Understanding Children and Young People's Voice as Intergenerational
Dialogue within the Context of Children and Young People's Participation

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ABSTRACT

The discourse of child participation stemming from the UNCRC has been criticised for adopting modernist ideas of personhood which over emphasise the child as an autonomous, independent individual, overlooking the importance of relationships and interdependence of actors. It is argued as a result, that much child participation falsely searches for ways to access the pure, inner, authentic, voice of the child, free from mediation by adults. So whilst voice is not synonymous with participation, a critical exploration of 'children's voice' which takes account of emerging relational conceptions of childhood and child participation is now necessary.

This thesis builds on these recent criticisms of voice, positing that dominant models of child participation have implicitly assumed child to adult communication occurs monologicaly, as the transmission of information from child to an adult. I argue that transmission based notions of communication overlook the role context plays in the production of meaning, and the potentially polyphonic nature of communication.

Using the epistemic perspective of dialogism, I develop a relational and intersubjective model of 'children's voice'. With this, I argue that 'children's voice' can be understood as an intersubjective act of knowledge creation, occurring between at least two intersectional dynamic standpoint-identities, and interrelated with mutual recognition and potentially occurring both within and across generational boundaries.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPS - British Psychological Society

CGT - Constructed Grounded Theory

FDA - Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

PIS - Participant Information Sheet

UCLan - University of Central Lancashire.

UNCRC - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UN - United Nations

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a critical review of literature (Grant and Booth, 2009) relating to 'children's voice' in the context of child participation. Throughout, I have focused on the concept of 'children's voice' rather than what is said by children in participatory projects, or methods of engaging with 'children's voice'. Following Charmaz (2006), a general engagement with the literature to provide sensitising concepts was undertaken and a fuller review of literature was delayed until after initial data analysis to remain sensitive to the field data (Dunne, 2011). The full literature review was identified through two search strategies (see Appendix 1) using the terms participation, child and a variety of derivative or similar terms, including youth related terms. The first search combined these with 'voice'. The second combined these terms with 'dialogue' as recent critical literature increasingly uses the term intergenerational dialogue rather than 'children's voice'.

The literature review was conducted for the period January 1960 to August 2020. Due to the common usage of the search terms - 4386 articles were identified. In line with Facca *et al.* (2020), who conducted a narrower contemporaneous review yielding 2317 sources, the relevance of each article was assessed through scrutiny of journal titles, titles and abstracts to assess quality and identify which articles could provide insight into the *concept* of 'children's voice' in childhood studies. The remaining 315 articles were then read in iterative moves between skimming scanning and in-depth reading, to further focus on the most relevant sources whilst the field data analysis was conducted. During this, additional supporting works, identified through

citations and searches for literature by the same authors, were also incorporated. In total, 261 texts are discussed within this review.

The review chapter contains two substantive sections. In the first (Section 2.2) I explore the metaphor of 'children's voice' as it is used within child participation and Childhood Studies and argue that the dominant models of participation have uncritically used a concept of voice that implicitly based on the separation of meaning and communication and the notion of an autonomous child. In the second Section (2.3) I review recent relational critiques of this discourse, and consider the potential for a relational, as opposed to modernist, approach to 'children's voice' that rejects t*he pure voice within* (see Section 1.1). I conclude (Section 2.4) by arguing that the review shows there is a need for a model of 'children's voice' based on a relational, intersubjective perspective which brings together mutual recognition and shared meaning making, and that some work signposts to dialogism as a potential for this.

2.2 THE METAPHOR AND DISCOURSE OF 'CHILDREN'S VOICE'

2.2.1 Section introduction

This section outlines how the dominant metaphor and discourse concerning 'children's voice' lacks a clear theoretical underpinning, but is linked to the political project of children's participation. I explore how voice discourse in the UNCRC and popular theories of participation (e.g. Hart, 1992; Lundy, 2007) act as a normative anchor based on notions of the child as an independent autonomous individual and transmission-based communication. I review how the New Sociology of Childhood initial conceptions of child agency have contributed to this by reinforcing the idea of autonomous, individual, children and voice as an independent, individual act. I then outline recent scholars' rejection of this notion of agency in favour of relational, post-structuralist ontologies, demonstrating how this forms the foundation of the more recent critiques of 'children's voice' (see Section 2.3). I also review writing about children's standpoints and voice, arguing that critique is again lacking. I also summarise the need for an adequately theorised conception of voice and suggest the potential of relational perspectives.

2.2.2 The dominant metaphor and discourse

Although a number representations of 'children's voice' can be identified (Facca *et al.*, 2020) the predominant discourse of children and young people's voice (see Hartung, 2017) has focused on voice as an expression of the child's independently held view (e.g. Hart, 2002; James and Prout, 1990; Kellett, 2009a; Lundy, 2007). It has, often implicitly, assumed meaning is held or formed internally within the child and then expressed by voice. This inner 'mentalistic' (Komulainen, 2007, p. 23) notion of a 'pure' (Pinkney, 2010, p. 41), 'authentic' (James 2007, p. 261) voice within (see also Wyness,

2013b) portrays 'children's voice' as a kind of quality, property or possession which children can have, be enabled to develop, or even be given (e.g. Damiani-Taraba *et al*., 2018; Grover, 2004; Kellett, 2009a, 2010; Mayall, 1994, 2000, 2002; Warming, 2006).

The adult's role in this metaphor is to *hear,* or *listen to* voice (e.g. Alderson, 1995; Clark *et al.,* 2011; Clark and Moss, 2011; Crowley, 2013; Gray and Winter, 2011; Hallett and Prout, 2003; Hart, 2002; Palaiologou 2014), receiving their views and, ideally, acting in response (Lundy, 2007). This presents both the voice and the identity of the speaker as stable, present, reflexive and authentic (I'Anson, 2013, citing Mazzei and Jackson, 2009), and voice as something which can be accessible in its pure form to others without mediation or interference, if the right conditions are found (Lee, 2001). This generates a methodological need for adults to 'go deeper' (Horgan, 2017) to access voice 'unmediated' (I'Anson, 2013, p.110) by adult influence.

This metaphor and discourse is often understood, both critically (Wyness, 2013a) and uncritically (Cook-Sather, 2015), to privilege the spoken word, but has increasingly encompassed a variety of other methods of expression, such as the visual or creative (Eldén, 2013; Lomax, 2015; Robinson and Taylor, 2007; Whitty and Wisby, 2007). However, voice cannot be entirely detached from the sonic aspects of children's expressions and the sounds of childhood (Mills, 2017; Schnoor, 2013). Within this, voice as silence has been shown to be a highly competent strategy of expressing agency (Kohli, 2006; Lewis, 2010; Naraian, 2011; Silverman *et al.*, 1998). Resultantly, Spyrou (2018, p. 95), has argued there is a need to be attentive to *undomesticated, non-normative* voices and the 'voice in the crack' (Mazzei, 2009, p. 45) which includes things such as children's silences, screams (see Rosen, 2015) or expressions not based on the spoken word. In addition, Jupp (2008), Kellett (2009a, citing Warming

2006), Kraftl (2013, 2020) and Kraftl and Horton (2007) have argued for greater consideration of the emotional or affective aspects of voice and participation

In much writing the distinction between an individual's voice and group or collective voice is left ambiguous (Stern, 2015), despite a conceptual dichotomy between the two existing (Thomas, 2007). Thus, voice is associated both with *individual* children's agency and views within, for example, care and protection (Bruce, 2014) or legal settings (Holt, 2016), and also as something which represents *the collective interests of children as a group* within the public realm (Thomas, 2007). The latter is usually associated with democracy and a concern with representation and empowerment of children (McLeod, 2011; Wyness 2009). The practices referred to include children and young people's involvement in representative structures such as youth or school councils, as well as 'new forms' of democratic participation (Crowley and Moxon 2017) based on deliberative democracy, digital methods or social movements such 'School Strike for Climate Change' or even workers' movements (see also Gretschel et Kiilakoski 2012, Gretchel *et al.* 2014; Taft, 2015). However, collective voice-based structures and practices have been criticised as essentialising childhood (Fielding, 2001, 2004, 2007; Wyness, 2009), and taking emphasis away from everyday relational practices of participation (Horgan *et al.* 2017).

2.2.3 'Children's voice', participation and the UNCRC

Within practice settings, terms like youth voice and the voice of the child are often used as synonyms for participation (Tisdall, 2012). However, voice alone is not enough to constitute participation (Johnson and West, 2018). For Lundy (2007) it operates as a component of children's participation alongside space, audience and influence. 'Children's voice' might also be regarded as a critical concept within the broader construct of child participation, alongside children's agency, competence, autonomy,

citizenship, rights, protagonism and action (Hartung, 2017; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010; Thomas, 2007). Whether voice is *essential* to participation is debatable, with some preferring to focus on action or change (e.g. Johnson and West, 2018; Percy-Smith and Burns, 2013, Stoecklin, 2013), emphasising space (e.g. Moss and Petre, 2005, Percy-Smith, 2010, 2018, Walther *et al*. 2019), or voice as a precursor to participation (Baraldi, 2008). None of these articles give a theoretical underpinning to their use of the term voice.

Like voice, participation lacks a single theoretical definition (Thomas, 2007) but is strongly framed by the initial claims of New Sociology of Childhood, as well as the UNCRC (Cockburn, 2012; Hartung, 2017; Hill *et al*, 2004; Thomas, 2012; Tisdall and Punch, 2012; Woodhead, 2010). Although Childhood Studies and the children's rights movement are distinct (Bendo, 2020; Hanson, 2014), the desire to promote child participation can be seen as a political project within some parts of Childhood Studies (Skelton, 2013; Tisdall and Punch, 2012). Accordingly, as a landmark in children's rights (Woodhead, 2010), the UNCRC dominates discourse and comes to normatively define participation (Hartung, 2017). Despite influences on children's participation such as critical pedagogy (after Freire, 1972), service user participation (e.g. Beresford, 2000; Croft and Beresford, 1989; McLaughlin, 2009) and neoliberalism (Cowden and Singh, 2007; Raby, 2014) the UNCRC's emphasis on 'voice' forms part is the dominant standard in practice (Wyness, 2013a).

Whilst Articles 5 and 12-17 of the UNCRC are considered the participation rights (Lansdown and O' Kane, 2014), in tension with provision, and protections rights (Archard, 2004; Cockburn, 2012; Marshall, 1997), for many, Article 12 alone has been the central focus of participation (Lansdown, 2010; Woodhead, 2010). The Convention itself does not use the term 'voice', though Article 12 talks about the child who is

'capable of forming his or her own views', having 'the right to express those views'. However, the General Comment on Article 12 (UN, 2009) refers on five occasions to children 'voicing their views' or similar, describing Article 12 as the 'right to be heard'. UNCRC focused practice resources such as Lansdown (2011), which uses the term 'voice' twenty-three times, continue this trend and ultimately Article 12 becomes central to the metaphor and discourse of children's voice.

Whilst lacking a coherent conceptual foundation (Tobin, 2019), the UNCRC has been criticised for framing rights as individual entitlements or possessions (Cockburn, 2012). It is said this overlooks the interdependency of children with others, social relations, and over-emphasises the child as an autonomous and independent individual (Holzscheiter, 2010). Many of these criticisms can be seen in the way voices and views are talked about within the general comment and texts directly derived from it (e.g. Lansdown, 2011). These texts frequently imply that views are something the child forms internally alone and independently, and voice is something possessed by the child to be expressed to the adult. This implicitly reflects a 'transmission' (Shannon and Weaver, 1948[1]) based concept of communication, a monological perspective on communication whereby knowledge is formed and held internally and is clearly distinct from communication (Linell, 1998). This model of communication is based on a non-relational perspective, which assumes a high level of autonomous independence from other individuals in terms of forming knowledge, language use and communication, and that voice is the property of an individual (Linell, 1998).

Many of the most popular participation models (e.g. Franklin, 1997; Hart, 1992; Lundy, 2007; Shier, 2001; Treseder, 1997) are endogenously developed from practice (Thomas, 2012), and informed by UNCRC. Consequently, they explicitly adopt the

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[1] Shannon and Weavers model led also to many subsequent 'transmission' based models - they are cited here and elsewhere the originator of the concept of transmission.

language of voice and views within the UNCRC and implicitly and uncritically adopt its concept of transmission. Present across all of these models, but most elaborated in Lundy (2007), this narrative of participation describes voice as something the child or children use, in order to express a view to the adult listener to have influence (Lundy, 2007), or affect some sort of decision (Franklin, 1997; Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Treseder, 1997). Furthermore, these models fail to elaborate sufficiently on the distinction between single child, group of children, and children as a social category (Stern, 2015). Thus, they have been used uncritically to transfer a model of *interpersonal* communication to collective interaction between social groups. This potentially ignores the diversity of children's standpoints and intersectionality identities (see Section 2.2.6) and presumes a homogeneity of 'children's voice' (Fielding, 2007). In a rare example of unpicking the distinction between collective and individual Larkins *et al.* (2014) have suggested a lattice model of participation that 'can be used from different subject positions' to explore the influence of individual actors as collectivities, this lacks any theoretical grounding. Larkins *et al.* (2014) call for further research in this field.

2.2.4 The New Sociology of Childhood and voice

The New Sociology of Childhood arose within the late twentieth century, with Adler and Adler (1986), Alanen (1988), Alderson (1995), Denzin (1975), James and Prout (1990), Jenks (1992), Mackay (1991), Mayall (1994), Skolnick (1976), Speier (1976) and Qvortrup *et al.* (1994). It redefined childhood as a socially constructed phenomenon (Tisdall and Punch, 2012), and social constructionism became the dominant (Lee, 2001) and often unquestioned perspective (Alanen, 2015a). Now evolved into Childhood Studies, it is currently questioning its original ideas (e.g. Alanen, 2017;

Baraldi and Cockburn, 2018; Eßer *et al.* 2016; Holmberg, 2018; Spyrou 2017, 2018, 2019, Spyrou *et al.*, 2018a).

Childhood Studies contributes to 'children's voice' in three ways. It's theorisation of children's agency informs what it means for a child to act or exert influence through their voice, (although, voice might be considered a form of action (see Crossley, 2012; Habermas 1984; Searle, 2000)). It's methodological explorations of *how* to engage with voice through participatory research and ethnography (see James and Prout, 1990) as a way of generating knowledge with or about children (Alderson, 1995, 2001, 2012; Beazley *et al.* 2009; Kellett, 2009b, 2010, 2011; Larkins *et al.* 2014, Thomas and O'Kane, 1998). Here participatory research is criticised for a lack of engagement with what voice *is* (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008; Hammersley, 2015, 2017). However, the third contribution, recognition that children may have unique standpoints may provide some theoretical underpinning (see Section 2.2.6).

2.2.5 The agentic autonomous child and voice

Initial childhood studies assertions that children are agentic (e.g. James and Prout, 1990), led to a normative political goal for childhood studies to demonstrate, rather than explore, the agency of children (Mühlbacher and Sutterlüty, 2019). Overall, the field has been unclear on its conception of agency (Eßer *et al.*, 2016; Hammersley 2017; Lee, 2001; Raithelhuber, 2016) but was initially heavily influenced by Giddens (Oswell, 2011). Early approaches concluded children's competence was situated and partial (Hutchby and Moran-Ellis, 1998) and structures, contexts and relationships can open up or close the level of agency (Klocker, 2007). It is argued the Giddens-informed concepts focused heavily on children as independent, autonomous, complete actors (Eßer *et al.*, 2016; Oswell, 2011), (over)emphasised agency *versus* structure (Spyrou, 2018) and framed agency within a limiting dichotomy of the two (Oswell, 2011). This

overemphasis on the child as an agentic, independent, autonomous being parallels criticism made of the UNCRC above, overlooking intersubjectively and interdependence (Lee, 2001). The construction of the independently agentic child by the New Sociology of Childhood still frames much of the metaphor and discourse of 'children's voice' today. The major critiques of 'children's voice' (see Section 2.3) can be related to the idea voice being conceived as coming from a wholly independent autonomous child, rather than considering social relations, intersubjectivity and interdependence.

Within Childhood Studies, attempts to move beyond this concept of independent agency to a relational approach have included Abebe's (2019) continuum of agency, Larkins' (2019) use of critical realism, Stoecklin and Fattore's (2018) multidimensional structure of agency, Sutterlüty and Tisdall (2019) and Mühlbacher and Sutterlüty's (2019) attempts to distinguish between agency and autonomy, Raithelhuber's (2016) relational-relativistic approach and others. None of these have addressed voice fully. However, a 'new wave' (Ryan, 2012) that draws specifically on post-structuralist theory of agency does make some contributions

With this new wave, Eßer (2016), Gallagher (2019), Oswell (2011, 2016), Prout (2004), Spyrou (2016b; 2018), Spyrou *et al.* (2018a), Valentine (2011) and others have used post structural approaches to consider agency through actor-network theory and agentic assemblages drawing after Barad (2007); Bennet (2010); Deleuze and Guattari (1988); Haraway (1988, 2016); and Latour (1996, 2013). As part of this, Davies (2014), Daelman *et al.* (2020), Mayes (2016, 2019) and Spyrou (2018) have drawn on on Mazzei's (2009, 2016) and Mazzei and Jackson's (2009, 2012, 2017) to consider 'new materialist' approaches to 'children's voice' well outside the dominant discourse. Mazzei (2009, 2016), and Mazzei and Jackson (2017) seek to detach voice from the

subject, responding to their own and others' critiques about the lack of a *pure voice within* (see Section 2.3.4). They envisage voice as emerging from the interaction of all elements of an assemblage (Mazzei, 2013). An assemblage after Deleuze and Guattari (1988) is a flat relationship of 'things' (material, discursive, human, non-human and otherwise) which interact together to produce agency. Mazzei and Jackson (2017, p. 217 authors' emphasis) see voice as '*inseparable from all elements (human and non-human)* in an assemblage'. This position blurs boundaries between actor and object, as is common in other writing on distributed agency (e.g. Eßer, 2016, Oswell, 2011, 2016), which typically talks of human and non-human interactants (Müller, 2015). However, this part of post structuralist theory has attracted much criticism (e.g. Latour, 1996; Winner, 1993). Baraldi and Cockburn, (2018) consider the new wave part of a wider debate in children's agency about the relative importance of language or discourse in relation to non-human objects. Modernist notions 'children's voice' (see Section 2.2.5) have not specifically led to a case for treating material objects as co-agentic - although neither have they ruled it out. Furthermore, Mayes (2019) notes post qualitative notions of voice can be ahistorical and depoliticising. This may be a limitation for any political project of 'children's voice' concerned with children's rights and socially situated childhood.

2.2.6 Children's standpoints – situated partial knowledge

Childhood Studies has also considered *what* is expressed through children's voice, and the position it is expressed from. Mayall (1994, 2000, 2002) has claimed 'children's voice' is an expression of knowledge (Mayall, 2000). Alongside this, Alanen (1994, 1998, 2003, 2009) and Alanen and Mayall (2001) have developed ideas of childhood as a social category framed by marginalisation within the generational order. Explicit links have been made to standpoint theory (Alanen, 1994, 2005; Alderson, 2001;

Mayall, 1994, 2000, 2002) and 'children's voice' has been identified as an expression of knowledge from a standpoint of childhood, framed by intergenerational marginalisation.

This echoes Harding's (1991, 1995) work on feminist standpoints that claimed women's marginalisation led to a privileged position of knowing. Other standpoint theorists subsequently argued that any one group's standpoint could not be objectively privileged above others. (e.g. Haraway, 1988; Hekman 1997; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Similarly, Holloway (2014) reminds us that children's knowledge about childhood does not invalidate adult's knowledge of childhood. In addition, Hill Collins's (1990) introduction of intersectionality to standpoint theory demonstrated that single categories cannot be considered in isolation. Hill Collins (1990, p. 236) argued that 'each group speaks from its own standpoint and shares its own partial, situated knowledge. But because each group perceives its own truth as partial, its knowledge is unfinished.' Consequently, a generationally based standpoint must be considered alongside intersections with other social categories but this is often overlooked within Childhood Studies (Alanen, 2015b; Artzman *et al*., 2016). Arguably 'children's voice' is an expression of partially situated knowledge, from the standpoint of childhood but crossed by other intersections.

It is also accepted that there are multiple social and cultural childhoods rather than a singular category (Wyness, 2012) and this diversity of childhoods suggests that a homogenous, universal children's view does not exist (James, 2007). Leonard (2015) has also argued that children are agentic in constructing social categories rather than them being fixed, and Holloway (2014) has stressed the child is not an autonomously knowing subject but a relationally knowing one. Overall, Alanen's generational order has not had extensive further development to take account of these relational approaches within childhood studies (Alanen, 2020; Punch, 2020) and the concept of

children's standpoints has not been explicitly conceptualised further than Mayall (2000, 2002). Consequently, children's standpoints remain under-theorised, in regard to relational ontologies whilst still presupposing a relational approach (Wyness, 2012, p .35). So whilst children's standpoint theory is not necessarily subject to the same criticism of being based on modernist ideas of an independent child, it still only provides a starting point for examining intergenerational relations, interdependencies and 'children's voice'.

Despite this, voice as knowledge from a children's standpoint has been enthusiastically adopted by participatory researchers working with children (e.g. Alderson, 2001; Beazley *et al.* 2009; Kellett, 2009b, 2010, 2011; Lundy and Swadener, 2015; Thomas and O'Kane, 1998) as well as participation practice more generally. Seen as a way of accessing knowledge based on children's experience, or of marginalisation of children (Hadfield and Haw, 2001), Hampshire *et al.* (2012) go as far as using children's knowledge and children's voices as almost interchangeable terms, citing UNCRC Article 12 as theoretical acceptance that children can generate knowledge. However, participatory research with children is criticised for failing to engage in a more critical understanding of voice (Clark and Richards, 2017; Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008; Hammersley, 2015; Kim, 2016, 2017; Spyrou, 2011, 2018).

2.2.7 Section summary

The review conducted suggests that, 'children's voice' can be understood as a metaphor or discourse related to child participation and communication but is not a clear theoretical construct. It refers to both interpersonal communication with individual children and the collective representation of children as a social group, often with a lack of distinction between the two.

The UNCRC General Comment on Article 12 (2009), has a normative effect on the overall discourse of participation as voice based. The UNCRC-derived language of voice has been adopted uncritically in popular models of participation (e.g. Hart, 1992, Lundy 2007). This has led to assumptions that voice is something possessed or used by 'the child', to express an internally held or formed view without involvement of the adult listener. Both the UNCRC General Comment 12 and these models of participation are therefore inherently monoglocial, and too heavily based on modernist ideas of an autonomous, independent child, ignoring social relations and interdependencies with others.

Although Childhood Studies has provided valuable critical understandings of childhood and children's standpoints, this academic field has tended to contribute to the uncritical metaphor and discourse of voice. Early conceptions of the child as an autonomous independent individual have reinforced the modernist perspective on voice within the UNCRC. Mayall's (2000) important work on children's standpoints, linking 'children's voice' with knowledge production, lacks development around both relational approaches and intersectionality. More recently, however, this uncritical trend has been rejected by scholars writing about agency using post-structural or relational perspectives and several relational critiques of the metaphor of voice have emerged. The potential of relational critique to provide the missing theoretical grounding for notions of voice and dialogue in children's participation is therefore discussed in the next section.

2.3 CRITIQUES OF 'CHILDREN'S VOICE' FROM A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

2.3.1 Section introduction

This section outlines the criticism and limits of the dominant metaphor and discourse of 'children's voice'. Much of this relates to voice being conceived as expressed by the wholly autonomous, independent child and use of the modernist ideas of personhood. To that end, I focus on writers whose work helps develop a relational perspective, many of whom have used the term 'intergenerational dialogue'. The section focuses on voice at the interpersonal rather than collective level, following the focus of the writers identified.

2.3.2 The contextual elements of voice

Whilst Hill *et al*. (2004), Lundy (2007), Moss and Petrie (2005) and others have argued that children's voices are expressed *within* the context of space and audience, there are increasing claims that context should also be understood as *part of* 'children's voice' (Cruddas, 2007; Fielding, 2004, 2007; Maybin, 2006, 2013). A number of writers have highlighted the role of adults in shaping voice by both selecting and interpreting what is identified as 'children's voice' within institutional and relational practices (Clark and Richards, 2017; Ingram, 2013; James, 2007; l'Anson and Weston, 2018; Mannion, 2007; Tisdall, 2012). Kallio (2012) argues that the things children say are only recognised as 'children's voice' when they conform to the discourse of childhood advanced within the UNCRC. She maintains that participatory spaces to elicit children's voices do so only in distinct ways and on selected issues which both qualifies and disqualifies some voices.

Bragg (2001, 2007), and Thompson and Gunter's (2006) explorations of pupil voice come to similar conclusions, that voice, rather than being neutral, is produced by and within dominant policy and institutional discourses and is mediated by institutional practices. Most interestingly, Arnot and Reay (2007) maintain that understandings of pupil voice within schools are *sustained by boundaries* between social and organisational categories such as adult-child or pupil-teacher. For them, the recognition of children's expressions as 'children's voice' is not only influenced by intergenerational relationships and categories, but dependent on distinctions between them. Cruddas (2007) is critical of such binary distinctions inherent in voice discourse for failing to recognise self and identity as socially constructed, hybrid and multiple, thereby reinforcing conventional essentialist understandings of childhood as a category.

Some empirical work has begun to explore the mechanics of context and children's voice, but the picture is far from comprehensive. Alasuutari (2014) and Heiskanen *et al*.'s (2019) analysis of the reproduction of children's voices within teacher-parent meetings and educational plans respectively, illustrates the way 'children's voice' can be embedded in institutional practices, such as forms and questionnaires, and adults' own expectation of their roles. Kirby and Gibbs' (2006, p.209) study of children's participation in community health projects concluded that embedded hierarchical relationships constrained 'children's voice', and they identify a range of different communicative roles adults can take. McKay's (2014) study in special education needs settings comes to the conclusion that voice is context dependent, and affected by individual, intergenerational relationships, both positively and negatively. Maybin (2006, 2013) highlights the way that children utilise different communication genres or frames within different spaces within a school, expressing their voice differently when away from teachers whilst still talking about the same topics.

Taken together, this work goes beyond the existing widely made assertion that adults have the power to prevent children's voices being heard (e.g. Kellett, 2009b). Instead, they imply 'children's voices' are *fundamentally embedded* within the relationships, institutions and practices through which they are produced, in a way which means the meaning of the expression cannot be separated from context (Cruddas, 2007). Ultimately, Mannion (2007), sharing Wyness's (2013b) concerns that adults are left out of the analysis of voice, argues that discourse around children's voices requires reframing as a study of spaces of adult-child relations and intergenerational dialogue.

2.3.3 Voice as dynamic, intersubjective and linked to identity

Whilst dominant discourse and metaphor of voice has emphasised rational, coherent expressions, the idea that 'children's voice' can be regarded as a stable, consistent and linked to a fixed identity, awaiting the listener to extract, is contestable (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009, cited by Spyrou 2018). Various studies and theorists, reviewed below, have considered the relationship between 'children's voice' and identity and alluded to a more dynamic notion of voice that is interdependent with others.

First, MacBeath (2006, p. 206) has compared student diaries to classroom discussion to reveal ways in which 'internalized voices of friends, parents and teachers shaped perceptions of who the students "were" and what they believed'. She argues that voice can be understood as the internalising (Vygotsky, 1978) of dialogue which reshapes a sense of identity and extends the possibilities of the self. Similarly, Marks (1995) has highlighted the interplay between affect, sense of self and 'children's voice' within interview narratives of their educational exclusions. In this way, 'children's voice' might be understood alongside child development and the child's evolving sense of

self, taking into account belonging, affect, autonomy and cognition (Scholfield, 2005). The temporal nature of childhood may also play a role in destabilising identity for both adults and children (Cross, 2011).

Next, Arnot and Reay (2007), Lyle (2008), Naraian (2011) and others in the field of education have long explored the links between children's learning and pedagogical voice, and participation has also been conceptualised as dialogue-based social learning (Percy-Smith, 2006). Van Nijnatten (2010) and Lefevre (2012) have further argued that Vygotsky's (1978) theory, that children grow into and internalise the voices around them, means there is a need to reconceptualise children's agency to take into account the social nature of learning. More generally, the impact of engaging in participation on the learning and development of children involved is widely demonstrated (Shamrova and Cummings, 2017) and similar changes may occur for the adults involved (Kennedy, 2018). Although these writers take varying stances on learning and child development, the end point is the same: dialogue between children and adults, far from being static, may be inherently oriented to change in both understanding and identity (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010).

Furthermore, a variety of empirical work has challenged the position that children's expressions contain only an individual 'voice'. Tertoolen *et al.* (2017) studied the expressions used by young children (aged 5–8), their parents and teachers in educational settings. They identified that expressions and meanings used by children correspond substantially to those used by teachers, parents and even those who are not directly known to the child. Davies' (2009) study of interaction between young people in online chat forums identifies how phrases and meanings are quoted and co-opted between participants as a method of cultivating identity and relationships between peers. Gillan and Cameron (2017) illustrate the way an individual child

reappropriates the speech of her teachers when talking to her parents at the dinner table to express ideas of citizenship. Based on her studies of young children's talk, Maybin (2013, p. 397) argues that 'children's voices are institutionally configured, dialogically emergent, and appropriated from adults, peers and texts of various kinds'. All four studies utilise Bakhtin's ideas of polyvocality/heteroglossia[2] (Todorov, 1984 P.56) to argue that children's expressions are composed of multiple voices and inherited social language. In this way, children's expressions can be understood as *polyvocal* — containing within them multiple other voices.

Finally, Bertrand (2014) has shown concepts of internalisation and polyphony lead to a more intersubjective understanding of the way meaning arises *through* voice rather than being transmitted. Using Vygotskian 'third space' she see's dialogue as 'an interactionally constituted site in which reciprocal dialogue occurs and hybrid ideas may arise' (p. 815.) Bertrand identifies co-constructed meanings evolving between educational policy makers and young people, resulting from them building on each other's communication. In this way, although specific utterances are still attributable to the speaker, the means and understandings are intersubjectively constructed, arising relationally as a product of the interaction. In her intersubjective approach to voice, communication and creation of meaning become interrelated phenomena.

2.3.4 Moving away from the pure voice within

Children's possession of a *pure voice within* (Section 1.1), along with attempts to 'go deeper' (Horgan, 2017) to access it unmediated by adult influence are increasingly subject to much criticism (I'Anson, 2013). Similarly to debates on agency, it is argued

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[2]According to Todorov, Baktins *'Raznorečie'* is translated varyingly to polyphonic, multi-vocal, heteroglossia, heterophony and other terms. Todorov suggests Heterology, but polyvocal, polyphonic and heteroglossia are more common in other literature. The greek roots of these suggest diversity of speech/language/tongues (heteroglossia) and multiple individual voices in one (polyphony/polyvocal).

that this notion of voice overlooks the interdependency of relationships and relies too heavily on the concept of an autonomous individual (Cruddas, 2007; Fielding, 2007; Mannion, 2007; Wyness, 2013b, Lee 2001, Spyrou 2018). Consequently, with reference to Bakhtin (1981, 1986a, 1986b), a more dialogical understanding of voice has been called for (Cruddas, 2007; Spyrou, 2018) as well as a focus on intergenerational dialogue over voice (Cruddas, 2007; Fielding, 2004, 2007; Fitzgerald *et al*. 2010; Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010, 2012; Hill *et al*., 2004; Lodge, 2005, 2008; Mannion, 2007; Taft, 2015; Wyness, 2013b).

Within this, terms like *dialogue* and *dialogical* can be used in three ways. *Dialogue* can refer to communication in a very general sense, but also to imply a more specific privileged form of communication underpinned by ideas about valued forms of communication, their goals and how communication should be conducted (Carbaugh *et al.,* 2006, cited in Sleap and Sener, 2013). *Dialogical* can further refer to an epistemic perspective focused on relational and intersubjective understanding of communication – referred to outside of Childhood Studies as dialogism it draws strongly on Bakhtin (see Linell, 1998). These distinctions are not sharply made within Childhood Studies; much writing using these terms can read as calls for both dialogical perspectives and specific types of communication (e.g. Cruddas, 2007; Fielding, 2004, 2007; Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010; Hill *et al*., 2004; Lodge, 2005; Mannion, 2007; Taft 2015; Wyness, 2013b).

With unique clarity, Spyrou (2018) consistently talks about a need for a dialogical approach, and a concept of 'children's voice' that decenters the child to focus on relationality. Spyrou (2018) brings together the key arguments made by James (2007), Komulainen (2007), I' Anson (2013), Lee (2001), Mazzei (2009) and Mazzei and Jackson (2009) and makes a substantial case against this concept of a stable,

authentic pure voice within. Drawing on Bakhtin, (1981, 1986b) Spyrou (2018, p.105) goes on to argue children use 'inherited social languages and speech genres which constrain to some extent what they can say'. He argues the need for researchers to be able to locate 'children's voices' within discursive contexts and relate childrens voice to dialogue elsewhere. For Spyrou (2011, 2016b, 2018), children's voices are multilayered, expressing different things at different times and the reporting of them produces an interesting representation of the researcher. For him, no one expression of voice is more authentic or a truer formation of voice than the other. He argues that conceptualising 'children's voice' relationally requires a focus on 'the dialogical engagement which produces her voice, not as an authentic outcome of some unadulterated inner truth but as an outcome of multiple relations and situated encounters' (Spyrou, 2018, p. 108). However, whilst Spyrou draws on Bakhtin, he does not elaborate extensively on his work or consider later modern day theories of dialogism, instead turning to post-structural theory for further developments (see Section 2.2.5).

With less epistemic clarity than Spyrou, a number of works in childhood studies have also addressed what styles of intergenerational dialogue we should adopt to support participation (e.g. Bae, 2012; Baraldi, 2008; Barrow, 2010; Birch *et al*., 2017; Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010; Lodge, 2005, 2008; Murris, 2013; Olli *et al*., 2012; Taft 2015). However, without a consensus of rationales and purposes on participation (Head 2011; Thomas, 2007), the basis on which they might privilege one form of communication over another will be variable. Here it is possible to learn from Sleap and Seaner (2013, p.16) who, despite a review of dialogue practices outside of childhood studies, struggle to define dialogue, and come to only the broad conclusion that it is associated by different scholars *to varying degrees and dependent on their intentions* with the development of shared understanding and/or fostering mutuality in

relationships. This implies the conduct of intergenerational dialogue might need a different approach if the purpose is to produce knowledge rather than, for example, to foster agency. There are, however, still some writers on intergenerational dialogue, whose work gives insight into how meaning construction in 'children's voice' can be understood intersubjectively.

2.3.5 Meaning construction in intergenerational dialogue

Barrow (2010, 2015), discusses her concept of 'rights supporting dialogue', which generates new meanings and understandings between children and adults without the outcome being presupposed. Her goal is not to reach 'convergence of the self and others in intersubjective agreement' (p. 77). Instead, her aim is to hold a space for dialogue where the other positions are recognised and held in tension, in ways that lead to creativity and transformation. Barrow (2010) distinguishes rights supporting dialogue from dialectic and teleological dialogue with children, such as pedagogy and citizenship education, where the end goal is enabling children to learn skills for future democratic participation, and the meaning to be generated is presupposed by the facilitator. However, Barrow recognises the two positions can sometimes be difficult to differentiate (see also Kim, 2017). It is also worth noting the lack of a presupposed end point is often a condition considered necessary for dialogue by some, but not all, of the authors reviewed by Sleap and Sener (2013). This highlights one of the challenges with the conceptualising dialogue as a privileged form of communication - specifying the exact boundaries between dialogue and non dialogue.

Birch *et al.* (2017) allude to the further challenges of holding difference in tension within their work involving children in architectural design, where, by necessity, an end product must be achieved and agreement reached. They highlight that in

dialogue-based[3] approaches, meaning arises *from* difference, in contrast to dialectical approaches, which see differences as necessary to overcome. In their work, they argue the need to reach resolution can overshadow the transformative potential of dialogue. By contrast, Lodge (2005, p. 134) believes that dialogue inherently allows participants the opportunity to construct shared meaning and 'arrive at a point one would not get to alone' she shares Fattorre and Turnbull's (2005) view, derived from Habermas' (1984), that communication inherently moves towards consensus. This contrasts the Bhaktinian derived view of Cruddas (2007, p. 486) that we can move only 'imperfectly towards shared social meaning' but never fully reach it.

Overall, three positions can be seen. At one end, Lodge as well as Fattore and Turnbull maintain that all communication inherently proceeds to agreement or consensus. At the other extreme, Cruddas believes differences in understanding are perpetual and meanings can only be imperfectly shared. In between, Birch *et al.* and Barrow believe either can occur depending on the nature of communication. For them, that holding of differences of understanding in tension is what distinguishes dialogue from other forms of communication, but these differences can still be resolved in other forms of communication. In all approaches, meaning is not static; dialogue is productive of meaning rather than reproductive (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010). In all approaches intergenerational dialogue is a way of children and adults *producing knowledge together*, rather than transmitting knowledge from child to adult. There is a need for further research to identify which of these positions might be most relevant in understanding intergenerational dialogue in practice.

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[3] Birch *et al.* use the term 'dialogical', which I have amended here for consistency with my previous usage of the term.

2.3.6 Mutuality and recognition

A smaller number of writers have focused on recognition and mutuality through intergenerational dialogue. Using recognition theory, Fitzgerald *et al.* (2010) and Graham and Fitzgerald (2010, 2011) argue that children's identity can be viewed as constructed dialogically; through a process of mutual recognition with others. They (2010, p. 352) maintain that the way adults respond to the shared mutual meanings arising within dialogue with children will influence children's sense of selves. For Graham and Fitzgerald recognition of children is the *purpose* of participation and recognition is also mutual -i .e. adults are also recognised.

Graham and Fitzgerald (2010) cite Honneth (1995) and Taylor's (1995) theories of recognition. Lawrence (2019, p. 2) has alternatively used Buber's (1970) I–You concept of mutuality to argue that young infants can choose to 'enter [into] and extend dialogue, at times beyond human interaction, to encompass materials and the environment itself'. This stems from Buber's (1970) stance that only some forms of speaking establish mutual recognition. In this sense, a concept of dialogue based on Buber (1970) is dialogue defined in part by the presence of recognition, and communication without recognition is not dialogue. Neither Graham and Fitzgerald nor Lawrence fully justify their choice of recognition theories. Thomas (2012) argues for Honneth (1995), but does so on the basis that it can function at individual, social and historical level, rather than on its strengths for understanding intersubjectivity within communication. There is a need for fuller consideration of which interpersonal theories of recognition are most relevant to interpersonal communication and child participation.

2.3.7 Section summary

The review suggests many current criticisms of 'children's voice' can be understood as criticism from a relational perspective, about a discourse of voice based on modernist ideas of personhood. The limited body of literature draws attention for the need for further research on the relationship between child and other actors in context of voice, emphasising the intersubjective aspects of that relationship. Intersubjectivity has a wide variety of transdisciplinary theories and understandings with no singular definition (Crossley, 2012; Gillespy and Cornish, 2010). In the context of this review, and thesis, it might be understood as the sharing of perspectives leading to construction of shared meaning or mutual understanding, both about the object of discussion, and the identity of interlocutors. The latter part of which might be referred to as mutual recognition. Within Childhood Studies, there are varying ideas on how shared meaning is constructed. Some writers argue that dialogue proceeds to consensus, some that understanding is perpetually different, and some that either position can be realised based on the nature of the communication. Similar the handful of studies on mutual recognition contain differing theoretical perspectives.

Alongside this, the review points to the potential of a dialogism as a way of exploring intersubjectivity within communication.These concepts are often discussed using the terminology of intergenerational dialogue. However, Childhood Studies is ambiguous about what is meant by the term 'dialogue' and work is limited overall. Thus, 'intergenerational dialogue' is sometimes used to refer to privileged, unspecified forms of communication, but 'dialogue' and dialogical are also used to allude to a shift in epistemic perspective to attend to intersubjective aspects of communication.

2.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have identified that the academic and practice metaphor and discourse of 'children's voice' lacks a clear theoretical construct but relates to communication with children in the context of child participation and connects to accessing knowledge from a children's standpoint. This discourse has often implied a transmission based model of communication with children, which although not articulated, is identifiable present in many dominant models of participation. Some Childhood Studies authors are now recognising that its theoretical roots that stress children's agency, in concert with the UNCRC, have overemphasised the child as a similarly independent autonomous actor. This has further contributed to uncritical presumption of an autonomously constructed voice within the child, that occurs independent of the other. Relational approaches, replacing metaphors of children's voice with notions of dialogue have been proposed. The recent shifts towards relational perspectives in Childhood Studies make a compelling case to explore 'children's voice' from a fully relational perspective. Doing so means wholly setting aside the transmission based notion of 'children's voice', which conceives voice as sending messages from modernist individual to modernist individual. To date, however, the application and relevance of relational approaches has not been adequately assessed in practice.

This review and recent critique of 'children's voice' suggests there is a need for a relational model of 'children's voice' which can;

- Reject the assumption that voice is a coherent expression from a fixed inner identity, and the flawed notion of *the pure voice within* the child;

- Consider the possibility for shared meaning or mutual understanding that arising intersubjectively between the child and the other, and the active role the other may play in constructing meaning when engaging with children's expressions;

- Recognise the potential of context to contribute to the meaning of communication, as well as the potentially polyphonic nature of language and phenomena such as heteroglossia/polyvocality;

- Develop a concept of children's standpoints from a relational perspective, and the role of mutual recognition within communication.

Criticism of 'children's voice' gives weight to the argument for an epistemic shift from monologism to dialogism (see Linell, 1998, p.17 for definition). A deeper understanding of this is needed to avoid an uncritical replacement of 'children's voice' with the term 'intergenerational dialogue' as here Childhood Studies has suffered from a lack of clarity between *dialogue as a specific form of privileged communication*, and *dialogism.* Dialogism, treated as an epistemic perspective (see Linell, 2003; Rommetveit 1998) may also offer potential for further theoretical grounding to notions of communication in children's participation. One step in this epistemic shift suggested by Spyrou (2018) and Cruddas (2007) may be Bakhtan's dialogical theories of communication. The next chapter explains how these questions were addressed in the fieldwork and subsequent analysis. I return to the debate about the potential value of dialogical theorists in Chapter Six, before outlining in Chapter Seven, how this can address the gaps in academic writing and participation discourse that have been outlined in this review.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the literature review I outlined the need to develop a relational model of voice that considers intersubjective meaning making, highlighting dialogism as a starting point. This chapter outlines the study methodology beginning with research questions and objectives (Section 3.2.1). These speak to the gap in the literature by exploring the role of dialogue and standpoints in meaning construction *between* adults and children; specifically focusing on both sets of actors, rather than assuming the child(ren) construct(s) meaning independently. I then outline the ontological perspective and reflexive approach which further emphasises interaction between individuals, and intersubjective meaning construction. The chapter pays particular attention to the reflexive techniques which are used to situate myself in the discursive context, and address my own Selfs contribution to meaning construction.

Section 3.3 gives justification for the choice of methods, a case study of a participatory group. This group was established by myself within a host organisation; reasons for creating rather than finding a case are discussed. A description of the case, a group project lasting several months which involved children and adults, is given. The group's activities and facilitation are outlined and linked to activities in existing participation toolkits and handbooks so as to be based on common practices in the field. Section 3.4 outlines the data sources, collection processes and analysis, where the intention was to understand the group's dialogue in substantial depth and with multiple methods. Section 3.5 outlines the ethical approach to the study. Two limitations of the study, limits of generalisability (Section 3.3.1) and the inability to interpret intention (Section 3.4.4) are discussed, these are further explored in Chapter Five and Section 6.3.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION, OBJECTIVES AND PERSPECTIVE

3.2.1 Research questions

The aim of this research is to fill the gap in literature identified in Chapter Two by developing and investigating a relational model of 'children's voice'. Speaking to needs in my own field of professional practice (see Section 1.2), my intention was to situate the fieldwork within a youth participation project style setting, such as the forms defined within Crowley and Moxon (2017), and Gretchel *et al*. (2014) built around small groups and targeted at teenagers such as youth forums, school councils, steering groups, etc. (henceforth 'participatory groups').

The following research questions were used:

- How are knowledge claims constructed and voiced through dialogue in a participatory group setting made up of children/young people and adult practitioners/professionals?

- How do individuals' standpoints influence the dialogue and impact upon the voicing of knowledge claims?

Standpoint refers to membership of a social category, as articulated within childhood studies by Alanen and Mayall (2001), and Mayall (2000, 2002) and evolved by Leonard (2015). (Section 2.2.6), although as findings emerged I found it necessary to refer to standpoint-identities in order to encompass a wider variety of social categories (see Section 5.1). 'Knowledge claims' refers to the position that 'children's voice' is identified in participatory projects as a means of communicating or producing knowledge (Section 2.2.6), but that participatory knowledge claims may be different to other knowledge claims (Mclauglin, 2009, p.66). The answers to the research questions are

interwoven, so are reported across both findings chapters, although Chapter Five emphasises the second question more.

3.2.2 Ontological perspective

This study was conducted using a relational ontology. Speaking to the gap in literature on voice, relational ontologies enable focus on the interdependence of children and their relationships with others, in place of emphasising the autonomous individual child of modernism (Esser, 2016). There are a number of epistemic and ontological approaches within relational sociology with no single stance being more widely accepted (Powell and Dépelteau, 2013), as a result a variety of relational perspectives have been used in Childhood Studies (Esser, 2016; Larkins, 2019; Rimmer, 2017).

The perspective used in my study is comparable to Rimmer's (2017) relational-interactional approach, which involves recognising all actors (including the researcher) as existing in a world of co-constitution, through the interactions and relationships they hold with other actors. Rimmer (2017) distinguishes this from categorical-relational approaches which centre on relationships between *categories* of adult and child, and partially allies it to 'deep' relational ontology (Dépelteau, 2013) which involves a commitment to seeing individuals as fundamentally interdependent. In deep relationality (Dépelteau, 2013, p.180), '[Individuals'] actions cannot be reduced to their own capacities because, again, A cannot do what it does without B, and vice versa. Nothing is isolated, everything is social or interdependent; and nothing comes simply from any internal capacity.'

Deep relationality, presupposes the subject does not exist outside of the relationships it has with others; instead, actors are formed within and are inseparable from interactions and relations (Crossley, 2010); individuals interact with other individuals and non-human entities rather than directly with social structures (Dépelteau, 2013). This focus on interactions between individuals makes deep

relationaility suitable to explore the intersubjective creation of meaning and mutual recognition between individuals, identified as necessary to address during the literature review. Although deep relationality does not normally focus on the concept of agency (Dépelteau, 2013), given the centrality of agency to children's participation, it was not appropriate to dismiss it entirely. Instead, I tried to remain open to what relational agency might mean and how it was enacted by both children and adults within their relationships and communication, as well as being open to recognising that people's choices are not only constrained by external influences but also may shape these influences (Stoecklin and Fattore, 2018).

The research topic meant foregrounding the linguistic interaction between individuals. I made the case for a dialogical model of 'children's voice' in Chapter Two. However, dialogism was not an epistemic perspective taken *strictly* at the outset of this study, rather one considered at the outset and adopted as it progressed and showed relevance to findings. As a relational perspective with emphasis on language and intersubjective meaning (Markova, 2003,. p.64), dialogism is compatible with relational ontologies, but articulates a more specific link between knowledge and communication.

3.2.3 Reflexivity and use of Self

Reflexivity involves acknowledging the way the researcher (co-)constructs findings (Finlay and Gough, 2008). From a relational perspective, rather than using reflexivity to minimise bias or solely make researcher standpoints visible, reflexivity is a way of identifying how researchers' inquiry is a form of intervention that constructs reality (Hosking and Pluut, 2010). The researcher can never use reflexivity to 'transcend' reality and separate themselves from it sufficiently to make judgements about truth that sit outside of the relational context between researcher and research inquiry (Thayer-Bacon, 2010). Instead, identities of researcher, research objects and related realities are in ongoing co-construction and reflexivity draws attention to this (Hosking

and Pluut, 2010). Knowledge is something people co-construct as they have experiences with each other and the world around them (Thayer-Bacon, 2010); the self and the other is also co-constructed during the research process (Hosking and Pluut, 2010). This supports a dialogical view of language where, as I will argue in Section 4.3.2, context is a fundamental part of communication, the act of interpreting dialogue takes place within the context, and the researcher cannot conduct interpretation free from context..

Thus following Thayer-Bacon (2010) and similar to Gerlach (2018), reflexivity within this study is used to describe my relations and interactions with the research encounter in order to situate my Self in a relationship of knowing *within* the dialogue and research reality, rather than and to 'transcend' it. I cannot claim to have embraced or even been fully aware of Hosking and Pluut's (2010) and Thayer-Bacon's (2010) relational reflexivity at the outset of this study. Instead, I would argue, as they might, the process of engaging in this study transformed my reflexive practice towards it. Hosking and Pluut (2010) argue other approaches to reflexivity ask the researcher to avoid or minimise their own 'intervention' and effect on the construction of participants' realities and this was my intention prior to fieldwork. I viewed my role facilitating the participatory group I was studying (see Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.5) as an unfortunate but necessary compromise in the research, where a less active observer role would have been preferable. I debated the best way to juggle my dual role as facilitator and researcher, and believed I should and could minimise the impact I had on participants' knowledge claims. This reflects a facilitation belief typical to the participation practitioner's attempts to access children's voices in 'unmediated' ways (see Thomas, 2007). Before the fieldwork commenced I resolved to act as *observer as participant* (Kawulich, 2005) to minimise my effect on the group, by refrain from offering my own

knowledge claims to the group in order to minimise the impact I had on their own claims.

However, immediately as the fieldwork began I struggled with the impossible task of not 'intervening' (Hosking and Pluut's, 2010) in the way the group constructed knowledge. I found myself needing to choose certain aspects of participants' utterances and respond to them in a way that made it impossible to have minimal or no effect on their dialogue. Participants were able to invite, compel or require me to speak by asking questions or directing their body language toward me, at which points even my silence became a response. Rather than being able to minimise the effect I had on participants' dialogue, it was clear the question was *what* effect did my presence have. Responding to one participant or one topic always came at the expense of responding to another topic, or another participant, and there was no identifiable neutral ground. Thus, I began quickly to conceive and embrace the notion that the phenomena I was studying (dialogue) were co-created between myself and the research participants, in the manner Hosking and Pluut's (2010) and Thayer-Bacon (2010) describe, and to accept that my intervention with the research phenomena was inevitable.

I used three methodological tools for reflexivity, outlined below. The impact of my own standpoint and identity on the research is explored through Chapters Four and Five, and especially Section 4.2

i) The "Why interview"

Following Maso (2003), a research colleague conducted a semi-structured interview with me, on the topic of my motivations for the research. This method is intended to identify inner desires and beliefs behind the research question that shape my conclusions and research process (see Section 1.2)

ii) Scenic composition

Scenic composition is a psycho-social research method which elicits 'the synthesis and articulation of researchers' own complex experiences of events witnessed during data collection. Positioned between art and social science, it makes use of literary conventions to synthesise 'experience near' accounts of data for interpretation.' (Froggett *et al*., 2014, para. 1). It draws on Lorenzer's (1986) 'scenic' understanding. The research encounter is considered in its entirety as a whole 'scene' before exploring any specific incidents or figures (Froggett and Hollway, 2010). This emphasises the importance of the relational as opposed to the impact of the individual and personal. Additionally, the experience of the scene occurs on both conscious and unconscious levels and arises from the interaction between the 'scene' and the researcher's 'biographically and dispositionally specific patterns of interaction', linked to the researcher's cultural patterns and cultural life (Froggett and Hollway, 2010, p.281).

The intention of scenic composition is to help apprehend the qualities of the research encounter as a whole and give access to the sensory, embodied, emotional registers of experience (Froggett *et al*., 2014), including the emotional meanings within language (Froggett and Hollway, 2010). It attends to the intersubjective and relational context between the researcher and other participants and helps avoid detaching 'voice' from its emotional and affective elements (Hollway, 2009). This, therefore, makes the scenic composition useful for exploring the emotional and affective aspects of children's voice, called for by Jupp (2008) Kraftl (2013) and Kraftl and Horton (2007), one compatible with a relational, intersubjective, ontological perspective. Furthermore, the value of the researcher subjectivity is emphasised through the 'experience near' approach, avoiding 'reproducing assumptions of rational, unitary, discursive subjectivity when considering identities' (Hollway, 2009, p.461), making it well suited to an exploration of 'children's voice' which reject a stable inner fixed identify as called for by Mazzei and Jackson (2008), Spyrou (2018) and others. As a tool, the scenic

composition enabled me to identify emotional and affective links between myself and other participants as a group, how emotions between us influenced our interactions and experience of each other. This in turn provided a tool for reflection on how my emotional way of being and connections with others was part of co-constructing the dialogue and the research findings, during my interactions and my interpretations.

Practically, within this study scenic composition involved the creation of a short literary/creative text one to three weeks after the researcher encounter, immediately after relistening to the audio recording. This follows Froggett *et al*.'s (2014, para. 11) method of producing text when '[the researchers'] minds felt uncluttered and when they were free to "muse" on the materials'. The content of the texts were then analysed and discussed with my research supervisor, one of the authors of Froggett *et al*. (2014), to help identify latent themes in the composition and aid my interpretation and practice of scenic composition. Overall, the scenic compositions were one of the most important reflexive tools within the methodology. They were crucial in enabling me to be alive to the whole experience of dialogue. Furthermore, they guided both the ways in which the grounded theory analysis was constructed and they also formed a key part of the Foucauldian discourse analysis (see 3.4.2).

iii) Journaling and freewriting

Keeping a reflexive journal is a way to clarify personal belief systems, values, objectives and goals (Ortlipp, 2008). In this study, reflexive recordings were created using freewriting techniques, immediately after every research encounter as well as on an ad-hoc basis. The aim was to capture immediate impressions, thoughts and experiences of the encounter, and reflect on underlying power dynamics and relationships between myself and research participants. The use of free association is a well developed practice in psycho-social research, originally derived from Freudian ideas. The narratives produced can have an emotional logic as much as a cognitive

one, and can help enable the researcher to identify their associative and emotional responses to research participants, bringing what is known or experienced beneath the level of the conscious into the conscious realm (Thomas, 2018). The contents of my reflexive journal were returned to regularly and respectively interpreted during both fieldwork and data analysis and used to inform the interpretation of the data overall (see Section 3.4). Throughout the fieldwork they informed upcoming research encounters as experiential learning (Kolb *et al*. 2001), to adjust my way of being and facilitation (Section 3.3.5)

3.3 DEVELOPING A CASE STUDY

3.3.1 Rationale for case study

The methodology was designed to allow *in-depth* study of communication between adults and children from multiple angles and data sources, that situated participants in context of their relationships and considered intersubjective construction of meaning. This was necessary in order to explore the complex linguistic and intersubjective phenomena identified through the literature review, such as heteroglossia, polyphony, intersectionality of standpoints, and recognition.

The focus on text and language oriented the research to a qualitative method (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). To achieve depth, an instrumental case study methodology (Stake, 2003) was selected, where insight from a single case is used to inform understanding of other cases and applied to developments elsewhere (Gerring, 2004, Simons, 2009). Case studies can generate an in-depth, multifaceted explanation of a complex issue (Crowe *et al*., 2011) which can produce a detailed understanding of a single case from multiple angles (Simons, 2009). In addition, working with a single case allows attention to be paid to complexities of context, agency and temporality (Byrne and Callaghan, 2014), all of which were highlighted in the literature review as relevant features of 'children's voice' to explore. Case study methodology, and therefore this study, is susceptible to criticism for over presuming generalisability (Tight, 2009) this limitation is discussed in Section 6.3.3.

I treated a 'participatory group' as a single case rather than considering individuals within the group as separate cases, in order to avoid separating the individual from their relationships. Selection criteria for a participatory group was created, shown in Table 3.3.1.a.

Table 3.3.1.a: Case study selection criteria

Selection criteria	Rationale
1. Might be a typical setting for participatory projects with children and young people (such as a youth forum).	To increase transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to other participation projects.
2. Used facilitation methods and practices that were common within children and young people's participation projects.	To increase transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to other participation projects.
3. Was practical for me to travel to, on a regular basis.	To maximise the amount of fieldwork that can be undertaken, allowing for in-depth sustained immersion in the setting.
4. Was based around a small group of children and young people and adults who meet consistently on a regular basis.	To enable in-depth study of the same set of participations and relationships, in particular to see the way their interaction, dialogue aims evolved over time.
5. Would enable consistent and sustained study (including audio recording) of a group of participants' dialogue over an extended period.	

I undertook discussions with two non-governmental organisations who facilitated participatory groups. Whilst they were able to offer access to several, I was concerned about the risks within criteria five. Loss of funding for the organisation or staff change could have resulted in my losing access and ending fieldwork. Furthermore, most groups had a slight flexibility in who attended their meetings; a new participant could join at any point. This would create challenges for maintaining continuous data collection, if the new project member did not wish to participate in the research. To mitigate these risks, I decided to establish a small, time-limited youth participation project to form the case where recruitment to the project could be linked to

recruitment to the study. This allowed research consent and participation in the project to be linked removing risk of losing access to the case.

3.3.2 Case description

I established a participatory group within a host organisation[1] I was connected to, based in Northern England, focused on children and young people's participation. Amongst the organisation's projects was a series of public events that had been running for several years, which took the format of a speaker presenting to an audience of fifteen to thirty people. The organisation was open to these being co-produced with children and young people, but had not had the opportunity to explore this previously. Through the organisation, I set up a participatory group composed of young people and practitioners/researchers to run and plan the public event series (hereafter 'the group'). Through eight monthly meetings the group took responsibility for deciding the theme of that year's events ('What does it mean to listen?'), recruiting presenters, hosting events and making conclusions of the series. Four of the meetings ran for one and half hours, immediately after the public events, during which the group reflected on the speaker. The other four focused on planning and concluding the projects, lasting three hours each (see Table 3.3.3.a).

It was necessary for me to take on the role of recruiting participants (see Section 3.5), as well as facilitating the meetings (see Section 3.3.5). Recruitment occurred through the organisation's networks, which included a variety of services for children and young people in the local area, as well as practitioners or researchers interested in participation. It was intended that the group would have between eight and fourteen people, with at least half being young people. I limited the lower age to take part to 11 years old as my facilitation expertise below this was limited. Although it was not a requirement, all but three participants (one adult, two young people) joined the

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[1] Some details are omitted to preserve participant anonymity. The organisation and participants were both aware the project doubled as research (Section 3.5).

project in groups. Typically a children's service worker attended with two or three young people with whom they were working in some other capacity.

3.3.3 Case boundaries

The case was bounded (Stake, 2003) to the planned activities of the group (see Table 3.3.3.a), including any informal activities or spaces linked to these activities such as conversations during breaks and the interactions and dialogue of group members with each other.

The case study did not include interaction and dialogue between group members and individuals outside of the group, such as participants or speakers at the public talks themselves Obtaining informed consent from audience members and presenters would have been disruptive to running the public events.

Table 3.3.3.a: Planned group meetings and activities

Activity	Description	Setting
Two group planning meetings	The group planned the theme of the public events and identified potential public events presenters.	Group work room in host organisation
Four public events	Members of the group introduced the presenter for the events and were audience members alongside members of the public.	
Four regular group meetings	Taking place immediately after the public events, but with only the group and myself present, a meeting was held for the group to discuss what they thought of the presenter's ideas about the theme of listening.	
One group conclusion meeting	During this the group analysed the outcomes of the series of events and drew their conclusions on the theme of listening.	Group work room of nearby youth centre
One celebration meal	To mark the end of the project and say thank you to participants in a local restaurant.	A Nandos restaurant

3.3.4 Participant backgrounds

The group was made up of adult practitioners or researchers, and young people aged 14–18 years old at the start of the project. A number of participants did not engage beyond the initial planning meetings; the reasons for the drop-out were not explored, for at least two young people it was related to change in their care settings. My experience of youth participation groups is that some level of drop-out usually occurs, and so I aimed to over-recruit. Data analysis was focused on the core group which remained. Participant numbers, by generational categories and self identified genders are shown in Table 3.3.4.a. References to participants throughout this work should be understood to include me.

Table 3.3.4.a: Number of research participants by gender and generational category

	Adult male*	Adult female	Young male	Young female*	Total
Engaged in planning group only	1	1	1	4	7
Engaged throughout project (core group)	3*	2	2*	3*	10
Total	**4**	**3**	**3**	**7**	**17**

One participant in each of these categories identified as cis-gender. Others did not offer cis/trans/non-binary articulations.

These short statistics do not capture the fullness and complexity of participants' identities. Pen portraits (Campbell *et al*., 2014) of core group participant's based on the semi-structured interviews are in Section 5.2.2). These include details of disability, sexuality, ethnicity and class when disclosed.

Although all the young participants were under 18, they did not refer to themselves as children. Instead, they used varying combinations of young people, teenagers, youth and, in some instances, adults. I will refer to them as both young people and children throughout the findings, using children to emphasise theoretical

perspectives when needed. The term children/childhood in this study refers to a generational related sociological concept rather than a specific age. The term 'young people', refers simply to older children of comparable ages to the participants, rather than any sociological construct of 'youth'.

3.3.5 Facilitation of group activities

To increase comparability to other settings the group activities were facilitated using established techniques for group participation projects. Groupwork styles are under-studied within academic writing on children's participation. However, a variety of facilitation handbooks on children's participation exist (e.g. Badham, 2004; Keenaghan and Redmond, 2016; Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014; Larkins and Bilson, 2016; Tunyogi and Schuurman, undated; Willow, 2005). Many contain similar or identical activities; which through my experience of over a decade within participation work across Europe, I have seen replicated extensively. Although not identified by handbook authors as such, most follow principles of self-directed groupwork (Preston-Shoot,1987; Mullender *et al*., 2013). They seek to enable child participants to collectively discuss issues and reach a group decision designed to inform collective action. The adult supporter is positioned as facilitator, not as teacher or advisor, curating the process and environment but not instructing on the path; over time participants assume leadership roles. Links have been made between self-directed groupwork and service user participation (Mullender *et al*., 2013) as well as youth participatory action research (Fleming and Ward 2013). Accordingly, I used three facilitation strategies;

i) Self-directed groupwork values and principles

I followed principles and values set out by Mullender *et al*. (2013, p.49) on self-directed groupwork as well as their overall approach. In this, the facilitator begins by directing the group, establishing ground rules to support equitable interaction and then stepping

back as quickly as possible from facilitation to enable the group to set their own agenda and goals.

ii) Activities from 'The Magic 6'

Activities for child participation written by Larkins and Bilson (2016) were used. In keeping with Mullender *et al*. (2013), this was primarily in the first two planning meetings. Activities were:

- **Icebreakers and energisers** – To create an informal atmosphere.

- **Good contract** – Participants were asked to create and agree to a 'group contract' and ground rules. Through this I introduced some of Mullender *et al*.'s (2013, p.49) principles and values for self-directed groupwork.

- **Strengths based interviewing** – Participants asked each other questions that required them to talk about their skills and strengths. This helped uphold Mullender *et al*.'s value and principle that 'everyone is an expert in their own lives'.

- **Picture who can help** – Participants created sketches of people who listen to them, identify who might be presenters at the public events.

- **Dot voting** – Participants placed sticky dots on each of the sketches to indicate their preferences of who should be invited.

iii) Participants own activity ideas – 'Creating Thomas'

Following Mullender *et al*.'s, principle of stepping back, the regular group meetings and conclusions meeting used an activity suggested by participants — to make a life-size model of 'the ideal listener'. To enable this I purchased a tailors dummy for them to decorate and customise. Artistic contribution quickly waned and the activity evolved into a version of Thayer-Hart's (2007, p.11) Affinity Process. Each participant

individually wrote statements about listening onto a piece of paper. They then read out loud their statements and pinned them onto the mannequin (who became named Thomas), identifying connections and similarities between each other. This was repeated at each meeting and notes built up over time. In the final meeting the group wrote summaries of notes pinned to Thomas. This end text (Table 5.2.3.a), or a derivative of it might typically be reported as the output of "voice" from similar participation projects, supposedly representing conclusions reached by a group.

3.4 DATA SOURCES, COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.4.1 Data sources and collection

Multiple methods of data collection were used, to enable 'triangulation' (Denzin, 2015) - comparison between data sources to see if consistent findings or conclusions are identifiable throughout. This helps increase credibility and confidence in findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2003). The data sources are described below and their collection is shown in Table 3.4.1.a, they were stored and sorted in Atlas.ti v7.5

i) Audio recordings and transcriptions of group dialogue

Audio recordings of group meetings and group discussion were transcribed by myself. Each turn of speaking was credited to the named interlocutor, so that the enunciator of an utterance could be identified. Notes were added to indicate when participants entered or left the room, or split into multiple conversations so that it was as clear as possible to whom each enunciation was immediately addressed. Care was taken to identify and transcribe overlapping talk as much as possible in order to preserve sequence of dialogue. Notes were added where unusual intonation played a role, and as much as possible sighs, laughs, pauses, murmurs grunts and other enunciation were described in parentheses or using onomatopoeia. Extensively grammatically cleaning of text thereby privileging or assuming structured expression was avoided. This verbatim, naturalised transcription (Azevedo *et al*., 2017) was used to pay attention to silence and the 'voice in the crack' (Mazzie and Jackson, 2019), identified as important during literature review.

ii) Audio recording and transcriptions of participant interviews

Core participants were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews, away from group activities. These focused on participants' identities, relationships and experience of the group dialogue (see Appendix 2) and provided situated interaction (Kvale and

Brinkmann, 2015) and locally produced view of the subject (Foley, 2012). This enabled comparison of how production of their identity contrasted and resonated with production during group dialogue. Eight of the ten core participants were interviewed, including my 'why interview' (Section 3.2.3) which was also treated as a participant interview for data analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriber, using denaturalised selective transcription (Azevedo *et al* 2017).

iii) Ad-hoc interviews

Ad-hoc interviews alongside group activities using Gillhams (2010) 'naturally occurring conversation' and 'listening in' techniques took place. These were informed by the interview schedule and research questions but not generally audio recorded. Some were short passing moments and some more extensive, creating a spectrum of purposeful interview-style interaction.

iv) Collection of artifacts

Artifacts (Strohmetz and Rosnow, 2004) collected were flipcharts and Post-it notes written on by participants during group activities. Those generated during the 'Creating Thomas' activity (Table 5.2.3.a) provided an important point of reference representing the outputs of the group on the topic of listening (see Section 3.3.5).

v) Field notes and records of meetings

A facilitation plan and record of implementation was kept for group meetings. Whilst the primary purpose was to aid facilitation, it also acted as field notes (Clifford, 1990).

vi) Scenic compositions and reflexive journal recordings

Scenic composition and reflexive recordings (Section 3.2.3) were treated as data sources, in order to ensure the data generated reflexively was fully brought into the analysis and take account of my affective experience of the research encounter and participants.

Table 3.4.1.a: Data collection methods

Research encounter	Field notes kept?	Artifacts collected?	Scenic compositions made?	Reflexive journal recordings made?	Group dialogue audio recorded and transcribed?
Two group planning meetings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Recorded but not transcribed.
Four public events	Yes	No relevant artifacts generated.	Some scenic compositions of regular group meetings drew on public events.	Yes	Not generally possible due to the presence of members of the public. However, some portions of research participant dialogue were recorded during an activity in one public event.
Four regular group meetings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Group conclusion meeting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Celebration meal	Yes	No relevant artifacts generated.	Yes	Yes	Not possible due to members of the public present and noise levels.
Semi-structured participant interviews and why interview with myself	Made when participant observation felt significant to the interaction.	No relevant artifacts generated.	No	Yes	Yes
Ad-hoc interviews	Made when no audio recording was in place.	No relevant artifacts generated.	Some scenic compositions of group activities drew on the ad-hoc interviews.	Yes	Variable – the audio recording of the group's meeting sometimes captured the ad-hoc interviews.

3.4.2 Data analysis

My initial intention was to use constructed grounded theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2006) to analyse the transcripts of the group's dialogue, and supplement this with general interpretations of other data. CGT assumes the researcher is an active part of the world (Charmaz, 2006, p.10) constructing their interpretations through interactions. This compatibility with my ontological assumptions, it's flexibility, wide use in qualitative research and focus on text made a good case for its use. However, application of CGT produced mixed success (see Section 3.4.3) and did not say enough about the relationship between standpoint-identities and knowledge claims. Various other analysis methods were considered. Conversational analysis (Maxwell-Atkinson *et al.*, 1984) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992) were rejected for too overt focus on the mechanism of conversation and social injustice (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002) respectively. Narrative analysis, particularly Reissman's (2008) dialogical/dramaturgical approach, was too closely connected to Goffman (1959) to explore recognition effectively. Finally, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) (Willig, 2013) was used on a smaller selection of data that represented the group's knowledge claims on listening (see Section 3.4.4). This enabled a greater focus on the relationship between language, meaning, positioning.

Unlike CGT, FDA works with discourse rather than coding text, so also enables further consideration of *context*, identified as part of voice during the literature view. Compared to others (e.g Kendall and Wickham, 1999; Parker, 1992; Willig, 2013) Willig's (2013) variant of FDA provided a well-defined practical approach given the data available. However, adaptations were required to ensure ontological compatibility (see Section 3.4.4). The two forms of analysis cross-referenced to data sources are summarised in Table 3.4.2.a and the detail of their application is subsequently described in sections 3.4.3-3.4.4.

Table **3.4.2.a: Methods of data analysis cross-referenced with data sources**

Data source	Used for CGT?	Used for FDA?	Used for general interpretation?
Audio recording of planning meeting	No	No	Yes
Transcription of four regular group meetings	Fully analysed.	Subsection of text analysed ('The knowledge claim on listening').	
Transcription of participant discussion during one public event	Fully analysed.	Subsection of text analysed ('The knowledge claim on listening').	Yes
Transcription of conclusion meeting	Fully analysed.	Subsection of text analysed ('The knowledge claim on listening').	Yes
Transcriptions of participant interviews	Coded for knowledge claims codes.	Yes	Yes
Transcription of text from artifacts generated whilst 'Creating Thomas'	Coded for knowledge claims codes.	Yes	Yes
Scenic compositions	Used to generate *initial coding* (Charmaz, 2006,p.47) and *guiding interests* (p.17) for CGT	Readings of scenic composition were used to inform the interpretation of FDA	Yes
Reflexive recordings and transcription of why interview	Used to generate *initial coding* and *guiding interests* CGT	Readings used to inform the interpretation of FDA.	Yes
Field notes – records of activities	No	No	Yes

3.4.3 Application of constructed grounded theory

Initial attempt

My first attempt at CGT was unsuccessful. During this attempt, *coding using gerunds* (Charmaz, 2006, p.47) based on *line-by-line* participant expressions was used. C*onstant comparison* (Charmaz, 2006, p.54) to other data highlighted three issues. First, coding *line-by-line* focused on participant's expressions in isolation, losing meaning and detaching them from expressions around them (see Section 4.3); second it focused on individual actions, rather than interactions between individuals. Third, starting from a gerund derived from language use meant codes became functional descriptions (e.g. clarifying, asking, telling) and were devoid of the affective and emotional dimensions of the interaction. This speaks to Tisdall (2012) and Clarks and Richard (2017) concerns about selecting and interpreting quotes from children in isolation as well as Kraftl (2013) and others emphasis on the emotional dimensions of voice.

The second attempt – the 'dialogue flows' method

With the second attempt, a method of identifying 'dialogue flows' emerged. This term is inspired by Bohm's (2004, p. 6) metaphor of dialogue as a stream of meaning flowing between individuals (see Section 4.2). I define a dialogue flow as the minimum period of dialogue that could be analysed without removing an individual's utterances so substantially from the surrounding utterances that interpretation becomes too reductive. Coding an *incident* (Charmaz, 2006, p. 53) of dialogue rather than a single line of speech enabled focused on how each expression within that incident led to the next and related to the ones before it.

The combination of two categories of CGT codes, one on the quality or nature of interaction (the flow type code), and one on the topic of discussion (the knowledge claim code) were used to divide dialogue into dialogue flows. Through this, dialogue flows were demarcated by a consistent topic (or cluster of topics) of conversation, and a consistent quality of interaction between interlocutors. A change in either the topic or the quality of dialogue indicated a new flow occurring in the sequence[2]. However, the boundaries between one dialogue flow and another could be fuzzy or overlapping, as one flow transitioned to the next. I coded this shorter transition as a 'redirection' flow where the main flows intersect. During *focused coding* (Charmaz, 2006, p.57) dialogue flows were coded with both types of code applied to the entire dialogue flow. The coding software did not count speaker turns perfectly; this approximately ranges from four to seventy-four turns per flow, although around three-quarters (*n*=104) were no longer than twenty-seven turns. Including the shorter transitional flows, the estimated mean length was seventeen speaker turns per dialogue flow (*n=219*)[3]. Excluding the transitional flows, the mean length of a dialogue flow was twenty-three interlocutor turns and 139 unique dialogue flows were identified.

Developing the coding structure supporting this analysis was done as follows. Firstly, gerunds from the scenic compositions were identified. This generated *initial codes* (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47) focused on the emotional dimensions of interaction. Next, *Initial coding* conducted *incident to incident* on group meeting transcripts commenced. Here the code scheme was further supplemented with *in vivo codes* (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55) for participants' interaction and topic of discussion. Through *constant comparison the following emerged*,

- Seventeen major knowledge claim codes (Table 4.4.2.a) containing ninety-seven subcodes

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[2] Though the group could split into two subgroups, each having their own dialogue flow.
[3] Estimating from line lengths of quotations.

- Three unsaturated knowledge claim codes.

- Three major flow type codes (multi flow, uni flow, redirection flow) containing seventeen subcodes.

Charmaz (2006, p. 96) suggests collecting data until codes are *saturated*. As the project had finished this was not possible. Instead, all group meetings[4] (Table 3.4.1.a) were analysed and each knowledge claim code was considered for saturation. The three unsaturated knowledge claim codes, containing one quotation each were set aside and not used for analysis. All of the remaining major knowledge claim codes were amply saturated (see Table 4.4.2.a). Saturation of flow type codes was not relevant as these only informed demarcation of dialogue flows. With this coding structure full *focused coding* to divide all group transcripts into dialogue flows was undertaken.

Finally, participants' interviews and text from artifacts were also coded for knowledge claims codes in order for relevant text to be linked to dialogue flows. *Axial coding* (Charmaz, 2006, p.60) was then conducted on all quotations coded with 'the knowledge claim on listening'. This diagrammatically connected forty-seven dialogue flows and further text from artifacts to show the evolution of the knowledge claim on listening (Figure 4.4.3.a).

3.4.4 Application of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Foucualdian methods (if they exist (Kendall and Wickham, 1999)) required modification to follow the studies ontology. Foucault (1982) sees discourse as constructing the positions of subjects (Lessa, 2005). Individuals are 'subjected to' Foucault's discourse (Warming, 2006) and there is a limited role for biography, agency and recognition in the construction of a subject's position. This contradicts the assumptions in this study that standpoints might be constructed in a relationally agentic

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[4] With the exception of the planning meetings discussed above.

way. Foucault's (1974) concept of discourse is also oriented towards macro-social discourse that evolves historically (genealogy) rather than discourse situated within interpersonal small group settings like this study.

To compensate I followed Willig's (2013) process for FDA but modified the perspective to recognise participants were active in the construction of situated discourses that arose within the group's dialogue. This is comparable to Cruddas's (2007, p. 486) Bakhtinian-derived stance that we are 'regulated by discursive practices and technologies of power, but may always find ways to speak together that are internally persuasive and contribute to our shared ideological becoming'. Willig's variant of FDA was easy to adapt to situated discourse; she already de-emphasises the macro-social dimensions of Foucault's discourse. Willig outlines six iterative stages of analysis, my application of this is below, using illustrative abridged examples (full findings are in Chapter Five).

Stage one – Identification of a discursive object: Willig describes identifying all instances of text relating to a particular theme, being guided by shared meaning over lexicology. The dialogue flows forming the knowledge claim on listening during CGT were used (47 dialogue flows) as well as related written artifacts (Table 5.2.3.a). This formied a representation of their knowledge claim on listening (see Section 5.2).

Stage two – Discourses: This involved identification of discursive constructions – the various ways about which the knowledge claim was spoken or constructed. Four discourse constructions, situated within the group's dialogue, were identified (see Table 5.2.3.b).

Stage three – Action orientation: This involved asking what is gained from constructing the knowledge claim in this particular way. To emphasise interaction I found it useful to consider what was gained *and* lost recognising competing interests of participants and the relational context between them. This allowed an analysis of how

each situated discourse helped or limited participant standpoints and identities. For example, the *adult professional as failed communicator* discourse allowed participants to explore their concerns that children are not listened to enough.

Stage four – Standpoint and identities: Willig's suggests identifying the *subject positions* the discourses and action orientation allows. Positions, a Foucauldian term, is not suitable within my ontology, so standpoints and identities are used instead. To recognise my ontological stance — that participants could also act upon the situated discourses rather than just be subjected to them — I sought to take account of changes over time. I considered that participants, having been affected by a discourse, could then act to reshape it with their future utterances, in order that they could be affected differently in future. Willig potentially gives the impression *positions* are static however, my orientation drew attention to ongoing change. For example, the 'adult professional as failed communicator' discourse was modified to enable some participants to adopt the standpoint-identify of expert listeners.rather than failed communicators. To aid interpretation of standpoints and identities, reading of participants' interviews, scenic compositions and reflexive recordings was also introduced to the analysis at this stage.

Stage five – Practices: Willig's fifth stage is focused on how the discursive constructions and subject positions (now standpoint-identities) together limit or enable the practices individuals can engage in. A variety of practices were interpretable within the dialogue and also described by participants as occurring elsewhere. For example, adults who chose to adopt the stance of expert listeners spent time describing the practices they used to listen in expert ways, as well as critiquing other adults for their failure to listen. Similar to the previous stage, participants' potential to reshape discourse over time, and therefore open up or close down practices, was considered

Stage six – Subjectivities: for Willig, identifying subjectivities involves identifying how an individual might feel within their positions. This mainly highlighted the possible

intentions or motivations of participants when they spoke. For example, it could be interpreted that the adult males were motivated by the desire not to be characterised as a failed listener. By Willig's admission this stage of analysis is speculative and it was hard to be confident in its accuracy having conducted it. This was particularly because of the studies' presumption that participants could both act on or be limited by discourse rather than assuming only one occurs. As Ingram (2013) highlights, if children's expressions are not taken as *face value* expressions of intention there are a range of possible approaches to interpretation and a clear physiologically or psychosocially grounded approach is needed. The inability to confidently interpret intention is a limit of this study and is discussed further in Chapter Five

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study was a small discussion group based around non-sensitive issues, facilitated by myself as a professionally qualified youth worker, within a host organisation with established procedures for working with children and young people. The potential for harm to participants was minimal and ethical considerations were typical for research involving children or human subjects generally. I therefore followed accepted ethical principles for research with human subjects, and children. The ERIC ethical charter for research with children (Graham *et al*., 2013), the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2010) Code of Human Research Ethics and UCLan's (2015) Code of Conduct for Research were followed. Ethical approval was given by the UCLan PSYSOC ethic committee.[5] The key processes are outlined below.

3.5.1 Recruitment and consent

Securing informed consent from participants is emphasised across all three sources of guidance. Whilst Alderson and Morrow (2011) argue some children under 16 are competent to give consent for themselves, the BPS (2010) and UCLan (2015) guidelines state participants 16 and over may consent for themselves but all children under 16 require parent/guardian consent. I followed this on the basis it was unlikely parents/guardians would prevent participation. However, to respect the rights of the young participants, I designed a process that required their approval before parents/guardians were approached. Graham *et al*. (2013) emphasise that consent is *ongoing*, so I also built in several stages to reaffirm consent within recruitment and made it clear participants could withdraw from activities at any time.

A publicity flyer[6] advertising the participatory group and study was distributed to schools, youth projects and care homes local to the host organisation, inviting any

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[5] Reference number PSYSOC 357.
[6] Not provided to preserve anonymity.

interested participants to get in touch via phone or email. The same flyer was distributed by email to recruit adult participants via the host organisation's mailing lists. An informal one-to-one discussion by phone or in person was then held with anyone who expressed an interest. During this, consent, participation and participant rights were discussed using the participant information sheet (PIS) (Appendix 3) and consent form (Appendix 4)[7].

Verbal assent was sought from children under 16 during the one-to-one discussions. Following this, parents/guardians of those who assented were sent a written PIS and parents/guardian consent form and were offered a follow up discussion if they wished. After or during one-to-one discussions, all participants were given consent forms that they were asked to sign at a later date and return before participating. Participants were not able to participate in the research unless they had completed the appropriate consent form. Under 16s were not able to participate unless their parents had also completed the appropriate consent form.

Consent/assent was reaffirmed verbally on a regular basis at group activities and participants were reminded of their rights regularly. As outlined on the PIS and during the informal discussions, participants were able to withdraw at any time, but removing their data retrospectively was not possible as it could not be extracted individually from group dialogue.

3.5.2 Harm and benefit

All three guidelines emphasise that research should not harm participants but if possible be of benefit to them. Research with children particularly requires ensuring their safeguarding (Graham *et al*., 2013), which takes priority over other aspects of

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[7] Varying versions of the PIS and consent forms were produced with similar text adapted to different audiences. For example, the version for parents said, 'I consent for my child to participate' whereas the version for over 16s said 'I consent to participate'.

research ethics such as maintaining confidentiality (BPS, 2014). To protect participants from harm and deal with disclosures of harm either within or outside of the project:

- UCLan's (undated, accessed 2020) safeguarding policy was adhered to and participants were made aware of how safeguarding disclosures would be dealt with prior to their participation, through the PIS and one-to-one discussion.

- A risk assessment of all activities was conducted.

- Participants were made aware through the PIS and one-to-one discussions that they could contact the researcher for support outside of the meeting in the event of any issue of distress arising from the research, and the researcher would help refer them to support organisations if necessary.

- Through the PIS and one-to-one discussions, participants were given information about the UCLan officer for ethics should they have any concerns about the research.

No incident of harm occurred and no safeguarding disclosures were made.

The knowledge generated by the study has a potential benefit to improve the practice of participation with children and young people, though this is unlikely to have an immediate impact on participants' lives. Instead, the primary benefit to participants was the provision of a project which created an enjoyable safe space for association learning and discussion with others. I used my training as a youth worker to attempt to make the space engaging and enjoyable. Participants were also invited to a paid celebration meal to thank them for participation and given the opportunity to join other ongoing projects at the host organisation to maintain relationships. To ensure participants were not financially disadvantaged from participating, transport was either provided by the organisations through which the participants were recruited or

participants were financially reimbursed.[8] My intention, following the completion of this thesis, is to invite participants to hear the findings in another informal meeting on the results of their participation.

3.5.3 Confidentiality, anonymity and data protection

Ensuring participant confidentiality is emphasised across all three sets of ethical guidance. Participants' names, the name of the host organisation, any third party names as well as any identifying data in this thesis have been pseudonymised. This approach will be continued in any future publications. UCLan's (2018)[9] data protection policy was/is followed to ensure compliance with relevant legislation. This involves storing participant data on encrypted hard drives and in locked boxes, accessible only to myself and my director of studies, and destroying it after seven years.

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[8] Paid for using a research student grant from UCLan supplemented by myself.
[9] Earlier versions used during fieldwork

CHAPTER 4. THE INTERSUBJECTIVE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING AND THE ROLE OF CONTEXT

4.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In Chapter two I argued the need for a relational perspective to 'children's voice' that considered intersubjective construction of meaning. Citing I' Anson (2013), James (2007), Komulainen (2007), Lee (2001) and Spyrou (2018), I argued for a move away from the *pure voice within* the child, and to emphasise the context through which voice occurred. I linked this to a foregrounding of dialogue within analysis and the potential of dialogical perspectives after Bakhtin.

Supporting this emphasis on dialogue, Clarks and Richard (2017), I' Anson and Weston (2018), James (2007), Tisdall (2012) and Wyness (2013b) have all raised concerns about selecting and interpreting quotations from children in isolation from the context and dialogue within which they occur. Similarly, in Section 3.4 I outlined my own methodological challenges interpreting single turns of speaking, and my 'dialogue flow' method for working with passages of dialogue. I also outlined the ontological requirement to situate my Self in the analysis (Section 3.2.3) and take account of the role the researcher plays co-constructing the research encounter.

In this chapter I will draw out the implications for engaging with children's expressions in context of dialogue. I will discuss the key findings from my attempts to interpret how knowledge claims are constructed and voiced through dialogue, using the relational approach I have outlined in the methodology that emphasises intersubjective construction of meaning.

Supporting my reflexive approach (Section 3.2.3), to illustrate my own contribution to the meanings emerging from the research encounter, this chapter begins by exploring how my own background contributes to my interpretation and interaction with dialogue (Section 4.2). I explore how my cultural biography and social category leads to my emphasis on interactions between the group members in my engagement, and how my emotive encounter with dialogue as a flow leads to a focus on temporality in the findings. In this way my Self is presented as part of the context that contributes to the construction of the meaning of dialogue within this research.

Taking this into account, I then show some of the implications of working with extended passages of dialogue through the dialogue flow method. I present the analysis of a short passage of the group's dialogue to illustrate how meaning making might be understood as a process of *interaction* between participants (Section 4.3) who influence and affect each other's utterances. Through this example, with Bakhtin's theory of the utterance (Todorov, 1984, P. 41), I will argue that the meaning of children's utterances within this research was not contained exclusively within children's expressions, and so too of adults expressions. Thus, meaning was not formed individually.

Advancing Barrow (2010, 2015), Bertrand (2014), Birch *et al*. (2017), Cruddas (2007) and Lodge (2005), who have all argued that intergenerational dialogue leads to the mutual creation of new ideas *between* children and adults, I will argue the findings show that knowledge and meaning can be understood as constructed intersubjectively across and within generational categories, between all participants within the group. As a result, the intertextual context within which each utterance is made becomes crucial to interpreting the meaning created. I will discuss the challenges this brings in interpreting children's utterances, and the importance of recognising other interlocutor's roles, as well as the role of any subsequent interpreters, such as researchers or policy

makers, in the construction of the meaning. I will argue that this requires intertextual comparison of utterances, as interpretation cannot take place free from context. Through this I will begin to make a distinction between the utterances made by children and the concept of 'children's voice'. The latter being a metaphor relating to intersubjective construction of meaning with children, and the former being the actual enunciations or expressions made by children.

Next, I will give an overview of the knowledge claims constructed intersubjectively by the whole group that were identified through CGT analysis (Section 4.4). Here I will demonstrate how any single knowledge claim in this study could be understood as a series of interrelated claims, ranging from micro to project scale, and the exact boundaries of a claim – which utterances are within it – is challenging to identify though pragmatic interpretative choices can still be made to enable analysis.

Subsequently, speaking to my experience of dialogue as a flow through time (Section 4.2) I will then chart chronological development of a 'single' knowledge claim(s) made by the group over the course of the project (Section 4.4). Through this I will illustrate that meaning can be interpreted as evolving across the course of the entire project and chronologically cumulative but not necessarily stable. Established meanings did not always sustain for the length of the project. This will give rise to questions about the role and importance of temporal context in interpreting meaning within 'children's voice'.

Throughout, I will argue meaning is imperfectly shared, and profoundly unfinalisable, but may be pragmatically interpreted as finalised 'for all practical purposes' (Linell, 2009, P. 88). The latter involves interpreting feelings of agreement linked to changes of topic in a conversation. I will use 'interlocutor' (speaking partner) rather than 'speaker' or 'listener'. This recognises that all participants were both speakers and listeners, and avoids implying directionality.

4.2 MY SELF AS CONTEXT FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH DIALOGUE

4.2.1 Section introduction

Following the relational ontology and reflexive approach utilised by this study (Section 3.2.3), this section will outline how my own Self – my standpoint, identity, and cultural or professional biography – exists in this 'relationship of knowing' (Thayer-Bacon, 2010) and to begin to explore the effect that my Self has on the conceptualisation of dialogue within this work, to illuminate to the reader what I bring with me when I approach dialogue as phenomenon and concept. My interaction and relationship with other participants is dealt with more extensively in Chapter Five.

4.2.2 My Self interacting with the research encounter

My cultural biography interacts heavily with my experience of the *research scene(s)* (Froggett and Hollway, 2010) and my conceptualisation of dialogue in general. When writing my early scenic compositions as reflections, the style that emerged drew attention to an aspect of my Self that became central to my interpretations of participant dialogue and group interaction. They took the form of poetry or beat generation style prose after Jack Kerouac (e.g. 1957) and William Burroughs. As a young person I was heavily interested in these writers, known for expressing continuous streams of free form, unedited work inspired by Jazz. I have also played improvised music in groups inspired by a free and spontaneous flow of ideas where musicians interact and respond with each other to build a single evolving piece. This style of playing is collaged from a musical language and phrases previously played or repeated elsewhere, but always creates a unique piece. This speaks to my attraction to Bhaktin's (Todorov, 1984, P. 42) notion of utterance; each improvised musical part is created in response to other players, through sharing and exchanging motifs, musician's parts together, like language for Bakhtin, become polyphonic (see Section

4.3.2). A key part of an improvisation for me, like the unedited writing of Kerouac, is that it evolves or flows through time. Unlike rehearsing a song, or editing text, there is no stopping in order to go backwards and repeat an expression again or change the opening line.

This concern with flow though time is something I have brought unconsciously to my experience of the group dialogue. Early in this work I was drawn to Bohm's (2004, p. 2, P. 29) metaphor of dialogue as a flowing river; his description of meaning moving between participants like water between riverbanks connected with me early on in the process, occurring in my scenic compositions. The resonance can be seen with the methodological concepts of the dialogue flow (Section 3.4.3) my emphasis on the chronological passage of meaning (see Section 4.4.3), and underlying concern that participants somehow jointly pushed the flow forward together (see Section 4.2.3). Bohm's uses flow metaphors to describe shared consciousness and the evolution of ideas passing back and forth between speakers.

My cultural biography endears me to a view that meaning making and language are interrelated and that different understandings of words can co-exist. My immediate family and household uses two languages, and I work regularly in international, multilingual settings where English, my native tongue, is used. Within both of these I regularly have experiences where people seemingly have different ways of knowing in different languages. For example, my partner and child express things quite differently in their native Icelandic to English, in a way that transcends simple translation differences. In professional settings, I come across variations of English words that lead to diverging meanings between two language communities in a way where one cannot be understood as right or wrong. For example, to 'increase recognition' within the European policy community, combines marketing, promotion and validation in a way that I am unable to easily articulate in what "youth policy British English", where it

refers more strongly to visibility and validations. This speaks to my use of the notion of polyvocality/heteroglossia (introduced in Section 4.3.2). Furthermore, it can be linked to my non judgemental approach, fundamental to my professional background and group facilitation (See Section 3.3.5) Being non judgemental about language use in these settings, requires giving up the idea that as a native speaker, I hold access to the 'real' meaning of words. This speaks to the view of language adopted in this study (Section 4.3.2), that expressions do not have fixed meaning.

My professional background also plays a more extensive role linked to my expertise in groupwork. With some twenty years experience I consider myself to be an expert practitioner (See Section 1.2). The position of 'being an expert' (also linked to my identity as an adult male) extensively shaped the knowledge claims on listening created by participants by influencing the development of a discourse about expert listeners (see Section 5.4). My practitioner background further shaped the way I categorised knowledge claims with a project focus (see Section 4.4.2) In addition, my professional youth work training (based on work such as Batsleer, 2008, p. 121) was particularly rooted in anti-oppressive practice. Through this I was sensitised to the political stance that any action you take will be "part of the problem or part of the solution". Thus in group interactions, I am minded that the things I say will either silence or amplify others. This informs my sense that dialogue is an interaction which is evident throughout this thesis. Amplification and silencing can be seen in my reflective recording (Box 4.2.2.a) where I talk of 'resisting' 'collusion' – almost cliché in youth work discourse – with an adult male participant, Luke. Yet I also feel tension over this, as by avoiding co-operating with Luke I am amplifying the voices of the two young women Beth and Rebecca and so directing the topic and *intervening* (Hosking and Pluut, 2010, p.68) in the dialogue.

Box 4.2.2.a: Reflective recording made after the first regular group meeting pt. 1

Everyone is in the conversation consistently. Only Beth withdraws very slightly about three quarters of the way through but Rebecca tells her "involve yourself"and she re-engages. But at the same time they are involved in different conversations. Rebecca and Beth talk about food a lot at the start, Luke keeps trying to bring things back to the task [selecting presenters for the public events]. You get this sense that he wants me to help him in doing so. At times it's almost like Luke is trying to have conversations with me about the task over the top of the young women. They are always quieter, making more side comments. I can remember consciously trying to resist going along and colluding with Luke during the session, there are a few moments where I obviously do in the transcript. But then there are other times when I join the conversation about food instead, and support Rebecca and Beth's topic of conversation, even though I feel like I should not direct the topic one way or the other.

Finally, my social positioning as a British, white, middle-class, partly privately schooled, heterosexual presenting, adult, cisgender male plays a role – that is to say, I occupy the side of privilege in many social differences. From this I come to dialogue with a prior experience and sense of entitlement from previous interactions with the world. Enveloped in my social positioning, I have self-belief and experience that I am someone who is and should be listened to when they enter into dialogue. This relates to the way I experience dialogue as creating a bond, a sense of expectation upon the other to reply to me – and from the other for me to reply. Perhaps also linked to my personality, my large physical size, strong physical voice, I am someone who is more often *present* in dialogue – even during silence – rather than someone who can easily be a bystander or an observer. I am aware, however, that for many groups and

individuals their experience of dialogue is not the same as mine, and many people are ignored and overlooked during dialogue. My 'why interview' (see Section 3.2.3) revealed changing this as one motivation for my research into voice. But whilst I can acknowledge this different experience, it is not possible for me to wholly reflexively transcend (Thayer-Bacon, 2010, see also Section 3.2.3) the push and pull that dialogue creates within me and separate myself from this experience entirely.

4.2.3 Flows and forces – the Self in affect with others

This focus on the push and pull of dialogue helped co-construct my experience of interaction with other participants. However, my experience of dialogue was not that I had some exclusive ability to compel other participants to respond to me. Though I arguably often occupied a position of dominance (see Section 5.4), I experienced the push and pull of dialogue from, to and between multiple participants, in differing ways at differing times. Dialogue seemed to have, or even was, a force that was all around. Through it, others both influenced me, and I influenced them. This can be likened to Gallagher's (2008a, 2008b) concept of Foucauldian power within child participation. Gallagher (2008b) argues that power in child participation settings is diverse and dispersed all around, at a small scale and understood as actions affecting the action of others. If speech is understood as a type of action or interaction (see, for example, Crossley, 2012, or Searle, 2000 or Chapter Six), my experience of the group's dialogue highlighted exercise of power dispersed between participants' micro-actions. This experience regularly emerged in my reflective journal and scenic compositions. For example, following on from my Box 4.2.2.a the second half of this reflective recording (Box 4.2.3.a) highlights my experience of the pushes and pulls of the 'flow'.

Box 4.2.3.a: Reflective recording made after the first regular group meeting pt. 2

Overall I'm left with the feeling that discussion is less of a staged process than I had envisioned it before. Things happen at once, not in sequence, they go back and forth. Like an ebbing and flowing river. Most of the time I can see myself trying to stay still in this river, trying not to influence it too much. But that's a bit like having a tree trunk in the middle of it. Other times I can see myself trying to be like a leaf floating along with it wherever it takes me. Other times I can see myself giving pathetic little splashes in a certain direction - like I'm hinting at the direction I want the river to flow, but don't want to get in and try and push it all.

The metaphor of my Self as a tree trunk in a river resonates with my reflexive position that the researcher inevitably *intervenes* in reality (Section 3.2.3.). Whilst the trunk remains static as I attempt not to intervene, it is still heavily present in the flow of water – like my presence in the flow of dialogue – and even in inaction, it still affects the flow. Later, the description of my Self as making 'pathetic little' splashes or being a leaf floating along with the water, highlights the relative force the flow of dialogue had over me. It felt as though other participants, through their utterances, were able to influence, even compel me to speak. I experienced the dialogue in Box 4.2.2.a as Luke's requiring me to make a choice between him or Beth and Rebecca.

These sorts of micro tensions were common. One of the key aspects of the river metaphor is that different currents and forces exist within a single river flow, pushing and pulling against each other whilst still preceding in a broad common direction. This interaction of forces within the flow is further illustrated in a later scenic composition (Box 4.2.3.b). Here, I use the metaphor of a horse race to describe the impact that two young men, Sean and Carl, had on dialogue. The metaphor alludes to a sense that group participants have an almost violent competition to create meaning.

Individual participants, or perhaps the meanings advanced by them, are horses within the race, competing to lead. My horse is losing the race, and my own ability to advance meaning is falling behind in comparison to others.

Box 4.2.3.b: Scenic composition made shortly after third group meeting

The horse race

Somewhere between a race and fight (friendly, of course)
Either way I am beaten, beaten at the second round
My ideas, no matter how much I push do not connect
I thought I was the strongest one here
I started well, as we leapt from the horsebox we jumped back and forth to take the lead
I was in
I was there,
I was in the pack
But then somehow I lost
I was there but I wasn't in the pack so it left me
Not left in the way Sean and Carl have been.
Not left in the way that they so violently tear up the track on which the other horses run
Ripping turf , turning ground , changing the very race itself
The other horses fall.

Carl and Sean were two of the participants who spoke the least within the project, yet the scenic composition illustrates their strong influence. This supports Kohli (2006), Lewis (2010), Naraian (2011) and Silverman et al.'s (1998) arguments that children resist adult dominance through silence and tactical interaction. Extending their work, my experience was that resistance to power occurred not just from child to adult, but occurred across and within generational boundaries as well as other intersections in multiple directions. This is explored in depth in Chapter Five.

4.2.4 Section summary

The metaphors of rivers flowing and races illustrate my personal experience of dialogue within this research. This leads to underlying concepts within these findings that are profoundly connected to the situation of my own Self within the local reality and in relationship to other participants (a 'relationship of knowing' – Thayer-Bacon, 2010). This arises from an interaction between my background, standpoint and identity with the research encounter. These underlying concepts are, first, that the dialogue inherently had a direction of travel, that progressed in various evolving, sometimes chaotic, ways. Second, some interactive forces between group participants push and pull against each other and collectively create a commonality in this direction of travel and the construction of meaning - like improvising players in a band. Third, these things combine to create a sense that incidents in the past inform the direction of incidents in the future - the way upstream water pushes downstream water in a river. Fourth, like a race, the past does not fully set the future, winning early does not guarantee winning at the end. These concepts can be understood to be known as a result of my personal interaction with the dialogue. Rather than perceptions of an external reality, which may be regarded as more or less accurate, they are situated, unique interactions between my Self and the research encounter. Others immersed in similar situations may generate some similar situated knowledge (e.g. Bohm 2004 or Gallagher 2008a), however, some aspects may be unique.

4.3 THE INTERTEXTUAL CONTEXT OF A SINGLE UTTERANCE

4.3.1 Section introduction

My experience of dialogue as interaction rather than actions made in isolation (Section 4.2.3) perhaps explains why my initial CGT analysis (Section 3.4.2), working speaker turn by speaker turn, lost a substantial part of the interpreted meaning when compared to analysis of larger portions of text. Taking account of Clarks and Richard (2017), Tisdall (2012), and others' (see Section 2.3.2) concerns over selecting and interpreting children's expressions in isolation, analysing meaning across turns of speaking between child and adult participants, brings, as Wyness (2013b) puts it, adults back into the analysis. This section explores challenges this creates for interpreting the meaning of any one expression – be that from a child or an adult, even in a short extract of dialogue. This is illustrated using an extract of eight turns, which involved Luke (an adult male), myself and Rebecca (a young woman)[1].

4.3.2 Polyvocality/heteroglossia and intertextuality

In Box 4.3.2.a Luke, Rebecca and myself discuss our experiences of one of the public events presenters:

Box 4.3.2.a: Excerpt of group dialogue after first public event

1.) **Luke:** I didn't think there was that many of the practical things discussed, it was all very much the governance.

2.) **Rebecca:** Paperwork

3.) **Luke**: [The public event] wasn't kind of the... this is what it's like to talk to a young person, and this is how we empower or listen to them, it was very much the history of the governance, which...

4.) **Rebecca:** We're not bothered about, we're bothered about now

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[1] See Section 5.2.2 for pen pictures of each participant.

5.) **Luke:** yeah - we're bothered about the...

6.) **Me:** We didn't get the personal bits as much did we?

7.) **Luke:** Yeah - the practicalities

8.) **Rebecca:** Like about *actually working with different children,* like she said a bit how they didn't conflict against each other, and that time where they was talking about who they would like to live with [an educational activity], like that's the only practical bits they mentioned, like the rest was just paperwork, paperwork paperwork.

Retrospectively, I interpret the vocal intonations within the audio recording as indicating relative agreement, collaboration and consensus, rather than disagreement or debate or objection. This intonation style was consistent throughout the extract; so lines 4 and 6, for example, could be interpreted as accepting and building upon the previous line with additional meaning rather than opposing the previous speaker as alternative intonations with the same text might imply. Similarly, the use of the words "we" and "yeah" (lines 4-7), as well as the way participants interrupt to build upon, rather than stop each other, adds to this. My reflective journal also identified the *feeling* of togetherness within the encounter; I describe participants as talking in a 'multilayered' manner which 'built on top' of each other. This feeling of togetherness and agreement could be understood as what Kraftl (2013) terms emotions beyond voice.

However, when retrospectively analysing the utterances, degrees of difference within that agreement can be interpreted. Luke's initial statement about too much focus on "governance" over "practicalities" (lines 1 and 3), can be seen to be re-focused by Rebecca as being about a lack of concern with the present, highlighted by her use of "now" (line 4) in contrast to Luke's "history" (line 3). This contrasts with Luke's seemingly more incidental use of "history" in his original utterance. And whilst Luke's

response in line 5 directly paraphrases Rebecca's term "bothered" and he expresses a "yeah" of affirmation, he is not specific as to *what* he is agreeing with or affirming.

Cutting Luke off, in line 6 I invite others to agree that there was not much focus on the "personal", which Luke then swiftly adopts as being support for his original claim there was a lack of focus on "practical" (line 7) by seemingly synonymising the two terms. Rebecca then also picks up concern about lack of "practical bits" (line 8) as a subsequent affirmation of both. However Rebecca also contrasts Lukes "practical" with her "paperwork", repeating the latter three times (line 8). This turns my expression of desire for the practical into support for her expression of opposition to "paperwork". These terms have a connection; however, Rebecca's original use of "paperwork" (line 2) was earlier in the text and arguably originally used as synonymical support for Luke's "Governance" (line 1). As a result, the term "paperwork" is offered to provide contrast to the meaning "practical" and complement to "governance", but in doing so serves to rearticulate what both of these terms could mean.

My re-interpretation of this is a sense of an evolving dichotomy. On the one side, there is something the presenter is seen to have overemphasised. On the other, there is something the presenters should have emphasised more. There is seemingly an underlying agreement between participants that this dichotomy exists, and that the presenter focused on the wrong side of it. However, the precise meaning of either side of the dichotomy is open to continual reformation by interlocutors, and degrees of difference of meaning between their individual utterances might be interpreted. The terms "practical" and "personal", as well as "governance" and "paperwork" become somehow associated together through the discussion. Each pair of terms becomes somewhat synonymous to themselves and somewhat antonymic to the other pair. Thus, when Rebecca re-uses Luke's term of "practical" in the final line, it is interpretable as antonymic to both Luke's "governance" and her own "paperwork" as

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well as synonymical with my "personal". However, these associations are not perfect; they are what Cruddas (2007, p. 486) describes as 'moving 'imperfectly towards shared social meaning'. In addition to this the dichotomy is not wholly stable, elements describing time ("history" and "now") appear earlier in the extract but are not repeated. My interpretation is that the significance of these elements fades somehow over time – although this interpretation is directly linked to my experience and perception of dialogue as flow (Section 4.2.3), which may lead me to deprivilege past meaning in the interpretation.

This example highlights how interlocutors' utterances are open to re-interpretation and reformation by subsequent interlocutors, a phenomenon widely identifiable throughout the transcripts. The re-interpretation creates shifts within the way the object of discussion (the public event presenter) is represented. The re-use of terms between participants like "bothered", "practicality" as well as counterpoint terms like "history" and "now", illustrates the relevance of Bakhtin's polyvocality/heteroglossia (Todorov, 1984, P.41). Through polyvocality/heteroglossia, participants negotiated, evolved and changed the meaning of key terms and the wider meaning arising with the dialogue. Each utterance served to contextualise, re-interpret and build upon those around. The overall effect is that each individual is seemingly able to add slight variations of meaning to the evolving knowledge claim, and they contribute collectively to build meaning socially. However, rather than creating perfect clarity, the shared meaning is imperfect and open to various interpretations to other interlocutors as well as after the fact. Rather than being clearly defined, terms are – in Bakhtian's theory – heteroglossic and contain multiple varying meanings.

In a Bakhtinian perspective, language is shared, social and evolving rather than an external, fixed set of codes to be used by speakers (Todorov 1984, p.54, see also Linell, 2009, p. 24 and p.91; Marková, 2003, p. 61). The meaning of words (or other

expressions) in an utterance arises with reference to their use in previous utterances and then goes on to inform the meaning of future uses of those words. This happens both within the immediate social situation and over much longer periods of time. Words and language rather than having a fixed meaning contain multiple related meanings that evolve continually. A web of meaning connects an entire language community's utterances through time, making communication possible between interlocutors by allowing some sort of commonality and connection between the meaning of words without them being fixed.

A key part of this approach to language, polyvocality, (literally: multi-voiced) recognises the new speaker's utterance contains 'the voice' of many previous speakers. Polyvocality/heteroglossia arises from the reiteratiration[2] of the words and language from previous speakers' utterances within the current speaker's utterances (Todorov 1984, p.50). To speak a word is to reference it's previous uses, meanings, and the past utterances and speakers that created them. More than just quoting, this all uses of words, and connections between them that shape their evolving meanings. Thus, in line 5, Luke directly quotes Rebecca by using the term "bothered" giving us a very obvious example of reiteration and Rebecca's 'voice' within Luke's 'voice'. But polyvocality/heteroglossia also occurs within the paperwork-governance/practical-personal dichotomy as a whole. Together (and with connection to language use elsewhere in their lives), participants are evolving the meaning of all of these terms and speaking with meanings initiated by previous speakers. When Rebecca says "paperwork" in line 8, rather than communicating a fixed external definition of this term, she is creating an utterance which encompasses, relates to and is defined by the previous terms as used by Luke and myself. Whilst it is her utterance, the 'voice' at this point is polyvocal.

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[2] Not all aspects of an *utterance* can be re-iterative, only the language and words, see below this section.

Several childhood scholars further support my findings on polyvocality/heteroglossia. Maybin (2006, 2013) has shown that children's voices are appropriated from adults, peers and texts of various kinds and argued 'children's voices' are polyvocal/heteroglossic. Davies (2009), Gillen and Cameron (2017) and Macbeath (2006) (see Section 2.3.3) have reached similar conclusions. Tertoolen *et al.* (2017) have also shown polyvocality can occur when adults utilise children's expression. The concept is also not unique to *intergenerational* communication (Linell, 2009), thus polyvocality occurs within and across generational boundaries.

The Bakhanian stance, that language is not a fixed external code one can master, reduce's emphasis on speech which can be represented clearly in written forms and de-privileges 'well articulated' expressions (Linell, 1998 p. 28). This helps address Spyrou's, (2018) and I' Anson, (2013) concerns 'children's voice' ignores the undomesticated non-narrative voices and over-emphasises stable reflexive expression (Section 2.2.2). This is supported by analysis of shorter utterances and vocal sounds not based on words in this research. When considering these utterances as a single line, very little meaning could be ascribed to them. However, when interpreted in context of the utterances around them, and as part of a social interaction with others, this allowed much deeper meaning to be interpreted. For example, in Box 4.3.2.b, very limited meaning can be interpreted from the two single line quotations, other than what food Beth may have eaten, and that Sean has a query.

Box 4.3.2.b: Childrens' expressions shown in single line quotation style

"You what?" - *Sean, young male participant*

"PEEEKABOOOO, I've had McDonald's, Starbucks, and ...Wetherspoons[3] and pudding!"

Beth, young female participant

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[3] A UK pub chain.

However, when placed within context of utterances around them (Box 4.3.2.c), which relates to a discussion about my audio recorder a much more detailed interpretation can be made:

- Sean is surprised that I use a foot pedal to start and stop recordings.

- Beth agrees with Rebecca that their jokes are the things they want me to listen to in the research.

Box 4.3.2.c: Childrens' expressions in context of a dialogue about audio recording

Rebecca: Do you listen to that [dictaphone] with headphones in?

Me: er yeah and I have a foot pedal to start and stop so I can type it.

Beth: Seriously, that's sick I want one.

Sean: You what?

Me: So you have a foot pedal to start and stop.

Rebecca: I wish I had a stop that I could hear our music with.

Me: I mean if you wanted I could tell you when you start next time some of the things I think I'm learning about how you all talk to each other.

Rebecca: You should write...

Luke: Yeah that would be good.

Rebecca: you should write down the funny things that we say as well

Beth: [leaning into microphone and raising voice] **PEEEKABOOOO!!, I've had Mcdonald's, Starbucks, and...**

Rebecca: Wetherspoons and pudding!

Beth: **...Weatherspoons and pudding!** [over the top of, but starting later than Rebecca]

[Beth continues listing food types into the recorder for several lines]

When viewed in context, these utterances arguably express much greater meaning. But setting boundaries around the amount of contextual dialogue required is challenging (see Section 4.4). In this example, I might consider further context that Beth and Rebecca had recently taken part in a project on food together. Their joint exclamation of "Weatherspoons and pudding!" might be a shared joke from elsewhere with further meaning. Similarly, considering the discussion I had elsewhere with Sean about his musical hobbies might generate the interpretation that his exclamation related to the technology, rather than the act of recording. This continues to underscore Clark and Richard's (2017) and Tisdall's (2012) concerns about the flaws in interpreting children's expressions in isolation.

Bakhtin (Todorov, 1984, p .44) argues that as well as containing a repeatable aspect (the actual enunciation or spoken words) an utterance also contains a unique, unrepeatable, aspect – *the context*. Utterances do not occur *in* the context, the context is fundamentally *part of* the utterance. Bakhtin argues that the nearest social situations and utterances are crucial, but all context plays a role – the time-space, the values of interlocutors, the other dialogue interlocutors have engaged in. This speaks to Arnot and Reay (2007), Bragg (2001, 2007), Fielding (2007), Kallio (2012), Thompson and Gunter (2006), and others (see Section 2.3.2) who have argued that context plays a role in the creation of 'children's voice', and I will elaborate further on relational context in Chapter Five.

For Bakhtin, (Todorov, 1984, P. 45) utterances can never be repeated. Even directly quoting the enunciation of a previous interlocutor is to speak within a new context, and creates a new utterance, with new meaning. In Box 4.3.2.a, when Rebecca re-uses her own words ("paperwork") the meaning of this is interpretably different, based on the immediate context (first it is opposite of "governance" and latterly of "practicality"). For Bakhtin (1981, p. 426), the meaning of an utterance is

profoundly unfinalisable – it cannot be contained or fixed within language and text alone because new contextual relationships between utterances occur when expressions are repeated.

In a Bakhtinian sense in Box 4.3.2.a, "paperwork", "governance" and other terms cannot be fixed absolutely in meaning by *any* interpreter. It is not possible to draw upon an external lexicon existing completely free from intertextual context against which Rebecca's words – or the words of any other person – can be referenced to find their 'true' meaning. Any approach to analyse them is to contrast them to uses of the terms elsewhere in the interpreter's life. This requires a personal frame of reference for the meaning of them, and becomes an intertextual comparison to other communication the interpreter is involved in. My own analysis of Box 4.3.2.a shows this. Through my work in state institutions, I have many conversations about the paperwork and bureaucracy being a barrier to practical delivery of youth programmes. My interpreting synonymization between "governance" and "paperwork" as something that opposes the "practical" links to this. Another interpreter might use "paperwork" differently, and come to a varying interpretation. Without a context-free point of reference no interpreter can determine the meaning of children's utterances (or adults) without the interpreters active co-construction.

This co-construction occurs even when working from written text or other one way communication. To place a quotation from a child within, for example, a research paper places it within new context. Any reader comes to this within that context, and into a form of unspoken interpretive 'dialogue'[4] with the quotation. Applying Bakhtin's unfinalisability to 'children's voice' tells us not just that the meaning of words can evolve within interpersonal communication and have varying interpretations between speakers – but that the meaning of a child's (or adult's) utterance can never be fully captured.

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[4] Although dialogue may no longer be the best term at this point when considering its common usage.

Text cannot exist outside of context, and no approach can be made to interpretations that does not involve the active co-construction of the other.

We might link profound unfinalisability to criticism of *the pure voice within* and Spyrou's (2018) stance there is no truer or more authentic interpretation of 'children's voice' only situated encounters (see Section 2.3.4). In Box 4.3.2.b Luke, Rebecca and myself are in situated encounters with each other's utterances, my later retrospective analysis is a further situated encounter and so, reader, is your subsequent encounter with this thesis. It cannot be said that we are misinterpreting each other[5] when reaching new interpretations, because there is no single point of reference for determining the meaning of our words. Instead only an intertextual comparison can be made between utterances, and this comparison itself is done by way of further comparison to utterances elsewhere in the actors lives, as I have shown by deconstructing my own retrospective interpretation.

Overall, using Bakhtin's theory of the utterance to analyse dialogue shows how examples, such as Box 4.3.2.a, can be described as containing both a singular knowledge claim (relating to the quality of the public event presenter), that is imperfectly shared and intersubjectively established between the participants, and a series of more fluid micro-claims (about the personal, practicalities, governance, the present and paperwork), that may be shared to greater or lesser extents to differing participants. All these claims are interrelated, and exist in an intertextual relationship to each other. Furthermore the precise meaning of each is profoundly unfinalisable. Thus, within the production of meaning – i.e. the generation of a knowledge claim – this meaning was not easily attributable to any one utterance and *therefore any one person*. Though utterances are attributable to an individual, the meaning of them was

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[5]This does not preclude the possibility of a wilful, unethical, deliberate misrepresentation of children.

intersubjectively produced. Furthermore, this social production is not limited to the immediate spoken situation but also occurs during any retrospective interpretation.

4.3.3 Finalisation of meaning for all practical purposes

Cruddas (2007), Barrow (2010, 2015), Bertrand (2014) Birch et al. (2017) and Lodge (2005), have made arguments that intergenerational dialogue constructs new hybrid meaning between adults and children. But they disagree on if dialogue proceeds towards consensus, or if meaning is held in perpetually unfinalisable difference (see Section 2.3.5). I have argued through analysis of Box 4.3.2.a that meaning within this research was profoundly unfinalisable, speaking to Cruddas (2007). However, there is a general agreement between interlocutors that readers could interpret reasonably similarly in this example. Here, Linell's (2009, p.88) concept of *finalisation for all practical purposes* might provide an alternative more pragmatic approach. He argues that whilst profound unfinalisable differences still exist, it is still possible to reach more general conclusions where meaning making has completed, at least temporarily. For those concerned with participation primarily as a political tool and practice, this approach may be useful. Hence I will explore what can be said about *finalisation for all practical purposes* from my study.

Earlier (Section 4.3.2) I identified that my experience of the dialogue in Box 4.3.2.a was one of being in relative agreement or collaboration in some way with others. This feeling, combined with a change in topic, indicated - for me - when *finalisation for practical purposes* occured. Echoing Latour and Woolgar (1979), there was often no identifiable specific point at which a collective 'decision' on the knowledge claim is made in a dialogue flow. Even within facilitation activities that attempted to elicit this, (see Section 5.6), silence could varyingly be interpreted as agreement, submission, abstention, or even disengagement and resistance (see Kohli, 2006; Lewis, 2010; Naraian, 2011, Silverman *et al.* 1998). However, the move from one topic

to the next, indicated a period of meaning making had at least temporarily ceased[6]. A change in topic, when combined with the feeling that an instance of dialogue was closer to consensus and commonality than in opposition or tension produced, from my perspective, some sort of finalised meaning. It indicated the group finished meaning making with some sense of concluding agreement, rather than ceasing discussion following disagreement; these two positions being relative rather than discrete. This supports Jupp (2008), Kraftl's (2013) and Kraftl and Horton (2007)arguments that there is a need to focus the emotional aspects of child participation.

Considering my experience of speech as interaction affecting others (Section 4.2.3), the potential power of changing topic and creating a feeling of finalisation (or not) highlights a need to identify when participants were compelling others to change topic or when the was equitably enacted. My space within this thesis to expand further into these mechanics is limited. It may require greater engagement with linguistic studies, such Hayashi's (1991) *conversational floors*, and consideration of psychosocial methods to interpret the emotional encounter. Work on space within communication with children, (e.g. Bae ,2012; Moss and Petrie, 2002; Nind *et al.* 2010), and Kirby and Gibbs (2006) on hierarchical relationships, may also be useful.

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[6] This interpretation itself continues to emphasise concern with dialogue as a flow through time, Section 4.2.3.

4.3.3 Section summary

In this section, I have shown the flaws of viewing the meaning of 'children's voice' as something contained exclusively within children's expressions. I have shown that moving away from analysing expressions in isolation and instead focusing on passages of dialogue, substantially changes how meaning can be interpreted. Bakhtin's theory of the utterance provides a way of conceptualising this which brings into focus the intertextual relationships that occur between children's and adult's utterances. Furthermore, it foregrounds the role of the interpreter in meaning construction and emphasises a view that meaning cannot be contained within text alone, seeing language as a social and relational interaction rather than a system of fixed external codes. (see also Linell, 2009, p.24. and p.91). This demonstrates the importance of context *as part* of the meaning in 'children's voice' and the unrepeatable, profoundly unfinalisable nature of voice.

A further implication of focusing on sequences of dialogue is the question of how and where boundaries around a knowledge claim are drawn. Put simply, if meaning cannot be contained exclusively within a child's single expression, where does it start and stop within a period of dialogue? Here I have outlined two approaches for interpreting the end of meaning making. One is to accept that meaning is infinitely, profoundly unfinalisable, and another is to treat it as pragmatically finalisable. The latter requires attending to the emotion, and chronology. In the following section I will explore the chronology in more detail.

4.4 THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING OVER TIME

4.4.1 Section introduction

Building on the idea that meaning was created interactively between all participants and across multiple speaker turns (Section 4.3), this Section outlines the results of the CGT (see Section 3.4.3) as a method of identifying the specific knowledge claims made by the participants *working collectively*. It uses the group's dialogue across nearly all of our meetings (see Table 3.4.1.a) and attempts to create thematic groupings of text which identify their knowledge claims. This macro level analysis sets aside some of the complex subtleties of utterance to utterance differences described in Section 4.3 and uses broader interpretation of meaning to create this categorisation with emphasis on differentiating between claims.

Unsurprisingly, the same topics were identifiably discussed by the group on multiple occasions throughout the project. Broad categories of discussion and simple summaries emerged fairly easily through the CGT. For example, the quality of the public talks was discussed, and there was a seeming agreement amongst participants that the public talks were not that good. Furthermore, attempts to identify a more in-depth sense of meaning and specify an exact boundary within which all dialogue relating to any one knowledge claim was contained was still challenging – topic categories were clustered within each other and interrelated at many different levels (see Section 4.4.2). In addition, building on my experience that dialogue occurred as a flow through time (see Section 4.2.3), the chronological point in which utterances and specific sub-claims or nuances occurred affected the way meaning could be interpreted substantially (see Section 4.4.3).

4.4.2 Identifying intersubjective knowledge claims

Through CGT, 17 focused codes (hereafter, knowledge claim codes) identified the dialogue flows (see Section 3.4.3) within which participants were making some sort of claim about the world or experiences. Compared to interpreting single quotations of speakers, the amount of speech involved in each knowledge claim was substantial. Table 4.4.2.a shows the number of dialogue flows coded for each knowledge claim code excluding shorter redirection flows (see Section 3.4.3). This ranged from 6 to 47 dialogue flows per knowledge claim code. Based on an estimated mean of 23 speaker turns per dialogue flow[7], this is an approximate range of 140 to 1000 speaker turns per knowledge claim code.

Although the notion of knowledge claims bounded in a collection of dialogue flows is analytically useful, it is reductive to state that any one knowledge claim code accurately represents the boundaries of a single knowledge claim. For example, the 21 dialogues flows coded as *Public event presenter 1*, could be crudely summarised as 'presenter 1 was a bad presenter'. With this claim, there existed a series of smaller knowledge claims such as 'presenter 1 did not listen to public event participants' and spoke in a 'dry' way. These were identified through subcodes within the CGT (see Section 3.4.3) as well as general readings of the text and further contained the sort of micro-scale turn by turn knowledge claims discussed in Section 4.3. In addition, the dialogue flows coded *Public event presenter 1*, needed consideration alongside dialogue flows within five other codes (Codes 12-16 Table 4.4.2.a) about other presenters and the events generally. Participants made comparisons between event presenters and identified what a good presenter was. Thus, a discussion about Presenter 3 might inform the benchmark for a good presenter, which informed another discussion about Presenter 1's qualities. Thus six codes together formed an

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[7] See Section 3.4.3 for mean calculations.

interrelated group of 77 dialogue flows (potentially 1700 speaker turns), all of which informed any knowledge claim about Presenter 1.

Ultimately, conceptual inferences and links could be drawn between and across various topics of discussion as well as from micro to whole project scale. Furthermore as discussed in Section 4.3.2,. any meanings I identify, and therefore any links between meanings I identify, are co-constructed through my own Self's intertextual experience and context. Thus setting a boundary around 'one' knowledge claim is an interpretative act. Accordingly, my Self is strongly present in the boundary making of the final knowledge claim codes. The names and categories (Table 4.4.2.a) speak strongly to my organisation of the project and role of the facilitator. They are categorised by speaker, reflecting my role in practically organising speakers to attend, and also pay attention to group dynamics, a core concern of a facilitator and topic of many field note reflections. Categories of professional, schools and organisations reflect my professional background and discussion I engage in elsewhere regularly.

Table 4.4.2.a: Intersubjective knowledge claims

Name of knowledge claim code	Number of dialogue flows in which code appears
1. Gender and its construction	7
2. Listening and what it means to listen	47
3. Thomas the mannequin	8
Interrelated group* – Views on the group interaction	**40**
4. Participants' interaction	8
5. Participant behaviour and attributes	9
6. Participant behaviour and attributes – Sean's behaviour	22
7. Participant behaviour and attributes – Carl's qualities	12
Partially interrelated group* – Views on professionals and organisations	**44**
8. Professionals (interrelates with organisations and teachers)	14
9. Organisations (interrelates with professionals and schools)	9
10. Schools (interrelates with teachers and organisations)	12
11. Teachers (interrelates with schools and professionals)	19
Interrelated group* – Views on the quality of public events	**77**
12. Public event presenter 1	21
13. Public event presenter 2	33
14. Public event presenter 3	18
15. Public event presenter 4	21
16. Public event presenters – general comments	16
17. General requirements for a good public event	6

*A dialogue flow can be coded for multiple knowledge claim code, therefore total unique dialogue flows for a group is less than the sum of codes within it

4.4.3 Charting chronological development of meaning

This section explores chronological development (see Section 4.2 and 4.3.3.) using a 'single' knowledge claim in more detail in order to chart the development of meaning across the term of the project. For simplicity, I will refer to the knowledge claim code 'Listening and what it means to listen' as a single knowledge claim.

To explore the flow of meaning over time I used axial coding (see Section 3.4.3) to identify semantic links between different dialogue flows and artefact text within the data coded as 'Listening and what it means to listen', and then organised these quotations in a diagram, chronologically (Figure 4.4.3.a). The diagram shows the dialogue flows[8] relating to the knowledge claim across all of the group's meetings. They are shown chronologically from top to bottom and left to right. Dialogue flows are represented by the black numbered boxes within the blue, red, cyan and yellow loops that show the meetings in which the dialogue flow occurred. In addition, the green box at the bottom of the diagram shows the statements written and agreed by participants during the conclusion meeting to represent their 'agreed' view on listening, represented again by black numbered box. These statements are shown at the bottom of the diagram as they represent an output of the group – something that might be presented as an end statement of collective voice (see Table 5.2.3.a) – although they were created during the conclusion meeting. Arrows indicate conceptual links, identified through axial coding, between dialogue flows and between flows and these statements. The numbering within all black boxes takes the format 'Document number: Line number'. Document number refers to a transcript number and line number refers to the line within the document at which the quotation starts. Although not fully accurate, one speaker turn tended to generate two lines.

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[8] Excluding shorter redirection flows for clarity.

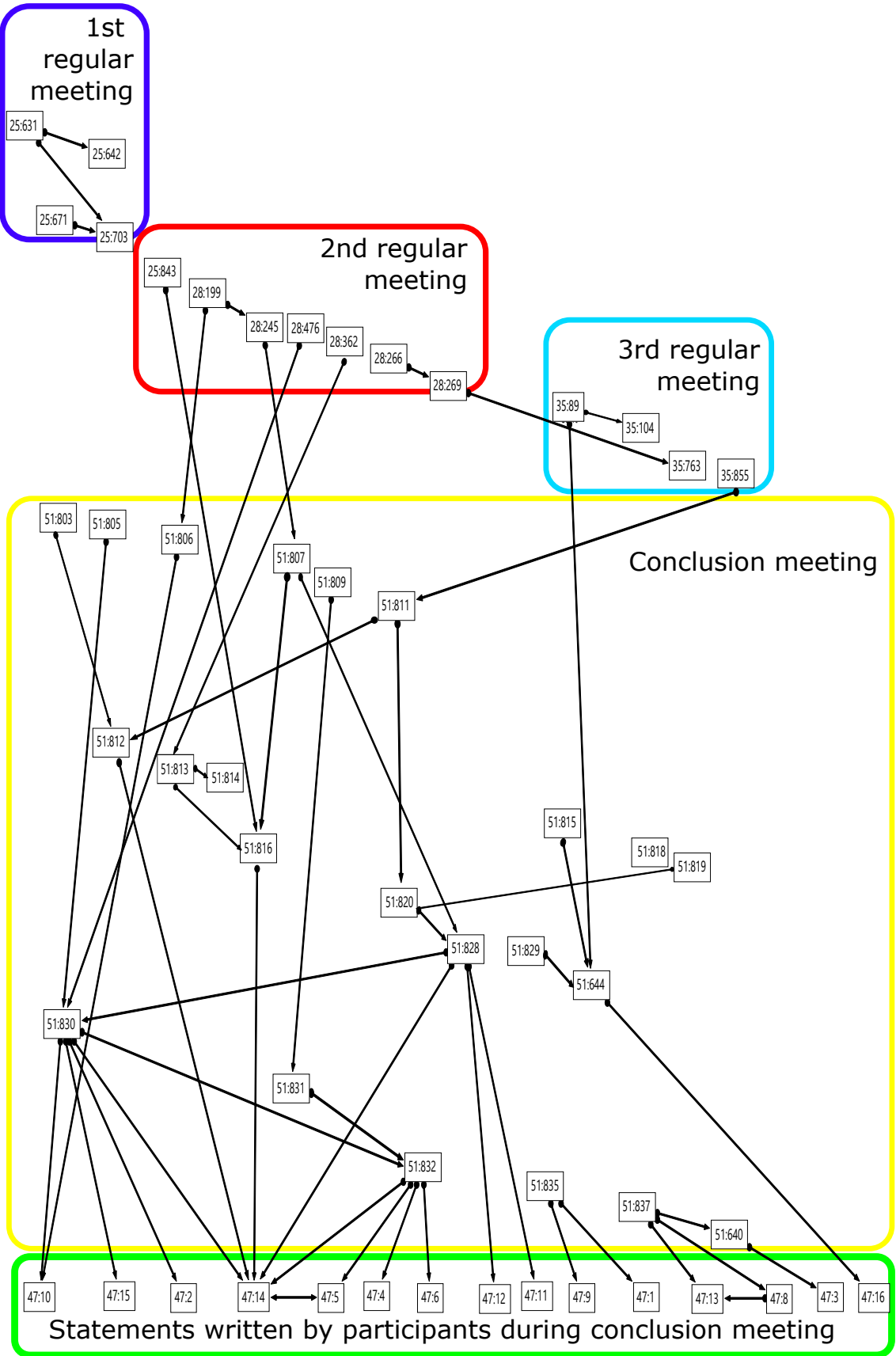# Chain of meaning across participants' knowledge claim on listening

Figure 4.4.3.a

The diagram illustrates the chain or overall flow of meaning on the topic of listening that participants created from their first regular group meeting to their conclusion session. Nearly all dialogue flows are connected in some way to at least one other, and often across multiple meetings through as many as four instances. Thus, interpreting a single utterance requires understanding of its intertextual relationship to utterances not just immediately before and after it, but potentially also to those made several months away at entirely different instances. As the boundaries of the diagram are created by the boundaries of the case, not the phenomenon, this means there will be dialogue even further away not shown that is still connected. For example during one meeting, two participants described attending an older people's forum to discuss how young people could be listened to in the community, and two other young people described discussing listening with peers at school. Figure 4.4.3.a represents a snapshot window into a much more extensive chain of meaning that exists across participants' and others' people's entire lives. This resonates with Vygotsky's (1978) ideas that we are born into dialogue then internalise it. Connections can again be drawn with Gillen and Cameron (2017) and Maybin (2013) who have illustrated the way children reformulate meaning arising from one setting and group of actors within other settings and contexts.

Meaning was part of a perpetual chain, however some meaning arises within just one dialogue flow and is not carried forward to later discussions. For example, in 51.818 Gail suggests, through a passing reference to Public Event Presenter 4, that differences of opinion are necessary for listening to occur. Rebecca, Luke, Mark and Angela express short utterances interpretable as agreement ("mmmmhmmm", "yeah") but do not add to the topic. I then continued the dialogue (at the start of 51.819) by expressing another point about presenter 4 – that presenter 3 cared more about the audience's views than presenter 4 - creating a change in topic. This ultimately flows into a more extensive discussion on the topic of listening, caring and passion (see

Section 5.5-5.6) which is picked up in further dialogue flows (51.820 onwards). Effectively the discussion on differences of opinion is closed by no further interlocutors adding substantially to Gail's initial utterances, the initiation of a new topic. The idea of differences of opinion being necessary is not revisited at any later stage in the case.

This illustrates how knowledge claims could be made, and then effectively set aside. But interpreting why this occurs, and how they should be treated as a result, is challenging. On the one hand, it could be said that the group agreed on a seemingly uncontroversial point and felt no more need to discuss it as they believed they had a high level of shared understanding. It could be that I pushed the flow of dialogue away from this point. Another interpretation might be that it was considered an unimportant point not necessary to dwell on. Finally, it could be interpreted that Gail, who described herself during the interview as preferring to "sit back" and "let the conversation go where it needs to go", did not exercise enough power to insert the claim into the dialogue.

Similarly, some dead ends within the chain occurred when participants discussed an idea and seemingly reached the position of unspoken 'agreement' that it was not useful. For example, in 35:104, the group discusses whether the things Presenter 2 says about listening and health relate to Rebecca and Beth's school. Referencing discussion Rebecca and Beth had with young people outside of the project, they identify that only one person in their school has a relevant health condition. Their utterances become increasingly tangentially and pauses between turns elongated, as if they are running out of things to say. Luke eventually initiates a new topic and the pace of conversation picks up starting a new dialogue flow (not shown).

Most interesting, however, is the dialogue flows appearing in the first meeting (which include Box 5.4.a, Chapter Five). These develop the idea that, with the exception of a small number of experts, most adults who work with young people do

not know how to listen to them (see Table 5.2.3.b, Discourse 2*)*. Open discussion of this is not repeated within the text of utterances outside of the first meeting – and it does not appear on the group's final statements (see Table 5.2.3.a). However, the discursive *context* it creates is fundamental to shaping the knowledge claim on listening as a whole. In Chapter Five I will elaborate how this context allows the adult male participants to become positioned as expert listeners, which has a strong effect on other parts of the knowledge claim - at least from my own perspective. In direct contrast to the other two dead ends described above, here a set of utterances, which are quite fundamental to the knowledge claim, do not seem to repeat as text and across the wider claim but do sustain as context. This highlights how CGT, even when applied to passages of dialogue may still fundamentally privilege text over context, and fail to reveal all contextual connections.

Overall, consideration of the chronology of dialogue raises challenging questions about the duration of 'children's voice' and the extent that meaning created should be regarded as permanent or temporary. Where a claim appears in the text of utterances and is not revisited, when and on what basis might we interpret that the knowledge claim or meaning created to sustains beyond those utterances? For example, does the assertion about listening and interaction led by Gail still exist beyond the immediate utterances, or is it forgotten by the end of the project? When utterances are not revisited by participants, does meaning cease to exist, or would documentation by the researcher sustain it? How might we value sustained situated discourses compared to specific expressions? These questions are challenging but, above all they demonstrate that although meaning accumulates over time, it is not necessarily stable.

The meanings carried forward in text to the end of the project (the bottom row on the diagram) represent a written statement generated through a typical 'participation

activity' to represent a collective voice (see Section 3.3.5). This kind of representation of voice, whilst critiqued in qualitative research (Clark and Richards, 2017) is common practice in many participation projects and would typically be chosen to represent the voice of the group by project organisers. When considering the chronological context, these become problematic, and create an arbitrary snapshot point at which meaning is extracted based on the timing of the project end. This demonstrates Bragg (2001, 2007), I' Anson and Weston (2018), Kallio (2012), Thompson and Gunter (2006), and others' arguments that institutional practices are often central to determining what is recognised as 'children's voice' (see Section 2.3.2). This finding supports this by identifying the way temporal context created by the project end helps determine what meaning might be reported as the output of a typical participation project, despite meaning varying at other points.

4.4.4 Section summary

Within this study, shorter periods dialogue and meaning between could be understood as part of a much larger sequence of meaning construction flowing over the entire duration of the fieldwork and potentially beyond. Different meanings were interpretable at different points in times, and meaning making was cumulative but it was not necessarily a stable accumulation. Meanings from the past informed future meanings; development of ideas stretched over months or more. However, past meaning was not permanently fixed, it could be discarded perhaps forgotten, as well as built upon and reshaped in future dialogue. So, even when *finalised for all practical purposes* occurred, this finalisation was temporary, and the meanings could be revisited and extended at a later stage. This is consistent with Linell's (2009, P. 88) who emphasises the temporary nature of *finalisation for all practical purposes*.

4.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The findings in this chapter support the case for moving away from selecting and interpreting children's utterances in isolation, as argued for by Clark and Richards (2017), Tisdall (2012), and demonstrates the value of focusing on passages of dialogue along with intersubjective construction of meaning. I have shown working with dialogue substantially changes how meaning construction in 'children's voice' can be interpreted, as what we might understand 'children's voice' to be. This chapter also demonstrates the value of Bakhtin's theory of the utterance as the basis for understanding language and communication by applying this in analysis to a number of examples of participant dialogue, with a range of foci. The examples chosen were not unique or special phenomena, and the group discussions could be analysed in this way throughout. This dialogical stance brings into focus polyvocality/heteroglossia, and intertextuality that all occured between children's and adults' utterances in this research. This makes it possible to see ideas and meaning arising in response to others and enables understanding of meaning making as intersubjectively occurring *between* speakers – or in the case of intergenerational dialogue, between adult and child.

Bakhtin's dialogism, and the methods I employed in this chapter provide a way to take up Lee's (2001) and Oswell's (2011) position that the child (or any human) is not an exclusively independent autonomous agent, by focusing on intergenerational and peer interactions within the production of voice. Through this, the findings emphasise Mazzei (2009) and Mazzei and Jackson's (2009, 2012) position that voice is not a fixed entity (see and Spyrou (2018) stance that voice is an outcome of multiple situated encounters rather than a process of adults extracting knowledge from children (see Section 2.3.3). The dialogical stance adds to these by further helping conceptualise

what voice is if *transmission* (Shannon and Weaver, 1948) is rejected, and showing how we might better interpret these situated encounters.

The findings demonstrate that a dialogical stance requires us to make a greater distinction between what we might call *voice as children's expression* (the spoken words or other communicative gesture made by a child) and *voice as meaning making with children* (the understanding and knowledge that arises between the child and other interlocutors during communication). The latter is more aligned with 'children's voice' as it pertains to a metaphor within participation (see Section 2.2), however this is still dependent on the former to exist. The findings highlight the distinction between Mills (2017) and Schnoor (2013) sonic aspects of 'children's voice', or Baraldi's (2008) 'children's self-expression', from Mayall (2000) and others conception of voice as knowledge (see Section 2.2.6). This particularly stems from the problems attribution meaning creation to individual actors. In these findings, whilst an expression from a child – the sonic voice – *can* be attributed to an individual child, the meaning making aspect of 'children's voice' occurs intersubjectively, between individuals, both within and across generational boundaries. So whilst this meaning making, still requires a child's expression in order to occur this ultimately distinguishes between 'children's voice' and the expressions of children. There may well be other methods through which children make meaning – play, experience or reflection, for example. *Voice as meaning making* is simply one method pertinent to child participation.

Dialogism introduces a number of challenges for how we might interpret and draw boundaries around periods of meaning making with children. If meaning cannot be contained within a single children's utterance, the question of which other utterances are involved and when does meaning become finalised arises. I have suggested two approaches to finalisation. One, after Bakhtin and similar to Cruddas (2007) accepts a profound unfinalisability, and one, after Linell (2009), which

pragmatically accepts interpretations of emotion, chronology and affect, might be combined to identify when resolutions and agreement are reached. Further research is needed on interpreting emotion and the mechanics of communication to develop the latter.Both of these approaches are useful to the field of participation. Unfinalisability might be more relevant to those involved in participatory research and knowledge production, whilst pragmatic finalisation may be more useful to those involved in political action and social change.

Neither of these concepts resolves a more challenging philosophical question of how we might value past and future children's voices differently, which may need to take into account that childhood and children also have temporal facets themselves (see Cross, 2010; Holloway *et al*., 2019; Uprichard, 2008). However, this finding does add to a debate on how and if difference in meaning within intergenerational dialogue can be resolved, discussed in Section 2.3.5 with reference to Cruddas (2007). Barrow (2010) and Birch *et al*. (2017) suggest that holding difference in tension and reaching pragmatic consensus may not be exclusive concepts, but instead simply different degrees of interpretation. In addition to this, and importantly for this research, they show that whilst the meaning of voice may accumulate and progress over time, it cannot be considered fully stable. In this research I showed how future meanings of voice may build on past meanings, but past meanings may also sometimes be 'forgotten' – if such a term is appropriate. (Section 4.4.)

In addition, I have argued, dialogism necessitates understanding speakers' expressions as intertextually related, with no fixed, finalisable reference for the 'true' meaning of a child's (or adult's) expression. This is based on a dialogical view of language as a social and relational interaction rather than a fixed external code (see Linell, 2009, pp. 24, 91; Marková, 2003, p. 61) which is also explored by Maybin (2006, 2013). I have shown one of the advantages of this for child participation is that it

de-privileges utterances that can be represented easily within written text (i.e. highly organised spoken words), allowing fuller consideration of utterances such as grunts, screams, groans and silences as called for by Mazzei (2009), Rosen (2015) Spyrou (2018) and others (see Section 2.1.3). However, this stance on language also requires emphasis on the contribution of the person interpreting or responding to the child's utterance as an actor of the meaning making process. Importantly, this is not just the immediate interlocutor with whom the child may talk, but also any interpreter approaching their words after the fact, through quotations or other means. Spyrou's (2018) stance that engagement with children's voices is a situated encounter of meaning making can therefore be argued to apply not just to face-to-face communication, but to *any* engagement with representations of children's utterances after the fact.

This highlights the need to use intertextuality to interpret children's utterances. Within this research, an intertextual chain of dialogue could be said to have occurred, starting from the dialogue participants engaged in prior to the project, to the participants' utterances within the research, to my engagement with the transcriptions and recordings after the fact, to my creation of written words on the page, to you as a reader of these words. In a dialogical stance there is no external lexicon of absolute truth with which utterances in this chain can be interpreted, and only comparison within it, or to dialogue elsewhere, may be offered. This supports Alasuutari (2014), Bertrand (2016) and Heiskanen *et al*. (2019), who have all illustrated the potential of intertextuality for understanding child participation. Further connection might be made to Derrida's (1982) concept of *différance*; and Fairclough (1992a; 1992b) and Kristeva's (2002) work on intertextuality might be useful for expansion.

Overall, the findings in this chapter begin to bring out a central feature of Bakhtin's theory of the utterance – that context, as well as text, contributes to the

meaning of voice. In this chapter I have explored three layers of context. Firstly, the context of the Self – the one who makes the approach to dialogue, in order to represent it elsewhere – such as a researcher or participation worker. Here I have tried to show how this person exists within a contextual relationship with the dialogue from which they cannot be extracted, so their identity, experiences and intertextual reference points from dialogue they have otherwise engaged in, contribute to the meaning of the dialogue they seek to interpret. Secondly, the near immediate intertextual context within which a single utterance is situated – the utterances before and after the child's expression – contributes to meaning. Here I argued that meaning rather than being contained within the expression of a single child (or adult), is intersubjectively constructed through the relationship between the interlocutor's utterances and is socially shared to a greater or lesser extent. Lastly, the temporal context: dialogue inherently has a direction of travel, meaning accumulated through time but is not wholly stable. Thus, the point in time at which interpretations are made and the relationship of other utterances to utterances at that point all contribute to the construction of meaning. This emphasis on context builds on the work of writers such as Arnot and Reay (2007), Bragg (2001, 2007), Kallio (2012), Maybin (2006), Thompson and Gunter (2006) and others (see Section 2.3.2), who emphasised the importance of institutional, social, relational contexts to 'children's voice'. In Chapter Five I will go on to explore relational context further.

CHAPTER 5. THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS' STANDPOINTS, IDENTITIES AND KNOWLEDGE CLAIMS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Section 2.2.6 I noted that 'children's voice' is understood as partial, situated knowledge expressed from the standpoint of the child. By contrast, in Chapter Four I argued that the interlocutor(s) to whom the child's expressions are being made is/are also involved in meaning construction. In this chapter, I will develop and consider standpoints from a relational perspective. I will investigate the situated discourses and intersecting standpoint-identity of the group participants (of all ages) and consider how the knowledge claims were shaped intersubjectively, by the interplay of all of these, rather than being expressed from one standpoint in isolation. This will show knowledge claims as arising *between* two or more standpoints, rather than expressed from one in isolation.

My intention was to build on children's standpoints after Alanen and Mayall (2001) and Mayall (2000, 2002), as well as work recognising children's intersectionality (Alanen, 2005, 2015b) and agency in constructing social categories (Leonard, 2015). However, in analysis the distinction between participants' standpoints and their identities was blurred. Standpoint, understood as membership of macro-social categories such as gender, generation and ethnicity (after Alanen, 2016 and Leonard, 2015), was insufficient, on its own, to consider how participants' backgrounds were connected to knowledge claims. Certainly the role of these categories was relevant, but so too was membership of other social groupings, such as belonging to a profession or being a pupil (echoing Arnot and Reay, 2007 and others (Section 2.3.2)). These forms of social categories are not referred to by Alanen, Mayall or Leonard, and membership

of one might also be thought of as part of 'social identity' (e.g. Jenkins, 2014) rather than standpoint. Despite this, in my analysis, the way both types of category influenced the knowledge claim was comparable, and a sharp distinction between them was not implied. Therefore, a clear conceptual separation between concepts of standpoint and social identity was not required to complete the analysis, hence my signposting now to relevant literature that has linked the two.

This question over what type of categories are being referred to by intersectional standpoint theory echoes recent writing by Anthias (2013, p. 10), who abstracts from macro-social categories to societal arenas of investigation such as organisational relationships as well as intersubjective practices and representational discourses. This work has rarely been brought into Childhood Studies (see Larkins and Wainwright, 2015, for one exception). However, some work has already linked social categories and identity. Graham and Fitzgerald's (2010) work on dialogue and recognition of children's identities (see Section 2.3.6) is followed by Thomas (2012) who has theorised recognition at both the individual and macro-social levels. Maybin's (2006, p. 27) exploration of children's identities and dialogue maintains that identity relates to both the social and individual, with identity formed within the macro-social category. Similarly, Valentine (2000) has considered children's construction of narrative identities within social categories. Ultimately, the relationship and overlap between children's social identities and generational categories warrants further discussion, but it is not the topic of this work. For a working terminology I will use 'standpoints' for generational, sexuality, and gender[1] based categories, and 'identity' for associations with a social group abstracted beyond this (e.g. 'pupil'). But a sharp distinction between the two should not be inferred and 'standpoint-identities' will be used to encompass both.

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[1] Ethnicity, nationality, race and class did not play a substantial role in this research, but should be assumed to be part of this concept.

In this chapter I will consider the role of participants' standpoint-identities in the construction of the group's knowledge claims. I will show how participants collectively negotiated mutual recognition of their standpoint-identities through their dialogue. Moreover, this process of recognition could be seen to affect and be affected by the shared meaning and knowledge claims. The chapter is based on the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) of the group's knowledge claim on listening (see Section 3.4.4). The analysis therefore draws on forty-seven dialogue flows (see Section 4.4.2), further supported by other data sources (see Section 3.4); extracts of dialogue in this chapter are examples, rather than the sole source of data. To aid the reader's interpretation, a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of this text is given at the beginning (Section 5.2), along with miniature pen portraits (Campbell *et al*., 2014) of participants

Following this, I will explore the way the prior relationships and past standpoint-identities of participants shaped their knowledge claim on listening, and illustrate how this context framed the discourses situated within the dialogue (Section 5.3). Next, I will address the way in which adult males created space within the situated discourse, which facilitated recognition of their own identities as *expert listeners* (Section 5.4). I will highlight how the situated discourses on listening established by the group, and the accommodation of the adult male identities, both led to distinct practices that constrained what could be established as listening. Then, I will show how two young female participants can be interpreted to be co-agentic in this, further utilising the situated discourse and material objects as a resource to enable recognition of their own standpoint-identities, influencing how listening was conceived as a caring and passionate practice (Section 5.5). Finally, I will show how a third female participant's intervention with this conception could be interpreted as linked to her own standpoint-identity and relationship with other participants in the group. (Section 5.6). Throughout, all descriptions of meanings of utterances should be understood as my

intertextual re-interpretations, and I will reflect on my own relationship of knowing in Section 5.7.

The findings in this chapter build on previous work on recognition, mutuality and shared meaning within intergenerational dialogue (see Section 2.3.5–2.3.6.). This work has considered the way in which dialogue facilitates recognition (e.g. Fitzgerald *et al*., 2010; Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010, 2011; Lawrence, 2019) and enables the construction of shared meaning (e.g. Barrow, 2010; Bertrand, 2014, 2016; Birch, 2017; Lodge, 2005). However, it has not considered the two together, and if or how recognition of standpoint-identities may *affect* the shared meaning, or the way in which shared meaning may facilitate recognition of standpoint-identities.

Theories of intersubjective recognition developed by Honneth (1995) and Taylor (1995) have been very influential. While Taylor's focus is on how we recognise each other in multicultural societies, Honneth's is a more ambitious theory of how social change is driven by struggles over recognition and misrecognition. These theories have been used in various attempts to understand children's participation in terms of interpersonal dialogue (Fitzgerald *et al*., 2010) or more broadly at a societal level (Thomas, 2012). More relevant for my purposes, however, is the intersubjectively oriented and process-focused view of recognition in Benjamin (1988, 2018)

Benjamin (2018, p. 2) sees recognition as the process through which the Self develops and comes to know itself in relation to the other 'who not only provides recognition, but is dependent on the Self's agency and responsiveness to create a working pattern of co-created action'. Benjamin emphasises that recognition is reciprocal with the other, who is equally as reliant on the Self for recognition. Furthermore (Benjamin 1988, p. 59), although breakdown of recognition is possible, the process of recognition occurs, even in the most asymmetrical power relationships .

This makes it useful for considering intergenerational relationships, which are often asymmetrical.

This view of recognition helped re-orientate questions such as if and when recognition of children occurred, to more nuanced consideration of by what means did recognition occur in dialogue, and, how did this intersect with standpoint-identities and the construction of knowledge claims? Assuming recognition is, for the most part, generally present within communication is congruent with this study's view that all communication is dialogical. This can be contrasted to the stance, held by Buber (1970), that recognition occurs only in some types of communication and is a signifier of *dialogue as a privileged form of communication*.

In this way, recognition could be interpreted within the dialogue where there were emerging shared (unfinalisable) understandings of participants' standpoint-identities. Participants could use knowledge claims, situated discourses and other resources to name, embrace, shape or reject aspects of the standpoint-identities that they choose or that were ascribed to them. This resonates with Marková's (2003) ego-alter*,* part of dialogism I will return to in Chapter 6, and with Yuval-Davis's (2010) theorising of dialogical identities.

5.2 OUTLINE OF PARTICIPANTS AND THE KNOWLEDGE CLAIM

5.2.1 Using thick description

This section is a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of one of the group's larger-scale knowledge claims and miniature pen portraits (Campbell *et al*., 2004, p. 142) of the participants. This is presented to inform the reader's understanding of my subsequent analysis by providing in-depth description of the totality of the situation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). While defining the boundaries of the group's knowledge claims was challenging, and claims were interrelated, nested within themselves and extending beyond the case (see Section 4.4), for this analysis the group dialogue coded as "Listening and what it means to listen" during the grounded theory analysis (see Section 3.4.4) was taken to represent a single broad knowledge claim (hereafter, 'the knowledge claim' or 'the claim'). Pen portraits are centred on the aspects of participant backgrounds most referred to in the analysis.

5.2.2 Participant pen portraits

The pen portraits of participants presented in this section illustrate the backgrounds of, and relationships between, participants. They vary in length to focus on the most relevant aspects to the analysis and more could be said about all participants. The pen portraits leak into each other, as this is a relational interpretation of the way in which identities were presented and understood in the group. The participants were not fixed isolated entities, their identities and standpoints in the context of the project were related to their relationships with each other and the contexts of their collaboration, as well as other factors that they did and did not name.

Sean

Sean identified as a 17-year-old white British male. He had care experience, lived in a working-class area and identified as being attracted to women. He described himself as a young person and a college student. Sean was Carl's brother, describing their relationship as "competitive" and often leading to fights. Sean had been involved in participation projects and care support services run by both Mark and Angela who both encouraged him to join the research project. In our group meetings Sean did not speak as much as others and regularly instigated play and jokes, particularly with his brother, but was not disruptive.

Carl

Carl identified as an 18-year-old white British cis-male. He had care experience, lived in a working-class area and identified as being attracted to women. During the interview, away from the group, he described himself as a young adult, emphasising to me that being 18 meant being an adult and he was "more adult" than his younger brother. He also said that being a musician was an important part of his identity. Carl was often very vocally critical of his brother. Like Sean he had received support from Mark and Angela in various projects and services. Carl did not mention having Asperger's syndrome within the interview when asked about his identity, but it was discussed at other times in the project.

Maria

Maria identified as a 19-year-old white British cis-female. She lived in a working-class area. She was care experienced and had spent time inside secure institutions. Maria had recently begun living in her own flat, and told me she felt a lot had changed in recent years. She told me she described herself as a young person "when I'm trying to get my own way" and an adult at other times. Within the interview she described how she had moved on and learnt from chaotic or high-risk situations in her recent past and

was now much better at expressing herself. She described herself as being vocal and opinionated a "civil bitch … a lovely person but I say what I think". Maria was very outspoken on the topic of gender, identifying it as biological rather than social, and arguing that both sexes could take on a variety of roles without it changing their gender. When describing other participants she said she valued those who spoke in a direct and forthright manner. Maria had been involved in participation and care support services with Mark and Angela, who had both provided support for her for several years previously and encouraged her to join the research project. She described the importance of these relationships and the persistence of Mark and Angela in building these connections were important to her. Maria described Mark as the first male she "let in and spoke to" and being perhaps the only person she really trusted. She also said - "I wouldn't have a conversation with Angela for six months but she just kept coming back". In the interview, Maria said she described herself as a young person "when I'm trying to get my own way" and an adult at other times.

Beth

Beth identified as a white British female, who was 15 years old and attracted to the opposite sex. She described herself as "fun, bubbly, outgoing but can be shy" someone who "opens up when you get to know her". I experienced her shyness as self-uncertainty, covered up at times by humour. Beth and Rebecca were friends from the same school, which was in a working-class area. They were observably close, choosing to sit together and talk together whenever possible. Beth, along with Rebecca, came to the project with Luke, who had worked with them in previous projects.

Rebecca

Rebecca identified as a 15-year-old female. During the interview she told me she was born and raised by a white British mother, but unsure of her own ethnicity knowing only that her father was not white, resolving her identity as being white with something else uncertain included. Rebecca described herself as "mature" and "sensible" for her age. Both Rebecca and Beth were keen to emphasise that they were "nearly adults". In the interview - which was conducted jointly and with Luke, at Rebecca and Beth's request - Beth highlighted they were both "nearly sixteen", Rebecca then asked Luke how he felt about them "passing the age of consent". They talked often about boyfriends and both identified as being attracted to the opposite sex. They used sexual undertones in their jokes, sometimes at Luke's expense.

Luke

Luke identified as a white British adult male, aged in his thirties. He identified as bisexual during the interview, but did not refer to his sexuality during the group meetings. He described himself as middle class but said that "sits a bit uncomfortably" as he was from a working-class background and area. He was a participation worker, with a university education in the arts. Luke came across to me as very committed to his work, with a strong sense of confidence in his skills. This came through both in the way he talked about his work and the way he acted within the project. Within the group Luke was one of the most frequent speakers, and usually one of the first to offer his ideas and opinions, often drawing on examples from his own professional practice when doing so.

Gail

Gail identified as a white British adult female. She lived in a working-class area, was university educated and worked in a professional role related to children. Gail was a mother and referred to experiences with her daughter within the interview. I had worked

with Gail intermittently for over five years prior to this research. Within some of the meetings Gail had seemed to me as more reserved, talking less than Luke and Mark. Midway through the project I had discussed this with her, and raised my concern that Luke, Mark and I were dominating discussion. We reflected on the role of gender within this, agreeing that we were both (at the time) uncertain about its influence. We revisited this topic in our interview at the end of the project. Here, Gail described herself as being less interactive in group discussion because she wanted to "actually sit there and listen and think about things", but related this aspect of her personality as coming from her experience of being the "last to get heard" as a young woman growing up.

Mark

Mark identified as a white British male aged in his fifties. He lived in a working-class area but was university educated. Mark was an experienced senior participation worker and previously had worked with all other participants (including myself) on an extensive basis. Maria, Carl and Sean had been involved with participation work with Mark regularly. Carl both described him as someone who helped them talk to other adults, usually decision makers and, 'gives you ideas" about what to say. Mark had a sort of quiet authority within the project. His input often came across as intended to provoke or encourage response from the young participants more than to express his own opinion. He seemed aware he was able to exercise a lot of influence within the group, but attempted not to do so.

Me

I am a white British middle-class cis-male in my late thirties. In contrast to the other participants I do not live in the same town, although I'm familiar with the area and have done some work there. My background is as a participation worker turned participation researcher and I pride myself on trying to be an expert in my field. Unsurprisingly given my role as facilitator, during the interviews several participants identified me as being a

significant influence within the group. Rebecca described me as an "important person" who "made groups like this". A more elaborated picture of myself is found in Section 4.2.

Angela

Angela was a leaving care worker who had supported Sean, Carl and Maria for several years and also had working relationships with Mark and Luke. She only attended three of the meetings, although two were the celebration meal and planning meetings where dialogue was not analysed. In this sense she did not play an extensive role in the project. My contact with Angela was too limited to create a detailed pen portrait. I read her as presenting as female, white, likely of British descent and in her thirties and upper working to lower professional class.

5.2.3 The knowledge claim on listening

Recognising that meaning is profoundly unfinalisable, in this subsection two re-interpretations of the knowledge claim on listening are offered. This is presented in two tables that represent extracts of how the accumulation of meaning throughout the group's ongoing dialogue. This re-interpretation risks presenting these situated discourses as fixed but they should not be regarded as static throughout the project (see Section 4.4). The FDA would likely need a much longer chronology and volume of text to generate a full series of snapshots of these changes. However, I will use the extracts to describe aspects of their modification in Sections 5.3–5.6.

The first extract Table 5.2.3.a takes contains written statements produced by the group during the concluding part of the 'Creating Thomas' activity (see Section 3.3.5), and offers a basic re-interpretation of each one based on my interpretation of the dialogue leading to them. This takes into account both immediate dialogue and related distal dialogue (see Figure 4.4.3.a).

Table 5.2.3.a: Knowledge claim(s) on listening: Written statements

Written statements	My interpretation of meaning
1. Listens and takes action 2. Goes out of way to help 3. Someone who takes in what you say, processes it, takes it into consideration and responds in a helpful and appropriate way	These statements reflect the notion that listening in some way was about hearing and acknowledging the concerns or opinions of the speaker. Good listening was when someone fully understood and acted on those concerns. This was usually discussed as a child speaker and adult listener.
4. Respect	This term was proposed without discussion in the final activity. In my experience it is a term very commonly used when discussing ground rules or similar in young people's services. The frequency of its use causes it to lose substance and meaning, and it is quickly repeated in such activities. Participants are likely to have done similar ground rules activity multiple times, and was a term used without much exploration or objection.
5. [A listener is] someone who is prepared to take a chance and hear what someone else has to say even if it is not what they expect or want to hear 6. If you can speak out loud be able to take criticism	These reflect the participant's claims that listening and acting does not always mean agreeing. In addition, they allude to the emotive nature of listening that was discussed, implying risk may be involved.
7. Not interrupting 8. How we speak 9. Eyes, Ears 10. Silence	These are reductive terms based on the group's emphasis on communication skills. They reflect discussion around the need for the listener to feel 'engaged' by a compelling speaker. They emphasise that a good listener is generally understood to be a good communicator, who makes the audience want to pay attention to them.

11. Someone who genuinely cares, shows an interest and passion, willing to listen to opposing views, the audience wants to engage and continues to [do so]	Alongside 5–9, this statement builds the idea of discussion as an emotive, passionate, highly interactive connection and interaction between people. It links to the participant discussions on the connection between listening and passion.
12. Thomas ♡[Love heart symbol]	This statement was not discussed when it was pinned on the mannequin. It was written by Rebecca and reflects a number of discussions throughout which Rebecca and Beth began to describe the mannequin as a sexually desirable figure – the "boyfriend" of Rebecca. As the mannequin was introduced as a representation of the ideal listener, this positions listening as occurring within a romantic or sexual relationship.
13. Listening means staying focused on the speaker and showing that you care about them [marked with a question mark sticker to show a disagreement]	Building on listening as emotive engagement, this statement, written by Rebecca, reflects the idea that listening is an expression of care about the person speaking. It was marked with a question mark sticker during the activity to indicate open disagreement in the group.
14. Care about what you're telling about	This statement, written by Maria, is connected to statement 13 on caring. It asserts that listening involves caring, but expresses care about the topic (not the speaker).
15. Experience – Lived [marked with a question mark sticker to show a disagreement]	This statement originally said 'Experience'. It linked Maria's assertion that to listen effectively you need some sort of common experience, which was disputed by others during the discussion. The word 'lived' was added in response to this dispute. 'Lived experience' was an iteration of 'shared experience' that arose within discussion of this point.

The second extract, Table 5.2.3.b was produced through the second stage of the FDA (see Section 3.4.4) which identified four situated discourses constructed by the participants within the knowledge claim. These four discourses, *binary child-adult, the failed adult communicator, the child as disengaged audience* and, *listening as caring* are described based on the FDA analysis.

Table 5.2.3.b: Knowledge claim(s) on listening: Situated discourses

Discourse 1: Binary child-adult constructs
In the group's discourse there was an absolute split between constructs of child and adult, with little space for transition or liminality between the two. While the term 'young person' was used, this was simply an older 'child' rather than a transitional stage. The two constructs were also limited in scope. They referred primarily to *service-provider/service-user* relationships*,* those of professionals working with young people. They did not encompass (e.g.) familial, kinship or friendship between child and adult. Listening that occurred (or not) within this narrow relational paradigm, was primarily, but not exclusively, considered as adults listening to children.
Discourse 2: The failed adult communicator
This referred to some sort of adult in a professional role, failing to communicate effectively with children and young people. The "professional" was constructed as an adult who holds authority over a child; a professional by status and role rather than expertise and skill. Most, but not all, "people who work with young people" were said to be failed communicators (see Section 5.4). Failed communicators cannot hold the attention of the children and young people or "engage" them effectively; using poor language and speaking more than listening. This discourse regularly focused on teachers, schools and pupils, but it was not limited to this; the public event presenters also became characterised as failed communicators.
Discourse 3: The child as disengaged audience
Linked to the above, the child or young person was someone expected to listen to the professional. However, they frequently become bored or unable to pay attention and become "disengaged". Disengagement was said to sometimes lead to misbehaviour such as "kicking -off" at teachers. The reasons for disengagement were identified as two fold, firstly the professional is a failed communicator, secondly, the child lacked the skills of the adult to concentrate and focus. As a result, there was limited moral responsibility or agency from the child for their engagement; children who are listened to become engaged and well behaved, children who are not, become disengaged and misbehave.
Discourse 4: Listening as caring
This discourse focused on a mixture of ideas about emotional connection between speaker and listener, as well as the idea that good quality listening demonstrated or enabled some form of caring and emotional interaction. Listening involved showing an interest in the other person, and taking action after listening as a result of caring. Listening also required interactive feedback such as nodding or other forms of body language; to listen well you must use "all the senses" and create a sort of animated emotive interaction with the other party. The term passion was used repeatedly related to this discourse, with varying meanings (see Section 5.5-5.6).

The following five subsections of this chapter explore how these discourses shaped

and were shaped by the knowledge claim on listening and the standpoint identities of

group members.

5.3 PRIOR RELATIONSHIPS SHAPING THE SCOPE OF THE KNOWLEDGE CLAIM

The pre-existing relationships between participants, and the context this created, shaped the scope of the group's knowledge claim on listening by contributing to the *service-provider/service-user* elements of situated discourse (Table 5.2.3.b, Discourse 1). All the young participants had prior *service-provider/service-user* relationships with one or more of the adult participants. These relationships brought them to the project and helped create the context of it being another 'participation project' similar to ones they had previously taken part in with these adult professionals. The adult participants were participation practitioners and their own relationships with each other were all on this basis, reinforcing this context. As such, they are immersed in the macro-discursive context of 'listening' to children after the UNCRC (see Section 2.2).

Although there was no explicit direction from me as a facilitator to do so, the participants rarely considered listening as something that occurred in home life between friends or within generations. Instead, it was implicitly assumed that 'listening' was a reference to *service-provider/service-user* relationships similar to the ones they held with each other and that are talked about with child participation. This was never discussed openly by the group, but their anecdotes about listening nearly all focused on these kinds of relationships and adult professionals listening to child service-users. Their previously established relationships and identities constrained the concepts of adult and child/young person within their discourse to the types of adult and child/young person they were to each other. In turn, the wider policy based discursive context in which the adults were immersed arguably then framed 'listening' as something done by adult professionals to children they work with, rather than other forms. Participants' prior relationships, identities and the macro-social discursive

context can be seen to regulate the production of meaning by the group, producing the situated *binary child-adult discourse* (Table 5.2.3.b).

This finding supports Arnot and Reay (2007), Bragg (2001, 2007) and Thompson and Gunter's (2005) and Kallio's (2012) work highlighting that participation projects occur within a particular set of policy discourses and institutional practices that are designed to elicit voice on particular topics or in particular ways and are sustained by organisational categories or identities. The pre-existing relationships and identities between participants, which is framed by the institutional contexts and practices within which they interact prior to the project, contributed to the *binary child-adult discourse* (Table 5.2.3.b) within the knowledge claim.

By establishing the discourse in this way, participants perpetuated, recognition of these binary relationships and identities, rather than transforming them. Arguably, this might have constrained aspects of Maria and Carl's standpoint-identity. In the interview, Maria (aged 19) described seeing herself as being both an adult and a young person; Carl (aged 18) described himself as being "more adult" than his brother Sean, and both had a sense of moving between stages. The group's *binary child-adult discourse* (Table 5.2.3.b) had no space for the young adult standpoint-identities. Notably, within the group discussions, both Maria and Carl drew on their past experiences of school, rather than their current post-education experiences, thus reflecting the settings where they are positioned as children rather than adults. It could be interpreted that the knowledge claim discourse constrains them to a particular standpoint – that of the child – the binary discourse might also regulate the utterances this standpoint allows them to bring into the dialogue.

This notion of constraint assumes that they wished to be identified differently but were unable to achieve this whereas an alternative interpretation may be more accurate. They may have chosen to support and sustain standpoints as children/young

people within the group. During interviews and elsewhere, Maria and Carl both spoke very highly of Mark, the adult participant who brought them to the project. He had clearly been important to them in their journeys through social care. It is arguable that they chose to perpetuate a child-adult orientation with him, and draw on aspects of their shared biography that supported this, to maintain stasis in a key relationship in their lives. In part this echoes some of the writing on the role of silence in children's voice (e.g. Kohli, 2006; Lewis, 2010; Naraian, 2011; Silverman *et al*., 1998), where it has been shown that not speaking, or in this case not speaking of particular things, can be understood as an agentic choice, rather than a lack of agency. Overall then, interpreting the power exerted by different actors in this scenario, and others in this chapter, relies on guesswork about the intention of the young participants. FDA was not sufficient to confidently interpret intention (see Section 3.4.4).

Regardless of whether standpoint-identities were constrained or chosen, this focus on the *child-adult binary* discourse (Table 5.2.3.b) draws attention to the intersectioning professional, organisation identities and generational standpoints, reminding us that participants came to the dialogue with historical relationships and identities. Enacting or focusing on specific aspects of these standpoint-identities differed between the knowledge claim and setting like the interviews.. These enactments were not conducted by participants in isolation but by way of interaction with each other through the dialogue. This interaction shaped the way the knowledge claim and its situated discourses were constructed.

5.4 ESTABLISHING SPACE IN DISCOURSE AND MEANINGS TO RECOGNISE ADULT MALE IDENTITIES

Mutual and group recognition Mark, Luke and myself as successful participation workers – or perhaps to avoid being recognised as a *failed adult communicator* (Table 5.2.3.b, Discourse 2) – was a significant influence on the claim. I experienced this to be the strongest influence of all, perhaps because it relates to my own standpoint-identity. I consider myself to be a successful and competent participation worker (Section 1.2) and, based on interviews, their utterances in the group and contact in our community of practice generally, I believe that Mark and Luke also view themselves similarly. This confidence might be linked to our privileged status in gendered, generational and class terms.

The failed adult communicator discourse (Table 5.2.3.b), if applied to myself and the other men, would not have sat well with our self perception as experts; it is both a discursive context that might constrain identity and a potential resource for other interlocutors to affect our identity. My analysis is informed by my understanding of my own drives – fear and anxiety of being seen as a failed participation worker is a recurring theme in my early scenic compositions and field notes – and elements of transference and countertransference between myself and the other men may also play a role. I interpreted that none of us wish to be identified as failed communicators and identified that we took steps to adjust the knowledge claim to prevent this from happening. An example of this is illustrated in Box 5.4.a.

Box 5.4.a: Excerpt from group dialogue: Most professionals don't listen

1. **Rebecca:** I find that people who work with young people don't actually know how to engage with young people.

2. **Luke:** No, that's quite a... is that not quite a big statement? … *some* people …

3. **Rebecca:** Well most of the people that we have meetings with.

4. **Luke:** Okay yeah.

5. **Rebecca:** They talk about working with children but when they work with children they don't know how to engage them, so it's about young children.

6. **Luke:** So when we have met commissioners and stuff. [Intoned as statement rather than question]

In line 1 (Box 5.4.a) Rebecca's utterance could be interpreted to mean that no professionals know how to listen to young people – including Luke. This challenges Luke's identification as a competent, confident professional. His response to Rebecca (Box 5.4.a, Line 2,) effectively narrows the meaning interpretable so it is applied only to some rather than all professionals. This creates space for him to identify as one of the professionals who can communicate effectively. Rebecca's reply 'Well most of the people we have meetings with' (Box 5.4.a, Line 3,) refers to meetings her, Beth and Luke attend in other participation projects; however, this still has a certain openness of meaning. Luke could be within the "we" in this statement, setting him apart from the people that can't communicate. However, he could also be part of the "people" that Beth and Rebecca have meetings with, that "don't know how to work with young people". Luke's next utterance (Box 5.4.a, Line 6,) narrows the meaning again to place himself within the "we". He intones this as a statement, and re-interprets Rebecca's "most people" as "commissioners and stuff" – something he would not likely be identified as by Rebecca. Overall, this avoids his being identified as someone who

"doesn't know how to work with young people" and the meaning within utterances are evolved to accommodate a particular identity for Luke.

The additional space in *the failed adult communicator discourse* (Table 5.2.3.b) enables the adult males to identify as a sort of expert listener; one of the few professionals who are able to listen to young people. This expert listener identity – some sort of superior expert – also reinforces traditional masculinity and adulthood standpoints by helping sustain the adult males in gendered and generational positions of superiority. This identity is congruent with the biographies of myself, Luke and Mark, and the identities we expressed outside of the group setting. However, this identity still arises though being recognised by others (Benjamin, 1989). Accordingly, two practices can be interpreted that help to recognise it: *judging participation* and *demonstrating good listening*.

Within *judging participation*, interlocutors critiqued, usually negatively, the ability of other adult professionals to listen to young people (e.g. Box 5.5.a). Both child and adult participants are engaged in this practice, which helps with recognising adult males as *expert listeners*, as they are deemed sufficiently expert to judge their peers. It occurs through stories told about colleagues, criticism of the young participants' educational settings and teachers, and criticism of public event presenters, which all becomes a regular feature of group discussions. Criticism of public event presenters is so extensive it forms one of the knowledge claims made by the group (see Table 4.4.2.a) – broadly, that public events and public event presenters were not good.

The adult males also attempt to *demonstrate good listening* to the participants in the group. This means asserting they are able to engage in the kind of ideal listening between professionals and young people defined within the knowledge claim. One of the ways we do this is through telling stories of our success. In Box 5.4.b we continually escalate and boast about the length of time for which we will be missed by

young people when we leave youth participation projects. Mark, Luke and I seem to be recognising each other's expertise while simultaneously competing to assert who is the most expert of all.

Box 5.4.b: Excerpt from group dialogue: Boasting about *good listening*

My emphasis in bold.

1. **Me: ...when I've left [participation] projects**, I remember about, someone was telling me about when they interviewed the person to replace me and they were like 'Well he's alright, but he's no Dan'

2. [Lines 2–8 contain general reaffirmation and agreement between interlocutors]

9. **Luke:** ...even tonight Beth said to me oh you need to bring me a [participation organisation] form cos I've moved address and I was like, oh I don't work for [participation organisation] any more **I've not done for three months!**

10. [Lines 10 and 11 contain general reaffirmation and agreement between interlocutors]

12. **Mark:** Well I haven't done [youth group] for **seven years** and I did [youth group] for about **eighteen years** and I see somebody in the street, an adult, and it's like 'oh I remember you, are you still doing [youth organisation]?' and it's like 'no no I aren't!'

To maintain their identity as expert listeners, adult male participants also need to ensure the elements of the claim defining *good listening* are things they could feasibly do, especially with the participants they have brought to the project and have relationships with. For the most part this is not an issue, statements such as "show an interest" and "respond in a helpful way" (see Table 5.2.3.a) are very open to wide interpretation of meaning. However, during the final meeting, Maria makes the statement that a speaker must have "experience" to be listened to. She uses the example of her not wanting to listen to a "drugs teacher" talking "off the book" without ever having "touched a drug in their life". The term "shared experience" is introduced to describe this link between speaker and listener.

This development in knowledge claim is problematic for Mark's identity as *expert listener*, it makes it harder for him to *demonstrate good listening* has occurred between him and Maria, whom he has worked with for many years. Maria is care experienced and previously had a lifestyle involving drug use, crime and running away from care. Mark knows Maria and her life story well, but his own life experience is far from this. The meaning of "shared experience" becomes interdependent with Mark's identity as an *expert listener*. If Mark does not have "shared experience" with Maria over drugs or other aspects there is less possibility for *good listening* to occur between them, and it is harder for him to be recognised as an *expert listener*.

It can be interpreted that, over an extended discussion, Mark uses examples of his professional practice to argue that he listens to young people from care or involved in the criminal justice system, and "experience" can be understood as "degrees of experience" or "more understanding of experience" rather than direct experience of crime or care. Maria, bluntly and repeatedly, continues to disagree with him. Interestingly, Luke, who does not have a prior relationship with Maria and is potentially less in need to be seen as someone who has *demonstrated good listening* to her, speaks in support of her. Eventually, Maria acknowledges some relevance to Mark's experience ("you know their experience they [children in care] have shared it with you [Mark] … so you have got knowledge of it, what really happens, not just by the book"). However the debate is only ended by my own intervention to change the topic (speaking to my need to ensure participants interact positively to feel I facilitate this participation group with expertise). The impact of this is that "shared experience" becomes an unclear element within the claim and "lived experience" is written down and spoken by Mark (see Table 5.2.3.a, Statement 15). Had the group engaged in further meetings, the topic would have likely re-arisen for further discussion.

Overall then, there are a number of different ways that standpoint-identities of adult males affect the knowledge claim, re-interpreting and contesting the meaning of elements of the claim, and also affecting the claim discourse in order to enable their particular identities of *expert listeners*. The identities of the men are still reliant on being recognised by the young participants who, in turn, must be identified as people who have been listened to by the adult males to sustain this. As Benjamin (1988, p. 59) describes, recognition is mutual, reliant on the other, even in asymmetrical relationships of power. The practice adopted to recognise the men's expertise begins to encourage dialogue on specific things. This affects the particular utterances that are brought into the discussion.

As well as organisational and generational categories, this also occurs across gendered differences. The contrast between the adult males and Gail, the female adult participant who engaged most substantially with the project, is notable. In interview, Gail described that she preferred to "sit back, listen" during the project, and did not act in concert with the adult males. However, her identity was partially outside of the *service-provider*-based identity the adult males had. While many would consider her an expert, this was not a way she talked about herself. Furthermore, she also held no prior relationships with young participants so had less possibility of them recognising she had *demonstrated good listening* to them in the past. This very different set of interdependencies makes it hard to draw further insight into gender versus generation. Not least because the males' confidence could be seen as reflecting gendered privilege, and Gail linked her own reservation to gender. Overall, though, it is clear that generational boundaries could not be understood in isolation from gendered boundaries, reinforcing claims by Leonard (2015) and Alanen (2015b) about the intersectionality, and that the social identities could be situated within macro-social categories.

5.5 RESHAPING LISTENING AS CARING

Continuing to emphasise the dynamism of knowledge claims (Chapter 4), Rebecca and Beth, two young participants, were able to use practices and discourses within the dialogue, as well as material objects, to reshape elements of past meaning in the knowledge claim. This reshaping is interrelated to, and simultaneous with, mutually recognising their sexual and gender identities, and occurs by way of interaction with each other and Luke. However, both recognition and the reshaping are only partially successful.

Noting again the limits of the research methodology, some speculation on participants' intentions can be made to explain this partial success. In their interview and the group's discussions, Beth and Rebecca expressed aspects of their standpoint-identities relating to sexuality. Beth highlighted that they were both "nearly sixteen" which Rebecca swiftly pointed out to Luke (who was present) was "past the age of consent". Their talk between each other, but within the group, often focused on boyfriends, and they frequently made innuendo-laden jokes directed toward Luke, often based on puns related to his name. Luke was aware of this, and he attempted to downplay or ignore the jokes. On other occasions he drew on his authority as their worker to lightly reprimand and state the jokes are "not appropriate". We might assume assertions of sexual identity by Rebecca and Beth could be problematic for Luke. A worker engaging in innuendo laden jokes with children and young people would be considered unprofessional and potentially predatory.[2] Children's identities are frequently desexualised in educational settings (Valentine, 2000). There is arguably a strong general motive, and professional expectation, for Luke to resist reciprocally recognising Beth and Rebecca's sexuality.

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[2] I should make it clear I observed nothing that suggested Luke acted inappropriately or unprofessionally toward the young women, nor did he encourage any sexual behaviour or make any advances. My experience was that he dealt with these comments by downplaying the humour, changing topic and light reprimand.

Nevertheless, through his *expert listening* identity Luke is positioned as someone who listens to Rebecca and Beth (see Section 5.4). We see this demonstrated in Box 5.5.a where Luke, Beth and Rebecca, and Gail all discuss public event presenter three. Luke is disparaging the presenter by making reference to his own expertise, and highlighting that he himself would have shown more interest in the young people present (this includes Beth and Rebecca). Rebecca and Beth enthusiastically agree with these comparisons. This example reflects the practice of *demonstrating good listening* (see Section 5.4) and is a regular occurrence.

Box 5.5.a: Excerpt from group dialogue: Discussion on public event presenter three

1. **Luke:** ...My work's all about involving experts by experience, alright in a different field but if [the public event presenter] had talked more about his experience of that, rather than lots of examples of different groups which I could have looked up myself on google like, it wasn't anything, he didn't really, he didn't talk about the methods that all those projects used. How they actually empower people. He just said, they are doing this here, they are doing that there. I didn't come away thinking, oh I, like I'd like to have come away, as somebody who works with young people, thinking oh I really want to try that, that sounds interesting that's a new way of doing things, and I didn't, I didn't learn anything.

2. **Gail:** Yeah cos he was saying about like use social media and everything, and obviously there is ways now of getting loads and loads of information.

3. **Rebecca:** We could have just googled all of this.

4. **Gail:** But that's just getting lots of information.

5. **Luke:** Because...

6. **Gail:** I wasn't sure what it was influencing.

7. **Luke:** The other attendees in the room, I'm sure they would have [learnt something]. Alright you're working in a specific field, but you can still share things about your approach that people can pick up to use on any project whether you are doing things with social workers or erm... children living in deprivation or whatever it may be. But that was all very project specific, it wasn't anything about empowerment or involving experts it was just a list of these are doing, and kind of fancy diagrams that look quite nice but didn't really convince me that he really worked in that way.

8. **Me:** Mmm this is almost like a running theme isn't it? When people talk to us about their project it feels really hard to get under it like how do YOU talk to someone, how do you listen to someone?

9. **Gail:** mmmm [agreement]

10. **Me:** Like it's the same sort of stuff you were saying about [another public event presenter] and said a little bit about [a third public event presenter] as well… is that how do you... it's almost like you want to get that feeling of talking to someone one to one and what does it feel like when you are sat with people like this.

11. **Luke:** and I think the interesting thing is cos they all know young people are going to be here don't they, there's four young people in the room, so it was me doing that, if it was me doing a presentation, I would make more of an effort to go and speak to or involve those young people, but it didn't feel like, it just felt like he was just doing a presentation and they just happened to be here, whereas...

12. **Rebecca:** That's what I meant by saying it was talking about young people like we were not in the room.

13. **Gail:** mmmm

14. **Luke:** …or even just like even simple things like when he was leaving if he'd have come over and said. oh it's really great that you have taken your time to be here in your own time, just those sorts of things kind of make, because these four are all here in their own time they could be off doing other things.

15. **Rebecca:** You know like he was talking about how they [public event presenter's young project participants] work on Saturdays, he doesn't really notice that we are here.

16. **Beth:** I have responsibilities!

17. **Rebecca:** Yeah we're here like seven o'clock at night listening to him speak!

18. **Beth:** Yeah, donk!

19. **Rebecca:** He doesn't realise that!

Beth and Rebecca's attempts to reshape the knowledge claim arise within the intersection between Luke's *expert listener* identity (and the practices in the dialogue supporting it) with the *listening as caring* discourse (Table 5.2.3.b). The idea of listening as caring is originally introduced by Gail, slightly before Box 5.5.a in the same meeting. She relates it to "being interested" in the person speaking to you, as well as a sense that animated "passionate" speakers can help sustain and create this interest. The idea is generally accepted by the group, and an important implication is that *expert listeners* (such as Luke) "genuinely care" about the people they listen to. Luke emphasises this

last point several times. As it is well established, through practices such as Box 5.5.a that Luke listens to Rebecca and Beth, this implies he cares about them.

The intersection creates a possibility for Beth and Rebecca to assert recognition of their sexual identities. One way this is done is by introducing a sexual element to the concept of passion and caring. Implying a sexual dimension to the meaning of the term passion, suggests, in context of the previous dialogue, that Luke may be passionate about them. In the example below, when Luke uses the term "passion" as part of his sustained criticism of Presenter 3 (Box 5.5.b, Lines 1 and 3). Similar to earlier in the discussion (Box 5.5.a), Rebecca again supports Luke's criticism, agreeing that the presenter lacked "passion". Beth later (Box 5.5.b, Lines 4–10) extends this by suggesting Luke shows "passion" toward her and by adding an innuendo about tickling. These utterances build on the previous discussion that Luke would be more attentive toward the young women than the presenter (Box 5.5.a), and begin to suggest he would be more passionate, perhaps in a sexual way toward them. While the joke and the understanding is clearly shared by Rebecca and Beth, Luke does not respond directly. It might be assumed he either does not share the meaning, or does not wish to acknowledge it.

Box 5.5.b: Three excerpts from group dialogue in chronological order: Public event presenter three and passion

1. **Luke:** I can't say he [the public event presenter] came across as very passionate.

2. **Rebecca:** No I don't really remember anything he said already.

[substantial text abridged]

3. **Luke:** You would think somebody [like the public event presenter] who is trying to embed that approach and do things differently, would come across with a bit more passion and yeah…

[substantial text abridged]

4. **Beth:** [reading from a Post-it note written by Luke] 'Show some passion'

5. **Luke:** Yeah.

6. **Beth:** Is this for me?

[substantial text abridged]

7. **Luke:** Yeah, I wrote 'show lots of passion'.

8. **Beth:** He wrote [reading from Post-it note] 'show lots of passion, need to convince people they are genuine cos they aren't just' [pauses]

9. **Rebecca:** [takes over from reading the Post-it note] 'and they aren't just ticking boxes'.

10. **Beth:** Thought that said *tickling* boxes!

[laughter]

Rebecca and Beth's attempts to bring a sexual dimension into the *listening as caring discourse* (Table 5.2.3.b) are further extended by their use of material objects. As part of the group activities I introduced a dress maker's mannequin, which I explained was to represent the ideal listener and asked participants to pin Post-it notes with their ideas about listening on. Although I'd intended to purchase a gender neutral mannequin as a blank canvas, it arrived from eBay with an Adonis-like torso that was clearly male. Across several meetings Rebecca and Beth personified "him" as their "boyfriend", Beth joked numerous times about "my Tom" suggesting other people "touch his abs". Other participants are fully aware of this, it becomes a running joke

within the project. At one point they ask Luke to use Rebecca's phone to take a photo of them with the mannequin. When they take an expressive pose, Luke tells them it "probably isn't appropriate".

Reflecting Lawrence's (2019) claims that children can use material objects to enter into and extend dialogue, this might be interpreted as Beth and Rebecca using the mannequin ("Thomas") to associate to "the listener" as an object or person of sexual desire, and allude to the prospect of listening occurring within a sexual relationship. This was never openly articulated in the group's dialogue. With a discourse based on listening within *service-provider/service-user* adult-child relationships (Table 5.2.3.b *binary child-adult discourse*), sexual interaction between listener and speaker is morally and legally forbidden. The mannequin appears only in the group's final statements as "Thomas ♡". (Table 5.2.3.a, Statement 12). However, my scenic compositions and field notes regularly recorded and brought attention to the importance of personifying this object to interactions between Beth, Rebecca and Luke, and it's regular use in innuendo-based jokes directed at Luke.

The impact of this on the knowledge claim is that all three parties 'arrive at a point they would not get to alone' (Lodge, 2005, p. 134) in the way they construct shared understanding, within the listening as caring discourse. Some level of the meaning is shared, each interlocutor seems to believe caring/passion is connected to listening. It can be interpreted that Rebecca and Beth ascribe a sexual meaning to this. Highlighting unfinalisability, it can be considered Luke may not be aware of this, or he may not share this, or he may also be aware and/or share this understanding but prefer not to acknowledge it because of his professional discomfort. This further supports Cruddas's (2007) concept that we move imperfectly toward shared meanings. All three interlocutors can be understood to be co-agentic in construction of this meaning in this example. They work both with and against each other to construct the concept of

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listening in a way that best facilitates recognition of their identities. Adding to the intersection of generation and gender already described (Section 5.4), sexuality is also central to this scenario and meaning construction occurs within, as well as across, generational boundaries.

Importantly, rather than standpoint-identities *leading to* situated knowledge claims, the negotiation of new shared meanings occurred simultaneously alongside the assertions to recognise standpoint-identities. In a process of continual adjustment and realignment, a complex web of continuously evolving interrelationships between recognition and the knowledge claim(s) was established. Although standpoint-identities did not radically transform, they were in the process of 'becoming' (Lee, 2001; Yuval-Davies, 2010, p. 271); imperfectly shared meaning and standpoint-identities were continuously and dynamically triangulated[3] together. Davidson (2001), in his philosophy on intersubjectivity, refers to triangulation as fundamental to establishing the social character of language and thought. He defines it as 'the mutual and simultaneous responses of two or more creatures to common distal stimuli and to one and another responses' (p. xv). Marková (2003) (discussed in Chapter Six), makes extensive use of this concept, understanding identity as the position one adopts toward another *in relation to an object*.

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[3] Not connected to triangulation after Denzin (1970) used in Chapter Three

5.6 INTRA-GENERATIONAL ALLIANCES AND INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

For another young woman, Maria, when the idea that listening involves caring and passion is discussed at the final group meeting it is problematic. She is open about her objection to this, demonstrated in Box 5.6.a. The group is discussing public event presenter four, who Maria had disagreed with during the public event. Discussion is animated and interspersed with laughter, with participants cutting into each other's utterances.

Box 5.6.a: Excerpt from group dialogue: Discussing public event presenter four

1. **Mark:** Yeah and I thought, and I thought [public event presenter 4] was quite a nice genuine guy, he *was* interested in what you had to say. He wasn't saying 'no, I disagree with you' and challenging you was he? He was saying 'oh tell me more'.

2. **Maria:** No he tried making me, like, think the same as him, he were like a cult leader or something.

    [Group laughter]

3. **Mark:** You think he was trying to brainwash you?

4. **Maria:** Yeah! he was!

5. **Angela:** I thought he might have been being passionate.

6. **Maria:** no ....

    [Multiple voices, unclear]

7. **Maria:** Passion's gotta be truth behind it there was no..... [cut off by Luke]

8. **Luke:** But if somebody's passionate about something even if there is not ... truth behind it is that not, I'm not saying there wasn't truth behind what they guy was saying but it...that's not better than somebody just not being passionate at all and just dry and boring, like even if you are really disagree with somebody

9. **Mark:** [Unclear]

10. **Luke:** if you really disagree with someone, if they are passionate then at least you can have... an interesting conversation that might lead on to some [cut off

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by Maria]

11. **Maria:** That's how they get ya! [laughing]

    [Group laughter]

12. **Maria:** That's how they get you in! you can't fall for that one

    [Group laughter, multiple voices]

13. **Angela:** [attempts to speak through Maria's laughter, unclear]

14. **Maria:** You need your own opinion! [laughs]

15. **Gail:** It is though isn't it, if you are passionate enough to get people talking about it, but not so passionate that they won't listen to anyone else's opinion isn't it, it's sort of finding out that balance.

Later in the meeting, more objections from Maria arose. As shown in Box 5.6b, Luke is reading out statements written on Post-it notes by other group members during a previous activity. Any statements the group 'agrees' on are due to be used in the next stage of the activity. He is reading each in turn, almost to call for objections to them from others participants. After reading each one he places it into a new pile to represent a decision being made. This creates the effect of each statement being presumed to be agreed after Luke has read it aloud, unless anyone vocalises objection to it. Silence from the group is treated as agreement and Luke moves quickly between Post-it notes as most do not speak, until Maria raises her objection to caring.

Box 5.6.b: Excerpt from group dialogue: Caring and listening

1. **Luke:** This one [Post-it note] said, I think this is Rebecca's 'Listening means staying focused on the speaker and showing you care about them'.

2. **Angela:** ahhhh.

3. **Luke:** and this one says 'Listen and take action'

4. **Maria:** I don't think you have to care about someone.

5. **Luke:** and this one says 'go out of the way to help'.

6. **Mark:** Sorry, Maria did you say something?

7. **Maria:** I don't think you have to care about someone to listen. You listen to the police, you don't know the police and you don't care about one

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8. **Luke:** But do you listen to the police? The same level that you would listen to your mate who you care about, do you listen on the same level do you think?

9. **Maria:** Depends what I'm talking about

10. **Carl:** Yeah depends on the topic but..that's because you listen more if the topics about..

11. **Maria:** [at same time as Carl] if the topics about

12. **Carl:** ...topics about something you care about.

13. **Me:** is it about the difference in sort of power there? cos that sort of stuff about caring about ...

14. **Maria:** [same time as Me] if its a topic I cared about

15. **Me:** ...is about saying kind of adults or teachers or workers only really listen if they care about young people's lives whereas its a different sort, it's more like taking instructions really

16. **Maria:** I'd say caring about the topic, not the person that's speaking

17. **Me:** so about the topic not the person, ok .... I can see there is a really long one [Post-it note] down there as well, is that yours?

In the first excerpt (Box 5.6.a) Maria objects to the idea that a passionate conversation is a positive thing, with humour she likens the public event presenter who Angela calls "passionate" to a "cult leader" who tries to "get you". Notably, Luke (Box 5.6.a Lines 8 and 9) defends the idea that passion is important and both interlocutors interrupt each other to make their utterances. In the second extract Maria (Box 5.6.b, Lines 4 and 7) objects to Luke's utterance, made with reference to Rebecca, that "'listening means showing you care about someone", (Box 5.6.b, Line 1). Again we see Luke pushing Maria's assertion out of the dialogue, first by moving on to his next utterance without stopping to respond to Maria (Box 5.6.b, Line 5) and next by directly disagreeing (Box 5.6.b Line 8) after Mark prevents him from moving on with the activity (Box 5.6.b, Line 6).

Maria is a care experienced young person with highly chaotic, risk-focused incidents in her teenage years. In her interview Maria identifies that she "doesn't like to let people in" and trusts very few people, "especially men". During interview, she

describes initially rejecting relationships with both Mark and Angela in their professional roles; however, she also identified them as the main people in her life who listen to her. Mark's *expert listener* identity is by now well established, and the growing discourse of *listening as caring* (Table 5.2.3.b) with some element of passion potentially starts to be interpretable as meaning this form of listening is present in Mark and Maria's relationship. In contrast to Rebecca and Beth's relationship with Luke, this might be quite objectionable to Maria, especially when framed in a sexual manner and related to 'passion'. Maria's attempts to reshape the discourse so listening does not require caring *about the person* and passion could be understood as resistance to having her relationship to Mark sexualised by Beth and Rebecca's innuendo about the meaning of passion. She may be motivated, for example, by her care identity and possible experience of abuse prior to coming into care, relationship to support workers (e.g. Mark and Angela), her wish to keep the notion of passion out of supportive listening relationships, her wish to retain an identity as a child who is listened to, and association of passion with adulthood or indeed other identities and relationships not mentioned here. Again, the methodological limits of the study do not allow interpretation of intention. Nonetheless, resistance appeared to be evident.

This scenario demonstrates how dialogue is productive rather than reproductive (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010). Although standpoint-identities only shift in small steps, they are 'becoming' (Section 5.5) and their movement triangulates with an evolving knowledge claim. The imperfectly shared meanings of caring and passion initially established by Luke, Beth and Rebecca do not remain as fixed, but provide a starting point for re-interpretation by both Maria and Carl and enabled by Mark (Box 5.6.b, Line 6). This evolves meaning to incorporate a much less personal 'care about the topic'. Reading the dialogue on care, Maria and Luke are interpretable as acting in opposition to one another (Box 5.6.b, Lines 1, 4 and 7), their understanding of the term care is imperfectly shared, and this creates a source of diffraction between them. Carl

attempts to facilitate coherence by expanding the meaning of the term care (Box 5.6.b, Line 10). Rather than opposing the idea that caring is part of listening, he re-interprets what caring is, managing to both support Maria and allude to Luke's original term, Maria repeats Carl three times (Box 5.6.b Lines 11, 13 and 16). Carl's repetitions of Luke and Maria's subsequent repetition is reminiscent of Davies' (2009) work on paraphrasing as a method of showing affinity and maintaining community. Ultimately, I act to end the topic of discussion by moving on to the next Post-it note (Box 5.6.b, Line 17). Although meaning might be considered finalised for all practical purposes (Linell, 2009), interpreting the extent to which the meaning of 'care' is profoundly finalised, shared and/or agreed at the end of this interaction means being attentive to the emotional aspects of participation beyond voice (Kraftl, 2013). My emotional experience within this encounter is it *felt* like disagreement. But I am drawn to the interrelation of my own emotions with participants in forming this interpretation. The way my own emotions may affect or be affected by others, and how feelings of disagreement or agreement between participants may develop will play a role in how I then interpret and share the utterance meanings. Another participant with a differing emotional encounter might feel there is a strong shared understanding on the topic of care.

This series of interactions highlights the possibility of intra-generational differences of understanding, and the role of intra-generational dialogue. Despite being in the same generational category, Maria and Carl's stance contrasts Rebecca and Beth's. Mark's enabling of Maria's intervention places him in a contrasting position to Luke, despite both sharing common gender, generation and professional identities. It might be speculated that Mark, Carl and Maria, who are not involved in the call for recognition of Beth and Rebecca's sexual identities, are not motivated to sustain the idea of passion within the claim in the same way.

Two competing areas of meaning within the claim formed around listening and caring supported by intra-generation groupings. In one camp, Luke, Beth and Rebecca assert that listening means caring about the person, with varying forms of passion within this, interrelated and bound up with mutual recognition of their identities between them. On the other side we see Maria, supported to varying extents by Carl and Mark, objecting to this, arguably led by a rejection of the implications it had for her relationships and own standpoint-identities. Notably these groupings are cross-generational, which speaks to James' (2007) and others' rejection of a universal children's view. Furthermore, each grouping reflects the participants who have the strongest historical relationships together outside of the project. These intra-generational alliances further emphasise the way disagreement, degrees of difference in meaning and imperfectly shared understanding within the knowledge claim can be understood as closely interrelated to and triangulated with the relationship participants hold and the identities they express toward each other.

5.7 REFLECTING ON MY RELATIONSHIP OF KNOWING

The findings above represent only a selection of examples from the FDA analysis and more could be reported, for example about Sean, Carl, Gail and *the child as disengaged audience discourse* (Table 5.2.3.b), than is possible in the space here. Doubtless more could also be said if other knowledge claims were analysed. As any qualitative researcher, I have selected findings I view to be the most important and interesting within the case. It is notable that my analysis starts from my own standpoint-identity and works outwards – the expert in participation work (see Section 1.2). This builds on the fraternal connection I felt for Mark and Luke with similar identities through a gendered and generational dimension, as well as construction of adult-child relationships in the context of service provision that reflects my own professional background. It speaks also to my own sexuality – predominantly heterosexual – and centres the analysis relating to sexuality on opposite sex interactions. Finally, the choice of knowledge claim to analyse speaks to my own project to consider the collective outputs produced by intergenerational groups (Section 1.2). Analysing the group's claim on listening was an attempt to analyse the formal theme they had as a participation group. However, more of their dialogue was devoted to discussing the public events (see Table 4.4.2.a). I made a conscious decision that the knowledge claim on listening was most relevant to practice, and a smaller, more manageable volume of dialogue would be beneficial to work with. Ultimately though my engagement with the research encounter and construction of these findings is still led by who I am, and my concerns.

Overall, my analysis is deeply rooted in my own standpoint-identity and experience of the shared meaning that arose within the dialogue. Others may come to alternative interpretations, and participants will have experienced the incidents above

from the position of their own standpoint-identity. As I have argued within Chapter Four, any approach to interpretation relies on the Self, and the Self's experiences providing part of the contextual meaning of dialogue and the intertextual reference points. This analysis therefore comes from my place *within* the dialogue, both as a participant at the time and as a researcher afterwards. What I offer here is still a situated partial knowledge (Hill Collins, 1990, 1991) of the group's interactions.

Thankfully, my task was not to analyse the specific interactions and interrelations within the dialogue to produce a full interpretation of participants' knowledge claim(s). Neither was it to identify transferable types of interaction or patterns within intergenerational dialogue. Instead I seek only to present the possibilities for and implications of considering intergenerational dialogue relationally, and one of these possibilities is that interpretation is in part situated within the researcher's standpoint-identity. Spyrou (2018) argues that in a dialogical perspective no one interpretation of voice is truer or more authentic than another. Similarly, Thayer-Bacon (2010) maintains that in relational ontologies one cannot make truth claims free of Self context (see Section 3.2.3). Thus, we can recognise that another researcher conducting the analysis of meanings in these utterances from their own standpoint-identity would come to a differing interpretation, but this could be regarded as no more or less authentic. Multiple researchers operating reflexively might be required for full interpretation, although, some interpretations may be ethically prioritised if they enable further realisation of children's rights or participation. In this study however, the findings do not rely on the veracity of interpretations of meaning. My focus is on process rather than outcome.

5.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In Chapter Four I emphasised the importance of context, particularly temporal and intertextual context as part of 'children's voice'. The findings in this chapter underscore the importance of *interpersonal relational* context in creation of meaning. They highlight how the standpoint-identity of the person with whom the child is speaking becomes, alongside the child's own standpoint-identity, involved in constructing meaning. They illustrate the role that the 'listener' plays in constructing 'children's voice' when children's expressions are responded to.

In this study there was meaning creation *between* adults and *between* children, as well as between adults and children. Thus, the findings support James's (2007) and Fielding's (2007) arguments against a homogenous children's view or voice: participants within the same generational category (both adulthood and childhood) influenced the claim in supporting *and* opposing directions. A relational concept of 'children's voice', then, needs to include both inter- and intra-generational communication.[4] Furthermore, the findings speak to Alanen (2015b), Artzman *et al*. (2016) and Leonard's (2015) arguments to consider other intersections with standpoints and generational categories (Section 2.2.6). Gendered, sexuality and organisational categories played a role in meaning construction, alongside generation. This extends Leonard's (2015) list of intersectional categories by adding sexuality and organisation, the latter supporting Arnot and Reay (2007). Ethnicity, class and nationality are absent in the findings, though this may be attributed to a greater degree of homogeneity between participants in these areas.

Participants' standpoint-identities were dynamic and had the potential to change and shift. This was illustrated by Beth and Rebecca's assertion of their sexual

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[4] Though it could still be politically argued that the metaphor and discourse of 'children's voice' does not refer to communication, which is primarily child-child, and that participation always requires children to communicate with adults at some point in the process in order to influence adults.

identity through Luke and the mannequin, as well as Maria's adoption of a standpoint-identity of a young person within the group, when framed by her dialogue with Mark, but adult when outside of the group. The findings builds therefore on Spyrou's (2018, citing Mazzei and Jackson, 2009) claim that 'children's voice' does not come from a stable identity and Leonard's (2015) work on children's agency in constructing relational categories. Adding to Mazzei and Jackson (2009), it is important to stress lack of a stability within identity was not something chaotic or fragile. Within this research, standpoint-identities were evolving, but anchored by more stable (but not static) resources such as biography, historical relationships and institutional context. Participants' standpoint-identities did not radically transform, instead they were negotiated and recognised in minute steps from utterance to utterance.

Importantly, this relational negotiation of standpoint-identities did not apply just to the young people, but also adults. I have shown how the adult males negotiated their identities as *expert listeners*, and how all adults helped sustain a particular type of *professional-adult-as-service-provider* identity. Thus the concept of *dynamic* standpoint-identities applies to across generations. Extending Mayall's (2000) concept of children's standpoints substantially, *both* children's and adult standpoint-identities in this study were inherently relational, dynamic, and framed by generational and other boundaries. The utterances of the young people in this research did not come from a stable homogeneous common child's viewpoint, instead *they were expressed between* two dynamic relational standpoint-identities characterised by generation as well as other intersections.

The interaction and process of recognition between these 'becoming' (Lee, 2001; Yuval-Davies, 2010) standpoint-identities can be understood as triangulated with the knowledge claim. The way knowledge claims are made was continually negotiated to facilitate the recognition of participants' standpoint-identities. For example, the adult

males in this research acted to adjust the knowledge claim about adults not being able to listen to accommodate their own identities as *expert listeners*, which in part informed a series of later interactions about care and sexuality. These were never fully finalised and the development of the claim was ongoing.

Through the findings in this chapter, I have begun outlining a relational picture of 'children's voice' as something occurring between (at least) two interlocutors who hold dynamic standpoint-identities and exist in a relationship of recognition with each other. Both interlocutors' utterances and standpoint-identities are involved in shaping the socially shared knowledge that arises between them, and this shared knowledge is triangulated with mutual recognition of the standpoint-identities of both interlocutors. Alongside this, generational difference between interlocutors, other categorical differences and similarities can play a role in mutual recognition of the interlocutors' standpoint-identities. When more than two interlocutors play a role, consideration of both inter- and intra-generational communication is also required. The implications of this triangulation are discussed in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION: A DIALOGICAL MODEL OF "CHILDREN'S VOICE"

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Through the literature review I identified a need for a critical consideration of 'children's' voice', from a relational perspective, that rejected the *pure voice within* and transmission-based communication. I showed that a limited body of literature had signposted toward intergenerational dialogue and dialogism as a starting point. This work highlighted the need to account for intersubjective construction of meaning, as well as the role of recognition and context within voice. In this chapter I aim to fill elements of this gap with a dialogical model of 'children's voice' developed from my research findings. The chapter begins with an overview of the model (Section 6.2.1) before going deeper into the core elements (Section 6.2.2-6.2.4) and then considering current limitations and areas for further research (Section 6.3).

6.2 A DIALOGICAL MODEL OF 'CHILDREN'S VOICE'

6.2.1 Overview of the model

This section gives an overview of the dialogical model of 'children's voice' developed in this study. The model envisages two or more interlocutors in an act of dialogue, with the dynamic standpoint-identities of all interlocutors playing a role in knowledge construction and connected through mutual recognition. Together, interlocutors create dynamic, intersubjective knowledge claims, which are informed by past meanings and triangulated with interlocutors' standpoint-identities. Shown diagrammatically in Figure 6.2.1.a and Figure 6.2.5.b, the model is grounded in the findings of this research and further underpinned by the dialogical epistemic perspective in Marková's (2003) and Linell (1998, 2009), which follow Bakhtin's utterance.

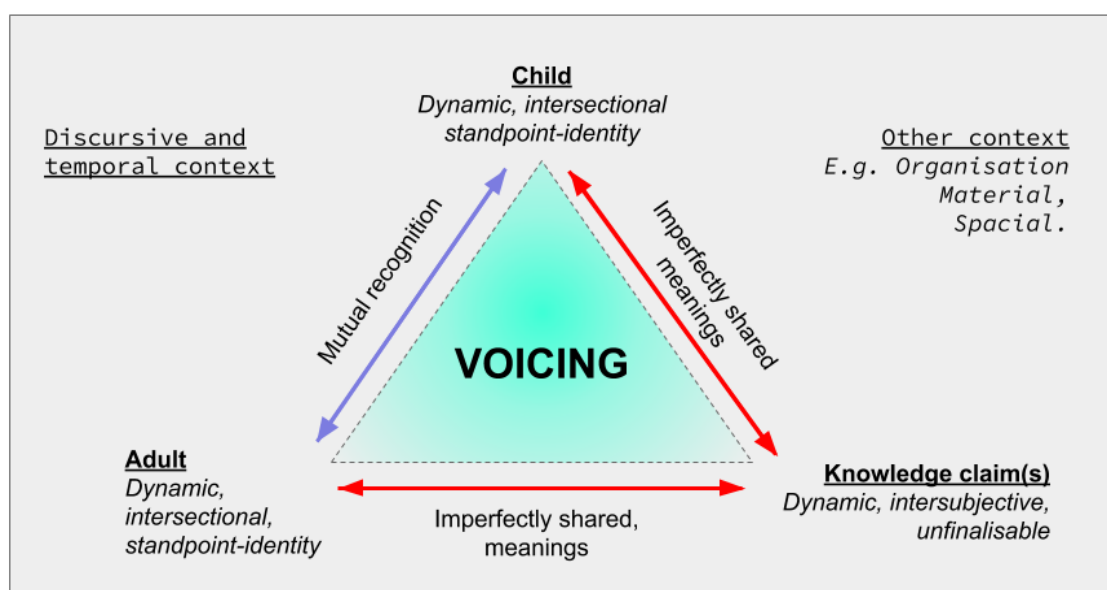**A dialogical model of 'children's voice' shown as dyadic interaction**

Figure 6.2.1.a

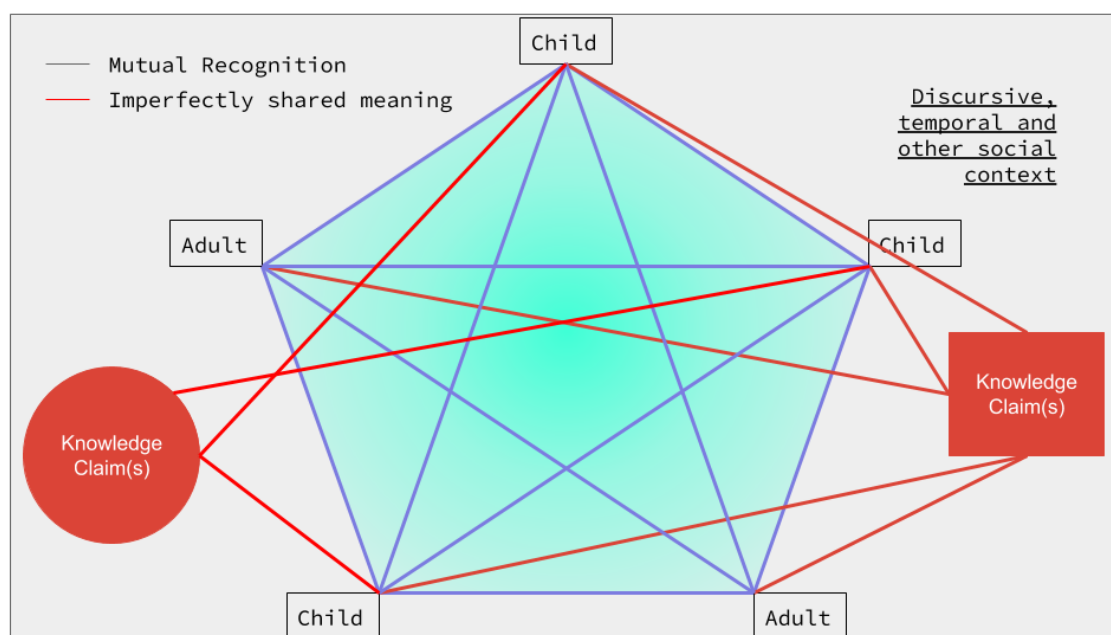## A dialogical model of 'children's voice' shown as a small group interaction

Figure 6.2.1.b

The model emphasises voice (ing) as an interaction between individuals, rather than a property of an individual, or a product of interaction. 'Children's voice', owing to it's apostrophe, remains in quotation marks. Intergenerational dialogue is a more accurate term, but risks confusion with *dialogue as a privileged form of communication*, where this model aims to apply to all forms of 'children's voice'. Similarly, I have avoided using the common terms 'speaker' and' 'listener'. Whilst not inaccurate, all individuals are both, and the sense of directionality they imply is misleading. *Interlocutors* (speaking partners) avoids this.

Figure 6.2.1.a shows a dyad of an individual child and an individual adult. Figure 6.2.1.b shows a small group of children and adults. The same underlying concepts occur in both settings, though the latter diagram has simplified labeling. In the model, both child and adult standpoint-identities are dynamic and intersectional, linked

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by a relationship of mutual recognition (the purple lines). Mutual as in two-way, but not necessarily asymmetrical. Triangulated to interlocutors' standpoint-identities are their dynamic knowledge claim(s). These are profoundly unfinalisable, and intersubjectively constructed through imperfectly shared meanings. The link between interlocutors and knowledge claims is two way; past meanings regulate, and are resources for, the development of new ones. Through triangulation the claims also facilitate recognition of interlocutors' standpoint-identities. Both claims and standpoint-identities are continually adjusted to accommodate each other. Context is shown as the box encompassing this interaction. Context is a fundamental part of voice, illustrated by the dashed line (Figure 6.2.1.a only), and colour fading between the box and the triad. Discursive, temporal and other context are all part of the way meaning that is established through voice. Meaning, rather than being held within interlocutors' expressions, is formed through both context and expression. This makes each instance of voice a unique and unrepeatable occurrence, that is interpretable through comparison to other occurrences.

Providing further epistemic underpinning, this model builds on Marková's (2003, p. 147) use of triads within dialogicality and social representation, which resonated with the model that emerged from my findings. Drawing on Bahktin's utterance Marková (p .81) provides a general epistemic model of communication and intersubjective meaning making (p. 89) that is fundamentally relational (p. 79, p.101). As well as supporting triangulation, by emphasising change Marková (p. 1), reinforces the temporality and dynamism (p. 150) that is evident in my findings. Her use of Bhaktinian concepts of language (p. 154) further echoes my findings on the *undomesticated, non narrative voice* (Section 4.3) and the role of intertextual interpretation. In addition, my model draws on Linell's (2009, p. 95) commentary on Marková which emphasises social and temporal context; this supports my observation and assertion that context is part of

'children's voice'. Linell's (1998, p. 17) earlier work, contrasting dialogism and monologism, on which Marková draws, also provides general articulation of the epistemy by outlining underlying concepts about the relationship of communication and knowledge. A few childhood scholars have drawn on Marková, including Barrow (2010), Löfdahl and Hägglund (2007) and Olsson (2017), but none have developed an empirically grounded and theoretically underpinned model of 'children's voice'.

Whilst standpoint-identities are dynamic and intersectional, the foregrounding of intergenerational terminology in the model speaks to the political project of participation. The literature review identified that 'children's voice' was a metaphor *within the context of child participation* relating to communication, a trope of which was the adult 'listener'. The project of participation is concerned with generational marginalisation, relations and difference. Notwithstanding the importance of other intersections with childhood, to speak to this field, intergenerational terminology is used. This distinguishes it from a general model of children's communication; it is a lens specifically for child participation. Generational categories were relevant in this study, the adult-child binary was established in the case studied by the group interactions, and through the dominant UNCRC discourse on child voice, but they may not be reproduced in all dialogue. The use of the social categories 'adult' and 'child' might therefore be replaced by other standpoint-identities in other iterations of the diagram/model.

6.2.2 Two standpoint-identities in mutual recognition

The model conceptually distinguishes between *children's expressions* and 'children's voice', responding to Spyrou's (2017) call to decenter the child, by acknowledging at least two subjects are involved in 'children's voice'. This is supported by findings in Chapter Four, where I showed how meaning was not contained within the

expression but constructed intersubjectively between participants. I argued if 'children's voice' *as a metaphor for meaning construction* was intersubjective, it could be separated, conceptually, from *children's expressions* and their individual sonic voice. 'Children's voice' involved the interlocutors with whom the child spoke, as well as others beyond. In Chapter Five I then demonstrated the involvement of other participants' standpoint-identities, alongside the child's own. I will return to both of these points below, here they show the necessity of (at least) two subjects, the child and the other, to the model.

Contrasting Lundy's (2007) 'listener' the other interlocutor is not an abstract, unspecific, respondent to 'children's voice', but they are part of its creation, and a whole subject in their own right. The specific instance of 'children's voice' is created *between* both subjects, unique to their interaction, at the moment it occurs. Backing this, drawing on Bakhtin's utterance, in Chapter Four, I showed how even quoting the participants' expressions elsewhere created new meanings and new instances of voice. Thus, the most reductive model of 'children's voice' possible is a dyad, shown as child and adult in Figure 6.2.1.a. This follows Marková's (2003, p.xiii) *ego-alter*, two subjects in relation, and the irreducible ontological unit of communication.

With this dyad, I conceive 'children's voice' as occurring *between* the standpoint-identity of the child *and* the standpoint-identity of the other. This extends Mayall's (2000) representation of voices coming *from* a children's standpoint with no account of any adult presence. I also maintain, building on Leonard (2015), that a variety of intersections are involved alongside generation. In Chapter Five I showed participants' gender, generation and sexuality were all central to their intersubjective meanings of caring and listening. This was not on the basis some meanings were more

common to particular categories[1]. Instead interaction across and within these intersecting categorical boundaries shaped meaning by way of participants' standpoints-identities. Following Arnot and Reay (2007), I showed intersections went beyond Leonard's macro-social categories and included social identities such as organisational categories. I highlighted the effect of participants' prior roles as service providers and service users on meanings. So while my model foregrounds generational terms, its standpoint-identities include a multitude of intersections of which generation is just one. Interlocutors have both similarities and differences with others' standpoint-identities. These may be more or less important than generation to meaning construction. This notion of multiple and intersecting standpoint-identities is at the heart of Hill Collins (1990) work, but not visible within the literature on 'children's voice' in childhood studies.

In the model, these standpoint-identities are dynamic evolving together through voice, in a relationship of mutual recognition. Supporting this, in Chapter Five I identified how standpoint-identities of participants were co-evolved through the dialogue across the course of the project. Not in the sense of radical change but by minute increments, informed by past biographies. First, I showed that adult males embellished their historical organisational identities to further develop their identity as experts, in a way that was reliant on the recognition of the young participants. Next, I argued that two young women had evolved parts of their generational and sexual standpoint-identities across the mutual but contested recognition from one of the adult men. Finally I also showed how Carl and Maria expressed their generational identities as adults outside of the group, but sustained youth identities within it. This was framed by shared biography and recognition of Mark who provided care services for them.

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[1] Although this was not precluded however, and larger statistical studies will likely also illustrate this.

Participant's Standpoints-identities were developed during the dialogue through mutual recognition, in specific relation to each other and their interaction. This builds on Graham and Fitzgerald's (2010, 2011) and Thomas' (2012) work on recognition. My model posits recognition as an *ongoing mutual* process (e.g. after Benjamin 1988; 2017) rather than a status to be achieved for children. Both child and adult are continually becoming (Lee, 2001) something together. Marková's (2003, p.101) ego-alter relationship and concept of identity (Marková, 2007) fits well here, she envisages the two subjects as coming to know each other and themselves through the identities they develop *toward* the other, emphasising change in this. Mazzie and Jackson (2009) further support voice's lack of fixed identity.

Both intergenerational and intragenerational dialogue plays a role in this model of 'children's voice'. During this research it occurred alongside and in connection to each other. In Chapter Five, I showed how there were interpretable differences of opinion between child participants on the role of "passion", and similarly between adults. Supporting James' (2007) arguments against a universal children's viewpoint, both sides did not come to this discussion with a homogeneous position. Instead, participants developed meanings across and within generational boundaries during their group dialogue. Figure 6.2.1.b, illustrates intra-generational dialogue alongside intergenerational dialogue, in a setting comparable to the group in this research. Furthermore, intra-generational dialogue acted as a precursor to, and followed on from, the intergenerational discussions within the project meetings. In Chapter Four, I argued dialogue within the project was potentially part of a chain of meaning construction across participants' lives. I illustrated how the knowledge claimed on listening linked to dialogue outside of the project itself. For example, during the project, child participants

described their conversations with other children at school. Intra-generational dialogue therefore formed a precursor to intergenerational dialogue.

6.2.3 Constructing meaning intersubjectively

The model posits meaning as intersubjectively constructed and imperfectly shared between interlocutors. Meaning creation cannot be wholly attributed to any single expression and therefore any single individual. My exploration of participants' key terms such as "governance", "paperwork" (Chapter Four) and "passion" (Chapter Five) illustrated how the meaning of expressions could be interpreted to vary. They meant different things to different participants as well as to the same participant at different points in time. Even when participants quoted each other, these repeated expressions had new meanings. I argued the meaning of these keywords, rather than being fixed, was established through the intertextual relationship with the expressions round them, shifting over time and imperfectly shared with others. Expressions were heteroglossic, encompassing multiple stances and variations in meaning. Because the constructed meaning could not be exclusively attributed to any one expression it was not exclusively attributable to any one individual. Meaning was constructed intersubjectively through multiple participants' utterances. This is further supported by Alasuutari, M. (2014), Bertrand (2016), Gillan and Cameron (2017), Heiskanen et al (2019), Maybin (2013) and Tertoolen et al. (2017). The model follows the Bakhtinian position, used by both Marková (2003, p.81) and Linell (1998, p.24), that language is not an external fixed system of codes. Communication is a chain of unique utterances, and intersubjective acts of meaning construction.

Building on this, my model contends that context, as well as text, is a fundamental part of voice. In Chapter Four I showed how the meaning of Beth's expression "Peekaboo", was contextually dependent on the utterances around it. I also

charted the knowledge claim on listening, showing meaning was chronologically evolving and not necessarily stable. Because meaning was not fixed within expressions it varied with temporal context; past expressions informed future meanings. Ultimately, I argue while 'children's voice' is still reliant on children's expression to exist, the social, intertextual and temporal context in which these are made, and their connections to expression of others, be they adult or child are fundamental to meaning and voice. Whilst the need to understand quotations, dialogue, and observations as partially generated by context is well developed in some qualitative research (eg inspired by Delueze and ideas of assemblage), in the practice field of 'children's voice' and in to an only marginally lesser extent in Childhood Studies, the need to recognise context as an aspect of voice is almost entirely absent. I am therefore proposing a full departure from transmission models, where voice occurs within, rather than by way of, context. (Lundy's (2007) 'space', for example, enables voice but does not affect voice's meaning). My position is extends Arnot and Reay (2007), Bragg (2001, 2007), Kallio (2012), Thompson and Gunter (2006), arguments, who highlight importance of context, but stop short of viewing context as fully part of voice

As a result of this intersubjectively and the role of context, knowledge claims are profoundly unfinalisable. Their meaning cannot be objectively fixed, so the model conceives 'children's voice' as something to be engaged with *from within the model*. In Chapter Four, similarly to Spyrou (2018), I argued no one interpretation of participants' expression was truer or more authentic. I maintained there was no way to produce a context-free interpretation of dialogue, only a situated encounter with it based on intertextual comparisons. I argued any interpreter cannot extract themselves from the social context, nor access a context free lexicon against which to compare children's expressions. Building on Spyrou, I contended any act of interpretation of children's expressions, *even reading quotations*, is a further act meaning construction where the

interpreter is making intertextual comparison to dialogue elsewhere in their lives.

Supporting this, throughout this work I have shown how my own Self has influenced my interpretations of dialogue. In Chapter Four I showed how my categorisation of knowledge claims were linked to my concerns as a project facilitator, and how my emphasis on flow, interaction and multiple meanings of words was linked to my cultural biography. This demonstrates how an interpreter must situate themselves inside, or in connection to, the interlocutors in the model; they exist *within* the surrounding context. They must conceive themselves as an actor in connection to, or within, the triad, and identify the effect they have on meanings. Speaking to debates on how shared understanding is reached (see Section 2.3.5) the model supports Cruddas's (2007) view that meaning is profoundly unfinalsable and we work imperfectly toward shared meanings.

Despite the challenge of this, in Chapter Four, drawing on (Linell, 2009, p. 88), I showed that pragmatically finalised interpretations of meaning could still be reached if changes in topic and feelings were considered. By paying attention to the *feeling of agreement* (or lack of it) interpreters engaging with children can make judgments about when understandings are shared between themselves and the child(ren). This allows practitioner's to make a more confident interpretation that their own understanding of key utterances was close to that of others. Such interpretations are cruder and more general, and still have a level of profound unfinalisability. But they are useful if the imperfections behind these is acknowledged, and the possibility of divergence is reported. In Section 5.2 I illustrated one possible approach to this reporting, collaging a thick description of texts to allow various readings.

6.2.4 Triangulating with knowledge claims

In the model, knowledge claims are dynamic discursive objects that evolve over time through interlocutors dialogue, and are not wholly stable. They are both a product of interlocutors' past interactions, and a limitation or resource for future interactions. By charting the evolution of the knowledge claim(s) on listening in Chapter Four I showed that meaning had developed over time. Importantly, while past meaning informed future meaning, past meanings could also be discarded from the claim, either forgotten or removed. In addition, throughout Chapter Five I also showed the way this claim was continually adjusted as the dialogue progressed, including by changing previous meanings. Knowledge claims then were not static objects that were added to piece by piece like bricks onto a wall. Instead, they were evolving objects which are reshaped and manipulated by interlocutors over time. Situated in wider macro-social discourse, these objects form a resource with which participants extended their dialogue, that both enabled possibilities and created limitations. When participants discussed 'what it means to listen' they collectively constructed and reconstructed their meaning of listening. By speaking of it together they transformed what it was, but their past discussion still framed and limited how those transformations could take place. For example, listening was initially constructed by participants to refer to a child-adult relationship, which strongly limited, but did not entirely prevent, the possibility of discussion on listening between peers or romantic partners. However at the point where caring and passion were connected to the knowledge claim, some participants began to use this as a resource to imply listening in a sexual context. Marková (2003) refers to Moscovici's (1984a) *fossilisation* to explain this: as the meanings become more strongly shared, while still holding potential to change, they can become tradition and taken for granted.

Most importantly within the model, knowledge claims are *triangulated* with

standpoint-identities and both are simultaneously evolved, informing the development of each other. In Chapter Five, I argued that participants' standpoint-identities were triangulated with their knowledge claim(s). I showed how assertions that adults couldn't listen were modified to accommodate adult male expert listener standpoint-identities that were sustained by mutual recognition and other features of the dialogue. This in turn allowed space for two young women to assert their sexual and gender identities by co-opting the practices in the dialogue, leading to possible adjustments within the knowledge claim. Through simultaneous mutual recognition and intersubjective meaning making participants continually evolved both their knowledge claim(s) and their standpoint-identities in relation to each other. The dynamic nature of both allowed them to be readjusted to accommodate each other. In my model the child and the other continually negotiate the way the knowledge claim is represented. This opens up or closes down different forms of recognition that can occur between interlocutors. The past meanings of the knowledge claim(s), provide both a resource and limitation for ongoing recognition of standpoint-identities. Shown by the triad in figure 6.2.1.a, this triangulation is one of the most important elements of the Model. Recognition and meaning construction are interrelated together, rather than being independent or parallel processes. Graham and Fitzgerald (2010) speak to this, highlighting that mutual understanding and recognition are both involved in dialogue, but stop short of the dynamism and interrelation between both that I am suggesting. There is a strong basis for triangulation in dialogism however. Marková (2003, p.152) drawing on Moscovici (1984a, 1984b) outlines the concept extensively, and Bauer and Glaskills (1999) and Linell (2009) have developed similar iterations. Davidson's (2001) intersubjective philosophy provides further underpinning.

6.3 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.3.1 Towards a dialogical model of collective 'childrens' voice'

The literature review showed 'children's voice' referred to both interpersonal communication and children's representation in the public realm. Although this research is not sufficient for a model of collective voice, the interpersonal model I have set out may provide the foundation for one. The triad (Figure 6.2.1.a) shows two individuals from different social groups in an instance of dialogue. There is no basis to substitute this directly for two social groups and collective voice. Instead, modeling across longer periods of time and with a greater number of interlocutors (i.e. toward the collective level) should be based on connecting instances of interpersonal dialogue in series. This would involve situating each instance within wider webs of meaning, interaction and macro-social discourses. An initial sketch is shown in Figure 6.3.1.a.

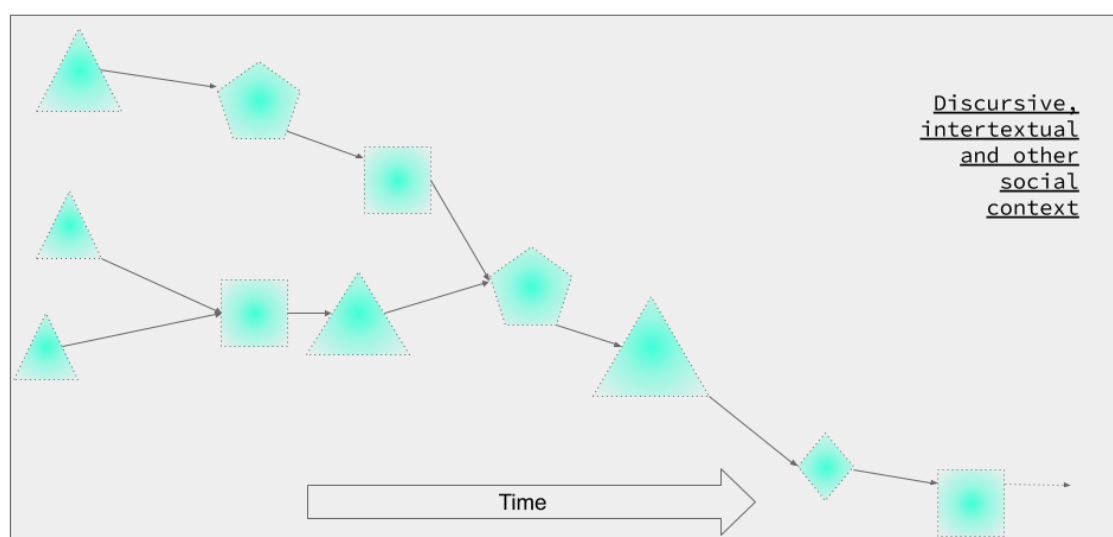**An initial model of collective 'children's voice'**

Figure 6.3.1.a

This diagram reflects the chain of meaning within participants' knowledge claims I developed in Chapter Four (Figure 4.4.3.a). This showed how meaning chained between instances of dialogue across the project. Figure 6.3.1.a imagines this type of

chain at a macro-social level. Different shapes represent instances of dialogue; they are versions of Figure 6.2.1.a and Figure 6.2.1.b with varying points to illustrate varying numbers of interlocutors. Each instance is linked by a flow of meaning.

Bakhtinian analytical approaches based on genre analysis, frames, and intertextuality may usefully guide further research on collective voice. These have been explored by Alasuutari (2014), Bertrand (2016), Heiskanen et al (2019) and Maybin (2006) at institutional level. Maybin (2006) for example, compares how the same children talk in the playground compared to the classroom. A similar intertextual approach might be used to chart meaning evolutions at a larger scale by comparing expressions longitudinally across multiple schools, families and communities. However, further research on this as well as recognition of childhood as a social category and sustained historical phenomenon, similar to Thomas, (2012) is required. Links might be made to Yuval-Davies (2010, 2012) and Moosa-Meetha (2005) who have drawn on dialogism for relational approaches to voice and citizenship respectively.

6.3.2 Power and agency

Further research on power, intention and emotion within this model may be beneficial. This may help identify what forms of communication practitioners should engage in to best support children's participation. I have suggested (Section 4.2.3 and 5.8.6) that Gallagher's work (2008a, 2008b) after Foucault provides a starting point, but that Foucault's *discourse* is not compatible with dialogism (Section 3.4.4). Crossley's (2012), writing on power and intersubjectivity argues Foucault's *power* can be developed so actors can affect discourse as well as be affected by it which may be useful. However, in Section 5.3 I showed interpreting if participants were affecting or affected by situated discourses required interpreting intention. Thus a sound basis for interpreting intention is required to identify the flow of power within dialogue. This might

also link to a more detailed understanding of emotions, which I showed were important for interpreting agreement and pragmatic finalisation (Section 4.3.3) speaking to Kraftl (2013) and others. This supports the case for Childhood Studies to engage further with psychology (Spyrou *et al*. 2018b)

Further research might bring together my dialogical model with uses of agentic assemblage (see Section 2.2.5) and contribute to wider debates around children's agency, action and voice. Using assemblage, Mayes (2019) like Mazzei and Jackson (2017), posits that voice is a *thing* produced through the intra-action with other *things.* By contrast, the dialogical model distinguishes between the act of voice and it's product, knowledge claims. This suggests an approach to assemblage where voice *is* the intra-action between *things*, (the interlocutors, the context, the expressions, past meanings etc.) and knowledge claims*,* rather than voice, are the *things* produced. Such research may speak to concerns about relative emphasis between action and voice in child participation (e.g. Percy-Smith and Burns, 2013, Stoecklin 2013) by uniting both

6.3.3 Transferability: Dialogue or dialogism

This model is an epistemic lens to consider child participation in various settings. However, recognising the debate on dialogism as epistemy or theory (see Linell, 2003 and Rommetveit, 1998), replicating this research in other social contexts may be useful to further establish the transferability. Dialogical approaches, in addition to my participatory group setting, have already shown usefulness in the family (Gillen and Cameron, 2017), in primary school (Maybin 2013), in early years settings (Lawrence, 2019), in high schools (Bertrand 2014, 2016), online (Davies, 2009) and with disabled children (Alasuutari, 2014; Tertoolen et al. 2017), but these studies are all within the Global North. Studies utilising the model in a variety of cultural and project settings would be beneficial.

6.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Within this chapter I have attempted to fulfil the need identified through literature review for a model of 'children's voice' which steps away from modernist ideas of personhood and toward relationality. Grounded in the research findings I have developed a dialogical approach to 'children's voice' to:

- See voice as an interaction between the child and (at least) one other interlocutor, with both parties linked together through mutual recognition.

- Consider that the standpoint-identities of both interlocutors, as well as the wider social, temporal and intertextual context are part of the intersubjective construction of meaning.

- Emphasise the dynamic and temporally evolving, though not necessarily unstable, nature of both knowledge claims and standpoint-identities, seeing both as interrelated together in an ongoing process of development and fossilisation.

In the following Chapter I will explore the value of this approach to Childhood Studies and the political project of participation.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

 This thesis helps fill the gap in literature around 'children's voice', a concept central to child participation lacking critical exploration. It also supports my personal project to develop a model of 'children's voice' that could conceptualise collaboration between policy makers and young people. In this research, a case study in children's participation was created to allow detailed exploration of 'children's voice'. Through a relational approach and focus on intersubjective construction of meaning*, a*nalysis of the findings has shown that 'children's voice' is not the property or expression of the child but a situated interaction between interlocutors. By analysing dialogue in the case study, I showed that each engagement with voice is a unique moment of meaning making, where the meaning created is determined by the relationship between expressions and the standpoint-identities of both the child and the other interlocutors.

    The literature review showed only a handful of scholars had considered 'children's voice' in this way and they had contrasting and underdeveloped ideas on how meaning construction occurred. An even smaller number suggested this may also require consideration of mutual recognition. The various critiques of 'children's voice' made from relational perspectives had signposted towards intergenerational dialogue, but through imprecise terminology risked confused *dialogue as a privileged phenomenon* and the epistemic perspective of dialogism. It was clear from the review that a relational perspective on 'children's voice' focused on intersubjective meaning construction was required. This needed to reject entirely transmission based concepts of communication and the *pure voice within the autonomous child.* Modernist concepts which, through their implicit use in the UNCRC, and dominant models of participation (e.g. Hart, 1992, Lundy 2007) have been uncritically adopted by many in child participation and Childhood Studies.

To develop this, I have argued that 'children's voice' is not synonymous with children's expressions but is a metaphor for meaning construction. I argued children's expressions, *as well as the context they are made in* are part of 'children's voice', stressing the involvement of other interlocutors' expressions, both from immediate interlocutors and those beyond this. Speaking to Arnot and Reay (2007), Kallio (2012) and Maybin's (2006) emphasis on context, although I have not explored an extensive ranges of social settings, I have sought to demonstrate that the meaning constructed though 'children's voice' is profoundly inseparable from the context in which voice is enacted. Using dialogism after Bakhtin and the theory of the utterance, I have demonstrated meaning is not contained exclusively within the expression of a single child (or adult). Instead, I have shown it is constructed through the intertextual relationships between the child's (or adult's) expressions and the expressions of those they are in dialogue with. I have shown that these intertextual relationships and this 'dialogue', whilst grounded in the immediate conversation a child is involved in, extends through interactions throughout their lives and the lives of any other who seeks to engage with their expressions.

Through this, I have developed an approach to 'children's voice' that emphasises the involvement of other interlocutors so extensively that dialogue becomes a theoretically more accurate term. This answers, and supports, calls by Cruddas, (2007); Fielding, (2004, 2007); Graham and Fitzgerald, (2010); Hill *et al.*, (2004); Lodge, (2005, 2008); Mannion, (2007); Taft, 2015 and Wyness, (2013b) for a focus on dialogue. As part of this approach, extending Mayall (2000), and with reference to Leonard (2015), I have argued that the standpoint-identities of other interlocutors, as well as the standpoint-identities of the child, are involved in voice. With further reference to Graham and Fitzgerald (2010), I have argued both interlocutors' standpoint-identities are dynamic, intersectional and in a relationship of mutual

recognition during dialogue. Both adults and children are continually negotiating their standpoint-identities together.

As part of the emphasis on context I have highlighted the importance of temporality and change to 'children's voice'. I argued both the knowledge claims constructed by voice and interlocutors' standpoint-identities are dynamic and evolving together in triangulation. I have shown that the knowledge claims constructed through 'children's voice' evolve chronologically, and whilst past meanings inform future meanings, knowledge claim(s) are not necessarily stable or fixed. Thus, the point in time at which interpretations are made, and the relationship of that point to dialogue at other points in time, profoundly affects the meaning that can be interpreted. Following Bakhtin, I have argued each act of 'children's voice' is unrepeatable, specific to its unique temporal context. Supporting, Crudas (2007), I maintained, any subsequent interpretation of children's (or adults) past expressions brings new context, new intertextual relationships and thus new meanings. In addition, I have argued that, during dialogue, knowledge claim(s) are co-evolved together with standpoint-identities. The dynamic nature of both allows them to be triangulated together and continually negotiated between interlocutors to accommodate each other. Past knowledge claim(s) become both a resource and a limitation for the recognition of standpoint-identities and the future claims that can be constructed through 'children's voice'. My empirical work here further enhances Spyou's (2018) position, derived from James (2007), Komulainen (2007), I' Anson (2013), Lee (2001), Mazzei (2009) and Mazzei and Jackson (2009), that voice is not a stable reflexive message coming from a fixed inner identity, but a situated encounter. Although I sidestepped the ethical question of how child participation might value past voice, compared to future voice, my thesis provides a way to conceptualise this situated encounter.

To do this I have developed a dialogical model of 'children's voice' (Figure 6.2.1.a). This is grounded in my research findings and further supported by Marková (2003) and Linell's (1998, 2009) dialogical epistemy. The model envisages voice as a dynamic interaction between two interlocutors, through which imperfectly shared meaning and mutual recognition produce, and are affected by, shared evolving knowledge claims. Areas for further research and development include the role of power, agency and emotions in this, and it's extension to collective voice.

A dialogical model of 'children's voice', shown for dyad
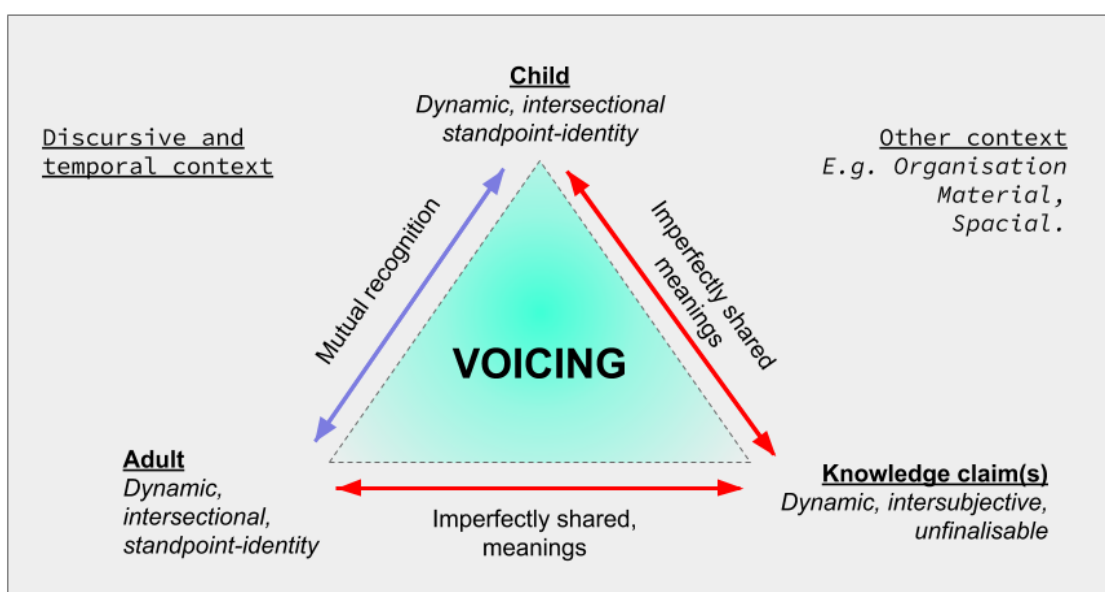

Figure 6.2.1.a (repeated)

In this model I have stressed the context of the Self, and the profound unfinalisability of meaning. Here I have tried to show how any person who interprets, or engages with 'children's voice', exists within a contextual relationship to the dialogue, from which they cannot be extracted. Their own standpoint-identity and intertextual reference points contribute to the meaning of the dialogue they seek to interpret. To demonstrate this, and address concerns about use of quotation (Clark and Richards, 2017; Tisdall, 2012), rather than taking children's (or adult's) isolated expressions as authentic representations of meaning, I experimented with a variety of interpretation

methods during this thesis. Working with passages of dialogue using tools such as discourse analysis, scenic composition, intertextual comparison, relational reflexivity and pragmatic finalisation, has been fruitful. Though much work is required to make these methods practice ready, and there was insufficient space for me to fully discuss next steps, future practice oriented publications will synthesise these tools in more detail..

Overall, the value of this model to the field of child participation and Childhood Studies is that it enables consideration of participation that isn't based on two homogenous sides, child and adult, in contest over decisions and power (after Hart, 1992; Lundy 2007 etc.). The model replaces this with a variety of actors, existing in relation, with dynamic, intersecting standpoint-identities, where communication and meaning making is collaborative and interactional, occuring by way of their standpoint-identities and surrounding context. This solves issues with the presumption of a homogeneous, universal childrens' view (see James, 2007). It allows the field of children's participation to entirely remove the fatally flawed concept of an unchanging *pure voice within* the child, and a child whose voice is unaffected by others.

To use this dialogical model of voice as a lens in the field of children's participation and childhood studies may mean;

1. **For all:** Abandoning the idea that supporting adults can create spaces or methods of interacting with children that are neutral environments or processes with no effect on the meaning produced through 'children's voice'. Instead, ask how do supporting adults and environments interact with the child and vice versa, when voice is enacted. This demands a high degree of reflexivity from supporting adults, who must consider how their own standpoint-identities, intentions and needs for recognition come to the fore when they engage with children. It also demands consideration of how discourses the child or

supporting adult is engaged in can, enable, limit and inform what can be meant together and how identities are realised through voice.

2. **For running consultations, or trying to capture 'children's views' on a topic:** Considering how 'children's voice' is produced differently, with different interlocutors in differing contexts. For instance by situating participatory encounters with the same participants in varying contexts, such as Gillen and Cameron's (2017) comparisons of the dinner table and the classroom. However, embracing intertextuality fully might also mean avoiding the objectified study of children's expressions entirely. Instead, turning to collaborative creation of texts between the practitioner and child, created for the purpose of creating knowledge with the reader (e.g. Moxon *et al.* forthcoming; Satchwell *et al.,* 2020). Dialogism requires new approaches to representing voice within outputs from participatory activities (such as consultation reports) that do not rely on quotations. It is necessary to abandon the idea 'children's voice' can be perfectly captured and replicated for future reproduction. This means rethinking consultation reports and the like as texts, informed by dialogue with children, that go on to generate new meanings with their readers and audience.

3. **For service user participation and involvement in public decision making:** Although I noted the model is currently limited for conceiving collective 'children's voice', it may be particularly useful for the vehicles used for participation in public decision making which are often based on small groups (Crowley and Moxon, 2017). The model suggests moving away from 'representative' forms of public participation, where policymakers are lobbied with pre-formed recommendations drafted in advance by groups of children and young people. Then moving towards deliberative forms, where children and

policy makers engage in discussion to generate policy and service ideas collectively. Deliberations should be ongoing processes, to recognise the temporally dynamic nature of 'children's voice'. This means conceiving institutional participation as an ongoing system of communication through which meaning flows continually between child services users and professional service providers instead of conducting snapshot consultations.

4. **For those working with children with learning and communication difficulties or very young children:** In this model and dialogism generally, language competence is relationally and socially situated. This reduces emphasis on communication which can be represented clearly in written forms, and the idea of mastery of language (Linell, 1998, P. 27, P. 111). Speaking to broader ideas on competency, rather than seeing children as lacking voice unless/until they master coherent reflexive language use, they can be conceived as *differently competent* (Morrow and Richards, 1996) language users. They may *work at* (Hutchby and Moran-Ellis, 1998) language competency in varying *relational, contextual and temporally expressions* of competency (Moran-Ellis and Tisdall, 2019). The model does not privilege any one style or use of communication, such as that which might often be described as 'well composed' or 'well articulated'. This responds to concerns that children's participation ignores *non-normative, undomesticated voices* (Spyrou, 2018, P.95). By placing equal emphasis on these expressions, professionals can treat those with 'limited communications skills' as fully able to participate in voice and respect their potential to do so. It shifts onus onto adult supporters to create contexts and interactions that enable voice, rather than presuming that some children cannot express it.

By providing a critical deconstruction of the concept of 'children's voice', and a model that is rooted in a relational ontology, this thesis contributes to the political project of child participation. It does so by allowing greater consideration of the interdependence of 'children's voice' with those around them and the context through which voice is produced. Advancing understanding of voice and dialogue in this way provides a stronger theoretical grounding to improve child and youth participation initiatives. It allows institutions and practitioners to have for more sophisticated consideration of how we might, for instance, include children within democratic policy making, enable them to affect change in legal or social care proceedings, or ensure they have their rights and citizenship realised. Any critical debate between theory and practice is an ongoing process where new developments have both strengths and limitations. With this, I have noted that ideas about what sort of communication with children should be privileged are underpinned by goals and values relating to the purpose of that communication (Section 2.3.4). As a result this thesis does *not* give a definitive guide on how to communicate with children. However, it provides practitioners a sharper lens with which to ask 'What sort of communication should we engage in with children, *in order to...*'. This question allows voice to be re-considered for the various competing goals and rationales for child participation (enhancing citizenship, promoting rights, informing policy, enabling agency etc.). Changing the ending of this question may lead to differing answers. Also, it calls on practitioners to reflect more deeply on what they are personally and professionally contributing to the process of dialogue. Rather than being a set of practice recommendations, the model is a tool to support the ongoing process of reflection through which participation practitioners can critique and improve their work based upon a sound understanding of the contribution they seek to make to the political project of child participation. It signposts participation practitioners to areas in which their work might be improved, to enable further discussion and debate. In the next stage of my own contribution to the political, I intend to disseminate

and train practitioners to apply the model, stimulating further dialogue in the sector on the forms of communication needed to support child participation across different settings.

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APPENDIX 1: LITERATURE REVIEW SEARCH TERMS

The literature search was conducted using an EBSCO search followed by scrutiny of titles , abstracts and journal titles, to assess quality and relevance.

EBSCO search

The search combined a number of subsearches into two final search phrases. EBSCO web host advanced search page was used, in combination with the search history page to combine searches.

Subsearch phrases		
S1	TI (participation OR participatory) OR AB (participation OR participatory) OR SU (participation OR participatory) OR KW (participation OR participatory)	Searches for *participation* or *participatory* within titles, abstracts, keywords or subject terms.
S2	TI (child* OR youth OR "young people*" OR Adoles* OR Youth) OR AB (child* OR youth OR "young people*" or Adoles* OR Youth) OR SU (child* OR youth OR "young people*" or Adoles* or Youth) OR KW (child* OR youth OR "young people*" or Adoles* OR Youth)	Searches for *child, young people, youth,* or *adolescence* as well as singular or categorical plurals (e.g. children, childhood,) and possessive declinention (e.g. children's, young people's) within titles, abstracts, keywords or subject terms.
S3	TI voice* OR AB voice* OR SU voice* OR KW voice*	Searches for *voice, voice's* or *voicing* within titles, abstracts, keywords or subject terms.
S4	TI dialog* OR AB dialog* OR SU dialog* OR KW dialog*	Searches for *dialog, dialogue, dialogical, dialogism, dialogical,* or *dialogically*, within titles, abstracts, keywords or subject terms.

Final search phrases		
S5	S1 AND S2 AND S3	Combines three searches to show only hits that match all three. This generates results relating to child, voice and participation within titles, abstracts, keywords or subject terms.
S6	(S1 AND S2 AND S4) NOT (S1 AND S2 AND S3)	The first bracket combines three searches to show only hits that match all three. This generates results relating to child, dialogue and participation within titles, abstracts, keywords or subject terms. The second bracket then excludes hits that have already been identified through search S5..

Search limiters (used throughout):, Jan 1960 - Aug 2020 only, Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals only

Databases (used throughout): Academic Search Complete, APA PsycInfo, British Education Index, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, CINAHL Complete. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), Education Abstracts (H.W. Wilson), Educational Administration Abstracts , ERIC, Humanities International Complete, MEDLINE with Full Text,Race Relations Abstracts, Social Sciences Full Text (H.W. Wilson), SocINDEX with Full Text

Scrutiny of titles, abstracts, journal titles.

This was a subtractive process, conducted in waves, to remove articles from sources identified by the EBSCO search. It involved iteratively moving between scanning, skimming and in depth reading of article titles, abstracts and journal titles. Within this, greater caution was exercised before rejecting sources in journals or by authors that had already begun to show high relevance or a high number of matches. (e.g. Childhood, Children and Society)

Reasons for removal adopted at the outset were:

- The source was not in English, despite filters,

- The source was a partial/broken/incomplete,

- The title and/or abstract indicated children and young people were not a substantial focus of the article,

- The title showed clearly that the article was not connected to the topic of the thesis.

- The key terms were used within the title or abstract with their common usage rather than as keywords relevant to the thesis. e.g.
    - "participation in interviews"

    - "participation in the labour market"

    - "participation in sport"

    - "This article contributes to the dialogue between Topic X and Topic Y"

    - "A range of academic voices have called for…"

- The source was a duplicate of another source.

As the rejection process progressed it was possible to add further rejection criteria based on identifying fields or journals that were producing no relevant matches after reviewing a substantial proportion of articles. These were:

- The journal title indicated a focus on music, theatre or performing arts (e.g. choirs, vocal projection on stage)

- The journal title indicated a focus on medicine - e.g. articles about throat surgery,   (psychiatry, psychology and nursing were not excluded without abstract review)

- The journal title or article title indicated a focus on children's literacy or reading/

- The article title related photo voice methods.

In the final wave of reading the following in depth rejection criteria were used

- The abstract did not indicate an in depth discussion of the *concept* of voice or dialogue (used only after in later waves)

- The CASP (2018) Qualitative Research Checklist showed the article was likely to be poor quality.

During this wave scanning of full body text was used when needed

Results

Search	Total hits	Filtered by EBSCO for English language only	English language only, with duplicates removed by EBSCO*	Amount selected after journal, title and abstracts review
S5	5413	5054	3085	-
S6	2235	2136	1301	-
		Total	**4386**	**315**

EBSCO's advanced search gives the total number of hits on its front page. The exact number of unique hits can be found by scrolling to the end of the search results, or exporting. In practice the exported results also still contained some duplicates.

APPENDIX 2

Participant Interviews - Interview Schedule

Begin by discussing the PIS and reaffirming consent. In particular, emphasises that the interview will be confidential from other research participants. Introduce / explain the purpose of the interview as exploring:

- What the participant has learnt from the seminars,

- how that compares to other people's learning,

- how learning and seminar findings were discussed in the group.

Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers

Original learning

1. Thinking about the seminars you took part in, what sort of things did you feel you personally learnt/found out about the [theme of seminar series] from them?

    - *Prompt for specific examples*

2. Can you describe things that were said in the seminars that led to this learning/finding?

Sharing learning in the steering group

3. How did you share the things you had learnt from the seminars with the other members of the steering group?

4. What was the steering group member's reaction to your ideas, had they learnt similar things?

    - *What were the differences?*

    - *What were the similarities?*

    - *Did they agree / disagree with you?*

        - *On what?*

        - *What was your experience of this?*

5. What happened when people disagreed on the findings/learning from a seminar?

    - *How was it discussed?*

6. What happened when people agreed on the findings/learning from a seminar?

    - *How was it discussed?*

7. Did you change your opinion on the seminar findings as a result of discussion in the steering group?

    - *Prompt for examples of specific opinions/ideas*

- *Prompt for examples of who changed them and what led to them changing*

8. Do you think changed anyone else's opinion on seminar findings as a result of discussion in the steering group?

   - *Prompt for examples of specific opinions/ideas*

   - *Prompt for examples of who changed them and what led to them changing*

9. Where there any findings that were suggested by other members of the steering group that you hadn't thought of before?

   - *Did you agree/disagree with them? On what?*

   - *Where they similar/different to your ideas? How?*

10. Do you think you suggested anything to the steering group that they hadn't thought of before?

    - *Prompt for examples of specific opinions/ideas*

    - *Did they agree/disagree with you?*

      - *What was your experience of this?*

    - *Do you think they were similar/different to other people's ideas? How?*

11. So, was there anything learnt just from discussion within the steering group (and not the seminars themselves)?

    - *Prompt for examples of specific opinions/ideas*

    - *What events/discussions led to this learning?*

Agreeing findings

12. How did the group agree what was recorded/written down as the seminar findings?

13. Do you think some members of the group influence the findings more?

    - *Who? - Which findings?*

    - *Why was this? (Adult / child? Type of expertise?)*

    - *Anything else you would like to say?*

Identity

14. Can you tell me a bit about who you are, how would you describe yourself? I'm interested in finding out a bit about how you see your identify

    Leave space for participant to self-define, then follow on with prompts below:

    - *How old are you?*
    - *How would you describe your gender?*

- *How would you describe your ethnicity?*
- *How would you describe your class…. working class? middle class? (explain if needed)*
- *Do you consider yourself to be disabled?*
- *Do you have a career? What is your work role?*

15. Do you think who you are has influenced your experiences on this project?

16. What about some of the things we talked about before, did it influence any of them? (Give examples from previous responses)

- *Things you saw as important or interesting*

- *Ways people responded to you*

- *Who agreed or disagreed with you*

- *Who learnt from your ideas*

- *Who you learnt from*

17. Who else influenced your ideas?

- *Why do you think that was?*

- *What role did their identity play?*

APPENDIX 3: REDACTED PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

[Name of project] Participant Information Sheet

Meeting dates and times:
- [List of dates and times]
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Meetings will normally take place at **[address of NGO]**

[Name of project] members will need to be able to commit to coming to most of these meetings. We might also organise additional activities if members are interested.

Taking part

We want to learn about how young people and adults can work together to create new ideas and knowledge. People who take part in **[Name of project]** will also be part of a research study about their experiences of the project. This research study is being conducted by Dan Moxon, for a doctoral thesis at UCLAN.

This means that

- A research study will be written about how the group works together.
- Meetings will be observed and recorded.
- If you want to, you can take part in an interview about your experiences of the project.

Do I have to take part?

- Taking part in the **[Name of project]** is your choice. You can stop taking part at any time by letting Dan know.
- If you stop taking part, the things you have already said will still be used as part of the research study.
- If you are under 16 you will also need the permission of your parents/guardians

Will what I say be kept confidential?

- Members of **[Name of project]** will be asked to keep their discussions confidential. At times they may agree to share information about the things they have learnt with people outside of the project, such as when they run events. The group will decide how this is done.
- The members of **[Name of project]** will create their own report and presentation about the things they have learnt. If you wish, you can choose to be named in this as one of the people who helped create this report.
- The things you say may be quoted as part of the research study and any publications linked to this, but your name will not be used in these.
- If you tell us that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of serious harm, we will not be able to keep this confidential. If this happens we will talk to you about what happens next.

What happens to the information I give?

Consent forms and records of discussions/interviews will be stored securely in a locked cabinet. Dan will be the only person who has access to this.

How will the research be used?

The research study will be published as part of a doctoral thesis, and other publications may be written that are linked to this. If you would like to receive copies of these you can.

4

At the end of the project you will be given a copy of **[Name of project]** own report to keep.

For further information contact:
Dan Moxon
Associate Director - The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation
UCLAN School of Social Work Care and Community
DMoxon1@uclan.ac.uk
07412551720

Any concerns about the research should be addressed to the University Officer for Ethics at OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk

APPENDIX 4: REDACTED PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

[name of project] **-** [name of consent form version]

Please tick the boxes to indicate 'YES' to the following statements

I have read the information sheet for this project and I have had the chance to ask questions.	
I understand that taking part is my choice. I understand that I can stop at any time, and I don't have to say why,	
I understand that if I choose to stop taking part the contributions I have already made will still be used as part of the research	
I agree that what I say can be used as part of [name of project]'s own report, the research study and any publications linked to these.	
I understand that I will have the choice to be named as a contributor to the [name of project]'s report but that my name will not be used on any other publications	
I consent to being audio recorded as part of this project.	
I consent to being observed by a researcher as part of this project	
I agree to take part in the [name of project]	
I would like to be sent a copy of the research by email	

P.T.O

Contact and emergency details

We will only use these for emergencies or to send you information about the project

Your name:	
Phone Number:	
Email:	
Your address:	
Name of someone who can be contacted in an emergency	
Emergency Contact's phone numbers	
Do you have any additional needs, such as dietary requirements, allergies or medical needs we should be aware of? (Please give details)	
Name and phone number of GP's surgery	

	Print Name	Date	Signature
Participant			
Researcher			