been to position and integrate my understanding of epistemology, of how this encompasses a differentiation of knowledge that we possess from knowing as an activity, and of the challenge, importance and value of not knowing. It has also been about integrating these ideas with the previous sections, showing how they have been woven together into the method of **enactive agnosis**.

There are other links into the realms of practical knowing (Coghlan, 2011), power and knowledge (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2013), lyric inquiry (Nielsen, 2008), metaphor (Zwicky, 2014) and phases of research in ABR (Leavy, 2015). Some of these have been made already, some will be hinted at, and others discussed in depth in the next section – as I demonstrate my method as a way to make sense; to build on what has already been shared to describe and show how this has impacted my understanding of power, change, action research and thus my own practice.

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Making sense



The last section described in depth the theories, ideas and interactions that led to the emergence of enactive agnosis. This section acts more like a case study, showing how I have used enactive agnosis as a methodology to make sense of broader concepts, and the impact on my context and practice of the resulting new or shifted knowing and understanding. It starts with a discussion of power, primarily the intersection of power, knowledge and expert and then considers the implications this positioning has on the perception of not-knowing in terms of my healthcare context and my role, position and agency within that. It then moves via a relearning, revisiting poem-ish form to a discussion of action research and how I understand my inquiry from the paradigmatic perspective of action research, with an associated discussion about what makes 'good' action research. It concludes with a description and discussion of my understanding of change.

The aim of articulating my understanding of action research and change and my tricky relationship with power and expertise here is that it is an attempt to build on the evidence and data already shared so that I can answer the 'So what?' and 'What next?' questions in this and the final chapter.

That's all been very lovely but 'So what?'

- What has the impact of enactive agnosis been on me and my context?
- What does this methodology offer action research or organisational change?

And what am I going to do next?

- Has this enquiry and methodology altered my understanding of context and of where and when I can undertake change work?

Chapter 8. Power

Power and Expert Knowledge

Power is a concept that I feel slightly uncomfortable with, something that for me, despite the attempts at alternative metaphorical representation shared towards the beginning of this thesis, does conjure Machiavellian images of manipulation, scheming and malicious intent. I recognise that some of my conceptualisation relates to military metaphors used in politics and power; power as a vehicle; power as something that can be owned, wielded, exercised; representations that result in phrases like ‘character assassination’ being used for ‘managing’ opponents. However, more of my conceptualisation is likely to be related to my upbringing, education and the hierarchical understanding and correlation of power and knowledge (rather than power and politics) this instilled.

“They don’t get it”

is a phrase that looms large from my childhood and has continued into adulthood. As a child it was uttered whilst sitting as a family at the dinner table discussing the latest aspect of Dad’s work; now it is sitting as a family with a drink hearing Dad pontificate on his latest ‘thing’.

What it means is

‘they don’t have the knowledge; I do, therefore they are wrong and I am right.’

This is a living example and expression of how knowledge was, and is, valued in my family. I grew up in a house where there was deference towards the important work of my dad, a

doctor and academic, supported by a fundamental acceptance and belief in the importance of hierarchy, of the position and power of consultants and officers (my mum grew up in a military family). It instilled a perception of knowledge as something that defines position, affords power, has value, is true. A conflation and correlation of power and knowledge where power was hierarchical and wielded with military precision. This continued into medical school, where despite the attempted erosion of the paternalistic tradition of 'doctor knows best,' almost the ultimate expression of knowledge is power, the conceptualisation of knowledge as affording expertise, and expert as power, was and still is present. Phrases that we use in an attempt to counter this paternalistic position such as '*expert patients*' and '*patient empowerment*' demonstrate very clearly that within medicine we still believe that knowledge=expert=power.

This interplay of knowledge and power, between the epistemological and the political (Coghlan, 2011), is the focus of a chapter by Cornwall and Gaventa where they state that "*power and knowledge are inextricably intertwined*" (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2013, p. 172). This is a perspective I had clearly absorbed, and which needs to be discussed, particularly in a thesis that is making claims about the power and value of not-knowledge.

The metaphorical conceptualisation of knowledge as a resource is suggested by Cornwall and Gaventa (2013) as a reason for the overlap and interplay of the ideas of knowledge and power. If knowledge is a resource, then more knowledge is more influence and more power. The individual with more knowledge has more power over the individual with less. This is a metaphorical representation that I now appreciate I had understood as real, as a true positioning of knowledge and power, and one that describes my childhood and university experience of knowledge=expert=power.

This metaphor would be described by Cornelissen (2006) as an effective metaphor, as extending it enables us to gain a greater understanding of the interaction between knowledge and power. Resources can be produced and controlled, so by extending this metaphor then the same is true for knowledge. Power is afforded to those who generate knowledge, and this power also enables them to determine which types of knowledge generated have the most value, for example scientific knowledge. If we stick with this knowledge as resource conceptualisation, then not only can knowledge be generated it can also be limited. Limiting knowledge means not only limiting who participates in its production, but also limiting who the knowledge is shared with, or who gets access to that knowledge – promoting or maintaining a ‘power over’ paradigm (Lukes, 2007).

This is a metaphorical or paradigmatic view of power and knowledge that I recognise within medicine. It helps to explain the paternalistic approach; doctors are experts with knowledge, patients are powerless; doctors have the choice about how much valid academic scientific knowledge they share with the patient, and how much attention they pay to the patient’s less valid experiential knowledge. This conceptualisation also determines the hierarchy of doctors over nurses; doctors possess knowledge that is more valid than the knowledge nurses possess, as doctors have academically acquired scientific knowledge and (traditionally) nurses only had vocationally gained practical knowledge. What could be described as ‘normal professionalism’:

“Professionals produce and reproduce hierarchies of knowledge and power that place them in the position of agents who know better, and to whom decisions over actions, and actions itself, should fall” (‘normal professionalism’ attributed to Chambers, as quoted by Cornwall & Gaventa 2013, p. 177)

Much as I like to rail against this paternalistic and hierarchical paradigm within medicine, I realise that I do consider knowledge a significant contributor to power and position. This ‘power over’ perspective in which knowledge is a resource is a metaphorical conceptualisation that explains a lot of the behaviours, processes and organisational contexts in healthcare, as well more specifically some of the choices I have made about roles and maybe even doing this doctorate.

I have been comfortable taking on leadership roles in which my ‘expert’ clinical knowledge equates with power, such as leading the Children’s Emergency Department, but reluctant to take on roles in which my power wouldn’t (and couldn’t, as the poem-ish *Circus* suggests – (page 106) be explained purely in terms of clinical expertise. Getting involved with change and improvement has included getting more qualifications, more knowledge (a masters, a doctorate) – actions which I could now interpret as a way to ensure that my potential involvement and position cannot be questioned from the knowledge=expert=power perspective.

I recognise that the value and amplitude of the power associated with knowledge in healthcare is changing and being challenged and that this is both positive and negative. The knowledge=expert=power only perspective is limited and limiting to the opportunities for change in healthcare organisations, with colleagues and for me, but undermining it not only takes away the professional value, but potentially damages a sense of personal value too.

I very recently considered that I may need to give up clinical practice if the context in which I work continues to be as difficult as it is – as I contemplated this I suddenly, momentarily, terrifyingly and surprisingly didn’t know who I was. I had never before realised how much of

my identity, value, worth, my construct of self, was tied up with the knowledge, position and power of being 'a doctor'.

In the context of trying to undertake change in healthcare, where the trust and knowledge on which careers and positions and self-value are based is being continuously eroded by the media, where the system in which we have trained and worked is broken, to add in the suggestion that we need to admit to not-knowing, as I am proposing in this thesis, becomes even more challenging. The amplification of the defence mechanisms described in the previous section starts to make sense – the jumps to knowledge we already have, the continuation of what we've always done, the desperate need to deny not knowing, the siloed behaviour taking place not just to avoid 'not-knowing' but in order to maintain a sense of worth and value. The real difficulty of enabling change in this context using the concept of not-knowing starts to make much more sense.

The ideas in this doctorate challenge professional and personal position and value. Whilst I am not suggesting that medical knowledge is of no value, I am suggesting that not-knowing and not-knowledge is an important part of undertaking change within healthcare. Against the paradigmatic backdrop of knowledge=expert=power that is already feeling shaky and less certain than it used to, this non-knowledge positioning may be considered too challenging to engage with. Not-knowing, as the previous sections have shown, is as much a challenge for me as I perceive it is for my colleagues. Although I have developed more expertise in not-knowing, I also still default to wanting to know and jumping to knowledge, particularly when I am anxious, stressed and overwhelmed – conditions that currently feel very familiar working in healthcare.

Considering alternative conceptualisations of power and knowledge may offer one way to respond to this challenge. The idea of developing expertise in not-knowing (Raab, 1997), in contrast to being an expert, may offer another.

Cornwall and Gaventa (2013) move from the conceptualisation of knowledge as a resource used, created and shared (or not) to convey power, to discuss the idea that power is “*everywhere*”, a component of all social relations, as described by Foucault (Foucault & Gordon, 1980; Foucault & Rabinow, 1984), it is “*diffuse and embodied and enacted*” (powercube.net, 2011). In this construction knowledge and power are (again) inseparable to the extent that power/knowledge is a single concept or force that works through interaction and discourse as well as through institutions and practices. A force that is neither positive or negative, but instead is found in all social relationships affecting both those who are perceived of as powerful and those perceived as powerless. Although there are negative associations of control through discourse and institutions associated with this construction, there are also positive interpretations, the potential for synergistic enabling power relationships and interactions. “*Power involves any relationship involving two or more actors positioned such that one can act, within or upon powers mechanisms to shape the field of action of the other*” (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2013, p. 176). Instead of ‘power over’ there is the potential for ‘power to’, ‘power with’ and ‘power within’ (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2013, p. 175).

Agency and Power

What I have come to realise is that, whether I understand power as ‘power over’ or distributed, or whether I see knowledge=expert=power or not-knowing as powerful, from the context of healthcare change what matters is how I enact this understanding and what agency I have to do this.

In terms of understanding my own agency within the complicated intertwined nature of power and knowledge I also need to be honest. I have yet to embrace the reality that I have power that doesn’t reside purely in my clinical expertise, but also in my physicality, my interactions and my gestures as *Circus* (page 106) showed – I have remained reluctant to acknowledge that I have non-clinically related power or to ‘formally’ use it.

In an echo of the lightbulb moment in my progression viva where the comment “*Maybe you are doing embodied not-knowing*” enabled me to see what this dissertation is about, another single question in a supervision conversation made visible something previously unknown to me about my relationship with the implications of power, that alongside my construction of knowledge=expert=power has been impacting on my engagement and agency. A lightbulb moment I will now describe more narratively, before coming back to more conceptual and theoretical conclusions about not-knowing and power.

I have so far in my career, avoided ‘formal’ leadership positions apart from clinical lead for Children’s Emergency, instead opting for alongside, alternative, flexible roles. The first of these was when instead of putting myself forward to be Head of Service for the whole Emergency

Department, I stepped into a previously non-existent role sitting within improvement and organisational development, a role focused on 'medical leadership'. A role that over the four years that I was in it became whatever was useful for the organisation, a role in which I had personal rather than clinical expert power, but I didn't see it as 'formally' recognised. A role where I continued to play down and dismiss any power that I had, but because of shared trust from and of senior colleagues this 'self-deprecation' was managed or ignored by others so that I could use the power I had to change things. I gave up the role when we moved, and although the trigger for leaving was family, this role was also coming to an end and much more powerful and formal roles were being suggested. I wonder now, with hindsight whether leaving also allowed me to avoid confronting my reluctance to take on a powerful role, to acknowledge my power.

When we moved I did something similar, taking on a newly developed, non-formal, leadership role. Unfortunately, after nine months it became clear that in my new organisational context this sort of role was less successful. That my ("*at times brutal*") honesty was not always appreciated and after a couple of challenging meetings and accusations of being "*too honest*" I resigned. I am still being asked for my opinion, and being taken seriously as someone with valid ideas, values and suggestions by senior colleagues, but to get things done in this context, to have any chance of enabling change, I realise that I would need to take on a formal leadership role, to step into and use power. I had an opportunity to do this after covering a senior colleague during an episode of sickness, but then avoided taking on the role properly and accepted (what has turned out to be a frustrating) 'deputy' role instead.

In talking about not pushing to take on this senior role during a supervision session in 2021 I was appropriately challenged, and after trying to work out why I wouldn't take on the role and skirting the issue a bit I found myself suddenly, tearfully saying "*Because I don't want to let*

people down". The conversation moved to considering what had triggered this response, whether there was something getting in the way of me stepping into and using the power I have and why I continue to (potentially detrimentally) be dismissive of my position and power. The suggestion was that 'trauma' may be shaping my behaviour and resulted in the question:

"Was there an event in your past where you were let down, or you let people down?"

As this question landed, I had an immediate flash back to a particular event, where I felt irrevocably let down. It was a visceral, straight back into the moment shift that caught me completely by surprise. I didn't have to think about the answer to the question, I was there in it, feeling it, seeing it, knowing it. I had never previously equated this experience as having anything to do with work choices, with a reluctance to let people down, with my (at times overwhelming) sense of responsibility and high expectations of myself, but it does. I had never seen this event from the perspective of being let down by someone in a position of power before, or to the fact that I had drawn the conclusion that therefore avoiding power means I can't let people down like that. The immediate, felt, embodied response, that I now consider a valid way of knowing, makes me know that this event is significant, that this power-related conclusion is one that I had integrated into being and doing. I also realise that in knowing it I no longer must respond 'unknowingly', I can choose differently. I could step into and use power; I could acknowledge and use the power I have that isn't related to expert knowledge and have a different level of agency. That perhaps I am letting myself and the system down more by *not* stepping up than I ever would by 'failing' in a formal position.

The core concept of this doctorate is that change requires the ability to not know. That there are activities that do epistemological work, that hold and make safe not knowing in order to know. That knowing is an active epistemological practice, a body connected, body enabled active doing process that delays the jump to familiar knowledge in order to generate new knowledge.

This supervision conversation, like the viva conversation, is an example of this positioning in action. In a conversation in which it is safe to not-know, in which the conversation holds not-knowing, in which the conversation is doing epistemological work of its own, familiar knowledge was resisted. I was able to discover through embodied, relational, enactive knowing new knowledge about my relationship to power that makes sense and I hope will enable change in a way that the jump to *'I don't want a traditional leadership role'* never has.

Expertise in ‘Not Knowing’

Despite the potential to reconceptualise power I need to be realistic and accept that reframing to ‘expertise in not-knowing’ is a more pragmatic response in my context as well as a more comfortable response for me. It is a response that fits within the knowledge=expert=power construction but also subverts it and enables not-knowing to be feasible. In fact within healthcare this may be a construct that feels partly familiar, particularly if it is described using the action of a clinical consultation.

It can be hard to say “*I don’t know*” in a consultation – we are trained to be experts, to know the answer, to progress in our career via knowledge accumulation. It is not uncommon, however, that at some point in the process of making a diagnosis we don’t know. Whilst the percentage of consultations that this occurs in diminishes as we get more senior, or perhaps more accurately as we get more specialised (less so for GPs or Emergency consultants), knowing more and more about less and less – part of the clinical consultation skills we learn are in fact practices that enable us to manage not knowing – getting investigations, using time, asking for another opinion. All of these are ways of holding the space of not-knowing long enough to gather more data, to know. Perhaps considering that we already have some expertise in not-knowing and could develop more in order to undertake change may make my ideas more palatable in the context of healthcare change, and maybe similarly in change practice outside healthcare too

In discussing this reframing Raab describes one of the qualities required to be an expert in not-knowing is the courage to remain vulnerable (Raab, 1997, p. 173), but with a description of vulnerability that Leigh, my martial arts swimming friend would appreciate, and that fits in with the qualities of courage, patience, integrity, honesty and humility that Crossman and Doshi (2015) suggest are necessary for negative capability. The idea of vulnerability as a state of passive alertness, passive in the sense that like a martial artist's stance it is relaxed yet contained, flexible but ready for movement, able to act or not act as needed, with the patience to wait and do things at the appropriate pace, with the appropriate force at the appropriate time.

In the spirit of this perception of vulnerability I realise that, although I could continue to just push against the dominant paradigm in my current organisational context, it is getting to the point where I feel like I am banging my head against a brick wall and making a hole in my head rather than making a hole in the wall. Some things have helped me to make less of a deep hole in my head – the shift to understanding that I am developing expertise in not-knowing has helped; owning that my doctorate is about the importance of not-knowing has helped, but perhaps the biggest change is that I have started to consider that I don't have to stay in this context indefinitely.

I have realised that if the context is shouting – loudly, continuously and relentlessly – knowledge=expert=power and denying not-knowing at every opportunity then moving (at least some of the time) to a context where the volume is lower may be necessary for me to enact my new understanding and have some agency in change.

The idea of potentially leaving or limiting my primarily clinical role in my current organisation is one I am struggling with. Not only does considering leaving mean I am allowing the power differential, the 'power over' positioning, the knowledge=expert=power construction to continue, but it also means that I am using the privileged position I have to 'get out', a privilege not available to everyone. It plays into the '*letting people down*' and failing narratives that are my defaults as well as triggering the '*what am I if I am not a doctor?*' dialogue. I also realise, however, that if leaving allows me to develop further expertise in not-knowing that staying would not – to undertake change and stop making a hole in my head – then it may be the necessary and best option. It could also allow me the opportunity to push against the dominant power over paradigm, by sharing knowing and knowledge differently and involving others in its use and development.

As I write this, I have just started a one-day-a-week role working for a national healthcare improvement organisation, decreasing my clinical role by the same amount. I have also been honest with senior colleagues about the difficulties of the 'deputy' role and about feeling overwhelmed by the challenges of trying to change anything in our current context. I have even asked for some help in the form of time away and different expectations of the 'deputy' role in order to be able to continue in it.

I do not yet know what my new role will entail or how it will evolve, but I do know that talking about my doctorate - about context, change and the importance of not-knowing – in the interview was met with interest and excitement. I went into the process of getting a new role with my shifted knowing and understanding on display and had my ideas validated, to some extent, by getting the job. I now have an opportunity to share the knowledge and knowing differently, to own and use this work to make change in a different but allied context.

Power, Data, Change and Ethics

Despite including examples of the impact this inquiry has had on me like the one above, I have also been repeatedly challenged throughout this doctorate process that there is not enough 'me' in my writing. My immediate response to this challenge is that there is already far too much me in this thesis and that more would shift it towards my still slightly nagging feeling, that you will come across in the next chapter, that first-person action research can become a bit of a navel-gazing exercise. I recognise, however, that the challenge is really about ensuring that I show enough me to support my claims for change. It is about how I evidence and validate the impact of my methodology on change practice in a way that also shows the potential applicability and usefulness this methodology, or the ideas that have shaped it, may have for others. It is about why this is action research and not self-indulgent therapy; it is about the 'So what'.

I have shared some tricky situations at work and how wire structures and enactive cognition have enabled me to know them differently – for example *Thwack (page 13)*, the opening of this thesis, describing an event in resus that triggered my awareness of context, and the section *Artful Tension (page 145)* describing the shifted approach I took to a meeting after making a wire structure. I have described two instances where a realisation took place in a conversation, in an activity that was doing epistemic work, in relation between two embodied individuals, that has altered the sense I made.

I have intended to show how method derived from physical activity in the form of enactive metaphors has enabled me to examine my own writing and ideas and slow down, relearn,

new-learn; to describe how this process has revealed some defaults and anxieties that I have and the impact they have on my interactions and practice; and yet the challenge remains – how much more ‘me’ do I share, what is ethical and what is enough to answer ‘So what’.

There are many stories, conversations and incidents that I have written about, talked with others about, perseverated about, beaten myself up about and learnt from, that have shaped and been shaped by the ideas of this thesis. Some of them were good stories, some of them throwaway lines that were picked up by others or I came across through revisiting my journal and other writing, some of them are too raw or rough for me to share, some not visceral enough. In the stories and writing that I do share, my intention is to show the impact this work has had on my understanding, choices, thinking and behaviour.

In considering what to share, however, I also have to pay attention to the ethics of the choices that I make. This doctorate is individual or first-person action research into my own epistemology and practice which as my understanding of body-as-subject and object, as a ‘thinking body’ means is always in relation, most often in relation with others. This means the stories are at times about my work context – a healthcare organisation that is potentially identifiable, employing individuals who are also potentially identifiable no matter how hard I try to anonymise it and them.

There is also a theoretical risk to patients if I were to comment specifically about organisational decisions or directions unfavourably, as this might have implications for reputation and then potentially for patient care, if the organisation were to be identified and the comments publicised. I am confident that this risk is mitigated by the fact that I have not

written down any opinion in here that I haven't already voiced or shared in my organisation with colleagues; however, the risk of identification and the ethics of that still remains.

My aim has been to share enough of myself and my context so that the not-knowing, knowing and change makes sense without sharing too much, keeping methodology as the focus.

Anyone named or identified has been asked and has agreed to being mentioned, and I have been as honest in my organisation with my opinions about context and care as I have been in here. This is a stance that I am comfortable with, and one that aligns with the ethics and values of action research, as the next chapter details.

Chapter 9. Action Research

This chapter is about my understanding of action research and how I position my work within that. It begins with a poem-ish form, *Villanelle*, constructed using the revisiting relearning method and is followed by a discussion of how this process altered my understanding of action research and this inquiry.

Villanelle

Action research as detective
Every assumption interrogated
Space between from a new perspective

Holmes and Watson, as collective
Dirk Gently as interconnected
Action research as detective

Ways of knowing more effective
Doing and Being facilitated
Spaces between from a new perspective

All is relevant be selective
Evolving, emergent, unexpected
Action research as detective

Boundary or mirror both reflective
Place and time in which its nested
Spaces between from a new perspective

Democratic and respective
Inquiry spirals implicated
Action research as detective
Spaces between from a new perspective

In a slight change from the first experiment with the enactive swimming metaphor, instead of revisiting and relearning from discrete pieces of my own writing, I decided to try going through the copious notes I had made from books and articles on action research. In a similar process to the one I undertook to write *Wet Play Day* (page 159). I pulled out phrases and terms that jumped out at me, including quotes, my own interpretations and phrases that seemed completely new although as I had written them before they clearly weren't (!) and typed them all into a Word document (Appendix 1). I then reviewed the list seeing if there were any patterns or triggers for a metaphor and the first thing that I noticed was that the word *actors* seemed to be repeated and holding to the playful mindset of the process I started to wander in the direction of stage, plays, scripts.

I then noticed lots of the things I had written were pairs – of words or phrases, often contradictory or opposing. With the images of actors and plays I was led to the idea of fictional detectives from TV series I have watched, often working in contradictory and complementary pairings like in *Elementary* and *The Mentalist*. These are both American detective series that seem unrelated – one focuses on a logical, deductive, tortured detective and the other on a random, playful, previously hoax psychic detective – and yet both collect data, challenge assumptions, work with another person and are relentlessly curious to know how and why.

I read “paying close attention, data, rigour, curiosity, inquiry into the sources of our misunderstandings” and I think of Sherlock Holmes, but then “inquiry necessarily nested in space and time, questioning perceptions, seeing perspectives, challenging assumptions investigate reality in order to transform it” and I shift to science fiction and Dirk Gently, the holistic detective “accepting chaos to facilitate order” and “evolving, emergent inquiry, ambiguity, messiness, the unknown”

I recognise the previous value that constraints and limits had on the poem-ish rewriting process and look for a formal poetic structure that will help me to shape these ideas further. As I search a list of poetic forms (Lee Brewer, 2021) I see there is one called Villanelle. I leap on the *Killing Eve* reference, yet another fictional TV investigative link, and I use poem-ish form and the metaphor of action research as 'investigating detective' to construct *Villanelle*.

So how did *Villanelle* help me to make sense of how I understand action research, or the process of my inquiry within the context of action research?

The poem-ish writing mixed ideas of mine with ideas from literature, which is almost a metaphor for the whole process of inquiry within this doctorate, and therefore within action research for me. It starts with being curious about what and how I know, which combines paying attention and / or taking apart (investigating) what I do with coming across an idea in literature that seems to have links or connections. I then play around with both for a while, trying to stay curious and to hold the space between knowing and not-knowing, until;;

- I know something new and move off to investigate that
- I experiment with the new knowing
- I put it down and investigate something else

The conceptual blending of 'process of inquiry' with the 'metaphor of investigation', felt helpful; it brought into focus for me how I have been investigating at the edges of things, between boundaries in an evolving, emergent and unexpected way. Not knowing what I was doing, ideas emerging and then changing, spending time between or at the boundaries of different academic disciplines, genres, paradigms and concepts. Learning that there are more ways of knowing than I had previously considered, **that for me being (embodied) and doing**

(enactive) is how I am and how I know. That my inquiry is based in context, in the place and time in which it has been taking place, reminding me that context matters. That the process has been far from linear and far from easy, interrogating aspects of my self, education, knowing and practice, sometimes repeatedly.

I realise that via the process of creating *Villanelle* I understand my process of inquiry better and how it fits into the ideas and concepts associated with action research, but do I know the paradigmatic positioning of action research better? Did *Villanelle* capture the core concepts and help me understand them?

The principles of action research, according to Coleman (2013), are that it is **Practical, Participative, Progressive** and challenges the positivist paradigm by using **many ways of knowing**. I am going to expand on my understanding of each of these four principles using the knowing from *Villanelle* and how this links into action research literature, including work from Coleman (2013; 2015; 2017), Coughlan (2011, 2014; Coughlan & Brannick, 2014; Coughlan, Coughlan & Shani, 2019) and Marshall (2001, 2016a; 2016b).

Practical

Coleman (2013) describes **Practical** as being about creating change in real life by understanding what you are doing in order to do it better. Research that makes a practical and positive difference to those doing it, recognising that this takes place in emergent spirals of action and reflection (Coleman, 2013, pp. 3-4) – ideas that have been brought to the forefront and encapsulated in *Villanelle* via the phrases

'being and doing facilitated, inquiry spirals implicated, evolving, emergent, unexpected'.

Coghlan's (2011) paper is aimed at both those inside and outside the action research community, traces the history of action research to describe its scientific and philosophical positioning and concludes, similarly, that action research is "*science in the realm of practical knowing*", where "*the realm of practical knowing directs us to the concerns of human living*", is "*contextual and practical*" and is about things in relation and related to us (Coghlan, 2011, pp. 55-61).

I realise that this idea of practical knowing resonates with my understanding of what I have been doing, of action research, of investigating how to make change happen in my context by investigating how I know, what I do and whether that could be more effective. Developing practical knowing in, from and for practice, or as described by Nascimento Souto developing practical wisdom (2019, p. 52).

Knowing in terms of action research means actionable knowing. This is knowing that enables researchers to enact the change they want; it helps to narrow the gap between where we find ourselves, and where we would like to be, narrow the 'spaces between'.

"Action research investigates reality in order to transform it"

(Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 132).

Participation

Working as *collective* and being *democratic and respectful* are the lines in *Villanelle* that speak to the principle of **Participation** – described as one of the core values of action research; research that is with, not on, people (Bradbury-Huang, 2010; (Coleman, 2013, p. 5; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2006, 2008). This principle applies to the knowledge obtained, the actions undertaken, and the processes of both. Action research is research that is undertaken with participants, where data is gathered by a researcher who is within the research and reporting from, not external and reporting on. Action research is an orientation to “*collaborative inquiry and learning-in-action to cogenerate actionable knowledge*” (Coghlan, 2011, p. 79).

These values of collaboration, co-operation and co-generation are crucial to the paradigm of action research and inform the ideas of voices, types or modes described within action research. Whilst I agree with the principle of participation and collaboration, it is also one of the aspects of action research that I have struggled with – both from a practical doing it perspective, and from a theoretical perspective – this struggle is associated primarily with the ‘voices’ construct of action research.

- *First-person – ability of researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life. Inquiry into more and more moments of our action – not as outside researchers but in the whole range of everyday activities. In our action research practice, first-person inquiry provides a foundational practice and discipline through which we can monitor the impact of our behaviour*
- *Second-person - ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern*
- *Third-person – extend to create a wider impact, to create a wider community of inquiry*
(Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p.6)

My main contention is whether research can ever really be into issues of *mutual concern*, as described as second-person action research. The investigative / crime metaphor begun in *Villanelle* has helped me to navigate my own understanding of this distinction.

As an investigator I am trying to solve a crime, to do this I have conversations with witnesses, colleagues, strangers, friends to get multiple viewpoints, understand potential motives, ensure I don't miss any possible suspects, challenge my own assumptions, get added information and knowledge. It is likely that all the conversations I have are about the crime I am trying to solve not about an alternative crime that a group of us would like to solve together. It may be, in the act of inquiry with others about my investigation, crimes are identified that overlap, that my hypothesis might also fit, and we might end up co-generating new actionable knowledge to help solve those crimes, in that case I would consider this second-person inquiry, but if the conversations remain focused on my crime, any new knowledge generated in that co-inquiry, would still be first-person inquiry, although it is generated in collaboration with others. I am not sure that co-inquiry can ever be truly collaborative into issues of mutual concern or whether the invitation to inquire always confers some form of hierarchy. Even if there is shared interest in the inquiry topic is it ever truly mutual?

As an alternative Coghlan (2011) describes multiple aspects of action research that have helped to broaden my understanding away from the 'voices' construction (Coghlan, 2011, pp. 67-70). He starts by describing the following commonest action modalities, referring to the 'family of practices' that make up action research:

- Action learning – to learn and develop through engaging and reflecting on their experience as they seek to solve real-life problems in their own organisational settings
- Action science – analyse and document behaviour and the reasons behind them, attributed to Argyris (1995) and the need to bring ‘science’ back into the realm of action research
- Appreciative inquiry – focusing on what is already successful, rather than what is deficient (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010)
- Clinical inquiry – a modality attributed to Schein (1995) and associated with being invited into an organisation to enable change
- Cooperative inquiry – *“participants work together in an inquiry group as co-researchers and co-subjects”* (Goodyear & Zenios, 2007; Heron & Reason, 1997; Reason, 1988); Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 366);
- Developmental action inquiry – a form of action science associated with ideas from psychology, where individuals progress through stages of transformation developing and gaining insight into their own action-logics (Torbert, 2001; Torbert & Cook-Greuter, 2004)
- Intervention research – *“a detailed analysis of an organisation’s performance and the consequent development of management tools and actions to address deeply embedded problems”* (Coghlan, 2011, p. 68)
- Learning history – concurrent, multiple and divergent stories in an organisational story are presented as described by Roth (2008) (cited in Reason & Bradbury, 2008, pp. 350-365)

This is followed by the differentiation of insider and outsider action researcher – the concept of researching inside an organisation, as a full member of that organisation, in comparison to being brought into an organisation as an outsider to undertake an intervention (Coghlan, 2011, 2014; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014; Coghlan et al., 2019).

There are then different levels of analysis in action research described, working from individual through to socioeconomic political structures, with steps along the way that include small group exploration, organisational change and inter-organisational supply chain networks (Coghlan, 2011, p. 69).

I had struggled with where my own inquiry sat in terms of first- and / or second-person action research and instead like the opportunity that Coghlan's (2011) alternative categorisation offers me to describe it alternatively as '**individual, insider action learning**' – I am inside and part of the context (organisation, system) that I am trying to change, undertaking action research into how and what I know and do, in order to learn, to generate actionable knowledge, to undertake change.

I now appreciate that my struggle with the 'voices' construct was in part whether there are ever truly issues of mutual concern as described above, but also that where I ended up is not where I intended at the start of this doctorate

I was very clear that I did not want to be doing first-person action research; instead I was going to be doing second-person NHS changing action research. I felt I wanted to push against what I saw as a tendency to promote and prioritise first-person action research in the doctoral

community I am a part of, and for that research to feel more like therapy than research. At the start of this process I described first-person action research with a hint of disgust, as navel-gazing self-help, potentially not vastly different from the myriad of self-improvement books that litter the shelves of airport bookshops. I struggled to see how investigation into oneself was valid, or to see the 'So what' – what is the impact, what difference has this self-flagellation made, how is it relevant to anyone else?

Now I realise that despite writing it and articulating it I didn't *know* at the start of this process that what differentiates action research from self-help is the paradigm of action research itself. That it is the intent, the values, the philosophy, the orientation that make first-person action research valid.

As an individual insider, or first-person action researcher, I am an investigator of my own values, assumptions, beliefs, knowing and actions. I am undertaking this research with intent, to answer a question, interrogate a hypothesis or to know differently in order to generate actionable, practical knowledge that enables change, a valid positioning described by action researchers including Coleman, Marshall and McNiff (Coleman, 2017; Marshall, J., 2016b; McNiff, 1997).

This inquiry is research that fulfils this principle of participation in that it is research into me as a researcher and practitioner in relationship with, not in isolation from, self, others, environment and context.

Progressive

Progressive is the third principle described by Coleman (2013), which I take to encompass the idea of values in action research, that include an intent for improvement and ideas of social justice, democratic research and inclusivity. That action research is “*values oriented*” (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4), that it has an ethical stance.

“A reflective process through which an individual takes their own experience seriously, and begins to see it as a form of knowing which in turn tells them something about wider organisational and social dynamics is a consciousness-raising process”

(Coleman, 2013, p. 5)

democratic and respectful, boundary or mirror both reflective

It is impossible to undertake action research without some form of reflective practice, without a way to pay attention to the space between, to notice, to consider, to wonder, to investigate, to hypothesise, to review. Reflective practice and cycles of action and reflection are core to all the action research literature I have read. The lines in *Villanelle* suggest that this reflection might be as straightforward as the equivalent of looking in a mirror, or as complicated as discovering a boundary, and whether it acts as a catalyst or a constraint (Farjoun, 2010).

Action research is about applying rigour to this reflection, to collecting data, to being able to review that data, to interrogate it, and to present the knowledge, learning, change and action derived from that reflection. It is “*analysis of your lived experience, as well as your own theoretical and methodological presuppositions*” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 134).

The need for rigour and method in gathering reflective data which is then explored and evaluated is described as epistemic reflexivity (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 134), interiority (Coghlan, 2011), critical reflexivity (Gergen, 2009) and critical subjectivity (Ladkin, 2005); all of

the authors referencing a methodology that can be described, evidenced and repeated, in order that an action researcher can investigate their own and (with) others' perspectives, biases, assumptions, feelings and understanding to know the impact they have. This enables an openness to alternative or novel framings, viewpoints and conclusions, whilst at the same time acknowledging the *subjectivity*, and *contextual specificity* of the knowing that emerges. Reflection in the context of action research needs to be considered as an empirical method of undertaking knowing, a process of intellectual self-awareness, or as Coghlan (2011) describes it (as the concept of interiority) reflection in action research *"involves shifting from what we know to how we know"* (Coghlan, 2011, p. 76); a description that resonates with and validates my version of action research within this inquiry.

The progressive principle I feel also starts to consider what makes 'good' action research (Bradbury-Huang, 2010), pointing to ideas of meaning and relevance and quality, aspects that I will come back to.

"Action research has a subversive quality about it. It examines everything. It stresses listening. It emphasises questioning. It fosters courage. It incites action. It abets reflection and it endorses democratic participation."

Coghlan and Shani (2005) quoted by Coleman (2013, p. 6)

It also points to the discussions of power and knowledge at the start of this section. About challenging the positivist paradigm, a challenge which is taken further by the fourth principle of many ways of knowing.

Many Ways of Knowing

Many Ways of Knowing is a principle that this doctorate has no issues with upholding. A principle that not only speaks to extending epistemology to beyond the propositional, positivist paradigm but also considers the issues of power and knowledge, and the need to alter how and who generates knowledge in order to alter the usual dynamics of power.

Knowledge in action research is acquired through multiple ways of knowing, through valuing and integrating all the parts of an extended epistemology (Heron & Reason, 1997, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2006, 2008). It is knowing that is discovered, investigated, tested, refined, reviewed, questioned, challenged, deepened – knowing that is actioned and then re-investigated, re-tested, and so on in continuous messy cycles.

*Ways of knowing more effective,
Doing and Being facilitated
Inquiry spiral implicated
Spaces between from a new perspective*

Part of action research is making the incoherent, messy, spiralling emerging inquiry coherent. To find a pattern and linearity that allows others to navigate, make sense of and to either know something new or undertake further investigation themselves. The ability to share both the knowledge and the ‘ways of knowing’ is a necessary part of the process. The idea of making the pattern visible reminds me of how Zwicky (2014) describes metaphor as “*laying something over just so*” enabling the initial concept to be seen. It is about weaving all the threads of this inquiry together to make a pattern out of the messiness so that the ideas, knowing and knowledge of this action research thesis can be seen.



incoherent, messy, spiralling emerging inquiry



a pattern out of the messiness

Living Life as Inquiry

One of the features, rather than principles associated with first-person action research or individual inquiry is the idea of “*living life as inquiry*” (Marshall J., 1999), of constant analysis (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). At the start of this inquiry my interpretation of this was literal; that individual inquiry requires constant reflection, action, analysis and experimentation to be valid.

Five years later my interpretation and enaction is more nuanced and compassionate.

‘Constant’ reflection, reflexivity or interiority is not a realistic possibility, instead I need, and I think action research as a paradigm needs, to make visible a pragmatic, reality and context based, compassionate interpretation of ‘constant.’

There have been times during this doctorate where I have barely managed to write, let alone to reflect or to do this with rigor and epistemic reflexivity. Instead of allowing myself a break, to have some self-compassion, I berated myself, stressed about not working, worried about my ability to complete this doctorate and why I was doing it in the first place, reverting to my defaults. I am not someone who writes a diary, or a journal daily, who sits after meetings reflecting on ‘*what went well*’ and ‘*even better if*’ (phrases that got under my skin as part of my initial introduction to improvement work). I am someone who talks things through with my partner and my supervisor, who sometimes captures this and sometimes doesn’t. Someone who maintains equilibrium through pushing my body – sometimes processing sometimes escaping through exercise – who sometimes captures this and sometimes doesn’t. Part of the inquiry process for me has been one of trying to learn to let go of impossibly high expectations, to ‘constant’ goals, to getting it right, to realising that sometimes the most I can do is

remember the spirit and intent of inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2008) – and that is good enough.

This is an inquiry that responds to the messiness and complexity of context and to the ideas of ‘constant’ and ‘getting it right’ with methods and choices that work in and reflect that messiness and allow good enough inquiry.

“method (that) goes with work, and ways of working, and ways of being” (Law, 2004, p. 10).

Good Action(ish) Research

As previous chapters have shown my educational background and therefore understanding of research prior to my masters and certainly this doctorate was aligned with positivist quantitative research, as is the healthcare context in which I work. This is a research paradigm with clear notions on validity, reliability, bias, objectivity – and therefore clear criteria for what constitutes good and bad research. Although I find myself sitting comfortably outside this paradigm whilst undertaking this inquiry and recognising the importance of offering alternative perspectives into the realm of healthcare change, the legacy of this positivist paradigm remains. It is a legacy that forms a significant part of the nagging ‘navel-gazing’ concern I have about first-person inquiry and feeds anxiety around whether this is good or valid research and how I ‘defend’ it as such. Le Roux (2017) articulates a similar perspective in a paper in which she discusses the judgement of rigour in autoethnography;

“At the back of my mind a question nagged: was this real research: did this method constitute sound and valid academic inquiry? Did the research in some way contribute to the ‘body of knowledge’, or was it merely an opportunity to relate a pivotal lived experience and to find solace in the process” (Le Roux, 2017, p. 201).

My anxiety is then further compounded by the understanding of action research as an *“orientation to inquiry”* (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 1) with a set of principles and values rather than prescribed tools and methodology. In a philosophical and paradigmatic perspective that focuses on reflection, inquiry in action and knowledge generation that is contextual how is ‘good’ judged? How do I know whether my inquiry, as a piece of action inquiry, a subjective, reflective, individual mode of research is any good, that it is quality research?

When considering quality in action research Reason (2006) and Huang (2010) both start from the position that the principles of action research should be met. Huang describes the core features of action research as “*actionable, reflexive, participative and significant*” (Bradbury-Huang, 2010, p. 98) and Reason suggests that action research is an “*emergent process of engagement with worthwhile practice purposes, through many ways of knowing, in participative and democratic relationships*” (Reason, 2006, p. 189).

So if my research meets these principles and the principles discussed in the previous section – then it qualifies as good action research – however I recognise that claiming my research is good and demonstrating (or believing) it are not necessarily the same thing. Reason (2006) offers another way to evaluate claims of validity and quality, by focusing on the choices made within the research. As an action researcher one must be aware of the choices that are possible and make those choices clear and transparent to oneself and to inquiry partners, and then articulate those choices in the writing and presentation of the research (Reason, 2006, p. 190). So if I have also made my choices visible is that enough to qualify my research as good?

As I consider these suggestions about good action research I find myself wondering whether it is disingenuous for me to offer a justification or defence of my inquiry solely from the perspective of action research. Although this is a thesis that is being written to qualify for a specific academic award, the concept and methodology of Enactive Agnosis has emerged from my playful exploration of different genres of literature and research, and as such is not ‘just’ action research, it is probably more apt and congruent with the inquiry to call it action-ish research. It certainly fits under the broader heading of qualitative research, and potentially, despite the misgivings discussed in chapter 5 (pages 120-123) could sit not too uncomfortably within the realm of Arts-Based research. Does this mean that I then need to justify it against what constitutes good research in all these genres in order to defend my research against the

criticism it is likely to receive from within the traditional quantitative healthcare research paradigm?

“A significant issue in the practice of scientific research – whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method – is the ability to demonstrate that the research presented is intellectually accurate, thorough and trustworthy, for without rigour, research is meaningless” (Le Roux, 2017, p. 195)

Not only do I discover that ‘good’ includes discussions of principles, choices and rigour, but that there are also multiples lists of criteria available for differing research genres, and often more than one within the same genre. Sparkes and Smith (2014) offer examples for qualitative and arts-based research and Huang (2010) for action research.

- Qualitative Research; *worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, meaningful coherence* (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 197-198 referencing Tracy 2010)
- Arts-Based research; *incisiveness, concision, coherence, generativity, social significance, evocation and illumination* (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 199 referencing Baron & Eisner 2014).
- Action research; *articulation of objectives, partnership and participation, contribution, methods and process, actionability, reflexivity and significance* (Bradbury-Huang, 2010, p. 103)

I had always understood criteria to mean a standard by which something is judged, suggesting that research must meet these criteria to be good. Criteria can also mean, however, a characterising mark or trait (www.meriam-webster.com/dictionary/criteria), and if that is the case then these lists could be seen to offer guidance about the characteristics usually

associated within a particular research paradigm, rather than primarily lists against which research can be evaluated. By switching to this characteristic or trait understanding of criteria, the potential they have to restrict and constrain (or generate anxiety) if they are used as 'must have' or 'must do' is minimised, as is the potential they have to either legitimise or exclude (Sparkes, 2022) particular forms of inquiry and knowledge.

As I ponder these definitions of criteria I start to consider coffee, and a metaphor emerges that helps me to make sense. There are some very specific criteria that define coffee – made from coffee beans, contains caffeine (a defining feature for me!), but after that potentially the criteria that define what is 'good' coffee depends on context. If the context is me making or going out for coffee I like espresso, without milk, made well, with a good crema, tending towards fruity, fully bodied and acidic rather than bitter. I can appreciate well-made espresso even if the variety of beans are more towards the bitter end of the spectrum than I would choose, but I often don't like it. Similarly I drink and enjoy other forms of coffee in different contexts, recognising 'good' as blends that I like and coffee that is a decent strength, whether it is in the form of aeropress coffee whilst on a cycling or camping trip, or cafetiere coffee when staying with family. However, I rarely drink instant and I draw the line at decaf, according to my criteria this is not coffee.

Using this metaphor I understand that criteria can be helpfully used to place inquiry into a particular research genre, but subsequently both the author and the reader will need to develop their own 'knowing' and criteria about what is good for them in their context. Le Roux and Sparkes offer examples of using this positioning of criteria for their and others' work.

Le Roux (2017) defines her own criteria for her autoethnographic research after a review of others' criteria and responses to a questionnaire from fellow researchers as; *subjectivity, self-reflexivity, resonance, credibility, contribution* (Le Roux, 2017, p. 204).

Sparkes (2014, 2022) discusses writing his own autoethnographic research without criteria, whilst judging others' writing using paradigmatic criteria to evaluate the claims of genre, and then putting them aside to consider the value and purpose of the research, he suggests that

“Approaching something novel or unfamiliar, therefore requires that one be willing to allow the text to challenge one’s prejudices and possibly change the criteria one is using to judge the piece, thereby changing one’s idea of what is and is not good inquiry” (Sparkes, 2022, p. 273).

Having considered the criteria above then the idea of action-ish inquiry starts to appeal even more, enactive agnosis has emerged from research that has defining criteria characteristic of action research, but it also meets criteria that would identify it as qualitative and arts-based research. If, like Le Roux (2017), I defined my own quality criteria would this enable me to consider, defend and own it as good and valid research? Perhaps if I hold onto Reason's (2006) understanding of research validity, one that is based on Lather's (1993) definition as *“the incitement to discourse”* and my criteria are congruent with the form of my inquiry and with the characteristic traits of action research, arts-based research and qualitative research then this may work. It may be a way to hold back the positivist need to tick all the boxes on the quality criteria checklist and to lessen the anxiety about whether this is or isn't good research, whilst at the same time remaining cognisant of the fact that this thesis also needs to meet and be judged against specific quality criteria of the academy to which it is being submitted.

I have discovered that what has mattered to me in the process of this doctorate is that the research is honest; pragmatic; with congruent form, content and findings; is embodied and enactive; responds to questions of epistemology and ethics; uses practices of reflexivity to generate findings relevant to my practice; that it resonates with readers and evokes and illuminates meaning for others; and that it generates discourse and discussion. I realise that these could be considered as criteria that have emerged through the process of the inquiry itself as important and of value in defining this as good action-ish research for me, criteria based on but not slavishly adhering to one or all of the suggested lists.

I have distilled these ideas into the following quality criteria. They are mine against which I uphold my thesis, but I appreciate that you may judge this thesis against these, others or your own.

- **Pragmatic** – research that responds to what is necessary, possible and is good enough
- **Congruent** – form, ideas, content and values align
- **Credible** – research process is transparent; researcher and findings are honest and trustworthy; research is values-based and ethical
- **Reflexivity** – rigorous reflection on behaviour, ideas and impact, demonstrated in method, findings and discussion
- **Generative** – research in which the reader is engaged physically, emotionally and intellectually such that it offers an incitement to see and / or act differently, or to engage in discourse
- **Embodied** – undertaken from an integrated mind-body-environment perspective
- **Contribution** – research that offers a novel or significant contribution, or inspires others

I have intended to show in this chapter that my inquiry is good action(ish) research, in which my methodology is responding not only to the messiness of context and definition, but to my way of being and doing, a pragmatic, embodied and enactive investigation into knowing how to not know in order to have an impact that improves care and offers a methodological contribution more widely than my own practice.

Chapter 10. Change

My doctoral programme is entitled 'Ashridge Doctorate in Organisational Change' which suggests strongly that it should sit within the realm of change. In fact one of my conclusions is that I, and we, need to be able to not know in order to change, but leaving that as the total articulation of my understanding of change in a doctoral thesis is probably pushing my luck! What follows, therefore is an expansion on that single sentence with an emphasis on complexity theory, relational change, context, metaphor and not-knowing.

It will finish with a poem-ish form written in January 2020 that helped me to encapsulate and articulate my understanding of change then, with only a single word edit needed to ensure that it is congruent with the understanding presented here, over two years later.

The paradigms or constructions of change that have influenced my practice and understanding are the ideas of complexity (Stacey et al., 2000; Stacey, 2011, 2012) and relational change (Brugnach, Dewulf, Pahl-Wostl, & Taillieu, 2008; Shaw, 2002; Walker, 2010; Wiggins & Hunter, 2016). What I understand these to mean is that if an organisation is seen, or constructed, as a series of "complex responsive processes" or patterns of interactions that are complex, then if you alter an interaction it will cause emergent, unpredictable change. If organisations are also collections of people, then the interactions and responsive processes are interactions between people, so change is about those interactions, those relationships – it is relational. **This aligns my understanding of change with my understanding of body and knowing – as an embodied enactive process 'in relation'**. As I change what I know and how I make sense, then I can make

choices that change how I interact, who I interact with and how I relate to others or my context. By making changes to my interactions it is likely that the responses to them will be altered and change will emerge.

Choosing to mention the elephant in the room at the paediatric meeting having discovered it was there through my inquiry method – *managing the disappointment without blaming myself entirely*

asking for some time off and less hours to enable me to continue to work on change and support the clinical director without making a hole in my head – *getting an email summary of what's coming up for the next few weeks and a phone call before my clinical director goes on holiday instead of the usual WhatsApp message saying 'btw I'm off next week'*

realising a sense of letting people down impacts on my willingness to step into power offering me an alternative way to step into that – *having a choice to take that step or not*

Whilst this emergent view of change may seem uncontrollable and therefore unusable, the ideas of complexity theory state that order and properties in systems will emerge from the interaction of objects within those systems, and the properties in the system will be greater than the objects had in isolation (de Haan, 2006). How this translates into the construction of relational change is that the power of the conversations and the strength of the ideas generated are greater the more people are having, sharing and developing those

conversations, and therefore they are more likely to influence change in a particular direction; *“conversing as organising”* (Shaw, 2002).

This construct of relational change (Marshall, Smallwood, & Wiggins, 2018; Myers et al., 2012; Wiggins & Hunter, 2016) resonates with the idea of evolutionary change from Meyerson (2001), supporting the idea that individuals can through consistent interactions make sustainable change happen:

“Evolutionary change, by contrast, is gentle, incremental, decentralized, and over time produces a broad and lasting shift with less upheaval” (Meyerson, 2001, p. 94)

To use a metaphor, an interaction in change understood from a complexity and relational perspective can be seen as throwing a pebble into the sea – the action will generate ripples. I can change the pattern of the ripples by changing the size and the shape of the pebble, but I can't predict exactly where the ripples will go, whether they get interrupted by a wave, or a seagull, or some rain, but whatever emerges the surface of the water is still different from how it would have been if I hadn't thrown the pebble in the first place; it has changed. If there are a group of us throwing pebbles into the same place, making a bigger, stronger splash then the ripples are more likely to go in a particular direction, or we might be able to influence the direction they take if we keep trying. We may also find that the larger ripples are less easily disrupted by the wave, seagull or rain.

What I hadn't realised before starting this doctorate was the power of context, or contextual factors – to push the metaphor above further, it may be that alongside the waves, seagull and rain there is a cover over the area that I could reach with my throw that I hadn't seen before;

or a wall separating where I am throwing my pebble from the rest of the sea; or a sandbank between me and the group throwing pebbles too – all only visible when I really pay attention.

Sometimes the contextual factors influencing or surrounding an interaction will negate or minimise any change that might emerge, and therefore developing an understanding and awareness of context is required to understand change agency.

The definition of context used at the beginning of this thesis is ‘the set of circumstances that frame a focus activity, that must include at least one of participant, environment and event’. This definition aligns well with the complexity and relational conceptualisations of change, as it is the focus on an activity (or interaction), in relation that enables the frame, the context to be visible. The focus on context also enables the culture to be understood, as this interpretation of context and culture sees “*context as the substrate of culture*” (Savard & Mizoguchi, 2019, p. 3), as its supporting structure, so being aware of context also enables an understanding of culture and the possibilities (or not) for change.

If change is mediated through interactions, and interactions are mediated through our “*more than brainy*” (Seeley, 2008) “*thinking-body*” (Burkitt, 1999) then the meaning made by and through that body, in gestures, words, language and metaphor will also influence change.

In my individual action learning inquiry based on embodied enactive knowing, in context, then the sense made, and the meaning shared is context dependent and constructed in context; it is not fixed ‘truth’, it is metaphorical, fluid and potentially ambiguous and open to interpretation. This imbues the concept of ‘form as method’ with an added layer of importance as the form

involved in generating the meaning and the form involved in disseminating that meaning will impact on the sense made and the change that occurs in response.

Change and inquiry are then about using language with an awareness that its meaning is constructed through its use in context and in relation, not relying on language as an empirically fixed entity (Gergen, 2000, 2015; Kvale, 1995). It is about paying attention, noticing when and how different language used alters meaning, and making choices about using language, metaphors, and gestures as interventions for change, as well as ways to know.

“Language itself cannot finally be understood as purely cognitive content, but rather always is written, altered, heard, and (mis)interpreted as action within wider action contexts” (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 211).

The following quote from Gergen (2009), although it describes social construction, I see as support for my assertion that form as method has validity in making sense and generating change, in enabling knowing and shifted ways of thinking and therefore interacting.

“Constructionism invites us to become poetic activists. New ways of living are not secured simply by refusing or rejecting the meanings as given, for example avoiding sexist or racist language. Rather, the strong invitation is for the emergence of new forms of language and ways of interpreting the world. Invited are generative discourses, that is ways of talking and writing or representing that simultaneously challenge existing traditions of understanding and offer new possibilities for action” (Gergen, 2009, p. 12).

Challenging the paradigm of knowledge=expert=power by not-knowing, challenging the tradition of objective positivist propositional knowing by enactive metaphor-based subjective methods to know, interpreting the world through embodied, enactive non-cis gendered physicality, writing a thesis in the context of healthcare change that reveals that context as an impediment to change.

All of these offer new possibilities for action, the potential for change.

The words of Gergen also make links to the ideas of evolutionary change and the ‘tempered radical’, particularly to the interactions of ‘disruptive self-expression’ which I recognise and to some extent enact, *“the kind of self-expression that quietly disrupts others’ expectations”* (Meyerson, 2001, p. 95) and ‘verbal jujitsu’. Although ‘verbal jujitsu’ is described as reacting *“to undesirable, demeaning statements or actions by turning them into opportunities for change that others will notice”* (Meyerson, 2001, p. 96), it is also about calling attention to rhetoric, about paying attention to language, about the meaning made through actions and language in interaction and in relation.

Change, for me, emerges as a product of interactions. Conversations are one of these interactions as are gestures, use of form as method, activities of knowing. Change is about recognising that to do something different, to learn something new, to know something, we first need to not-know, and to recognise and be able to stay in that place of not-knowing long enough to know. Change requires tactics that allow us to tolerate the discomfort of uncertainty, so we don’t rush instead to deny or hide it, or to find knowledge we already know to make us feel safe. It is about paying attention to the power that is held and shaped by making meaning and possessing knowledge. About creating interactions and conversations that alter who takes part; about shifting the language and gestures used to alter the

knowledge that emerges – both actions potentially altering where and by whom power is held. Altering power relations and structures will also impact on the changes that are subsequently possible.

Change is about what is necessary and possible in context and therefore about ways to reveal or make sense of that context to understand what is possible.

Change is difficult, challenging, tiring, exciting and enthusing, and managing the oscillations of these responses is not dissimilar to managing the oscillations between knowing and not-knowing, knower and known, between stability and change, certainty and uncertainty – all of which are also associated with action research, this inquiry and my methodology. Like the complexity theory of change, inquiry is complex, messy, unexpected, evolving, emergent – the more you investigate, pay attention and undertake research cycles, the more the questions shift and change, and part of the process of both is *“accepting chaos facilitates the emergence”* (Heron, 1988, p. 52).

Change and inquiry require a pragmatic, realistic, playful approach or mindset that recognises, enables and enacts ‘not-knowing’ and ‘good enough’.

Premise

Change is relational

self and others and otherness

Conversations are the interventions of change

Consultations are conversations

diagnosing with physicality and playfulness

Form and Language of conversations affect and effect

Metaphor and poetics reveal

what is in front of you but hard to see

Metaphor shapes and creates knowing

Knowing (& metaphor) is embodied and enactive

physical to understand non-physical

Context is the landscape of change

revealed via language

Norms and context once revealed can be seen

and maybe made visible

Perspective, time, familiarity, position, weather alter the landscape

First-person action via inquiry

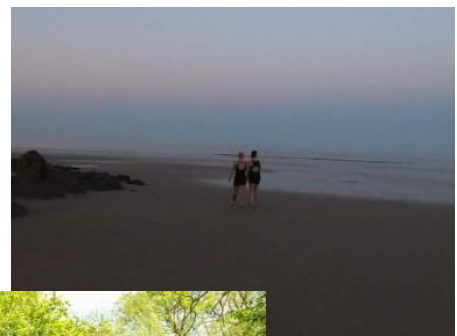
is right for now

Agency within context through altered articulation

Physical and Language Landscapes

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Concluding



Chapter 11. Concluding

“So what is your doctorate about?” is something I have been asked and been trying to answer repeatedly for the last five years. The answer has changed from the shutting it down ‘*organisational change*’ response to the early and easy ‘*playfulness*’ answer and then to something along the lines of ‘*the importance of not-knowing in change*’. The intent of this section is to answer that question or perhaps more accurately to summarise what it has taken me a whole thesis to describe, and to ensure that the ‘So what?’ and ‘What next?’ questions introduced in the previous section are also resolved.

This section is also about landing my ideas in the contexts in which they may be used, trying out and making the methodology and ideas accessible and interesting to colleagues working within healthcare as well as those working in action research and organisational change.

Perhaps ironically, for someone whose default is short, *bish-bosh*, conclude and move on writing, trying to encapsulate this thesis into hundreds rather than tens of thousands of words has been much more difficult than I expected, not only in summarising succinctly but also in taking ownership of my work and putting it out there as mine, ready for critique and hopefully application.

As a way in I:

- made a wire structure, the first for a long while
- wrote an ‘invitation to examine’ – two pages aiming to interest potential examiners enough in my ideas and work that they would agree to read and examine my thesis.

- did a TED-style talk on my thesis at a reconnection event for my masters⁹ – talking to an audience of 50 people working in healthcare, social care and the third sector about my methodology and ideas
- wrote a teaching session for a national Emergency Medicine trainee day on “*Why playful examination is more than just fun*”
- shared my not-quite-finished thesis with two friends who supervise and examine PhDs, although in completely different fields and not in the UK

“*It’s not navel gazing*” was the title of my TED-style talk and refers to where this doctorate started. As I have already described in the chapter on action research, I was very clear that I was not going to be doing a first-person ‘navel-gazing’ inquiry, and yet the move of cities and organisations within a few months of starting this doctorate revealed the challenge of context and how it shaped my subsequent inquiry. With the added insult of COVID-19 what emerged in response was first-person action research, that I no longer consider navel-gazing. Alongside the *Villanelle* work (page 201), making the most recent wire structure helped me to know and own this shifted position, as well as to recognise that this is a perspective that needs to be made more visible in the understanding and application of action research.

⁹ Generation Q was an action research masters degree, run by faculty from Ashridge Business School, now Ashridge Hult, funded by the Health Foundation with the intention of developing leaders for improvement within healthcare. Over the ten years it ran, there were nine cohorts of 18 participants from all over the UK, clinical and non-clinical backgrounds, all working in healthcare, social care or the third sector. In June 2022 there was a reconnection event at which 90 of those 180 participants and three of the eight faculty attended. An open invite was made to participants to do TED-style talks as an opportunity ‘to share an experience or a particular topic or passion with the wider group’.

In the two-page 'Invitation to Examine' (Appendix 2) I wanted to spark interest, outline the key ideas and themes and to summarise in a way that enabled an academic reader to know enough to decide whether this thesis was of interest to them, without giving so much away that they were no longer intrigued. It helped me to be more succinct in describing my work, but also to pay attention to how the audience impacts on the ideas I share and the form in which they are presented.

The TED talk was aimed at an audience within healthcare, familiar with the basics of action research, change and more than just propositional ways of knowing – but not with enactive cognition, metaphor or knowing as separate from knowledge. It was my first attempt at articulating my whole thesis and how I got there in just ten minutes. It was also an opportunity to see if my ideas landed in the context of healthcare change, to answer questions on my own research and to understand what I needed to say in this conclusion for the ideas to resonate. Sharing my not-quite-finished thesis with academic friends and getting honest not medical, not action research, not organisational change-based academic feedback also helped to triangulate how the ideas resonate and land.

The teaching was completely different again – presenting just some of my ideas back into the clinical context. Formally offering playfulness and enactive clinical reasoning into improving examinations with children – whilst also hoping by stealth to spark some interest in knowing as an active process and in the value of 'not knowing' for doctors in training¹⁰.

¹⁰ Unfortunately I got Covid for the first time the week of the teaching so did not deliver the session; instead I rewrote it and delivered it as a teaching session in the Emergency Department for consultant colleagues and trainees a couple of months later.

The concluding section is based on these actions aiming to summarise both what this doctorate is about and what it offers.

It is about making sense,

form as method,

bodily knowing,

enactive metaphor,

not knowledge

As an individual inquiry this thesis is about knowing through my body; knowing as an active process undertaken by an integrated thinking, being, doing, subject and object body, interacting and in relation. It is about knowing and holding the space of ‘not-knowing’ through swimming, cycling, wire and found object ‘non-art’ structures, poem-ish writing and photographs. It is about using enactive metaphor – *“one that we put into action or one that we bring into existence through our actions”* (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015, p. 392) to lay this bodily knowing as metaphor *“just so”* (Zwicky, 2014, p. 24) over my context, choices, behaviour and ideas to make sense and know differently. To then use this altered knowing to see and or act differently, discovering the impact this has on change and my agency within context.

Taking a small step away from me, it is about individual, first-person action research as a pragmatic, active, non-constant form of doing reflexivity to generate change. About using method to reveal and make sense of behaviour, ideas, life events, prejudices, defaults, and confusion and then using this knowing to act differently, choosing to share the knowing and action not the life events or ‘navel-gazing’. Sharing the ‘So what’ – the altered understanding and impact, not the in-depth personal discovery or self-flagellation. Again I found the most

recent wire structure helped me to really inhabit this position and although the full writing is included towards the end of this section, this extract is placed here to evidence my methodology in action.

I get out all the objects and find myself drawn to a rusted metal piece that looks like a small bagel – it even has a seam all the way around it and as I pick it up and handle it, it splits across the midline through this seam just like two halves of a bagel. I have been wondering how I really understand first person inquiry and as this object splits apart I see it as opening up and discovering the middle but not needing to have it on show. Being able to choose what to share or to use from the newly discovered surface without having to lay everything bare or even make it visible. I choose a piece of wire and make a rough circle that I place between the two halves so that the inside is hinted at but not revealed.

It is about having the methodology as the focus of inquiry, illustrating its value through experiments and examples of impact. It is about enactive knowing, undertaken by an embodied individual, rather than embodied knowing. What I mean by this is that it is about knowing through a body in action, rather than knowing through reflection on that body's response to an action. The action of falling off my bike enabling me to viscerally understand the individual parts of a bike (and subsequently my understanding of parts of an organisation), rather than the flushed cheeks, painful knee and raised heart rate telling me I was frustrated and embarrassed about falling off. It is about how this shift in focus to knowing as an active bodily process could be used by others as method in inquiry.

Taking another step away from myself, this thesis is about change and the realisation that not-knowing is fundamental to change. Developing method and expertise in not jumping to knowledge has enabled me to value rather than fear not-knowing and for new sense-making, altered interactions and change to occur in response. It is about offering this shifted perception into the realm of healthcare change.

In sharing my work via the TED talk I discovered that my ideas landed and generated interest and enthusiasm – at the end of the presentation I felt that this thesis has relevance in the context of healthcare change. The overall idea of methods within change that focus on knowing as a process and enable not jumping to knowledge along with the importance of not-knowing resonated. The separation of knowing from knowledge and the concept of enactive cognition were harder concepts to land in the ten-minute talk. However, the fact that the post-talk questioning went on for much longer than five minutes and was followed by further questions and comments in the bar that evening and during breaks the following day, made me feel confident that enactive agnosis offers something relevant and novel into the space of healthcare change (as did the requests to read my thesis and / or for me to write a shorter journal article or even a book!)

The post-TED talk questions also helped me to see that **valuing not-knowing** is part of this work. I had talked about the importance of not-knowing and about developing expertise and negative capability, I answered lots of questions about the ideas, but I was then asked about ‘the next step’ of taking this into an organisation, how to scale up the methodology, how to shift organisational culture.... I talked about reframing, speaking differently about knowing and knowledge, and the questions moved on, but as I reflected on the questions afterwards I realised that the next step is not scaling up the methodology, it is not developing an organisational methodology.

The next step is enabling others to see, appreciate and **value** not-knowing and the process and activity of knowing. If we continue to consider knowledge as the pinnacle of value, then not-knowing will continue to be challenging, scary, avoided. This thesis offers the idea that as individuals involved in change we can develop methods that focus on the active process of knowing; methods that value the space of not-knowing and make not-knowing less

challenging. That this shift will impact on our own agency within change and on how we empower and support others undertaking change. That modelling 'not-knowing' as useful and valuable within the context of change and enabling others to do the same is a good enough starting point, which in the construct of relational change and conversing as organising, may start to shift the culture.

Part of the enactive agnosis offer is also that a good enough, 'ish', non-expert, playful mindset and positioning also has value; that striving to be an expert, to be defined as an artist, poet, change expert, (doctor), whilst useful in many contexts can also inhibit. Needing to be an expert can push us towards familiar, safe, known enquiry methods and away from the development of new methods that use arts-based, or other non-familiar forms of enquiry. This thesis focuses on form as method, rather than outcome or presentation, the idea being that engaging with method playfully rather than with the intent of production of some form of representation, enables the space of not-knowing to be held and used rather than rushed away from.

Playfulness as a mindset enables **the process of knowing, not the product, to be the focus**. It gives permission to be curious, explore, move on, go back, revisit – to inquire and to not-know - as the most recent wire structure and associated writing demonstrates.



Wire Conclusion

It's possibly been a year since I made a wire structure, but I've been collecting objects at low tide, on trips via the sand to the local shops, some sitting on my desk, some sitting in a drawer ready for when I want or need to use the method again. I am getting towards the closing phases of the thesis – trying to put together a couple of sessions that will help shape the conclusion and 'bookend' my offer and I decide to trust and use the method to help me make sense of the almost patterns the threads are making.

I get out all the objects and find myself drawn to a rusted metal piece that looks like a small bagel – it even has a seam all around it and as I pick it up and handle it, it splits across the midline through this seam just like two halves of a bagel. I have been wondering how I really understand first-person inquiry and as this object splits apart I see it as opening up and discovering the middle but not needing to have it on show. Being able to choose what to reveal or to use from the newly discovered surface without having to lay everything bare or even make it visible. I choose a piece of wire and make a rough circle that I place between the two halves so the inside is hinted at but not revealed.

There is another found object that I have had on my desk for months that I am fascinated by. It is a heavy lump, possibly of metal, with an outer layer that is partly broken off but almost looks molten. It is like a shell cracking away revealing some bits and not others. Again as I handle it, looking at the various seams a couple of pieces come loose, but they stay nested in the shell. This time I take a piece of fine silver jewellery wire and start to follow the edge of the shell, in and out of the cracks. I realise it is following 'ishly' and that is good enough, I feel comfortable with the ish-ness and the knots and tangles that are keeping it in place. The whole process of inquiry springs to mind – following a track, sort of – not always going where you think, sometimes looping back, sometimes getting tangled, sometimes getting stuck for some time. I take one of the small broken bits that has been dislodged again whilst I am manipulating the wire and place it back on, but it doesn't sit in exactly the same place. I wrap some wire around it but don't try to hold it down – I just feel like I am marking where it is sitting. I realise the process of change is a bit like this, maybe particularly the individual change associated with first-person inquiry. Bits might come

off and go back slightly differently – the same pieces but in a different pattern – there is different knowing, different holding, change. I tangle a bit more of the wire and then let the end go free – an unfinished journey, still exploring. Again I think this seems appropriate for where I am currently. My inquiry isn't and doesn't need to be complete, tied down, wrapped up. I am not quite sure where or what next but I do have foundations to go from that are different than they were before this doctorate, even though they are made up of the same blocks.

I put this piece down and look at the two of them – I wonder whether I can link them and what knowing will emerge if I do.

I find a piece of linear driftwood in the drawer but the pieces don't balance or seem to be linked by it, so I put it back and reach for another one recognising that earlier in this inquiry I might have just tried to make them fit the first bit I chose. I find another piece that is smaller and irregular but has a square hole punched through the centre an odd and pleasing combination. I put a piece of modelling wire through the hole and place the heavy 'inquiry' piece on top. I then balance the bagel on the end and gently curve the modelling wire over it to hold it just in place. It is almost right, I bend the wire a fraction more and the top half of the bagel cracks into three pieces. I realise I don't mind and again, at the start of all of this I would probably have taken that bit off, put it aside as broken and found something else. Now I'm OK keeping it there, accepting the imperfection.

More surface is revealed, the shape isn't fixed, the structure will continue to change, more bits might fall off or become separated – just like the process of change, knowing and not-knowing.

A metaphor for change – not fixed, not static, not always what you expected or wanted but if you allow it to take place it reveals different knowing, different possibilities, new thinking, new opportunities.

A metaphor for where I am at now – holding less tightly, more honest with myself. There are broken bits, and bits that shift and don't always stay where I put them! I am able to choose differently about what I reveal / use / share – about how and what I know and do.

This inquiry has been a tangled, convoluted, ish process that is still ongoing. I haven't 'lost' or got rid of any bits they are just positioned slightly differently, or shared or visible differently or not. I realise that I feel slightly tearful as I'm writing after making, appreciating the significant shift in thinking and doing, in knowing as an active process that really does enable me to change and to change the choices, interactions and actions I take. That neither me nor work is fixed and I can choose to align the pieces differently, to go in a different direction, that I can offer something different of myself and my ideas into the space of change / healthcare/ action research. That also it is OK if it is not perfect, if its cracked, fragile, unfinished – that is the reality of change, of ideas, of active inquiry.

I have changed and without changing, without this doctorate, without being able to hold the space of not-knowing, I wonder whether I would have managed to stay in or keep trying to improve the totally unexpected and extremely challenging context I found myself in shortly after starting this doctorate. The context is still challenging although it has altered, but in an individual, insider action inquiry thesis it is difficult to evidence whether my change, my interactions, my relationships, my methodology have had any impact or if it would have changed in the same way without me.

I have used examples of interactions I have made that are different to the interactions that I usually experience within my work context and offer that as evidence. I have also shared reflection on the impact that my shifted understanding has had on my actions. I do appreciate, however, that the evidence that this methodology enables change is all from a single, (almost certainly) biased data set. I hope and intend, that despite the flaws or biases in this action

research that there has been enough of the methodology shared for you the reader to see the value and impact it has, and to take away something that may be of use to you.

I offer Enactive agnosis as a methodology and a mindset, a pragmatic, realistic, playful approach that recognises, enables and enacts 'not-knowing' and 'good enough' within the context of inquiry and change. A process of bodily active metaphorical knowing that holds and values the space of not-knowing long enough to make sense differently, to know, to change.

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Appendix 1.

Phrases, words, sentences that informed *Villanelle*

Actionable knowledge

Change in real life

Ways of knowing

Non-judgemental, curious

Emergent inquiry process

Data shifts in response to intervention

Practical not positivist

Spontaneous not methodical, language with a range of meanings not jargon, contextually embedded not context free, researcher immersed not neutral or detached

Transdisciplinary

Orientation to inquiry – need to know how things work, or try to

Consciousness as a quality of human knowing

Inquiry into sources of our misunderstandings

Self acknowledged as instrument of change

Ideas emerge from a process of dialogue

Critical reflexivity

‘Scientific claims are a human construction lodged in a cultural tradition’

Interrogate own perspectives and framing

Catch our perceptions in the moment

Truth is located, limited and emergent

Cycles, with, living, emergent, relational

How we know what we know

What do we value as knowledge

Insider, outsider

Actors, detectives

Mind the gap – in the space between

Investigate reality in order to transform it

System; Greek: to stand together – interconnected

Dualism – division into two, Duality – a whole from 2 parts, or condition of being dual

Boundaries serve as catalysts

‘Relative strength of conflicting and complementary effects depends on how nested in space and time’

Paradoxical thinking – integrating and differentiating alternatives constantly

‘playing by rules of language affirms reality and relationships’

Control of knowledges is critical to exercise of power

Power as a network of social boundaries that constrain and enable action

Power is shaped by discourse – change discourse, change power, change action

Critical examination of oneself as a researcher

Advocacy balanced with inquiry

What am I trying to do? What do I stand for?

Create conversations that enable members to enact the future they want

Extended epistemology – relative value to hierarchy free

Choreography of the everyday

Frame - Knowledge structure or mental template imposed to give meaning

Power as productive and relational

Action and feeling are as important as cognition and rationality in knowledge creation (see split!)

Knowledge generated from process – iterative process

Mutual vulnerability

Inquiry involves intent

Entertain the possibility that everything is relevant – if you think you know look again

‘only by forgetting does the mind have the possibility of total renewal’

Co-operative inquiry – understand your world make sense of your life, develop new and creative ways of looking at things, learn how to act to change things, find out how to do things better

‘practical knowing consummates the other 3 forms, bringing them to their fullness’ (??)

Non attachment and meta-intentionality

Accepting chaos facilitates the emergence of order

Knowledge is a matter of communication between persons, the conversation becomes the context from which knowledge is to be understood

To validate is to check, theorise, question

‘Purpose of knowledge is effective action in the world – I do, rather than I think’

'I wrote as I learned and learned as I wrote' (creative writing as research)

'language used creatively can be dauntingly powerful'

Imaginative writing illuminates gaps in own thinking / ideas / life

Linking intellectual knowledge and moment-to-moment personal and social action

Validity as asking questions and stimulating dialogue

Quality is; Pursue worthwhile purpose, democratic and participative, many ways of knowing, emergent developmental form

Process of inquiry as important as specific outcomes

'Artful knowing is concerned with how we come to know, how we cultivate our imaginative and perceptual capabilities and what we allow to inform our decision making in pursuit of.....'

Artful knowing 'is not an analytic, rational, thought process, but an active doing process'

Whole body curiosity and appreciation for that which is being experienced

Bodying forth – expression through body

Being in-form-ed; living and actions form and are informed by experiences, provocations, evocations of presentational knowing, both as perceiver and creator

Not writing what you think to be true

Research is the process of following through the idea, seeing how it goes, constantly checking it is in line with what you wish to happen

Research is a zig zag process, incoherence communicated in a coherent way

'Critical subjectivity involves a self reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing' (place, context)

Technical, practical, emancipatory knowledge

Forces reframe problem in more complex way – new questions, new problems

Spiraling dynamic of action research inquiry

Different forms and different ways of knowing

Emergency, evolutionary, educational process of engaging (self, persons, communities)

Critical subjectivity, critical reflexivity

Significant issues, significant questions, significant conversations

Premise of evolving methodology is a virtual given – research spiral not cycle

Aware of choices and consequences

'For those who have a low tolerance for ambiguity and messiness, action research would probably be best as the path not taken'

Ambiguity and conflict, flexibility and permeability, integration and separation, proactive and reflective, critical and committed, independent and interdependent, aspirational and realistic, political and subversive

Irreverent inmate (supporter of people, saboteur of organisational rituals and questioner of its beliefs)

Engage with and make sense of what goes on inside them as they work to deal with what goes on around them

I do therefore I am – practical knowing

Reflection as ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in the moment

Roles (insider outsider) socially constructed and in constant flux

‘Practical and theoretical knowing can be integrated through attention to the cognitive, valuing and action processes of the scholar-practitioner both provides a methodology and methods’

‘when you inquire into what is going on, when you show people your train of thought and put forward hypotheses to be tested, you are generating data’

What we know to how we know to what we do with that knowing

Creative confidence

Gathering data is an intervention

Epistemic reflexivity – the constant analysis of your lived experience as well as your own theoretical and methodological presuppositions

Being present, dynamically open to situation, holding intentions adaptively, emotional competence

Advocacy stating one’s views, inquiry asking questions

In pragmatism knowledge is assessed by its practical, lives and experience consequences

Action research is an orientation not a method

Conscious living

Appendix 2.

Enactive Agnosis

(Playful use of form as a bodily activity of (not) knowing)

This is an individual insider action research inquiry that takes place within the National Health Service in the UK. I am a Paediatric Emergency Medicine consultant, working primarily clinically, who has been involved and interested in change and improvement since 2010. I embarked on this doctorate having completed an action research masters at Ashridge with the intention of knowing how to do change better, to enhance the impact of conversations about change, and to undertake second-person action research that would impact on how we improve care in the NHS.

Early in the doctorate a move of cities and organisations revealed the challenge of context and how this shapes and constrains any possible enquiry. COVID-19 was then added into the mix a couple of years later and what emerged in response was first-person inquiry into my own epistemology. An exploration that resulted in a markedly altered understanding of ‘knowing’ and ‘not-knowing’ or perhaps more appropriately ‘not-knowledging’ and a focus on methodology.

It is now about making sense,

form as method,

bodily knowing,

enactive metaphor.

It is about knowing through my body; knowing as an active process undertaken by an integrated thinking, being, doing, subject and object body, interacting and in relation. It is about knowing and holding the space of ‘not-knowing’ through swimming, cycling, wire and found object ‘non-art’ structures, poem-ish writing and photographs. It is about using enactive metaphor “*one that we put into action or one that we bring into existence through our actions*” (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015, p. 392) to lay this bodily knowing as metaphor “*just so*” (Zwicky, 2014, p. 24) over context, choices, behaviour and ideas to make sense and know differently.

To then use this altered knowing to see and or act differently, discovering the impact this has on change and agency within context.

Through this exploration of my epistemology starting with how I know and diagnose in a clinical consultation, a tangle of ideas or threads emerged. These were then untangled, played and experimented with, and eventually interwoven to reveal the pattern, or concept and methodology that I call **enactive agnosis**¹¹. The threads are below, with a few key references listed for each one, to give a taster of some the literature that I have been exploring.

Metaphor

(Cornelissen, 2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Zwicky, 2014)

physicality, embodiment and enactive cognition

(Bresler, 2004; Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Øberg et al., 2015)

knowing as an active process distinct from knowledge

(Cook & Brown, 1999; Heron & Reason, 2013)

playfulness as a mindset that gives permission to 'non-expert' 'ish' positioning

(Bateson & Martin, 2013; Pichlmair, 2008; Proyer, 2018; Reynolds, 2005)

form as method rather than presentation

(Buchanan & Bryman, 2007; Leavy, 2014; Seeley, 2008)

negative capability

(Crossman & Doshi, 2015; Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008)

¹¹ The derivation and meaning of the terms *enactive* and *agnosis* are discussed in the introduction to the thesis, in order that the emergence and development of the concept then lands. It is, therefore, not a spoiler to share them with you at this point to enhance your navigation of this invitation to examine my work.

Enactive is derived from enaction meaning learning by doing, and I use it to mean learning, thinking, making sense through bodily activity and interaction.

Agnosis is the prefix 'a' meaning *without* added to *gnosis*, and I use it to mean 'not-knowing' or 'not-knowledging'

The intent of my thesis is to integrate form, theory and method to follow these different threads to both show and tell how this concept emerged, the impact it has had, and what it offers into the realms of action research, arts-based research, healthcare improvement and change.

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