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A logic of care in / of / for voice: tuning-in, enacting and assembling in student voice practices and education

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ABSTRACT
The present moment is beset by many complex challenges. Young people face living with the consequences of decisions being made largely without their consent or involvement. Centering youth voices may be part of the solution. But we need to go beyond liberal, individualist and rights-based models that pay insufficient attention to the enabling conditions of meaningful voice, to temporalities, or to schooling as institution and process. Seeking alternative conceptualizations of voice, this paper draws on Annemarie Mol's work on the 'logic of care' in relation to health services. She describes this as a ceaseless, ongoing, mutual process of attunement to the unpredictable nature of human existence, implicating a range of actors, technologies, resources, materials, meanings, and affects. This description better captures aspects of good – responsive – educational practice. It also resonates with recent feminist scholarship on the posthuman, new materialist and affective dimensions of everyday life and education. This can support innovative work related to youth voice, as exemplified by a research project aiming to 'attune, animate and amplify' what matters to young people in learning about sexuality. Such reconceptualizations may help us meet the challenges we face, not only in schools but those of life on a finite planet.

KEYWORDS
Phematerialism; student voice; school; participation; audience engagement

Introduction

As I first drafted this paper, in July 2023, some of the planet's highest temperatures ever were being recorded. EduTwitter was also aflame, debating a tweet arguing that kids bunk school and lessons because they are 'lazy' and 'can't be arsed'.[1] Schools were awaiting new government guidance on trans issues, which had been widely trailed as requiring schools to inform parents and carers about students who were questioning their gender identity, regardless of young people's own wishes. Climate crisis; what young people are 'really' like and how they should be treated in school; gender and sexual identity: these are all complex and multi-layered issues implicating young people, who moreover must live with decisions too often made largely without their consent or involvement.

In this context it is important to endorse UNESCO's call for a 'new social contract' in which the voice of children and youth would be central (UNESCO 2021). It is equally important to reconceptualize what we mean by 'voice'. Liberal, humanist, individualist and rights-based models, I will argue, are insufficient to rise to our planetary challenges let alone more local educational ones. They have tended to pay insufficient attention to the enabling conditions of meaningful voice, to temporalities,

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or to schooling as institution and process. Responding more adequately involves acknowledging our fundamental dependence on and entanglements with others: on our own and others' embodiments, the strangers within and beyond us, on non-humans, technologies, materials, resources. We might, as one result, interpret both education and voice within the terms of what Annemarie Mol has identified in relation to health services as the 'logic of care' (Mol 2008). This does not imply that educating is 'only' caring, however. Mol's analysis of care as a matter of endless, inventive, creative, patient 'attuning' to the situations and needs of others captures more appropriately what is sometimes being – and well as what can and should be – done in educational practices. It also resonates with recent feminist scholarship on the posthuman, new materialist and affective dimensions of everyday life and education – all captured in the term 'PhEmaterialism' (Ringrose, Warfield, and Zarabadi 2019; Strom et al. 2019) – that has also provided the basis for innovative work related to youth voice, as I will illustrate through discussing a specific research project that worked with these ideas.

Voice: its continuing relevance and dilemmas

Voice practices often refer to Article 12 of the UN convention on the rights of the child as their justification, as it continues to have relevance today. Article 12's concept of maturity and not just age moves away from universalist, developmentalist and stage-based understandings of childhood, as too does the 'Gillick competence' test of a child's capacity to consent. Article 12 has incited projects across youth, education, the voluntary, third and international NGO sectors that work with rather than on children, as equal participants, and that engage them in policy and practice that affects their lives. It was informed by but also underpinned sociologies of childhood which position children as active meaning-makers with knowledge, agency and as competent to contribute to shaping the world around them. In education, student voice has been argued to deliver personal benefits for students as well as dividends for school cultures and commitment to learning (Rudduck and Flutter 2004), even offering a vision of 'radical collegiality' rather than hierarchy in student-teacher relationships (Fielding 1999).

'Student voice' has been for many a strongly moralised 'crusade' (Lewis 2010), in which criticism can be hard to hear. However, questions have long been raised about whose voice or views are heard, about what, who is listening, and with what effects (see Mayes 2023 for a detailed and insightful discussion). Voice projects can be tokenistic, and are thus not necessarily experienced as empowering in the ways often claimed for them, indeed may risk increasing disenfranchisement. Some youth get to speak 'for' others, as adults spoke for children at one time and indeed continue to do so. 'Voice' is treated as singular, as if young people are interchangeable, ignoring power hierarchies and exclusions within school cultures. Demands and agendas may be self-censored or limited by adults. Children may be addressed in these processes as neoliberal self-regulating consumers, with opinions and wishes to be catered for, consequently reshaping educators' own professional identities (Bragg 2007). Audiences may listen selectively – amplifying the voices that are loudest, that are most coherently or pleasingly articulated, that chime with what they already believe or want to do, and muting those that are uncomfortable, in the 'wrong' register or to which it is not easy to respond (Bragg 2001). These selections often map onto familiar social divisions around class, gender, ethnicity. And finally, voice may not be solicited in sites or on topics that prove challenging for schools: ability labelling or streaming, discipline practices, racialisation processes, sexuality and gender.

Such criticisms generally aim to revitalise rather than undermine rights and voice practices *per se*. However, we can see worrying directions of travel in policy that do appear to do the latter. One example is a case brought against trans children's rights to access healthcare: Bell v Tavistock, where the Court of Appeal eventually upheld [trans] children's rights to respect, to their identity and autonomy, and argued that biologistic and protectionist discourses should not be used as tools to suppress these (Moscati 2022). In education, well-known names influential in current policy have spoken of student voice in highly contemptuous terms (see Bragg 2021). Critical scholars have noted trends in England towards deregulation, marketisation, privatisation and independence from local democratic accountability (Ball 2021; Kulz, Morrin, and McGinity 2022) that may support positioning education as an individual good, and children and teachers as distinct and even opposing or warring parties. In contemporary 'no excuses' and authoritarian disciplinary regimes, teachers are envisioned as 'champions' and often as acquiring and applying techniques from a position of exteriority on students as passive subjects. Meanwhile children are required to be compliant and seen as in need of control at multiple levels, such as provided by practices like 'silent corridors' or SLANT – sit up, listen, ask and answer questions, nod and track the teacher (Cushing 2021; Golann 2021). All this – despite often being framed through the rhetoric of social mobility – feels very far from the egalitarian and even utopian impulse behind many voice initiatives. Scholars have pointed to a colonialist 'homology' at work in such conceptions: the immature, ignorant, subordinate, not-fully-human 'child' (read also: the colonised subject) is led to enlightenment, civilisation and full humanity by the mature adult teacher (colonising power) and this is deemed 'progress' in the totalising narratives of capitalism and imperialism (Murris and Kohan 2021).

If, therefore, the advances of Article 12 cannot be taken for granted (Stalford and Lundy 2019), it may seem risky to demand new underpinnings for voice as I do in this paper. However, my aim is to consider whether such reconceptualisations might prove more sustaining. Recent feminist and post-human scholarship has urged us to consider more embedded, contextualised, material, affective understandings of voice and education (Black and Mayes 2020; Chadwick 2020; Mayes 2023; Mazzei 2013; Ringrose, Warfield, and Zarabadi 2019). These position student voice not as simply immanent, expressed or not, heard or ignored, but instead as practices that *enact*: that is, as bringing into being, in particular ways, not only students, but also schools, teachers, education, in complex assemblages. We can think about how voice is constructed and what it does rather than what it 'is' (see also Mayes 2023) – which means considering how to describe and understand voice practices. Along the way we also need to clarify the kind of institution we understand school to be.

Scrutinising Article 12: ontologies, language and temporalities

To make space for the argument I pursue here let us look more closely at Article 12 itself:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law. (https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf)

Article 12 is probably the best known of all the articles on the convention of the rights of children, and arguably this in itself may have tended to dominate thinking and eclipse other articles, such as, the right to an identity (A.8), to freedom of thought and assembly (A.13), to an adequate standard of living (A.27), to achieve optimal health possible (A.24), to protection from abuse and neglect (A.19), to respect for culture, identity and language. How might child hunger (an issue that we increasingly encounter in the wealthy UK), refugee status, a lack of home or respect, affect the expression of voice? In addition, have we given less attention to the right to relax and play, to recreation and leisure, to participate in cultural life and the arts (A.31)?

Conceptually, Article 12 assumes the ontological a priori of the (singular) 'child', who pre-exists the process of expressing views and is clearly distinct from others. It may tend to support prioritising language as the medium for expression (Lundy 2007). In turn, language is conceived as a conduit for something shaped internally, awaiting the invitation to be articulated whereupon it is channeled in linear fashion uninterruptedly outwards (Komulainen 2007). 'Views' appear to be seen as static, stable essences; as mental, rational, coherent, transparent, floating free of bodies and contexts. Views also figure as private matters, individually 'owned', independent and distinct from others, rather than social, relative, or collectively developed. The formulation of 'the child who is capable of forming [their] own views' may construct as its shadow a child who is not, despite arguments resisting this notion (Lundy 2007). Article 12 installs an image of individuals as possessing intentions we control, the 'holders' of views and opinions generated from within: in sum, as the autonomous, rational, independent, universalised, individuated, self-mastering sovereign citizen and/or consumer subject celebrated in Western culture and that the modernist project of education sets out to produce. The 'child' is detached from bodies and abstracted from social differences of race, class, gender, sexuality and relations, rather than shaped by and through them. Agency entails being in charge of our meanings, intentions and actions.

Also important is the temporality of Article 12, which as I will argue further below, works within a logic of choice. The right to express views appears to assume a singular, bounded act in a single moment of time, a one-off – even if it is repeated – an 'opportunity'. There is no *before*, where we might question the conditions of possibility of coming to voice / views. There is no *during*, in the sense that the circumstances and communities of which we are part do not explicitly figure here, only the solo child speaking, to an unspecified audience that is nonetheless assumed to be able to make sense of what the child says, to grasp precisely their intention. There is no *after*, in the sense of how we live with the consequences of the choices that we make, the views we express, although it potentially responsibilises the individual for doing so. In remarking on this however I am not arguing that there is or should be a strict linear temporality to voice, but rather, proposing more attention to all that 'bleeds through' (Murris and Kohan 2021) or 'haunts' (Freccero 2006) that moment of choice.

Rethinking voice; the child; schooling

> Voice, reconceptualised after the ontological turn, emerges from relations among objects, spaces, affects, bodies, discourses, texts and in dynamically shifting arrangements and rearrangements. (Mayes 2023, 47)

Article 12 has been subjected to useful rights-based analyses that respond in different ways to many of the points above (Lundy 2007). However, here I want to draw specifically on post-structuralist critiques of the humanist understandings of voice and language that underlie my analysis above (see for example: Jackson and Mazzei 2009). These critiques point out that no one can be in control or in charge because language is not a 'tool' used by the directing intention of a prior subject. Rather, we are constituted by and in language and as such we share the condition of vulnerability 'that we have by virtue of being interpellated kinds of being, dependent on the address of the Other in order to be' (Butler 1997, 26). Language is always ambiguous, never transparent. Communication is more than words: it can also involve laughter, noises, bodily movements, breath and indeed silence (Lundy 2007). If intentions are opaque and language is ambiguous, voice needs interpretation. The meaning of a communication lies therefore in the nature of the response it elicits from others; what is said depends on who is listening and how they do so. In this sense, social relationships enable voice, while making meaning is a complex, collective, social, locally-specific, ongoing, 'transindividual process enacted in particular assemblages' (Mazzei 2013). Audiences therefore need to be accountable since they play a part in how voice is elicited and resourced (Lundy 2007) and again in the never-ending task of interpreting and understanding. The school, then, is more than a passive backdrop against which student views are simply expressed, it needs to be 'response-able' (the term Karen Barad uses in Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012) for creating, framing or blocking conditions of possibility for voice and what it makes voice mean.

To bring together these points: a young person may be communicating something when they 'bunk' lessons, but they are expressing it by means other than speech – with their bodies, by staying away – and what they mean by it may not be clear even to themselves, nor necessarily remain constant from one instance or lesson to the next. They may not be able to give an account of themselves for themselves, let alone one that is acceptable within the terms of the school. To describe them as 'lazy' offers an interpretation that is also a causal account lodged only within the student themselves. Since the adjective effectively shuts down further sense-making, it is not response-able and in this way can be seen as unethical.

Posthuman perspectives move us even further beyond these post-structuralist insights, insisting that voice needs a body; it needs air; it must be located somewhere, in space, in time. If we do not acknowledge bodies, we cannot nourish and cherish them. If we do acknowledge them, we must also reckon with how they are profoundly shaped by the material and social, as Chadwick argues:

> Our voices are vital materializations of 'breathy embodiments'. As such, voices are living movements, relational enactments and entanglements of physiological, semiotic, more-than-human, affective, material, historical and geophysical vibrations, resonances, and (colonial, racialized, gendered) atmospheres and sediments. … mixed into the vocal sounds and gestures that become recognized as sensible speech are layers of resonances – affective, geomaterial, ideological, historical and relational – that always exceed the bounds of what is (recognizably) said/uttered. (Chadwick 2020, 3)

Such ideas contribute to the notion of voice as dynamically relational, dependent on bodies, on relationships that go beyond human-to-human to include things, machines, environments, spatialities and temporalities, histories (Ivinson and Renold 2020; Snaza and Weaver 2015). Because none has ontological priority above others, these 'intra-act' and thus merge into inseparable entanglements termed 'assemblages' in posthuman and new materialist thinking (Fox and Alldred 2013). Attention to these assemblages might reveal diverse phenomena significant to but potentially overlooked in voice practices.

Let us also think about the 'child' of rights and voice through the lens of temporality. 'What is your earliest political memory?' was the inspired question through which Sevasti-Melissa Nolas began her groundbreaking work on understanding children's engagement with the social and political world.[2] Responses to the question challenged a conventional divide that imagines younger children as caught up in the private, safe, protected space of home, school and play – implicitly designated non- or a-political – and only older children and teenagers as able to grasp the public world of politics and citizenship. Participants' accounts nominated experiences from early in life that showed very diverse definitions of 'the political', and how political understandings and identities are shaped by childhood experiences from far earlier than normally considered – all helpful evidence for resisting arguments that younger children are incapable of participation or should not be listened to. Engaging voice in education requires just this kind of revisioning of children's worlds, expanding our sometimes-limited view of how children understand and act, while also considering how best to attune to this child. One trend in voice practices involves training children as researchers, on the grounds that their capacity to engage in research evidences their maturity (Fielding and Bragg 2003; Kellett 2005). However, arguably this encourages voice on adult terms, those of (often largely positivist) social science research. It does not necessarily tune into the idioms of childhood – which as Nolas has argued, include the idioms of play (Nolas, Aruldoss, and Varvantakis 2019) or what Reggio Emilia refers to as the '100 languages' of children (Murris 2017). What might student voice be if we made more efforts to do so? Would we thereby also fulfil commitments to Article 31 – children's rights to leisure and play – in the very heart of voice practices? It is significant to my argument here too that Nolas's intervention effectively 'troubles' the 'time' of childhood, since it disrupts longstanding linear developmental assumptions (Murris and Kohan 2021) about what is 'proper' and developmentally 'appropriate', which as I noted above might be held to be part of a colonialist logic in schooling.

Finally, we also need to theorise the school itself as an institution. Too often voice is discussed only with reference to the individuals involved – the teachers / adults and the pupil / student/ child. I have argued elsewhere (2007; 2021) that understanding school in Ian Hunter's terms as a 'pastoral bureaucracy' contingently assembled from various technologies (Hunter 1996) is more helpful than accounts which are either overly idealising of school as the engine of social mobility and / or empowerment, or unduly conspiratorial in seeing school as deliberately manufacturing inequity. A further aspect of understanding the school in its contemporary materialisation is that in England in particular, it is dominated by a 'logic of choice'. 'Choice' appears in at least two ways. Firstly, marketisation has promoted parental 'choice' of school, although generally this is now more honestly described as 'expressing a preference'. With that has come a panoply of other high-stakes measures including published results, league tables and inspection reports. The weight of evidence suggests that the result has been to reward existing privilege rather than promote equity. It has intensified problems of funding, staff retention and recruitment, especially for urban schools in under-resourced communities, while relocating all schools within a 'less accessible, transparent and privatised space' (Kulz, Morrin, and McGinity 2022). But there is also a current tendency to define the student as choosing, although within very narrow parameters. They may choose what proponents define as well (come to school, comply, sit up straight, track the teacher, be silent in corridors), or badly (be lazy, bunk off). The emphasis in this view of education is on knowledge conceived as a linear process of transfer, input and output, and education as a transaction. We see this too when 'contracts' signed by parents or students are repeatedly mooted, as if there are simple legalistic or corporatist solutions to behaviour, low attendance or other issues in education.[3] In marketized, privatised, individualistic accounts that position education primarily as an individual good and route to social mobility, there is little room for uncertainty, for risk (Biesta 2013) or bewilderment (Snaza 2020). The logic of choice is about shifting responsibility onto the shoulders of the chooser.

Annemarie Mol's book T*he Logic of Care* (Mol 2008) involves detailed ethnographic observations of practices of care, through which she identifies a 'logic' that demonstrates 'good care' for people with diabetes. She contrasts it with the 'logic of choice' that she finds in commercial medical advertising, discourses by politicians and even by some health care practitioners that envision – and celebrate – patients as autonomous, individualised, customers or citizens. The logic of care offers a counterpoint to the 'neo-colonial ideological violence' (p. 3) of choice narratives. For choice is meaningless for those with chronic conditions: they cannot choose not to have that condition. Instead patients must find ways to carry on living with it, which will differ according to their circumstances, work, identity and so on. Care, Mol demonstrates, is not an achievement of two wholly separate roles – the carer and cared-for – and still less is it within the grasp of individuals alone. It is done within complex, shared webs of shifting relationships (consultants, nurses, lab technicians, family members, the self and more), bodies, key technologies (insulin, devices to measure blood-sugar levels, swabs, syringes) and other material resources. If we invest in, encourage and elevate autonomy and choice as ideals instead, this actively undermines our capacity to 'see' our interdependence, to attend to bodies, materials, affects, solidarity.

I propose that we can usefully read across from her insights into the context of school. Like patients, young people have relatively little 'choice' given that school is a compulsory institution. Schools enact a range of disciplinary technologies – by which I refer not just to detentions and exclusions, but all means of governing conduct inside and outside classrooms including voice practices as well as teaching strategies. However, as Mol's work also demonstrates, none of these solve problems or ensure learning once and for all. They are fluid, they have diverse and sometimes unexpected effects and demand adaptation and improvisation in response. Consider firstly, for instance, a 'behaviour policy' poster displayed prominently in every classroom outlining unacceptable conduct and its various sanctions. It has been designed to create a 'culture of high expectations'. However, it also paradoxically serves as an instruction manual for any young person seeking to be despatched to the relative sanctuary of an exclusion room.[4] Its intentions have in some ways misfired, and the school may require new approaches as a result. Secondly, consider some recent newspaper articles about schools supporting young people who are trans or questioning their gender.[5] In a febrile environment for transgender rights, few schools were willing to go on record about their response to this notable feature of contemporary youth voice. But what is striking about those who did is the careful diversity of strategies that staff describe: mentoring, communicating with other staff on behalf of students, adjusting toilets, sports or sleeping arrangements on school trips to accommodate all students, feeling their way in relation to parents while prioritising student safety. They attend to distinctive contextualised needs rather than global directives assumed to work for everyone. They manage and balance physical and material artefacts (uniforms, toilets), spaces (changing rooms), affects (responding to parents, to students). Their policies may differ, but all act in ways that Mol might describe as attunement: tinkering, revisiting and adjusting to get the best outcome in the context of an area which is delicate and indeed a 'minefield'. They are already 'posthuman' in that 'more-than-human and non-human entities (things, objects, materialities, spaces) of education are … given the respect they deserve and require as actors in their own right' (Taylor 2017, 428). They demonstrate 'response-ability', or the possibilities of mutual response. These are therefore ethical educative practices which begin in the recognition of difference and diversity, that take 'views' seriously, but also attend to what else is in play: spaces, resources, bodies, situations within and beyond the school, all of which come to be and mean differently as they intra-act in the school assemblage.

It is in this way that a 'logic of care' may be more appropriate for conceptualising engagements with student voice than a logic of choice which assumes a temporally distinct moment of expression. Where schools engage in/with care, they take time to understand, to ask why with genuine curiosity not as punitive rhetoric: why a student is missing school or classes, why a student may not want to tell their parents their questions about gender. They understand that 'assignment at birth' is not the end of a conversation and 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway 2016) of the bunking student. Messy realities do not conform to expectations, and policies, guidelines and guidance do not necessarily cover what happens as a result of following them (Braun et al. 2011). At their best, staff – and students – make multiple, situated calls in an attempt to develop bearable ways of living and being in the school: spaces that offer kindness, challenge, advice, reassurance, encouragement, solace, room to breathe. In the process they too are changed, become other to who they were. Good education is not about making individual choices, it is about continuing and collaborative attempts to attune, to make sense, to persevere. A logic of care in education, then, acknowledges irrationality, unpredictability, alongside caring-with, kinship and socialities, in multi-sensory contexts. Maybe school can be improved but this is not guaranteed in the simplistic (contract-signing) way that some policy-makers and think tanks appear to believe. Education is a process with no clear boundaries, that is open-ended and a matter of time, interaction, reshaping, ongoing, back and forth. It is a joint effort that is not transactional, not always clearly defined, not necessarily attractive and certainly not easy, and that when done well does not give up on anybody. It involves combinations of actors: professionals, technologies, students, families, resources, spaces. Educating is often about practical details, trying one strategy when another does not work, being open to changing everything including ourselves. About taking nothing as given, including the inevitability of lazy, can't-be-arsed students. In the process it may create liveable worlds.

Attunement in this sense, therefore, is something that some, perhaps many, teachers and school staff already do. I hope that my descriptions here might resonate as recognisable with educators across the political /practice spectrum in ways that could foster ongoing conversations rather than the polarised hostilities of social media. Nonetheless the posthuman scholarship on which I draw does present some fundamental challenges, especially to educational approaches wedded to hierarchy. It asks that we reject notions of human exceptionalism and superiority, the asymmetries of power and knowledge embedded in colonial logics of education, the assumption that only humans and individuals have agency or can count as 'actors'. It requests that we surrender our certainties not least around what counts as essential knowledge and who possesses it. It does so in order to make more room for respect and mutuality, for other ways of knowing – including by students – that might 'make trouble' for established approaches. In the next section I attempt to illustrate what this might mean for voice practices specifically.

'Attuning, animating, amplifying' as an approach to student voice within a logic of care

The perspectives described above should encourage attention to aspects of voice that are often overlooked in current accounts, as well as opening up possibilities of different practices. Conceiving voice as an assemblage of practices, objects, questions, methods, researchers, students, bodies, discourses can open up new questions, about what voice does and how – not just what it represents – how we ensure it is heard, and how we attend to those who have traditionally been silenced. We might call this a logic of care in / of / for voice. To demonstrate this, I discuss a collaborative research project led by EJ Renold with the children's charity the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), and in which I was part of the research team. In a forthcoming publication, we discuss how we endeavoured to *attune* to, *animate* as resources and *amplify* for diverse audiences how young people share what matters to them (Renold et al. 2024 forthcoming) informed by PhE-materialist perspectives. This tripartite approach also conveys well my argument about how to enact as well as conceptualise student voice in schools.

The project aimed to understand young people's perspectives on their learning about relationships, sexuality and sex, inside and outside school. Such a focus is often seen as 'risky' in itself, not least because Relationships and Sex Education in England has recently been in the eye of various media storms. It was therefore crucial that we allowed young people to tell us about their lives on their own terms and through various modalities, using creative approaches developed over many years by Renold and colleagues (see e.g. Renold 2016; Renold and Ivinson 2019; Renold and Ringrose 2017b; Renold, Ashton, and McGeeney 2021). The research involved 125 young people aged 11-18, across England, Wales and Scotland and from six schools and two youth groups, participating in generating what Renold has theorised as 'darta' or arts-based data (Renold 2018). Although the broad area was defined, we otherwise aimed to co-construct *with* children and young people 'ethico-political spaces enabling what we call *pARTicipation,* where feelings and ideas flow and can be surfaced and transformed through artefacts that can carry and communicate young people's words, feelings and experiences within and beyond the fieldwork encounter' (Renold et al. 2024 forthcoming).

Space precludes a lengthy discussion of these methods, but I will mention just a few elements. We aimed to create a safe space by asking participants to identify their sources of support and groundrules for our time together, on clouds that were then hung on a 'tree' kept on the table with us. We did not ask young people direct questions that might make them feel uncomfortable or implied we were testing their 'knowledge'. We as researchers also attempted to let go of our preconceptions, to attune to what they were saying and to be open to the unexpected: that is, we were 'response-able', open to mutual dialogue. We paid attention to the affects of the research encounter, both our own and the young people's. The activities all allowed young people to respond at their own pace and in multiple ways. For instance, they could talk, write, draw, create characters from pipe-cleaners if they did not want to discuss themselves personally. We provided a range of affective resources: various emoji stickers for feelings, hearts for what they loved or wanted to know more about, and stones for anything they felt was too 'heavy'.

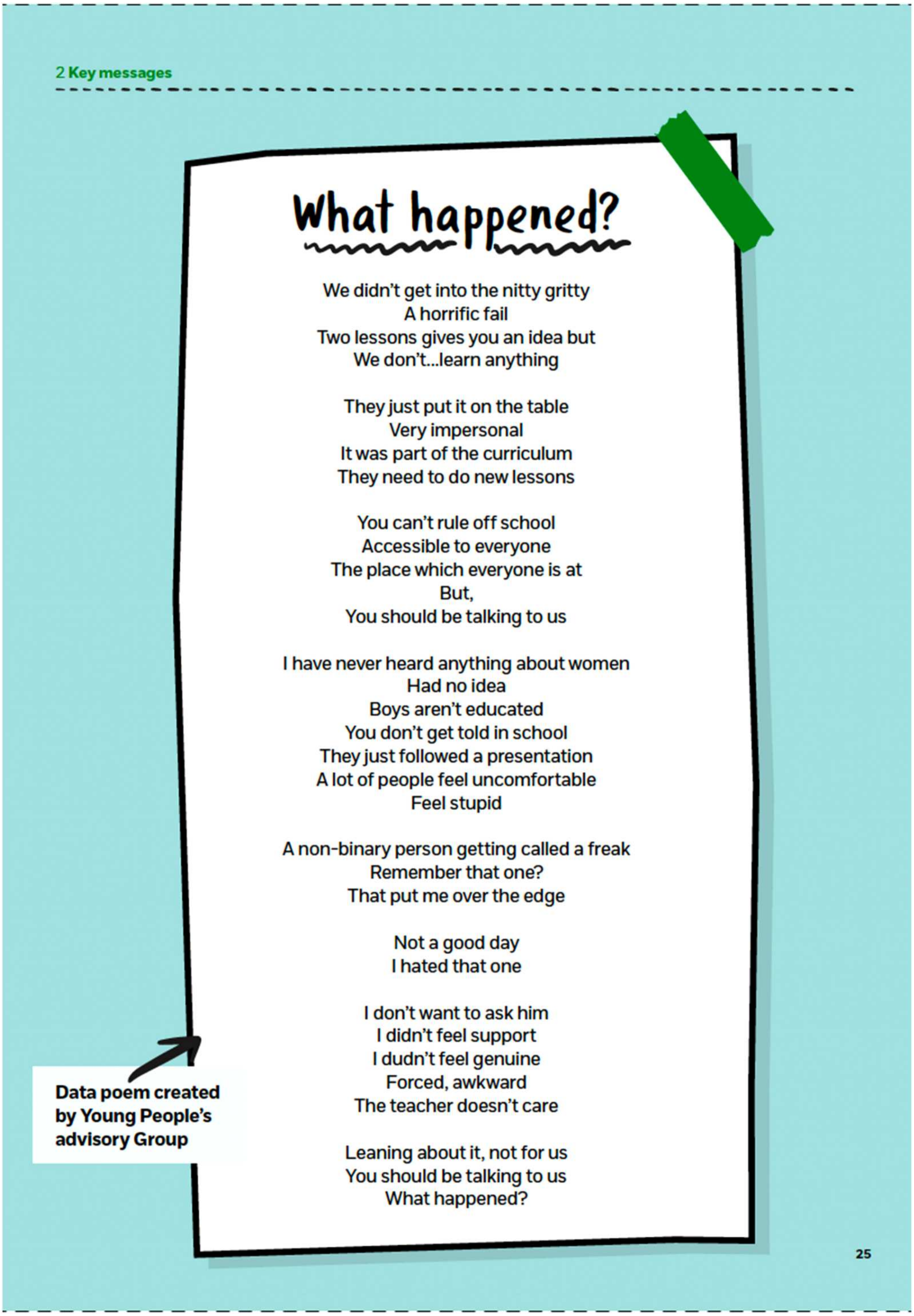
One activity involved a set of cards with a range of images, from the more representative, such as game consoles or toilets, to more figurative, such as a shark, glitter, a path through a wood, a wall. Participants could write or draw on these, tell stories by assembling them together into narratives, or hold and talk about whichever appealed to them. These provoked, as intended, very diverse responses. For instance, social media logos invited discussion of platforms that it is probably fair to say are often mistrusted by educators, and/or largely invisible to them. Here we were able to learn about social media on the terms connected to young people's lives and meaning making, as they enthusiastically educated us about Snapchat dating etiquette and other aspects of their online learning. Equally, the more abstract images prompted some articulate reflections on masculinity from this boy aged 15 – that is, from an age/ gender group that might be assumed to find it difficult to discuss such issues:

> Sinan: The shark is alone and it's just, I don't know, I thought some people, they don't talk about their feelings. . . Sometimes you just don't feel like brave enough to speak to your male friends about it. […] Just a masculinity thing […] just a standard that if you're like a male, you don't feel nothing […] It's just like not really a conscious thing that you're doing it on purpose. It just happens, you know? Like I'm not walking around thinking, 'Yeah, I got to be masculine', … . It just happens. It's just how people are.

After the cards activities, participants were invited to use large sheets of paper together, a blue roll to share more about what and where they were already learning, and a black one for how and what they would ideally like to learn. Finally, we provided glass jars and asked them to respond to the question 'what jars you the most?' in relation to relationships, sex and sexuality: they could write messages to place inside, and / or decorate the jar, and these were discussed in follow up interviews. This 'jar' technique has been developed and adapted by other educators in and beyond RSE contexts, where it opens up spaces for hearing what matters not only to students but also potentially to staff (see Hoyle and McGeeney 2019, 39). In all cases we attended carefully to how our various methods enacted voice differently, provided different horizons of possibility for what could be articulated.

In Renold's work, darta subsequently become 'dartaphacts': art-ful objects that *animate* or carry what has emerged in the research encounter to new places, spaces and audiences. The dartaphacts in this project included a 90-page report, a 10-minute film, cards for use by educators.[6] In conventional reports, meaning tends to be carried by authored narratives with quotations by research participants in a subordinate role, illustrating and confirming the argument. By contrast, our report foregrounded youth views in a much more diverse and detailed way. Further exemplifying how 'response-able' research generates the unexpected, an unplanned output was a series of eight 'data poems' (see Figure 1). These were assembled by the young people's advisory group (YPAG). Starting from the research team's compilation of quotations for each key section of the draft report, the YPAG pulled out what most struck them, collaged them together in different ways, titled them, and audio recorded them with each member of the group re-voicing the quotations. These were then included in the final report as well as played at launches. They were polyvocal and multi-media, not susceptible to easy or singular interpretations, instead presenting the range and depth of young people's views and experiences in ways that called out for collective efforts to make meaning. These were frequently mentioned by audiences as highly impactful, and educators who have worked with Renold have gone on to develop similar approaches within their own school context.

Finally, the notion of *amplifying* refers to the process of bringing audiences together to respond to these craftings: how we endeavour to make voice mean in contexts beyond its generation. In previous student voice research, I had often noted that a failure to ensure an audience for what young people had done could result in those young people feeling ignored and their energies dissipated. Other researchers have argued that the 'punctum' of a single final presentation can be inhibiting for young people engaged in arts-based practices (Mayes and Kelly 2023). Renold and Ringrose have long worked in 'intra-activist' ways to enact and 'enliven' change beyond the academy (e.g. Renold and Ringrose 2017a). One strength of creative methods is that there is potential for sharing in more diverse ways with wider audiences. These include online, where some of our research report and outcomes live on. Our face-to-face events enabled audiences – young people, parents, academics, education and care practitioners, policy makers and wider publics – to encounter the material agency of youth voice in specific 'lively' ways. For example at launches, Renold placed attendees around tables set up 'world café' style[7] rather than in rows. Here they could see and touch the support trees, the jars, and the rolls of paper with young people's writing and drawings on them, which had been cut up and laminated to form placemats. They themselves were invited to



2 Key messages

What happened?

We didn't get into the nitty gritty
A horrific fail
Two lessons gives you an idea but
We don't...learn anything

They just put it on the table
Very impersonal
It was part of the curriculum
They need to do new lessons

You can't rule off school
Accessible to everyone
The place which everyone is at
But,
You should be talking to us

I have never heard anything about women
Had no idea
Boys aren't educated
You don't get told in school
They just followed a presentation
A lot of people feel uncomfortable
Feel stupid

A non-binary person getting called a freak
Remember that one?
That put me over the edge

Not a good day
I hated that one

I don't want to ask him
I didn't feel support
I dudn't feel genuine
Forced, awkward
The teacher doesn't care

Leaning about it, not for us
You should be talking to us
What happened?

Data poem created by Young People's advisory Group

25

Figure 1. Data poem from '*We have to educate ourselves*': *How young people are learning about relationships, sex and sexuality.* 2023 NSPCC. https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/3138/sexuality-education-plus.pdf

contribute further to both the support trees and the jars. Our presentations included screenings of the films and poems, with various members of the research team, the NSPCC and young people from the advisory group all contributing, thereby diversifying the 'voices' with which audiences were invited to engage. In these ways we aimed to co-produce a caring ethical space that was at once playful, respectful of both participants and audiences, and open-ended, by inviting further participation. The ongoing re-animation of objects from the earlier research materialised our desire to disrupt conventional pathways and temporalities of research from the field to output to dissemination as distinct linear stages. They 'blur distinctions between research, engagement, pedagogy, and activism' (Renold et al 2024 forthcoming).

Although the project discussed here was a specific research project, I hope that readers would find some relevant suggestions about what a logic of care in / of / for voice might become – how it might be oriented around assembling young people's modes of self-expression in diverse ways, involving mutual respect and learning, with attention from the outset to the forms in which it might be presented, the audiences it could reach, and how it might do so in different ways to become 'response-able' to what matters to young people.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to rethink what we mean by voice to encompass bodies, resources, materials, others, heterogeneous ways of knowing and being; to consider how we become response-able to voice; to propose a logic of care as a way to conceive of how we might tune in specifically to student voice, but also to understand the mundane practices in which professionals and young people engage together in schools. Acknowledging the collectively shaped conditions under which we live, our mutual implication and entanglement not only with each other but with all the resources that create who we are, may help us take better care of all those around us, including the 'lazy' student or the unpredictably-questioning one. In the process of acknowledging our interdependence on others, it is to be hoped that we may come to take better care of the finite resources of the planet as well.

Notes

1. https://twitter.com/rogershistory/status/1679963337667248131?s=43&t=zrvz93CTxhvWWT-vYe7-Ag
2. https://childhoodpublics.org/archives/earliest-political-memories/
3. See for instance a 2023 report by the think tank Res Publica on what it calls the 'behavioural turn in English education policy' https://www.respublica.org.uk/our-work/publications/behaving-to-learn/
4. This example comes from Ciara Wheeler's dissertation research for the MA in Social Justice and Education at UCL, 2023, with thanks.
5. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/apr/23/teachers-warn-new-gender-guidance-for-english-schools-could-put-children-at-risk and https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-65473198 and https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/may/08/trans-pupils-put-school-policies-test-heated-debate-england
6. The research report and some creative outputs are available here: https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2023/how-young-people-are-learning-about-relationships-sex-sexuality
7. https://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/

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