Emancipating Voice: the role of Drama in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in a secondary school setting

Thesis submitted in accordance with requirements of the University of Chester for the degree of Doctor of Education

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Declaration

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

Date: 06.05.24

Signed: Julie Salisbury

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I would also like to thank the participants in this study for continually inspiring me and for allowing me to share their lived experiences. I sincerely hope that this thesis provides a platform which emancipates their voices and showcases their creativity and unique identities in a way that will support others in keeping the Arts alive in the curriculum for future generations.

I would like to tender my gratitude to my colleagues in the world of Drama teaching for their relentless contribution to the lives of young people in providing a safe yet inspirational environment in which young people can develop their identities, learn from each other, and develop their emotional and social capital through creative exploration and a love of the Arts.

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Dedication

For my family.

I dedicate this work to the memory of Bryan Jones, without whom my teaching journey would have been just a fantasy.

'Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.'

Boal, A. (2002)

'We can learn a lot from children'.

Stephenson, L. (2021)

'Drama matters because society is built on the ability to tell stories; to understand who we are, learn from our histories; to understand why we are and what we can be. Imagination is vital to solve human predicaments and how to solve them through telling stories.'

Scott Graham (2021)

Drama Matters, why?

Because it's powerful,

it' doesn't just plant seeds, grow minds,

save minds. It actually has an immense

power to bring about change.

Tracy Dorrington (2023)

Emancipating Voice: the role of Drama in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in a secondary school setting

Julie Salisbury

The aims of this arts-based research study are to examine how the mental health and wellbeing of young people in a secondary school setting is supported through a Drama curriculum, using performance poetry, found poetry and verbatim theatre as data. The participants were observed engaging in workshops in which the critical pedagogical approach of Open Space Learning (OSL) was applied. This pedagogy enables a shift in power between the teacher and the learner, encouraging democratic, explorative, and creative learning.

The study was structured through an arts-based methodology, using a triangulation of data through dramaturgical approaches, framing the data through performance poetry, found poetry and Verbatim Theatre to explore the experiences of a sample of Year 9 and Year 10 Performing Arts students. Observation of their creative practice in Spoken Word and Verbatim Theatre workshops, and the found poetry crafted collaboratively from semi-structured interviews generated the data, with an analysis of the emerging themes from their creative practice. The constraints of curriculum planning in educational policies and Bourdieu's theories of habitus, capital and symbolic violence were considered. This is supported with arguments for a more inclusive curriculum in secondary education by acknowledging the value of Drama in supporting students with their mental health and wellbeing at a time when the Arts are being marginalised in curriculum provision, particularly in state schools in areas of high unemployment and socio-economic depravation. This approach explores the impact of locality on the aspirations of the participants, in how the extent to which their view of the world is shaped by a gradual internalisation and acceptance of local historical influences which may subsequently have a subordinating and coercive effect within seemingly prescribed or accepted forms of habitus.

The research focuses on two key areas, specifically, Drama as a subject and its value as an aspirational art form, and the mental health and wellbeing of students in a secondary school setting. Both key aspects of the research seek to investigate through an arts-based research methodology, the extent to which habitus and capital may shape the mental health and wellbeing of the students, and how the inclusion of Drama in the secondary school curriculum supports the social and academic development of young people.

Summary of portfolio

This thesis has developed from the inspiration taken from work completed during a Doctorate in Education. What follows is a summary of the assignments I undertook on the EdD programme before starting the thesis.

Research Methodologies for Professional Enquiry

This module introduced me to research methods and findings, practitioner inquiry and professional practice through a range of learning experiences. The assignment instigated a desire to investigate academic research in conjunction with my professional role as a school-based practitioner. It presented a range of philosophies and testimonies relating to the value of the Arts from the perspectives of academics, practitioners and students and enlightened me to embark on a small-scale research project to examine the Drama curriculum against current theory and policy. The resulting study presented a range of data which allowed me to explore a range of possibilities for adapting current practice, to support the development of young people studying Drama in secondary education whilst navigating policy and curriculum.

Social Theory and Education: Key issues and Debates

In this module I ruminated on the theorists that resonated with me at that point in my professional practice, which prompted the realisation that I had been engaged in many strands of theoretical practice without formally acknowledging them. It became apparent that the ideologies we apply to our work do not simply stem from a sudden brainwave but are configurations of ideas that we understand because they explain our world, beliefs and practices: theories explored and developed through the philosophical writings of others. It

instilled a desire to engage in further, and more selective reading to discover theories which may work in my practice and could be applied to planning, practice and reflection. This assignment inspired me to examine Wenger's communities of practice, supported by Bourdieu's sociological theories of practice concerning habitus, field and capital.

Creativity in Practice

This module encouraged me to conduct a small arts-based research study into the ways in which students learn through creative engagement, exploring teaching and learning styles in secondary education. The participants were members of the extra-curricular Drama Club who devised a short film presented their views on Open Space Learning (OSL) in comparison to the desk-bound practice of the pedagogical approaches in classroom situations. The performance piece used desks to symbolise barriers to learning, and the wearing of masks to symbolise performance. This study has influenced my use of an arts-based research methodology to the thesis.

Cultural Practices

In this module I explored the impact of change on teaching and learning in Drama and Performing Arts through a small-scale research study conducted following the transition from an established secondary school site to a new £11M building in a local community housing estate. I applied Geertz's "thick description" concept (Geertz, 1973) to capture the essence of a sample of students experiencing the change in culture in one department within the school, Performing Arts, using an arts-based methodology. The study found that the power, discipline, and regulation (Foucault, 1980) governing the use of space had a direct impact on the teaching and learning the students, particularly when the students were displaced to alternative spaces when the Drama Studio was used for alternative

sessions, resulting in conflict and restraint (Flyvjberg & Richardson, 1998). Findings also indicated that for the teaching and learning experience to be fully supportive for the students engaged in the study, the creation of the Drama Studio space should be purposeful and emancipating in creating a learning environment. These findings have fed into the thesis research study where the Studio is identified by participants as being a 'safe space'.

Institutions, Discontinuities and Systems of Knowledge

In this module I explored the simulation of identity through power and structure, examining cultural, social environments where teaching and learning leads to the development of knowledge and understanding. This was analysed through a focus on identity and power, with the theoretical perspective of Baudrillard (1994) and the context of simulacra, simulation, and control, linking with Faucault (1980) and his theories on power and knowledge. I also referred to Bourdieu (1977) and the school context of 'habitus', examining the links between an educational establishment and the ideas of Baudrillard and Foucault regarding the desire for power and the illusion of progress when power is simulated. I compared the school with ancient Athens in relation to the 'polis', demonstrating identity through division and boundaries. The study of this module influenced me in the thesis research study and embedded deeper understanding of Bourdieu and Baudrillard.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This arts-based research aims to explore the extent to which Drama supports the mental health and wellbeing of students in a secondary school setting. The need for the research was identified through the rise in the number of young people presenting with anxiety, stress and depression, an increase in cases of self-harm, low moods and suicidal thoughts, supported by data published in the media, inquiries into metal health disorders (Mental Health Foundation, 2015; National Health Service [NHS] Digital, 2017, 2020), surveys conducted by mental health charities (Harrop, 2018) and data pertinent to the state funded secondary school in which the research was conducted, including student profiles, Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) incident reports, pastoral records of meetings with students and parents, an increase in Teams Around the Family (TAFs) and Child in Need (CIN) cases, and a significant rise in the number of students seeking counselling and mentoring.

The study explores and interprets the perspectives of lived experiences of the participants within a secondary school environment, aiming to generate understanding and insight to inform, empower and assist future teaching, planning and curriculum development in Drama. The study is intended to promote debate on current practice to provide insight and include improvements for students in secondary schools, arguing the value and place of Drama in secondary education.

The marginalisation of the Arts provision in education is explored and discussed in the context of the Drama curriculum in a state secondary school, supported by arguments from literary and practitioner sources alongside the data from the participants, which has been created through the practice of a transdisciplinary pedagogy (Monk et al., 2015).

The focus of the study centres on year 9 and year 10 Performing Arts students, through case studies, questionnaires, interviews and performance poetry, with the data presented as performance poetry (Bishop & Willis, 2014) and found poetry (Furman et al., 2014, Lahaman et al., 2010) which was used to create an ethnodrama (Saldana, 2006; Sallis, 2014) in the style of Verbatim Theatre (Paget, 1987; Bellfield, 2018; Wheeller, 2021). This is presented through a triangulation of data through dramaturgical approaches. The research explores the emancipation of voice through the role of Drama in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in a secondary school setting and presents three research questions to the participants:

1. What are your thoughts on Drama and the effects it has had on your wellbeing?
2. Which skills have you developed in Drama that you have applied elsewhere?
3. How would you sum Drama up in one word?

The methodology of the study and the research questions are discussed in Chapter 3.

In this study, the year 10 participants engaged in workshops at a local theatre with a professional performance poet. In these workshops, they explored ways of presenting their thoughts, feelings and emotions through drama-based activities and poetry writing exercises, culminating in a sharing of self-written performance poetry to a small audience of young carers, school Governors and accompanying staff, and family. Interviews with the year 10 participants were conducted to establish how Drama had supported them and were transcribed into found poetry.

A workshop was conducted with a Year 9 group of Performing Arts students to explore the findings and present the data as a piece of Verbatim Theatre. Through the Open Space Learning (OSL) (Monk et al., 2015) approaches used in the workshop, where the power

relationships between teacher and students are relaxed to facilitate emancipation of voice and freedom of choice (Boal, 2000), the students were immersed in an exploration of the poetry as they examined the issues and themes through self-directed improvisation and devising processes, with the teacher stepping back to observe.

The year 9 participants explored the performance poetry, and the found poetry which had been written using interview transcripts, to devise a piece of Verbatim Theatre for performance. They applied a range of Drama techniques to the pieces of text to create performance work which used the exact words (verbatim) of the participants who had created the performance poetry and engaged in interviews about their mental health and wellbeing. The context of the research is examined through a theoretical framework of Bourdieu's theories of field, habitus and capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Ethical consideration for the participants was paramount due to the nature of the research, ensuring that the study was conducted in a safe space, identified by the students, and that anonymity was ensured in employing Year 9 students in the Verbatim Theatre piece. The presentation of data from a combination of qualitative research processes with arts-based research, through an ethnodrama, evokes sensory and emotive responses from an audience, raising questions and inviting further research into the themes highlighted, with Verbatim Theatre being the most effective style for the ethnodrama, offering a truth and authenticity to the audience (Bellfield, 2018).

In further practice, the Verbatim Theatre piece may be presented to a range of audiences to raise awareness of some of the issues affecting young people, through the incorporation of data published in the media through news reports, charity blogs, and their own testimonies and performance, and spotlight how Drama may support the mental health and wellbeing of

young people in a secondary school setting, using the voices and the artistic skills of the students themselves.

In carefully considering curriculum proposals for Drama, the informal conversations with students who had opted to study Drama and Performing Arts, the school data, and the literature and media articles relating to the rise in numbers of young people with mental health issues, the validity of research into how Drama may support mental health and wellbeing became apparent.

Ethics have been carefully considered in designing the study and are discussed in Chapter 3. The young people wished to have their voices heard, but through a performance created by actors to protect their anonymity.

1:1 Research aims and the inspiration for the study.

This research aims to explore and analyse the impact of engaging in Drama practice on the mental health and wellbeing of students, a project which has evolved following an informal conversation with a student immediately after she completed a GCSE English examination. The student, whom I shall refer to as Georgina, exclaimed: *"If it hadn't been for Drama I wouldn't have been able to sit through that exam. I feel great and so chuffed with myself."* Indeed, she was visibly very proud of herself and of her achievements in completing the exam. She explained that some of the techniques used in her Drama lessons had been useful in combatting her anxieties around revision and recall, and in enabling her to feel comfortable enough (both physically and emotionally) to sit in the hall and complete the exam. She had used breathing techniques to support her in physically sitting at the exam desk, in the hall, with other students to stem a panic attack and placed herself in the 'role' of a confident student, applying some of the transferable skills that she had developed

through her study of Drama in approaching the examination question. She then placed herself in the 'role' of the characters in the question, the 'role' of an actor playing the character, and finally in the role of the director working with the actor who was playing the character (Neelands, 2010, 2011; Baldwin, 2012; Monk et al., 2015).

Georgina was a student who demonstrated anxieties which stemmed from a range of personal and social issues and which were creating barriers to her learning across the curriculum. This was evidenced in the data tracking system in the school, pastoral records, and in her open conversations with staff and other students. She was placed on the mentoring programme at school to support her transition to the school and to offer further support in developing her confidence and self-esteem, to offer her 1:1 tuition in subject areas that she found challenging, and to encourage her aspirations. In conversation she disclosed how Drama had supported her in developing her confidence and self-esteem, and in controlling panic attacks which were becoming a common occurrence leading up to her GCSE examinations. Her education had been partially affected by migration from several local authorities and by social services intervention following events where the family required rehousing. On arriving at this secondary school in Year 8 she described a history of bullying which had resulted in low confidence and self-esteem and raised her anxiety around attending school and being with other young people who she felt were judging her. She was quiet, insular and, at times, emotional. She could not bring herself to raise her hand in class, or to verbalise an answer. She did not like to ask for help with her work because she felt self-conscious and afraid of rebuke from her peers. She had no aspiration for post-16 and, when questioned about academic and career choices she replied: "I just want to be happy." Her literacy and numeracy skills placed Georgina academically in the lower banded English, Mathematics and Science groups and when the options process

presented her with choices for key stage 4 study she was keen to select Drama, Music and Art in favour of MFL and the Humanities subjects. On completion of her GCSEs she was overjoyed to have attained much higher than she was predicted, and to accept the offer of a place at a local college to study Level 3 BTEC Performing Arts. She is currently studying a Drama degree. (Neelands, 2010, 2011; Baldwin, 2012).

1:2 Acting on the inspiration and my place within the study

This informal conversation led to further professional interest and subsequent inquiry in examining the impact which Drama may have on the mental health and wellbeing of students, to explore if, and indeed how, Drama may support them. Primary investigation was conducted through informal group discussions with Year 10 Performing Arts students edifying initially that Drama gave students a voice through which they were able to communicate their thoughts, feelings and opinions in what they termed a 'safe space'. This identified the space in which to conduct the research to be the Drama Studio.

Reflexivity is strongly considered in ensuring that the research sustained validity, to think critically about the context and practice of research and practice of the study (O'Reilly, 2009), locating myself as both the researcher and the teacher - conducting and writing the research from the position of researcher, whilst holding the role of educator in the field of study. As the teacher of these students I held responsibility for their academic, pastoral and emotional wellbeing and had developed a strong relationship with them over their time in the school. As a practitioner in secondary Drama education the mental health and wellbeing of young people in education is carefully considered when working with students in exploratory contexts. In the context of this arts-based research project, as a teacher and former Pastoral Leader, professional knowledge and understanding of the social and

emotional background of the students and of how they interact in an educational setting has been applied. There is a considered responsibility to the social actors at the centre of the research and, indeed, to the gatekeepers – the Headteacher, the Parents and Carers of the participants – to ensure that the research conducted in a scholarly and reflexive manner. As a researcher, there needs to be a considered approach to collating and analysing the data to validate the findings.

In the role of teacher, there is a desire to constantly analyse the impact of practice on the progress of the students, to ensure the academic, pastoral and emotional wellbeing of the students in the learning environment. Indeed, professional praxis requires the necessity and relevance for research to be consistent in developing teaching practice. This would therefore support the role of the researcher in identifying a question lying within that practice, and examining data which supports or argues such, bringing the roles of teacher and researcher together in endeavouring to develop teaching practice to best support the progress of the students within the academic setting, placing the researcher as both teacher and researcher.

1:3 Mental Health and Wellbeing: findings from professional inquiries

The World Health Organisation (2013) estimates that, worldwide, 20% of adolescents in any given year may experience a mental health problem. Jenny Edwards, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, states that 1 in four adults and one in ten children experience a mental health problem, with three quarters of these receiving no treatment (Mental Health Foundation, 2015). The Mental Health Foundation inquiry was designed to present fundamental facts about mental health, drawing from research in mental health which examined types of mental health problems, socio economic inequalities, environmental

conditions and lifestyle factors. It was argued that there has been a long history of under-investment in mental health research and data, particularly for child and adolescent mental health (p12), and that ten per cent of young people (aged 5–16 years) have a clinically diagnosable mental problem yet 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age (Mental Health Foundation, 2015).

According to the 2010 Global Burden of Disease Study (GBD), the most predominant mental health problems worldwide are depression and anxiety, whilst guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2011), state that common mental health problems include depression, generalised anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Patel et al. (2010) allude to depression and anxiety as 'common mental health problems' and believe that they are distributed according to a gradient of economic disadvantage across society with the poorer and more disadvantaged disproportionately affected from common mental health problems and their adverse consequences.

Statistics from the mental health charity Mind (2020) identify the specific diagnosis in any given week in England for types of mental health problems. The highest statistics were presented thus: mixed anxiety and depression (8 in 100 people), generalised anxiety disorder (6 in 100 people), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (4 in 100 people). The literature relating to mental health and wellbeing is examined further in Chapter 2.

1:4 Mental Health and Wellbeing: the school perspective in curriculum planning

School data had presented a rise in the number of students presenting to Pastoral Leaders and the school Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCO) with

anxieties, panic attacks, depression, low moods, suicidal thoughts, and self-harming practice. The school uses mental health questionnaires such as the Anna Freud Centre resources (2023) which informs professional knowledge of the pupils but was not administered for the purpose of this thesis study. The Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) curriculum was amended to address some of these issues through a whole school approach, with a proposition for SMSC to be delivered through Drama for Key Stage 3 students to explore and develop their own mental health and wellbeing through practical and creative means in a safe environment. Pedagogical approaches to teaching Drama support emotional literacy (Robinson, 1980; Neelands, 1992; Weare, 2004) and enable students to feel empowered through the practice of OSL (Monk et al., 2015) and Forum Theatre (Boal, 2000), particularly in developing social and communication skills through practical exploration. Further references to links between Drama and mental health and wellbeing will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Mental health and wellbeing are addressed in the school curriculum plan through fortnightly SMSC and weekly Physical, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons. At key stage 3 KS3), SMSC is delivered through the medium of Drama to encourage practical exploration of themes and develop communication skills, confidence, and self-esteem. At key stage 4 (KS4), SMSC is delivered through tutor periods with discussions arising from power point resources. PSHE is delivered to both key stages using materials provided by an external agency. In assessing and analysing the standard of learning and teaching of SMSC in the role of the educator it is evident through school data that the students engage more effectively in the practical exploration of themes and issues than in a classroom-based discussion on the same topics. When analysing student voice over a 12-month period, 99% of KS3

students enjoyed the delivery of SMSC through Drama, stating that '*it was fun'*, '*it was interesting*', and '*you can be a part of it instead of just listening and answering questions*'.

When exploring mental health and wellbeing in SMSC and PSHE lessons, it became apparent that many students believed that the term 'mental health' had a stigma attached to it and that they were confident in talking to a close friend or a family member about their own mental health and wellbeing, but they were unaware of where they could go for counselling or advice. Evaluation of a workshop which was delivered to the students by the charity The Samaritans showed that at the start of the workshop 20% of the students had heard of the charity but only 12% were aware of the work that they did in the community. By the end of the workshop all students were able to identify the aims of The Samaritans and the services that they offered and could recite the helpline number and address of the local branch.

Data from a survey of over 12,000 young people aged between 11 and 19 carried out by the mental health charity Mind (2019) stated that three in five young people (59%) have experienced a mental health problem or were close to someone who has, and that one in seven (14%) young people say their mental health is currently poor or very poor. Almost two in five (38%) of all pupils said they wouldn't know where to go to access support within school and half (52%) said they wouldn't feel confident approaching teachers or other school staff if they needed help. Around one in five young people (21%) had accessed support for their mental health within school. Of these, almost one in two (43%) said they didn't find the support helpful and two in three (63%) said they weren't involved in decisions made about that support. In terms of receiving help outside the school gates, less than one in three pupils (28%) who had experienced a mental health problem had used mental health services. This means a huge gap in the numbers of young people needing help

and those accessing support from the NHS, which is supported in the statement from Louise Clarkson, Head of Children and Young People at Mind:

> "*There were some really positive findings, with most pupils saying that, on the whole, they thought their schools believed good mental health was important and promoted wellbeing. But we also heard from many young people experiencing problems with their mental health. Despite the high levels of poor mental health among young people, many are not accessing support and those that are aren't always getting what they need."* (Mind, 2019).

In a further study by Mind (2021) into the experiences of young people in England affected by mental health problems at secondary school, 96% of young people interviewed reported that their mental health had affected their schoolwork at some point. Staff interviewed for the study identified this to be 95% of young people, who presented with low mood, depression, fatigue, and difficulty in concentrating. The participants in the study consisted of young people between the ages of 13-25, as well as parents/caregivers of young people affected by mental health problems. At this time, schools were striving to address the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic which had resulted in the closure of schools and were developing recovery curriculums to sustain and scaffold academic attainment in addition to supporting students pastorally. However, the statistics in the study are alarming. Almost 4 in 5 young people surveyed (78%) stated that school had made their mental health worse, identifying the demands of meeting deadlines and the pressure to succeed and perform well in exams having a negative effect on their mental health.

1:5 The role of the school in the community

The satellite community within which the case study school sits experiences historical social depravation, originating from the urban planning of the 1950s when farmland approximately 2 miles from the city centre was used to build a large housing estate to relocate residents from slum housing developments. The housing estate was referred to within the Local Authority as the largest in the county. The area experiences generational social depravation impacting on the welfare of the population. The socio-economic disadvantages within this community include unemployment, familial lack of aspiration, digital poverty, high crime rates and lack of funding for education and community initiatives. The neoliberalism of educational systems, policy, and practice in England has shaped the political landscape of the last four decades and placed education within economic constraints, removing egalitarian aims and turning schools into competitors rather than collaborators (Hill et al., 2015). State schools within these communities are therefore facing immense pressure, being initially disadvantaged institutions within the education sector, with the secondary disadvantage of serving communities experiencing generational socio-economic constraints. The welfare of pupils appears to take second place to academic success as they are under pressure to reach academic targets set to secure the league table positions of the schools. This impacts negatively on the educational experience of young people in schools, particularly when socio-economic factors are taken into consideration. Anxieties, wellbeing, and mental health are impacted by the added pressure of academic achievement, and will have a detrimental effect on attainment, particularly in communities of socio-economic depravation, where students from this study school are in the lowest 20% of young people participating in higher education (Bamber et at., 2024). This satellite community is served by one high school, with most pupils from the five primary schools in

the area transitioning to secondary education within their community, the exception being the transition of pupils from a faith school to the faith secondary school in the nearby city centre. There is no post-16 provision at this school. The state schools in the community are challenged by the generational socio-economic deprivation of the community, most recently highlighted through the high level of digital poverty evidenced through the shift to online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, where the educational provision to the community was further impacted by a lack of access to digital devices at both primary and secondary levels. Familial factors are also a major consideration when planning educational and pastoral support within the community, with school data indicating young people following the same academic pathway taken by siblings, parents and grandparents and destination data presenting a high percentage of students dropping out of further education provision which is delivered outside of the community. School data evidences that young people have not previously attained well at post-secondary institutions due to factors such as feeling alienated from friends, not being able to access the curriculum through differences in teaching and learning styles, wishing to follow familial routes of employment with many engaging in cash-in-hand employment opportunities with little or no educational certification. However, current school data reflects some progress in the number of young people remaining in further education which is attributed to the support presented to students through the secondary school in preparing them for post-16 education and training.

This study strives to argue that the school in this community is enriching the lives of the students growing up in this socio-economic disadvantage, addressing the generational detriments through developing a nurturing learning environment, offering pastoral and

academic support, and delivering a Drama curriculum which facilitates explorative learning experiences and encourages democratic engagement.

The community is populated by children (aged under 18) constituting 23.2% of the population, with 59.7% aged between 18 and 64 years of age, and a 65+ of 17.1% (UK Office for National Statistics, 2021). The 2021 census of the local authority in which the school sits recorded a population increase of 27,000 (a rise of 8.4%) in a 10-year period: greater than both the 5.2% increase for the North West of England and the 6.6% increase in the overall population of England. This has been evident in the rise in school admissions in the community. The census stated the percentage of residents aged 5 and over providing at least 50 hours of unpaid care each week, which had increased from 2.7% in 2011 to 2.9% in 2021, correlating with the school data recognising a rise in students who were carers for family members. The schools within the community are established and fully subscribed, working collaboratively to ensure not only that the educational provision for the community is of the highest calibre, but also that there are strong and effective multi-agency links to support young people and their families: higher and further education, the Arts, careers, social services, family support, access to health care, mentoring.

Headteachers from the case study high school and partner primary schools meet regularly to discuss collaborative ways of working which aim to support the community through primary and secondary education initiatives which are proposed to enrich the learning experience of the students by adding to the cultural and social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) of the community by using a common language, applying similar codes and rules. Behaviour management systems developed in the high school have been adopted by 80% (4) of the primary schools to support their own practice and to ease the transition for

primary students in Year 6 in moving from one field to the next. Primary school staff are invited to the Safeguarding and Prevent CPD sessions at the high school to develop and support shared strategies and initiatives implemented within the schools in the community, building a shared practice within the community. Bespoke lessons in PE and Music are delivered in the primary schools by high school staff to bridge the learning between KS2 and KS3, and to establish community links with families, students and staff, further feeding into shared educational practice within the community and developing cultural and social capital. In addition, primary school students are invited to Art exhibitions and Musical Theatre productions throughout the academic year to experience the Arts provision at the high school, to familiarise themselves with creative subject choices available to them when they transition to KS3, and to experience work created and presented by siblings, within the field of the high school, adding to the social and cultural habitus of the community.

The Arts offer further links designed to bring the community into the high school, most effectively through Drama and Music productions which are presented at five occasions over each academic year and are consistently well-attended (averaging 80% attendance of full seating capacity). These provide opportunities for members of the community to step into the high school field and experience how students are developing through a range of thinking and learning styles, to complement their social and cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), and enable them to meet with high school staff, Governors and other members of the community. Invitations are extended to the whole community, with 90% of attendees being family and friends of the students, and the remaining 10% comprising of School Governors, staff and their families, and past pupils. Feedback from the audiences (evaluative questionnaires, emails to staff and verbal interactions) are consistently positive, with parents expressing their pride at seeing their children perform in a range of

performance styles, including Shakespeare, Choir, Contemporary Comedy, School Band, Physical Theatre and Musical Theatre, and at seeing the work of those in the technical and production teams operating as technicians, stage crew and front-of-house staff.

Further transition activities which share cultural capital and increase social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) include 'Wow' days, where year 5 students are invited into the high school to engage in a range of activities related to subject that they may not experience at primary school, such as Drama, Music, Spanish, Art, Graphics, ICT and PE. The sessions take place over a week and are delivered as a carousel with 1 primary school attending each day. The students work with secondary school subject specialists and a small group of secondary school students in each session, establishing positive and supportive relationships as they explore a range of creative activities and develop a collective identity through shared values, beliefs and behaviour. Annual analysis, conducted by the case study school, of feedback from parents and primary schools support the effectiveness of this initiative and its influence on parental choice for a place at the high school. School data expounds a five-year trend for admissions which presents an increase from 103 first preference applications in 2016 to 151 in 2020. Year 6 students are invited to attend taster days at the high school to experience core subjects teaching and learning, building on the collective identity through a shared cultural capital in the doxa of the high school. Again, the schools attend over a one-week period on a carousel and are accompanied by parents as they engage in English, Maths, Science and Humanities subjects. They engage in a tour of the school and sports facilities and experience break and lunch routines in the school. Pastoral and subject-specialist staff are on hand to answer any questions that the parents or pupils may have about the school, its policies, and its vision, presenting and encouraging a collective identity.

However, Drama activities have recently been dropped from the 'Wow' planning over the last 3 years, therefore reducing the impact of creative play and exploration. This impact has been clearly evident in the increasing lack of confidence and self-esteem of students transitioning into the school, resulting in the restructuring of the Drama curriculum to address low levels of resilience and to bridge the gap in social and cultural capital which had hitherto been addressed in the 'Wow' days transition activities. This study aims to highlight the value of Drama in the whole school curriculum to support the social, emotional, and academic development of capital for students studying a secondary curriculum, developing habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) through engagement in Drama.

1:6 Theoretical framework

This arts-based research is examined through Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and symbolic violence, discussed in detail in Chapter 2 with analysis woven through Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in relation to the triangulation of Drama practice applied through the arts-based methodological approach applied to the study. Bourdieu's theoretical framework explains the regularities of behaviour associated with social structures, class, ethnicity, gender. Through habitus, we see the embodiment of historical social structures in individuals through the way they perceive the world around them and in ways in which they behave within that world. In the context of this research the habitus is defined in this study as the dispositions, attitudes and values that shape and influence actions and perceptions of the world, and how the habitus of the participants is shaped by the community in which they live. When considering the influence of education within the community, the school sits at the heart of the habitus (Power, 1999; Gillespie, 2019). Power (1999) states that habitus is a way of describing the embodiment of social structures and history in individuals and that

the primary habitus instilled in childhood is more durable than further habitus learned and developed through taking on a profession or trade. The use of Bourdieu's theoretical framework of habitus in this study argues that the set of dispositions, attitudes and values of the participants reflect the social structures of the community and shape how they conduct themselves in the world that they perceive. They are influenced by the generational socio-economic depravation of the community, and of the current educational environment, and are reliving this repeated and reproduced social disadvantage. The impact of these experiences is explored and discussed through the triangulation of Drama practice presented: the performance poetry in Chapter 4, found poetry in Chapter 5 and Verbatim Theatre in Chapter 6, as the analysis of the impact of Drama practice on habitus* is woven through the work and summarised in Chapter 7. Gillespie (2019) supports the argument from Power (1999) in identifying habitus as a collective entity influenced by dominant social and cultural conditions which are established and reproduced. He argues that habitus is presented through institutions – in this case the schools in the community. The theoretical framework is applied through the triangulation of Drama practice which explores how habitus is observed in the work of the participants, where it may appear to be stemming from familial settings, and consequently impacted through engagement in Drama practice within the school, further examining how habitus is affected and restructured through social and cultural engagement.

The socio-economic landscape in which the participants live and learn presents a range of historic and generational barriers to the academic success desired by schools striving for recognition on the league tables. The social stigma attached to state schools serving socially deprived communities impacts on the developing habitus of young people who are becoming influenced by other sources such as social media to be desirable, successful, and

popular. This presents a conflict for young people as the initial habitus, shaped through familial influence, is developed through a set of dispositions experienced first-hand within a local community setting which may now be challenged by those of a larger society of which they have little or no understanding. This is where educationalists face further demands beyond financial constraints which are impacting the emotional wellbeing of young people, and which need to be addressed through teaching and learning practice.

This approach explores the impact of locality on the aspirations of the participants, in how the extent to which their view of the world is shaped by a gradual internalisation and acceptance of local historical influences which may subsequently have a subordinating and coercive effect within seemingly prescribed or accepted forms of habitus. The impact of the local community on shaping the habitus of the participants through the social, cultural, and economic background which influence their life experiences is explored through the arts-based research practice applied to this study, through both individual and collective habitus which are evident in the data created. It is argued that engagement in the Drama curriculum enriches the habitus developed through a democratic practical exploration of a critical pedagogical approach through Open Space Learning in a safe space, and that this in turn informs and supports the development of multi-agency links provided by the school, presenting opportunities to add cultural and social capital for members of the community and to enhance the habitus developed and experienced in the fields of friends, family and school. Transition from each educational establishment results in the habitus being developed through the learning experiences gained, for example moving from primary to secondary school, from secondary to tertiary education, progression into higher education, apprenticeship, or career pathway.

The research focuses on two key areas, specifically, Drama as a subject, and the mental health and wellbeing of students in a secondary school setting. Both key aspects of the research seek to investigate the extent to which habitus and capital may shape the mental health and wellbeing of the students. Each aspect would be a factor in the practical presentation of the data to an audience, as the interpretation of the data would vary dependant on the habitus and capital of each audience.

1:7 Subsequent chapters

In Chapter 2 I discuss the literature underpinning the study, referring to the complexities of establishing a Drama Curriculum within secondary education, particularly in light of political and financial constraints. I consider the pedagogical approaches applied in creative learning, in particular the power of Open Space Learning (OSL) (Monk et al., 2015) and the Forum Theatre practice developed by Boal (1999), and their place in the development of social and emotional skills in addition to academic achievement in line with school assessment practice. The mental health and wellbeing of young people is also discussed in relation to Drama practice and the emancipation of student voice within the secondary sector of the education system, through the theoretical framework of Bourdieu, in particular habitus and capital.

In Chapter 3 I consider methodological matters pertaining to my research design, justifying the methods applied and my position as a researcher within the study. I will review the reasons for my election of an arts-based methodology and the validity of the performance poetry, found poetry and verbatim theatre within the research design which produce the data for analysis and discussion. I will examine the validity of Verbatim Theatre in presenting a pure voice, and examine subjectivity applied in the rehearsal and production

process of Verbatim text. Furthermore, I will discuss the validity of a creative and democratic pedagogy applied through the practices of Open Space Learning (OSL) (Monk et al., 2015) and Forum Theatre (Boal, 1999), and the balance of power relationships conducive to the development of social and emotional skills, and the emancipation of student voice.

In Chapter 4 I examine the creativity of the Year 10 participants in developing Spoken Word practice to craft performance poetry. I analyse themes emerging from the poetry in relation to mental health and wellbeing and the habitus of the community, and to the ways in which the participants learn through both practical and written practice. I interrogate the impact of the workshop in emancipating the voices of the participants, relating my findings to concepts and theories presented in Chapter 2, the literature review.

In Chapter 5 I present the found poetry of the Year 10 participants, crafted collaboratively from interview transcripts which emerged from the three research questions. I will present themes within the found poetry which relate to mental health and wellbeing and to the habitus of the community, and the ways in which the participants speak freely in the Drama Studio, relating my findings to concepts and theories presented in Chapter 2, the literature review.

In Chapter 6 I present the Verbatim Theatre workshop with the Year 9 participants, analysing the creative practice of their devising and rehearsal process in developing verbatim text for performance. I interrogate the validity of Verbatim Theatre in presenting lived experiences of the Year 10 using the found poetry presented in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 7 I discuss conclusions and present the key findings which have emerged from the study, evaluating the use of poetry and verbatim theatre in arts-based research. I discuss the possibilities for further research and the challenges presented in this study.

Furthermore, I argue the value of this study in contributing to knowledge in the field of Drama education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The focus of this chapter is on significant literature which motivates and enthuses this thesis. I will explore Drama in the context of the Curriculum for Secondary Education in England, shaped through a critical pedagogy focusing on the conventions of Performance Poetry and Found Poetry, Open Space Learning (OSL), Forum Theatre, and Verbatim Theatre. Additionally, I will interrogate literature relating to the ways in which Drama techniques are practiced in potentially supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Furthermore, I will explore Bourdieu's (1977) ideas about habitus and capital in the context of the participants' interactions in the school and in the wider community, which shape and influence their experiences in Secondary Education. This exploration will identify the culture in which the participants work, presenting a context for the workshops and interviews at the heart of this research study. I will outline my methodological approach in Chapter 3.

2:1 Drama curriculum and pedagogy

To add context to the analysis of the data and the critique of the relevant literature, it is pertinent to understand the curriculum being studied by the participants. Drama is not a National Curriculum subject and therefore the curriculum design varies across schools as the Arts are offered as an optional subject to be studied at KS4. In this state funded secondary school, Drama is taught for one hour across a two-week timetable at KS3 and for four hours across a two-week timetable at KS4. The 2002 Education Act requires schools to provide a "*balanced and broadly based curriculum*" which: '*promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students at the school and of society, and prepares students at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'*

(Education Act, 2002). This requires the provision of both core and optional subjects being afforded appropriate space on the timetable to deliver each distinct contribution. A school's local curriculum reflects the individual nature of the school and its community, as with the school in this study. This recognises the local economy and employment base, whilst understanding the unique and bespoke challenges faced by students from the school's community. However, the current knowledge rich agenda which privileges traditional 'academic' subjects and increasing budget restraints dictate the offer of subjects from state funded schools, with the Arts being marginalised through a lack of funding (Schleicher, 2019; Longman, 2022) despite the 2002 Education Act's requirement for a "*balanced and broadly based curriculum*". Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the curriculum cannot be a universal model for education, as its effectiveness should be influenced by the community it serves and is reliant on the pedagogy employed to engage students and nurture learning opportunities, potential and achievement. In responding to criticism of the Ofsted education inspection framework, Harford (as cited in Ofsted, 2019) states:

> '*Inspections will focus on the real substance of education: the curriculum. Inspectors will spend less time looking at test data, and more time looking at what is taught and how it is taught. They will consider how a nursery, school, college or other education provider achieves its results. We want to make sure that good results flow from teaching a broad, rich curriculum and reflect real learning, not just intensive preparation for a test*.' (Harford, in Ofsted, 2019).

It is argued (Tucker, 2023; Monk et al., 2015; Schleicher, 2019) that Drama does not teach to the test but employs pedagogical opportunities which present students with practical and exploratory ways of developing their own learning and understanding. Through discovering knowledge and taking risks in a social environment conducive to safe exploration through play, discussion and self-evaluation, power relationships are developed and negotiated as

students navigate a learning journey which is '*coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment'* (Ofsted, 2022). This places Drama within the Ofsted inspection criteria, with a focus on '*skills for future learning and employment*' (Ofsted, 2022) and not '*intensive preparation for a test*' (Hartford, as cited in Ofsted, 2019).

Yet despite a focus on '*what is taught and how it is taught*' (Harford, as cited in Ofsted, 2019), the academic study of the arts does not appear to be regarded as an area for investment and valued attainment (Neelands, 2010; Tucker, 2023) despite the significance of pedagogical experiences on the '*broader development … of character – including their resilience, confidence and independence … equipping them to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society*' (Ofsted, 2023) stated as criteria for making judgements on the quality of curriculum, experiences which are explored in this study. Experiences of pedagogical opportunities for students to learn in practical and exploratory ways, empowering them to develop their own learning and understanding through discovering knowledge. Drama presents opportunities for safe exploration through play where risks may be taken in a safe environment, experiences which are shared through found poetry in Chapter 5 and Verbatim Theatre in Chapter 6.

In examining reports of Drama's efficacy in transforming students' behaviours and sense of identities, Neelands (2010) heralds Drama as a transformational art which is recognised for cross-curricular, rather than inter-curricular, experiences in the secondary school curriculum, highlighting the importance of Drama as a teaching method and ways of using it. '*Drama cannot …of itself … teach in any kind of way … It is what we do, through our own human agency,* ***with*** *Drama that determines the specific pedagogy and specific powers of*

Drama itself'. (Neelands, 2007; p. 48). Here, Neelands infers that there is no specific definition to the pedagogical approaches used in the teaching of Drama, but that engagement in experiencing Drama determines the learning journey. He contends that a creative curriculum empowers both the teacher and the learner to explore and develop knowledge and understanding through the medium of Drama. He argues that this is achieved by finding collaborative ways of working through a pedagogical approach where power is shared as knowledge and understanding develops, where there may be a degree of personal transformation, identity and hidden identities emerging from experiential learning. He argues that though Drama is not a National Curriculum subject, the pedagogical methods of experiential learning provide students with creative and social opportunities to explore, discover, build and develop thinking and learning skills which will support them in navigating their learning journey. Through Drama students explore identity and belonging, challenges and coping strategies. Yet concerns continue to be raised (Tucker, 2013; Schleicher, 2019) regarding the marginalisation of the arts in the curriculum and the effects on the development of students, building on Neelands (2007) who used the analogy of cartography for curriculum:

> *'… students do not come to us a 'human beings' but rather as 'human becomings' – we believe that what we do is planned to help them in this journey of becoming … The curriculum is the necessary map, it is not the journey itself'* (Neelands, 2000; pp. 7-8).

Neelands implies that the curriculum is a starting point for the learning journey, with Drama being a method of navigating that journey, referring to the curriculum as a '*necessary map*'. A map is defined as '*a symbolic representation of a place, usually drawn on a flat surface*' (National Geographic, 2023), therefore it may be argued that he is inferring that though the curriculum is a symbolic representation of a learning journey, composed on the level

medium of paper, an experiential learning journey encompasses undulation through areas of exploration, of uncharted territory, which are discovered through the ways in which the Drama unfolds, as the '*human beings'* – the learners – engage in an expedition of discovery as they chart their own learning journey. Tucker (2023) also argues against cuts in government funding for the arts, highlighting the life-changing impact of arts opportunities experienced as part of the school curriculum on not only literacy levels, but also on the behaviour, motivation and attendance of children who develop leadership skills and become critical thinkers and effective problem-solvers.

As cartographers of their own learning journey, through Drama, students are able to plot a route of personal significance. With the exploratory and creative experiential learning practice of the arts, initial pedagogical approaches are adapted in response to learners' needs or interactions with the learning experience.

The planned 'routes' for the learning journey can be 'diverted' to address learning needs, not just to access a quicker route, but to offer a more rewarding and memorable experiential journey. It is this opportunity, to explore, to experiment and to discuss through practical experience and emerging dialogue, that students may progress on their learning journey, taking into consideration the needs for all learners which will result in diversions and re-routing for some students. However, this is threatened by a widening gap as a result of the marginalisation of the arts through the constraints of the curriculum (Gregson, 2023; Tucker, 2023; Orsler, 2023).

This argument is furthered by Tucker (2023), in stating concerns for a widening arts deprivation gap between the most disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers. The Education Inspection Framework (EIF) identifies a set of criteria against which school

performance is judged stating that the curriculum should enable students to '*achieve well*' with achievement measured by '*results from national tests and examinations that meet government expectations'* to '*prepare learners for a life in modern Britain'* (Ofsted, 2019). Schleicher (2019) argues that to be successful in future careers, young people required a creative skills base rather than those developed through test-based learning, stating *'the arts could become more important for young people than maths in the future',* developing Neelands argument that the future workforce requires skills not only in new technologies and literacy, but those necessary for effective social realisations and public self-presentation, for collaborative engagement and problem. Schleicher calls for the curriculum to prepare people for the community and cultural changes in developing skills in communication, recognising rights and responsibilities, and developing personal and cultural identities, through improving the quality of pedagogy, which is embedded in Drama teaching, across the curriculum. Schleicher echoes Neeland's argument that Drama is: '*a strong, unique and powerful pedagogy … a vital and cross-curricular process or method of learning and teaching … Just what is needed for the future'* (Neelands, 2001; p. 48).

Kirkham (2019) supports this view of the skills developed through an arts education with the findings from her study of adolescents experiencing the arts through both live theatre performance and film adaption of the same play. She concluded that those who experienced the live theatre performance demonstrated improved academic performance and social tolerance and a greater understanding of social change compared to those who watched the film adaptation.

Kirkham's findings support Schleicher's argument for the validity of the skills developed through a creative curriculum in developing a skill set which will support young people in

the transition from high school to further and higher education in preparation for future careers, and in recognising the funding of 'hard skill' core curriculum subjects in favour of the 'soft' skillset developed through an arts curriculum. The ensemble-based approach (Neelands, 2009; Monk et al., 2015) practiced today places 'theatre' within the educational context of the school and presents students with 'real' and recognisable themes, issues, and contexts to which they can apply their thinking and understanding and develop their learning. Eisner (2008) states that the arts have typically been regarded as non-cognitive activities that are often thought to be more ornamental than useful: '*the arts stimulate, refine, and convey meanings that cannot be expressed in any other form of representation.'* (Eisner, 2008; p. 27). He argues that the arts are not an embellishment to education, they are at the centre of thinking, and should be considered as a source of insight and practice, which would therefore support both Neelands's and Monk's ensemble-based process and Schleider's argument that skills developed in the creative subjects are becoming the desired skills for the careers of the future. Critical pedagogues approach education as a process of social, cultural, political, and individual transformation, where social equity can be nourished, or social inequity perpetuated. Some common elements and general themes of critical pedagogy include reworking the roles of student and teacher. It is argued that a creative curriculum through the arts offers open-ended tasks which support inclusion, making the curriculum accessible to all, and extends a somatic experience of sensory exploration where students can be literate in their chosen form: '*One can be literate in one form and illiterate in the other… Each form of literacy provides another way to be in the world, another way to form experience, another way to recover and express meaning.'* (Eisner, 2008; p. 28).

2:2 Bourdieu's theories of habitus and capital

The field in which the research was undertaken is shaped by a range of factors: demographic, social and economic. The geographic setting is a large community estate which was constructed to address the overflow of council estates in Liverpool. The infrastructure consists of housing, local shops, five primary schools and a high school. There is a fusion of council and privately owned properties, tower blocks, maisonettes and one and two-storey properties. There are local medical practices, places of worship and public houses. The library has been closed for over five years and there is one youth centre. The community lies on the border with North Wales and in close proximity to a thriving city centre. There is a large retail park to one side of the community, a police station, a children's centre and a dependable bus route.

In this study, habitus is presented as the dispositions, attitudes and values that shape the participants' actions and perceptions of the world. This approach explores the impact of locality on the aspirations of the participants, in how the extent to which their view of the world is shaped by a gradual internalisation and acceptance of local historical influences which may subsequently have a subordinating and coercive effect within seemingly prescribed or accepted forms of habitus. The impact of the local community on shaping the habitus of the participants through the social, cultural, and economic background which shape their life experiences is explored through the arts-based research practice applied to this study, through both individual and collective habitus which are evident in the data created. The participants appear to present one collective habitus within the Drama Studio which is shaped through the OSL practices in which they work, and another, different, collective habitus in other areas of the school and in the community. It may be argued that

individuals within the group of participants initially entered the Drama Studio with an individual habitus, shaped and influenced by peers and family, and have developed a collective habitus with their peers as they practically explore and develop ideas and ways of working once they engaged in democratic and critical pedagogy. Zahiroh & Zegenene (2023) argue that according to Bourdieu's theory, habitus is formed based on the personality of the individual, with the individual forming and determining their habitus based on their everyday habits when engaged in activities. With the development of knowledge and experience, influenced by their social and educational environment, being internalised into a habitus, the individual's decisions moving forwards are based on what they do daily, with their actions therefore being normalised. Zahiroh and Zegenene (2023) also state that habitus can be defined as '*a social structure, being internalised and transformed into a habit that can be constantly manifested*.' (Zahiroh & Zegenene, 2023; P. 24). The habitus is impacted by the environment with individuals adapting to changes within this, not only producing but being produced by social life. The habitus of the participants is also shaped and influenced by soft power and symbolic violence, which the data from this study identifies and explores:

'The specificity of symbolic violence resides precisely in the fact that it requires of the person who undergoes it an attitude which defies the ordinary alternative between freedom and constraint.' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; p. 168).

This suggests that the participants may be constrained by the community, family or peers, or indeed by authoritarian and political means. Connolly and Healy (2004) commented on the acceptance and reproduction of subordination:

> *'… symbolic violence … represents the way in which people play a role in reproducing their own subordination through the gradual internalisation and acceptance of those ideas and structures that tend to subordinate them. It is an act of violence precisely because it leads to the constraint and subordination of individuals, but it is also symbolic in the sense that this is achieved indirectly and without overt and explicit acts of force or coercion.'* (Connolly & Healy, 2004; p. 15).

This study seeks to explore the ways in which Drama can support the mental health and wellbeing of the participants by emancipating them from the constraints of their world through Drama and giving them a platform to speak for themselves, emancipating Drama from exclusion from the National Curriculum and empowering subject specialists to take an active and recognised role in whole school curriculum planning, both as an academic subject and as a pastoral support for the emotional wellbeing of secondary school students. The emancipation of the participants' voices strives to highlight both individual and collective habitus which are shaped by life experiences in their community, and to demonstrate how they are developing their own habitus through Drama practice and experience.

Jenkins (2002) states that the principal taxonomies of the habitus are '*imprinted and encoded in a socialising or learning process which commences during early childhood*' (Jenkins 2002; pp. 75-76). This is observed in the community as students share the habitus and social capital with older generations, engaging in similar practices and demonstrating an acceptance of predetermined pathways. Passivity in students is observed through those individuals who chose to 'go with the flow' with a historical acceptance as their habitus resembles the values of the school, on some occasions recognising the constraint of social conditions and conditionings and reading a future that will fit them. This is observed in

students opting for GCSE study in subject areas pertinent to their career choice, those enrolled in the bursary scheme, and in students aspiring for change and progression through avenues available to them in secondary of tertiary education or apprenticeship. Complicity is evident in students who are marginalised through academic setting, who take their position as granted and reading the future that they believe best fits them, as they do not see any alternative, rather than aspiring to make progress. The school Drama curriculum has been designed to develop a transformative habitus where students are able to recognise the capacity for improvisation and to make things happen. Lingard et al. (2003) argue that schooling should be transformed to ensure the provision of educational opportunities for all students, particularly disadvantaged, and marginalised students. However, the question must be posed as to whether it is appropriate for teachers to attempt to transform students by projecting onto them identities without consideration for the communities they exemplify. This then promotes further questioning around identity, and the power or authority of teachers to change the identity of their students within the fields of the school, where various agents influence the individuals (teachers, peers, support staff). The questions of transformation and identity and the relativeness to the study are discussed in detail in the methodology (Chapter 2), and in Chapter 6.

2:3 Open Space Learning (OSL) and Forum Theatre: Cyclical Learning

Open-space learning (OSL) practice (Monk et al., 2015) is a transdisciplinary pedagogy practiced through collaborative approaches by classroom-based practitioners and theatre-based professionals. The practice was developed from work between the University of Warwick and the Royal Shakespeare Company, where the effects of space and performance on teaching and learning were explored, through the value of space in supporting learning

which is 'immediate, enactive and alive' (Monk et al., 2015; p. 1), comfortable in the rehearsal space, finding similarities with the Studio space at school. Monk et al. (2015) state: '*the very fact of working in a studio or rehearsal room space creates real physical engagement with the taught materials in ways that could not possibly happen in the lecture and seminar format*' (Monk et al., 2015; p. 2). It is argued that through OSL, the skills developed empower the participants to take responsibility for their own learning through increasing openness to experiment and taking risks, engaging interactively with learning materials, such as text, props, audio-visual materials to 'fashion or create their own knowledge'. (Monk et al., 2015; p. 1).

In KS3, the participants were taught in groups which were set according to their literary abilities, but in KS4 the group consists of students of mixed academic abilities who had opted to further their study of Drama. An active learning style was established in KS3, through the application of a thinking curriculum employing a Process Drama (O'Neil, 1995; Neelands & Goode, 2000) approach in exploring a range of theatre styles and practitioners to develop a range of explorative skills, empowering and preparing those who opted for KS4 study to develop a critical pedagogical approach to learning as common practice. In using Process Drama in addition to the OSL (Monk et al., 2015; Neelands, 2009) workshop method at KS3 to enrich the teaching and learning experience across a range of theatre styles in Drama, the active learning style has embedded a critical pedagogy from the transitional stage to empower students from the first Drama lesson, building knowledge and understanding, and enabling students to become positive agents of their own learning (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017). In becoming 'positive agents', the students are taking responsibility for their behaviours within the learning experience. It is recognised that all students learn in different ways, with preferred learning styles emerging through learning

experiences, and that some students find it challenging to become positive agents. The embedding of an OSL approach in the Drama curriculum is designed to provide differentiated ways of working through a practical and democratic model, offering an inclusive environment for learning.

Due to the option process for transition from KS3 to KS4 and the curriculum model employed for staffing and delivering subjects at KS4, the dynamics of a group moving forwards to KS4 in an options subject generally consists of a range of learners with varying academic and social abilities, who may not have worked confidently and effectively in this context. To address this, the introduction to Forum Theatre (Boal, 2000; Katsavidou & Vio, 2014) at this point was strategically planned into the Drama curriculum to create an ensemble in KS4 who could develop peer relationships constructed through an understanding of each other's thoughts and opinions, employing a democratic approach to working together, building on skills, knowledge and understanding introduced and developed in KS3.

At KS3 the students are introduced to workshop models of teaching and learning through an OSL approach, initially seated in a circle on the floor, as a forum, and using the space to explore and develop work in both a practical and academic manner, in contrast to working in more traditional classrooms elsewhere in the school, being seated behind desks (usually in accordance with the teacher's seating plan). In a critical exploration of Freire's contributions to literacy and emancipatory gender learning, Stromquist (2014) argues that a forum approach deploys a critical pedagogy in the classroom and refers to the circle in the context of public arenas, predominantly used by citizens or communities, further considering the documented use of the circle since 1844 in Denmark to create a learning

environment in which participants '*debate their conditions, analyse them and seek collective solutions*' (Stromquist, 2014; p. 553). The use of a circle for public debate can be traced back even further, to the ancient Greeks and Romans, with study circles now being used as a key pedagogical strategy in Sweden in particular (Stromquist, 2014). The circle is a pedagogical approach widely used in Primary Education and in Drama and Physical Education (P.E.) teaching, and in Drama practice both in educational settings and professional practice. The benefits of working in a circle are that everyone can be seen and therefore included in the work being addressed. It is intended to open up the teaching or working space, removing physical barriers, such as desks and symbolic representations of power and status, and presents all participants as equal. The participants had engaged in Circle Time in primary school, a concept introduced as part of personal and social education as a humanistic, child-centred whole class activity alongside the National Curriculum. Although Drama is not a National Curriculum subject, the circle is used widely in Drama teaching to provide an open forum for learning, particularly in Open Space Learning (OSL) Neelands, 1992; Monk et al., 2015). This had been observed in transition activities with the participants when they progressed into secondary education and was used as a starter activity in their secondary school Drama classes. The circle formation is used in many Drama lessons and practical workshops to facilitate supportive and safe group work, raise self-esteem, and reinforce positive behaviours (Neelands, 1992; Baldwin, 2012). In the circle, participants can be given equal status, the aim being that all contributions are listened to and valued and respected, and the teacher is a facilitator. The forum style of the circle in Drama is influenced by Boal's Forum Theatre approach applied through a critical pedagogy in transforming the participants (audience in the theatre, students in the learning space) into active learners, empowering them to teach each other. Disadvantages of the circle include the temptation

for students to distract each other across the space, to 'pass the punch' around the circle, and, for some more socially challenged students, may present some personal discomfort and a feeling of self-consciousness that everyone in the room can see them. Differentiation, therefore, must be applied at the discretion of the teacher to ensure that the technique is adapted to include all students if it is to be effective. In delivering an OSL workshop the practitioner ensures that the relational pedagogy is applied effectively to ensure a balance in the student-teacher relationship, therefore opening up the space for learning. Monk, et al., (2015) highlight the practitioner skills required as: confidence in managing group activities in open spaces; skilful scaffolding for practical work; personalising the lesson through skilled questioning, and a concern with the social, emotional and cultural development of participants in addition to their academic development. However, it is also vital that the teacher knows the participants, the dynamics of the group and the barriers that may hinder engagement. The shift of power between the participants and the teacher must be negotiated regularly and is more easily applied through the willingness to actively engage. At KS4, a more liberalist and critical pedagogy is encouraged in the drama studio through the continuance of an OSL methodology which is further influenced by a practice of forum style exploration based on Boal's Forum Theatre (Boal, 2000) empowering the participants in becoming actively involved in their learning through emancipating their voices in a practical exploration as an ensemble, as a collective. OSL practice is discussed in more detail through the methodology of the study in Chapter 3.

The participants at KS4 would now have four hours of Drama lessons instead of one over a two-week timetable, therefore widening the access to the practical exploration of a critical pedagogy through the OSL workshop method. The structure of the curriculum offer was new to them, as was the dynamics of the group. Many had not worked together as an

individual group in KS3 classes and therefore were unaware of each other's identities and ways of working. The transdisciplinary model of pedagogy through the OSL approach is one that creates conditions in which learning is 'immediate, enactive and alive' (Monk, et al., 2015; p. 1), equipping participants with transferable skills which may be applied to other subject areas as they recognise that taking risks is a valuable way to learn through practice and that they are able to learn from mistakes, accepting that what some may see as 'failure' should be honoured as it acknowledges experiment and recognises risk, through a pedagogical approach that 'creates knowledge *with* its participants rather than *for* them' (Monk, et al., 2015; p. 126). It must be acknowledged here that not all students are comfortable with engaging actively through practical exploration, and that therefore alternative methods of active learning would be applied, through discourse or small group work.

They explore, experiment with and share knowledge and understanding, developing social awareness and empathy, with the ownership of the knowledge that they have created becoming more fully embedded in their consciousness that might otherwise be possible in a less critical and non-practical pedagogical approach (Monk, et al., 2015). The power relations between the participants and the teacher are negotiated through the critical pedagogy of OSL, and the 'uncrowning' of the teacher, the 'dethroning' of power (Monk, et al., 2015), are amicably transferred. These terms, highlighted by Monk, are usually applied in theatre practice to the actor/director relationship, and in the OSL workshop model are transferred to the relationship between student and teacher. Participants take turns in being the 'Joker', Boal's facilitator for effective Forum Theatre, as questions, issues and themes are explored democratically and collaboratively, as student-teacher binaries are rejected in a focus on the *'mutual and collaborative exchange of ideas and knowledge*

intrinsic to artistic collaboration' (Harris, 2013; p. 414) through a blend of 'playfulness' and 'mindfulness' (Monk, et al., 2015). The ensemble emerges with its own habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; Connolly & Healy, 2004), adapting to, and continuing to develop, shared identities through a pro-social ensemble-based process for building community and a common culture (Neelands, 2009).

Not all subjects lend themselves to a practical and exploratory style of learning, however, Braund (2015) and Braund and Reiss (2019) argue for the value of the arts in engaging and inspiring students through the application of strategies employed in arts education which they believe involve a '*more collaborative learning effort and innovation from students*' (Braund & Reiss, 2019; p. 232) than in Science. They recognise that one method from the arts which stands out in regard of narrative alternatives providing the benefits of visualisation is Drama and believe that using the arts as a language would '*help students understand scientific concepts*' (Braund & Reiss, 2019; p. 232). Aitken et al. (2007) argue that it is the relational nature of teaching and learning in the Arts that enable negotiated spaces through a relational pedagogy where the teacher has a secure knowledge and understanding of the learners and of their confidence in the social role of the 'teacher' which facilitates a '*skilful and timely use of Drama conventions that deepen ideas in Drama teaching*' (Aitken et al., 2007; p. 11). Monk et al. (2015) argue for the 'playfulness' and 'mindfulness' of the OSL model where the participants work collectively through experimentation and play, and believe that this embeds the knowledge learned more effectively than a classroom-based pedagogy.

Aitken et al. (2007) examined how relational pedagogy and power in Drama teaching was established through Process Drama's teacher-in-role technique. They quantified that the

openness of the relational pedagogy in the arts, where teachers and learners work collaboratively in negotiated spaces, enables participants to '*develop engagement with their teachers, their peers, and the real and imagined worlds of Drama*.' (Aitken et al., 2007; p. 16). The notion of an 'imagined' world of drama is further supported by Neelands who also argues for the value of Drama in supporting learners to learn through 'imagined experiences' (Neelands, 1992). He states that Drama should not be seen merely as a subject, but as "a method … a learning tool" (Neelands, 1992; p. 3) because of the way Drama practice supports and enables students to understand themselves and others, as suggested in other research findings aforementioned (Aitken et al., 2007; Braund and Reiss, 2019; Chilton & Leavy, 2014). He believes that the democratic ensemble method used in Drama offers participants a model of 'democratic living' and '*a means of continually reimagining and questioning the idea of how best to live as interdependent human beings*' (Neelands, 2009; p. 2). The OSL workshop approach offers a democratic approach to learning through the negotiated 'dethroning' and 'uncrowning' of power to facilitate active engagement and imaginative exploration (Monk et al., 2015), bringing a change in identity to members of the ensemble as the teacher-student relationships change in the move to collaborative learning where the ensemble become the collective (Monk et al., 2015; Neelands, 2009).

2:4 Peer relationships

Rose (2014) states that culture is a 'complex concept' (Rose, 2014; p. 2). She quotes Hall (1997a) who argues that '*culture is … a process, a set of practices'* which is primarily concerned with '*the production and exchange of meanings … between the members of a society or group … Thus culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is*

around them and 'making sense' of the world in broadly similar ways' (Hall, 1997a; p. 2). The society or group in this instance would be the participants in this study interpreting their 'world'. In Drama, meaning can be conveyed in many ways, for example a visual communication which could be verbal or non-verbal, facial expression, body language, physicality, eye contact. The ensemble has developed meanings as they work collaboratively, but Rose (2014) implies that a distinction must be made between 'vision' and 'visuality' as visual communications are representative and therefore are open to interpretation. She implies that 'vision' is what the human eye is physiologically capable of seeing, with 'visuality' being the various ways in which vision is constructed, quoting Foster (1998): 'how we see, how we are able, allowed or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein' (Foster, 1998:ix), and referring to the phrase 'scopic regime' Metz (1975) as having similar connotations in referring to what is seen and how it is culturally constructed. The ensemble, it may be argued, have constructed their own meanings through collaborative exploration, seeing, interpreting and adapting the meanings through their democratic collective creative process in OSL and Forum theatre workshop methods where power relations are negotiated to enable active and critical learning.

McGrath and Noble (2010) state the importance of positive and 'high quality' peer relationships in equipping young people to experience a range of positive outcomes at school, including improved academic performances and positive mental and physical health, describing the link between pupil achievement and wellbeing to be bidirectional. Of course, if a young person is feeling positive about themselves and their peer relationships, they will apply themselves positively to their learning, and in being actively engaged and successful in their learning they will experience a greater sense of wellbeing. It may be argued that the OSL and Forum Theatre workshops support the development of positive relationships

through democratic and active collaborative learning and the inclusion of all participants, either as 'spectator' or 'spectactor' (Boal, 1999), to create and establish a 'relationship culture' (McGrath & Noble, 2010) focusing on the development of positive peer relationships through practical activities, and were strategically planned into the KS4 curriculum to facilitate the social milieu (McElhaney et al., 2008) required for the ensemble to emerge and develop.

Hill (1989) stated that structured tasks and games facilitated opportunities for more 'popular' children to interact with 'low status peers' with whom they would not usually interact. However, this must be carefully structured to ensure that children who feel socially rejected do not experience heightened social difficulties, by careful negotiation and an understanding of the dynamics of the whole group and of ways of working inclusively. Tyron and Keane (1991) found that pupils who experienced rejection from peer groups were less successful than their peers in 'joining' others in competitive games, therefore the activities, topics and themes must be carefully considered to support the development of the ensemble and develop a positive relationship culture. This is supported by Aitken et al. (2007) where it is argued that for the successful negotiation of power within the teaching space, the teacher must have a 'thorough knowledge' of the pupils. This knowledge, therefore, would also be informed by the dynamics of the ensemble and the peer relations developing and evolving through practical work and discussions as a positive relationship culture is established, through the relational nature of teaching and learning through the arts, where participants develop relationships with their peers and with themselves (Aitken et al., 2007).

The power relations in the Drama studio are not as hierarchical as they may be in other subjects, consisting of a more active approach to learning (Hill, 1989; McGrath & Noble, 2010). In facilitating OSL and Forum Theatre workshops the teaching builds on the actions and reactions of the participants, requiring a form of constitutional learning which Neelands (2009) states is the '*negotiation and continual re-negotiation of the 'laws' in the learning group*' (Neelands, 2009; p. 11). This is necessary to ensure that the teaching and learning environment is effectively opened up to establish a democratic and liberated space in which the ensemble can develop and explore through enactive and kinaesthetic learning, empowering a pedagogy that 'creates knowledge *with* its participants rather than *for* them' (Monk et al.,2015; p. 126), allowing those who may be suppressed in other classroom situations to have a voice. This suppression may manifest as peer pressure to not engage in class discussions, and a fear of ridicule from peers for offering answers in the classroom. This ridicule may take the form of verbal bullying, through being labelled a 'swot, 'creep', 'wierdo' or 'geek' (verbatim). Therefore, although there are 'laws' to control the teaching and learning in the Drama studio, they are negotiable, unlike those in other subjects and classrooms.

In applying activities and games from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed to explore stigmatization in children, Saldana (2010) argues that self-esteem is '*one of the most critical psychological foundations for human beings… When we think less of ourselves, our social interactions become ineffective. We assume a subordinate role and make ourselves vulnerable to oppression*' (Saldana, 2010; p. 60). The benefits of engaging in this style of theatre are supported by Burgoyne et al. (2005) who state that the participatory nature of Theatre of the Oppressed games and activities engage the participants in theatre exercises to explore a social problem and tackle oppression.

Young (2011) argues that each generation must question the roles of schools, stating that some form of authority relations is intrinsic to pedagogy and to schools, and that the teacher-student relationship must be hierarchical in order to transmit 'powerful knowledge', that learners lack the prior knowledge to make choices about their learning because they are not equipped with the necessary prior knowledge. However, in the critical pedagogy applied to OSL and Forum Theatre workshops the learners develop that knowledge, particularly in KS4 when they spend an extended period of time as an ensemble, constructing their knowledge through active, practical exploration and negotiated power relationships. Confidence, trust and ensemble building will only be effective when group trust is developed at the same time as establishing the space. In OSL good classroom management will facilitate effective relational pedagogy, allowing for collaborative work to develop confidence and trust. (Monk et al., 2015). To emancipate the learning experience, relationships and trust must be developed to empower the participants and support their learning experience through finding their voice and making it heard, giving them ownership of their learning.

This habitus has been formed collectively through the democratic practice of negotiated power through OSL and Forum Theatre workshop methods of practical inquiry, in addition to the skills developed through both Drama in education and theatre in education exploration and practice, resulting in a set of socially ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions which have enabled the participants to perceive the social world around them and react to it. These dispositions will be developed through the social and academic interaction of the participants through their active participation within the Drama studio and may form a contrasting habitus to that outside the Drama studio, which may be seen as one formed through symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1990). The habitus in the Drama studio is naturally

influenced by the cultural changes which develop through the ensemble's active and practical exploration of themes and ideas.

Neelands supports Monk et al. (2015) in advocating the pedagogical methodology of OSL to develop confidence in participants, bridging the work of school-based Drama and the theatre. He has worked collaboratively with Monk in developing links with universities and the Royal Shakespeare Company, engaging in active research, with findings demonstrating that learners engaging in OSL develop greater confidence, are more open to risk-taking, develop team-working skills and develop a greater willingness to take personal responsibility, concluding that the OSL approach '*allows individuals and groups who may be silent in lecture and seminar environments to have a voice'* (Monk et al., 2015).

2:5 Verbatim Theatre

Verbatim Theatre is an effective form of contemporary performance which is rising in popularity, due to the factual nature of its form, being derived from real-life events, using the verbatim of those interviewed, or from documentation or statistics pertaining to the focus of the material. The interviews are relayed to actors in one of two forms: as text transcribed from interviews into a playscript, or the original recording from the interview being played through headsets during rehearsal. However, as with all art forms, the verbatim material is susceptible to interpretation – in this case from the actor, director, and the audience, therefore impacting on the factual representation of the material. It is sometimes referred to as documentary theatre, though it is not necessarily the same form in as much as Verbatim Theatre-makers use real people's words exclusively and take this testimony from recorded interviews. This style of theatre is often used to share a specific story or event and gives voice to people who would not normally have a platform. The

process creates dialogue in a naturalistic way. The subjects being interviewed speak naturally, so their dialogue includes all the ums, pauses, slang, regionalisms, repeated words, and other speech mannerisms that happen in conversation. Playwright Rony Robinson sets out the boundaries of Verbatim Theatre as:

> *'a form of theatre firmly predicated upon the taping and subsequent transcription of interviews with 'ordinary' people, done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event, or combination of these things. This primary source is then transformed into a text which is acted, usually by the performers who collected the material in the first place'* (Robinson, 1986, as cited in Paget, 1987; p. 317).

Bellfield states that: "*Verbatim theatre offers an audience a truth and authenticity that even the most well-crafted and researched plays can't … With regular plays, the playwright's imagination is at large and, although it may have a historical or emotional truth, it is a represented realism*" (Bellfield, 2018). In using Verbatim Theatre as the vehicle in which to present the voices of the participants in this arts-based research inquiry, the representation is real, using the words of the participants.

Verbatim Theatre plays are performed predominantly to the communities in which the work has been created in before being performed to wider audiences (Paget, 1987). Documentary Theatre director Clive Barker (*Oh What a Lovely War)* sees Verbatim Theatre as '*a whole new area of documentary opening up – the direct communication, or second-hand communication, of lived experience through the actor as instrument*' (Barker, 1985, cited in Paget, 1987). Writer and director Peter Darney observed that audiences reacted differently to verbatim performances in as much as they found them to be '*more funny,*

more extreme, more painful and brutal, because ultimately they were true … we knew that we were honestly reflecting the experience of people … and in that, we were able to expose it, to provoke debate, discussion and reflection in the community' (Darney, as cited in Paskett, 2018). Verbatim Theatre directors include: Moises Kaufman (The Laramie Project), David Hare (The Permanent Way), Nadia Fall (Home), and Nicolas Kent (Justifying War). Kent and journalist Richard Norton-Taylor have established an award-winning partnership for verbatim theatre, staging plays based on inquiries including into Bloody Sunday and the murder of Stephen Lawrence and are currently editing down more than three years of evidence and testimony into a new theatrical production titled *Grenfell: Value Engineering – Scenes from the Inquiry* (The Guardian, 2021).

2:6 Mental health and wellbeing in a secondary school context

The subject of exam stress and test anxiety has been explored extensively as issues around the mental health of students in educational settings become a school focus (Putwain, 2007, 2008; Arney, K, 2018; Pascoe et al., 2020). Putwain (2008) argued that GCSE reforms for 14–16-year-olds triggered an increase in levels of stress and anxiety, with a 200% rise in requests from young people for counselling sessions. This argument is supported by research by the NSPCC (2005), Arney (2018) and Allegretti (2021) who presented findings which identified school and exam pressures as one of the main causes of stress and anxiety in children and young people. With ensuing reforms being introduced periodically, this is becoming a more recognised phenomenon which, in turn, leads to psychological disorders such as social anxiety (Herzer et al., 2014). The effects of exam anxiety on learning include demotivation and disaffection from education, not only on academic performance but on the mental health of young people (Putwain, 2008).

Young Minds (2022) presented statistics of young people being referred to the National Health Service (NHS) with mental health issues which included anxiety and depression, eating disorders and a range of psychological problems, with a total of 241, 791 young people being referred to the NHS in the first 3 months of 2022, already half of the total number of young people referred in the whole of 2021. The statistics revealed that 35% of young people felt that they faced stigma and discrimination when they tried to get help with their mental health, stating that they had negative experiences with GPs, teachers, and other professionals. More than half of the young people (51%) felt ashamed or embarrassed to ask for help, with almost 4 in 10 (37%) not wanting anyone to find out that they were seeking support for their mental health.

Cambell (2023) shared the analysis of data from the Young Minds research, adding that concerns about money and education also affected the mental health of young people referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs) for treatment. These concerns were in addition to treatment for anxiety, depression, self-harming and other psychological issues experienced by young people. Campbell presented findings from Mind (2022) that showed the number of school aged children referred to Camhs from 2019 to 2022 rose dramatically by 76%, from 812, 070 in 2019 to 1, 425, 194 in 2022.

In their study of young people experiencing mental health issues the mental health charity MIND (2021) identifies drivers of mental health problems in young people in 3 areas: trauma, racism and lockdown. They identify trauma as including PTSD; sexual and emotional abuse; witnessing domestic abuse; involvement in/witnessing drug dealing. They identified racism as a trigger for developing mental health issues which lead to withdrawal, isolation, depression and anxiety, and stated the effects that lockdown during the

Coronavirus pandemic has had on young people as a result of the closure of schools with a break in routines, little or no access to technology for those in low-income families, chaotic home lives, and the resulting cessation in face-to-face pastoral support for young people. It may be argued that it is the pastoral support available in schools that forms a bridge for many young people to feel comfortable in sharing their concerns about their mental health and enables schools to monitor the emotional wellbeing of students. Indeed, the Mind (2021) report states that 68% of young people in their study reported being absent from school due to their mental health. As schools continue to strive to improve attendance and support students in accessing the curriculum, in addition to pastoral support, recommendations from the study identified that immediate action is required from the Department for Education to improve wellbeing support for secondary staff and parents, and to support schools in meeting the needs of young people experiencing mental health problems.

The term 'wellbeing' has become synonymous with mental health. Well-being is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy." However, wellbeing has a range of definitions:

> *… it is important to realise that well-being is a much broader concept than moment-to-moment happiness. While it does includes happiness, it also includes other things, such as how satisfied people are with their life as a whole, their sense of purpose, and how in control they feel*. (Mental Health Foundation, 2023)

Considering the statistics published in mental health research, wellbeing is impacted by mental health, and vice-versa. They draw on each other. Positive mental health results in a feeling of wellbeing, and a sense of wellbeing feeds into mental health. In the context of

this study, it is the factors contributing to the mental wellbeing of young people in secondary education which are being considered. Mind (2023) offer the following advice on mental wellbeing to young people on their website:

> *Mental wellbeing doesn't have one set meaning. We might use it to talk about how we feel, how well we're coping with daily life or what feels possible at the moment. Good mental wellbeing doesn't mean that you're always happy. Or that you're unaffected by your experiences. And having good wellbeing doesn't always mean that you don't have a mental health problem. You may live with a mental health problem, but have good wellbeing right now. Or you might not have a mental health problem, but be struggling with your wellbeing at the moment. Poor mental wellbeing can make it more difficult to cope with daily life.* (Mind, 2023).

The daily lives of young people are influenced by the communities in which they live and learn, and by the wider communities which they reach through social media. Their mental health and wellbeing are therefore impacted by local and world events. The World Health Organisation (2023) state:

> *Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose.* (WHO, 2023).

However, Martyn argues that *'The success of a school's wellbeing provision depends on the culture that it creates as a community'*. (Martyn, 2022; p. 18). This statement is relevant to the context of the participants in this study, where it is argued that their habitus is formed

by the community in which they live and learn, a community which is indeed influenced by world events, but holds its own identity. Their wellbeing is impacted as they develop their individual social habits, or habitus, which is shaped by their cultural, social and economic background as well as their life experiences. In school, the habitus can be seen at both individual and collective levels through behaviours and attitudes of individuals and social groups (Ramsey, 2024). The desire to be part of a social group, to share a collective habitus, impacts on the mental wellbeing of young people and may lead to further issues if individuals fear that they may be rejected by their peer group.

Mental health and wellbeing are primarily addressed at the high school through SMSC and PSHE lessons which are timetabled on the school curriculum. At KS 3, SMSC is delivered through the medium of Drama to encourage practical exploration of themes and develop communication skills, confidence and self-esteem. SMSC is delivered through tutor periods with discussions arising from power point resources. In assessing and analysing the standard of learning and teaching of SMSC in the role of the educator it is evident that the students engage more effectively in the practical exploration of themes and issues than in a classroom-based discussion on the same topics.

The Department for Education updated the statutory guidelines for physical health and mental wellbeing for Primary and secondary schools in 2021, to be delivered through the existing whole school relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum. For secondary educations, students were expected to understand: how to talk about their emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary; that happiness is linked to being connected to others; how to recognise the early signs of mental wellbeing concerns; common types of mental ill health (e.g. anxiety and depression); how to critically evaluate

when something they do or are involved in has a positive or negative effect on their own or others' mental health; the benefits and importance of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation and voluntary and service-based activities on mental wellbeing and happiness. The RSE curriculum is delivered in schools as part of PSHE and therefore has no specific structure for delivery, usually timetabled into one hour a fortnight in tutor sessions, or collapsed days at the end of term.

In her argument following research into the value in the Drama curriculum for supporting mental wellbeing in schools, Martyn (2022) recognises that Wellbeing education has become prominent in whole school curriculum planning, particularly in light of the rising numbers in children and young people with depression and anxiety recorded in the UK, USA and Australia, but states that research demonstrates that *'the provision of wellbeing is broad and varied since there is no prescribed methodology that institutions must follow. This grants schools the choice to create their own taught curriculum or foster their own ideologies of wellbeing throughout their wider curricula and culture.'* (Martyn, 2022; p. 7). Her findings evidenced that Drama has *'several intrinsic links to the social-emotional wellbeing of adolescents' (*Martyn, 2020; p. 17). She concluded that Drama supported the wellbeing of adolescents and was evidenced through the development of empathy, self-expression, critical and creative thinking, communication skills, development of stronger relationships, the understanding of collaboration, and the levels of student satisfaction and contentment.

Considering the literature reviewed, the research study will be structured through an iterative approach, using Performance Poetry, found poetry and Verbatim Theatre. The Performance Poetry will establish how Drama supports the mental health and wellbeing of

the participants and identify the emerging habitus of both individuals and the collective through the creation and performance of Spoken Word. The found poetry will further evidence the impact of Drama on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the participants and identify individual habitus, keeping the verbatim of interview. The Verbatim Theatre will present how participants use Drama to support the mental health and wellbeing of a collective through a shared habitus in performing individual verbatim work as a creative whole, to emancipate the words of the individuals and invite interpretation, discussion, and action. The methodology for this study is detailed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The arts-based action research was conducted over an academic year, through merging roles as researcher, teacher, and director, living reflexively throughout the study and is presented through a triangulation of data through dramaturgical approaches, framing the data through performance poetry, found poetry and Verbatim Theatre, as presented in Fig. 3.1 Triangulation of Drama practice applied in three stages:

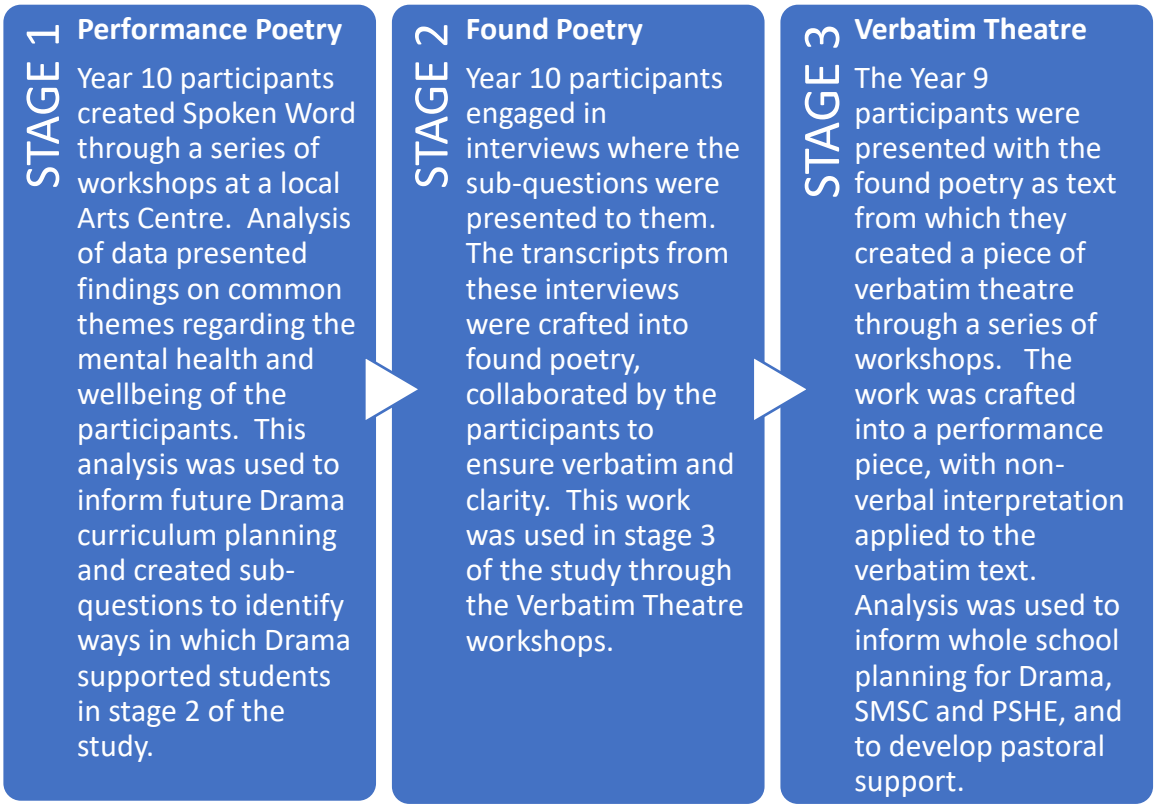


Fig. 3.1 Triangulation of Drama practice applied in three stages.

As a practitioner-researcher within the study (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007) it was vital that the participants were provided with conditions which allowed them to be heard and respected through a continuous development process, combining reflection, reflexivity, and validity. Drama is not a National Curriculum subject though nonetheless requires research through teacher reflection (Campbell et al., 2004) to ensure that classroom

practice is effective and that the varying needs of all students are supported and addressed through the learning and teaching strategies employed. Schon (1983) introduced the concept of reflective practitioner into educational debate, making a distinction between two accounts of what he refers to as 'professional knowledge': technical knowledge and reflection-in-action. He stated that the reflective practitioner is, by definition, a researcher who engages in researching their everyday practice as they conduct their practice (Schon, 1983). Both the technical knowledge and the reflection-in-action in this research study lies with the practitioner-researcher. In reflective practice, there is not a sole methodology which dominates the research for practitioners (Campbell et al., 2004), allowing for an eclectic model. However, as this research focuses on drama practice and the cross-curricular application of drama skills, an arts-based methodology is the most effective for this study. In describing the purposes and characteristics in arts-based educational research (ABER), Barone and Eisner (2006) state that two criteria apply: '*that it is engaged for a purpose often associated with artistic activity and meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to human activities which are educational in character'* and *'defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry process and the research text.'* (Barone & Eisner, 2006; p. 96). Both criteria are addressed in this research study.

The research was focused on professional practice and thinking, and the improvement of practice in an educational setting, (Campbell et al., 2004), using observations and interviews in examining how Drama plays a role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students. The study was conducted using Drama skills and practice to create performance poetry, found poetry and Verbatim Theatre to generate and present data using an art-based research methodology. On the issue of subjectivity, a professional code of practice was

maintained as research methods were justified and critically reviewed throughout the study, inviting the voices of the participants in each step of the arts-based journey. Interviews were exploratory and facilitated the sharing of information and opinions, being discursive in nature and allowing the participants to develop responses (Campbell et al., 2004). These responses are presented as found poetry which was transcribed from interviews with Year 10 participants, and which is performed using a verbatim theatre style studied by the Year 9 participants in their Drama curriculum, in a polyphonic chorus of both their verbal and non-verbal voices to be heard and experienced by an audience.

The participants for the research consisted of a group of Year 10 Performing Arts students, with a further group of Year 9 Performing Arts students forming the company who would present the found poetry data as a piece of Verbatim Theatre, using Drama techniques and practical performance skills to present the voices of the participants in a practical art form. Through informal discussions, interviews, and performance poetry workshops, the students shared personal experiences and aspects of mental health and wellbeing which were pertinent to them, and which impacted on their daily lives both in and outside of school. The transcripts of the interviews and informal conversations from the workshops formed the found poetry, with the performance poetry and verbatim theatre piece being created and performed through a series of workshop activities. Rehearsals and off-site events, such as theatre visits, workshops at the local arts centre and performances in a national theatre provided opportunities for the Year 10 participants to engage in informal conversations and discussions about their feelings and emotions which impacted on their work and on the interrelationships in school and at home. They spoke frequently of the trust that had developed within the group, built up over the periods of time that they have spent in the Drama Studio, which they reiterated was viewed by them as a 'safe space'. They described

the Drama Studio as somewhere where they felt comfortable voicing their feelings, emotions, and opinions without fear of rebuke or judgement, and where relationships were built on the nature of the work shared in the Drama Studio and through the exploratory and creative practice in the subject. They referred specifically to peer relationships in the Drama Studio and how they differed to those in classrooms and social spaces around the school. This is discussed in the analysis of the poetry as data in Chapters 4 and 5 and in the Verbatim Theatre discussion in Chapter 6.

3:1 The structure of the research

In identifying how Drama supports the mental health and wellbeing of students in a Secondary School setting, the research study was structured thus, through a triangulation of data through dramaturgical approaches:

Stage 1: Year 10 participants engaged in a performance poetry workshop. The aim of the workshop was to present young people with a platform to share their lived experiences with an audience. This workshop is discussed in Chapter 4. From the analysis of the data from the workshop and ensuing performance three questions emerged:

1. What are your thoughts on Drama and the effects it has had on your wellbeing?
2. Which skills have you developed in Drama that you have applied elsewhere?
3. How would you sum Drama up in one word?

Stage 2: Year 10 participants engaged in interviews where the sub-questions were presented to them. The transcripts from these interviews were crafted into found poetry, collaborated by the participants to ensure verbatim and clarity. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

Stage 3: The Year 9 participants were presented with the found poetry as text from which they created a piece of verbatim theatre through a series of workshops. Analysis and findings from the workshops are discussed in Chapter 6.

3:2 Representing mental health and wellbeing in a school context

With similarities to the work of Saldana (2010) where he explores themes of stigma and oppression using Boal's (1998) techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed, the participants were interested in finding ways in which to reduce the stigma which they believed was attached to mental health issues, and to give a voice to their feelings about their own mental health and wellbeing (Saldana, 2006; Sallis, 2014). When engaging in the performance poetry workshop they suggested presenting this through a performance, or an ethnodrama (Saldana, 2010). They believed that an audience would be able to experience their reality in a structured and practical context, with the hope that some of the issues and themes may evoke some understanding and raise questions that may lead to further investigation, inquiry or focus on the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

Through these conversations and considered reflection, an arts-based approach was decided as the most appropriate methodology for the study, with the data being presented through performance poetry and as a piece of Verbatim Theatre, using the found poetry as the text. Through the medium of Verbatim Theatre, the young people can be represented authentically, carefully and with respect, protecting their identity whilst emancipating their voice through actors in performance using their words in verbatim. Authenticity in Verbatim Theatre is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

As a practitioner firmly established within the field of the study, there was a distinct awareness and understanding of safeguarding guidelines set out in the school. The research

was conducted overtly, with participants being given as much information as they required to ensure informed consent and were actively encouraged to contribute to the research to ensure that their own perspectives were given due weight (O'Reilly, 2009:59). This ensured that the power and status of the researcher was not enhanced and that the participants were not exploited or misrepresented.

Participants in this study were comfortable in engaging in group discussions, informal conversations and interviews in the Studio and were open and honest about their own mental health. Despite working daily with these young people over a number of years, some of the issues that they faced were not openly apparent prior to the study, where these were presented through the Performance Poetry, the questionnaires and the Found Poetry, and identified and related to by other students through the Verbatim Theatre workshop. The participants all agreed that the school promoted wellbeing but felt that there was a stigma to the term 'mental health', whereby anyone who verbalised anxiety or stress was branded 'a nutter' or 'wierdo', with many young people preferring to internalise their concerns and issues over their own mental health and wellbeing, desiring to appear 'normal' (verbatim) and pretend that everything was as it should be. The participants were interested in finding ways in which to reduce the stigma and give a voice to their feelings about their own mental health and wellbeing, and suggested presenting this through a performance, as they understood that an audience would experience their reality in a structured and entertaining context. Through these conversations and considered reflection, an ethnological arts-based approach was decided as the most appropriate methodology for the study, with the data being presented as a piece of Verbatim Theatre.

3:3 Rationale for an arts-based research methodology

The study sits firmly within an arts-based research methodology, using the professional knowledge, or 'technical knowledge' (Schon, 1983) of the researcher as practitioner, shared poetry, performance skills and discourse of the participants to create a piece of verbatim theatre through which to present the data through an ethnodramatic form (Saldana, 2008). Ethnodrama is a methodology used within arts-based research to present qualitative data through dramatic literary conventions (Saldana, 2005; Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2008, 2001). Ethnodramas are produced from the constructed field texts that come from professional inquiry, dramatic literary writing consisting of research participants' stories and/or researchers' interpretations of data. (Saldana, 1999, 2005, 2011). Mienczakowski and Morgan, as cited in Butler-Kisber (2010) define ethnodrama as:

> *'…a method and methodology synthesising health and education fields where we combine qualitative research processes with action research, grounded theory and narrative. … Essentially ethnodrama relies upon the voices, lived experiences, and beliefs of its subjects to inform its content, shape and intent.'* (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2008, as cited in Butler-Kisber, 2010; p. 451).

In the context of this research study the verbatim theatre approach to frame the ethnodrama will consist of a synthesis of the secondary school field with the art-based research, theory and narrative comprising of performance poetry created by the participants in a series of practical workshops, found poetry which uses the transcripts of interviews and observations, and Verbatim Theatre as the style of theatre performance presented to an audience.

The participants in this arts-based research inquiry share their voices, lived experiences and beliefs through a range of practical Drama conventions, which are then applied to create the verbatim theatre piece for performance to an audience. Saldana describes the aims of ethnodrama as being '*to educate and foster avenues for social change by producing very vivid and credible accounts of lived experience that will generate an aesthetic, intellectual and emotional response from the members of the audience*' (Saldana, 2008; p. 283). Through the ethnodramatic form of this study, the voices of the participants are presented to an audience to evoke appreciations and understandings of the mental health and wellbeing issues which are personally experienced, and to demonstrate how Drama may be used as a vehicle to emancipate the voices which are not heard through other subject areas within the secondary school setting, with the intention that subsequent action or change may implemented to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people in education. The use of Verbatim Theatre frames the lived experiences of the participants and presents it to the audience in a multi-sensory experience, with the intention of triggering response, reaction and questions leading to further action in regard to the focus of the participants work – their mental health and wellbeing. The field texts were returned to at points throughout the research process to enable a triangulation of ideas between the participants (both the poets and the performers) and the researcher, to encourage the participants to identify what they thought the audience should or want to know, and to prioritize what the participants deemed relevant, resulting in a 'polyphonic script' resonating with the lived experiences of the participants (Mienczakowski & Moore, 2001).

Pelias (2008) states that in portraying data through characterisation it is possible for the researcher to '*remain very close to the actual verbatim text, or less so*' (Pelias, 2008, as cited in Butler-Kisber, 2010; p. 147). The arguments which both support and contest this

statement are discussed in Chapter 6. In the context of this study, the decision was made to remain close to the verbatim text to ensure that the voices were heard without dilution, particularly when using verbatim theatre as the style of performance. The rationalisation for presenting the data through the form of ethnodrama is supported by Saldana's beliefs that theatre practitioners and arts-informed inquirers use the same aesthetic sense in the application of skills in their work (Saldana, 1999). As a practitioner-researcher within the study (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007), with technical knowledge and reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983), this places me as both practitioner and arts-informed inquirer. Ethnodrama offers an important lens for thinking about an arts-based research inquiry that is embodied, relational, participatory, and geared to action and social change. It is hoped that in experiencing the Verbatim Theatre performance, that the aesthetic and emotive effect on the audience will evoke such, raising awareness, illuminating complex feelings of lived experiences, and evoking empathy and resonance to transform consciousness (Finley, 2003; Leavy, 2009). If the audience were to be Initial Teacher Trainees (ITTs) or newly qualified teachers (NQTs), the performance material could be used to raise awareness of the current mental health and wellbeing issues experienced by secondary school students and offer insight into how Drama practice may support the learning and teaching in the classroom. If an audience of mentors or counsellors were to experience the ethnodramatic performance they may benefit from the aesthetic representation of the mental health and wellbeing experiences of the participants, possibly highlighting triggers or issues that they could relate to theoretical understanding and therefore practice and develop strategies for further support for young people in their field. For an audience of students, the performance may reassure them that they are not alone in experiencing some of the mental health and wellbeing issues which emerge from the research and are presented to them

through the Verbatim Theatre style and may indeed offer them new thoughts and insights into developing resilience and seeking support.

The lexicology of terms for arts-based research is considerable, including such terms as A/R/tography, art-based inquiry, arts-based educational research (ABER), practice-based research and performative inquiry, to name but a few. However, for the purposes of this research study the methodology will be referred to as Arts-Based Research (ABR). Barone and Eisner (2006) state that the ultimate goal for conducting arts-based research is to ensure improvements in educational policy and practice. In conducting educational research, the purpose has always been to gain knowledge which is valid and reliable, being truthful and trustworthy in practice (Barone & Eisner, 2006). Through an arts-based methodology, Verbatim Theatre is the arts form used to ensure that the data is presented in a truthful and trustworthy manner, using the exact words of the participants through performance poetry and found poetry. Performance poetry, found poetry and verbatim theatre are the art forms used to inform the data.

Arts-based researchers aim to propose new ways of viewing educational phenomena, through aesthetic design elements which takes the participants and audience on a '*transmutation of feelings, thoughts and images into an aesthetic form*' (Barone & Eisner, 2006; p. 96). Arts-based research offers a lens for thinking about inquiry that is embodied, relational, participatory, and geared to action and social change, encompassing all the senses (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Arts-based research can be a means to extend beyond the potentially limiting constraints of verbal communication and explore themes and meanings which may otherwise be inexpressible through discourse (Barone & Eisner, 2006). It may also be open to interpretation due to the performative nature of the data presented.

Sullivan (2010a; 2014) presented an art installation by Alakbarov as an example of data which may be interpreted in several ways when analysed using different methods. Alakbarov presented a piece of art, constructed from everyday objects, with no discernible structure or pattern, onto a pedestal which stood in the corner of a gallery. Two lamps placed to the left and the right of the work illuminated the installation, casting shadows onto each of the two walls against which it stood. This produced a profile of two quite different city skylines: one resembling New York, the other bearing similarities to Istanbul. Sullivan stated that this was a prime example of '*how we make use of data and turn it into different types of information*' (Sullivan, 2014; p. 272). The installation presented one source for the data, showing two different types of information in the skylines, one source offering different meanings, the same raw data yielding different information. Through the presentation of data in this study, separate meanings will emerge for different audiences. The data will be interpreted in unique ways dependent on the audience observing. The data presents real people captured at a moment in time, experienced through a triangulation of Drama practice, where each participant is different to their peers, the communities that form the audiences are different to each other. The same source offering different meanings, the same raw data yielding different information. When considering the audience for research, Leavy (2020) argues for the value of arts-based research in reaching larger audiences, stating that over 90% of journal articles have only 3-8 readers. She maintains that arts-based research is an effective tool for investigating sensitive data: '*you can get at data that otherwise would be invisible … you can get at different data that otherwise would be unavailable*.' (Leavy, 2020). Leavy heralds the effectiveness of ethnodramas in reaching considerably larger audiences than journal articles, stating: '*some*

of the plays have been performed 2-300 times, at schools, at hospitals, in community centres'. (Leavy, 2020).

In this arts-based research study the aim is to examine how engagement in Drama supports and enriches the mental health and wellbeing of students, using the voices of participants in a secondary school setting in verbatim, framing the information gathered from interviews, observations and participation in performance poetry workshops into found poetry, and finally exhibiting the work through ethnodrama to present the data as a piece of verbatim theatre. The performance poetry and found poetry are a sensory journey for the participants with the performance presenting a sensory experience for both the actors and the audience, aimed at evoking response, reaction and questions leading to further action. Arts-based research is currently gathering momentum as a methodological genre, '*adapting the tents of the creative arts in social research in order to make that research publicly accessible, evocative and engaged*' (Chiltern & Leavy, 2014; p. 403).

Though becoming more prevalent in the world of research, arts-based research is not a new form of methodology addressing social issues with goals of change (Butler-Kisber, 2010). From the ancient Greeks, through Shakespeare and the French Romantic period, Drama has '*opened up spaces for understanding, critique and social action*' (Nisker, 2008, as cited in Butler-Kisber, 2010; p. 614). The Greeks used Drama for policy development; Shakespeare presented social, moral and political issues through his work, and in France, lay people were offered new ideas about democracy through Drama in performance. Dewey (1934) acknowledges that non-linguistic forms of educational research have found their way into the traditional printed venues, such as theses, journals and books, and states that a good piece of arts-based research is designed to enhance meaning, to broaden and deepen

ongoing conversations about educational policy and practice, which is evidenced through the exploration of the data in this study and performances to an audience.

Moving into the later twentieth century, theatre director Augusto Boal (1979) built on the work of practitioners Bertolt Brecht and Paolo Friere to develop the 'Theatre of the Oppressed', transforming the oppressive realities of impoverished Brazilians into awareness and action (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Boal's work continues to make considerable impact on worldwide community theatre since the 1960s and is studied at GSCE, A'Level and Level 3 vocational studies. Drama practitioners and educators have a wealth of Drama structures (Neelands & Goode, 2000) which also lend themselves to the praxis of Theatre of the Oppressed. Ethnodramatist Saldana (2010) profiled a case study experience using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques with children in which the theatre style was used to enable the participants to explore how their personal oppressions could be recognised and dealt with in the classroom and on the playground. He stated that self-esteem is one of the most critical psychological foundations for human beings:

'*How we feel about ourselves impacts on our identity and shapes our functioning and ability at daily living, particularly with interpersonal relationships. When we think less of ourselves … our social interactions with others become ineffective. We assume a subordinate role and make ourselves vulnerable to oppression*'. (Saldana, 2010, as cited in Duffy & Vettraino, 2010).

3:4 Drama Studio: a safe space for democratic exploration and developing relationships

In this study the participants, who have some knowledge and understanding of Theatre of the Oppressed from the Drama curriculum studied, worked practically in Drama Studios (both in the school setting and in a local theatre), using a range of dramatic techniques to

explore and present their 'oppressed' voices through performance poetry and found poetry, working in spaces which they refer to as 'safe' (Campbell and Groundwater-Smith, 2007), therefore emancipating their voices and presenting them through the verbatim theatre performance. In interviews and in informal conversations, the participants made repeated references to the Drama Studio being a 'safe' space, a space where they feel able to develop work without judgement and where they can apply creative practice in exploring feelings and emotions, experimenting with different Drama techniques to examine themes and topics, characters and context, mental health and wellbeing. The Studio is sometimes referred to in Drama lessons and workshops as a 'rehearsal space' to support the students in understanding that all work is 'work in progress' and that adaptations and development may be applied at any point to performance work, and equally alluded to that the term 'rehearsal' also applies to their personal and social development.

Students also frequently express feeling safe in the relationships and teamwork that develop and exist within the Studio as they develop their ensemble skills. This supports and evidences the relationship of the participants, both with each other and with the researcher within this study, ensuring that the study is conducted with the researcher exploring power *with* the students and not *on* the students (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007), feeding directly into the reflexive process which ensures that the young people are not manipulated or coerced in the processes applied within the arts-based methodology. In the workshops the researcher was an observer rather than a practitioner, as a professional performance poet facilitated the performance poetry workshops and performance with an Initial Teacher Trainee (ITT) supporting. An ITT is a trainee teacher completing a school placement on a PGCE course in line with assessment for the qualification to attain qualified teacher status. Participants created their poetry without the influence of the researcher. In the crafting of

the found poetry, the researcher and participants worked collaboratively. In the verbatim theatre workshops the Open Space Learning (OSL) model was applied which shifted the balance of the power relationships in the Drama Studio to remove the researcher from the role of director. The OSL model is detailed in Chapter 2.

The participants would frequently apply Stanislavski's methods for performance when working in the Studio, creating naturalistic characters through the techniques of emotion memory and given circumstances. They created and developed characters through practical exploration and experimentation, working collaboratively to establish a natural representation of roles for performance to ensure that intentions were clear to an audience. Stanislavski believed that acting should be more natural and less exaggerated than the popular theatre form of the early twentieth century. His belief in breaking down the fourth wall of the theatre to invite the audience into the world of the play influenced contemporary actors and directors in directly addressing the audience and focusing on a more naturalistic style of acting, where the actor explores what the character is feeling and thinking and how that is communicated to the audience. Some of the participants created role-on-the-wall (Stanislavski, 2008) templates to formulate a backstory for a character in their writing, as this was normal practice for them when exploring character, demonstrating their understanding of the correlation between poetry and acting, where the verse is the script which contains emotive and sensory language to be communicated to an audience, and bringing them closer to an understanding of the skills and techniques required to effectively create performance poetry.

3:5 Rationale for using poetry in arts-based research methodology

There are a rising number of arts-based methods of research and of data representation receiving advocacy as a creative alternative to the more traditional forms of qualitative research (Bishop & Willis, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, 2005; Leggo, 2008), including digital imagery, textiles and craftwork, and theatre-based practice and performances. In examining the places where poetry and human science research intersect, Leggo acknowledges that many human science researchers focus on research questions and methods whereas poets use language to open possibilities for constructing understanding, inviting experimentation with language, to create, to know, to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience (Leggo, 2008).

Leggo (2008) suggests that poetry facilitates the experimentation of using language to engage with experience through creativity and imagination, highlighting the validity of poetry as data and closing the gap between the creative arts and social science disciplines, by crafting ways in which the creative arts may inform social science research. He argues for the effectiveness of using poetry to create and communicate the world of participants through evocative performance, using the medium of poetry to invite interactive responses. The arts-based research methodology in using poetry in performance is also evidenced in Tucker-Raymond et al. (2011), where key themes are identified through the emancipation of the voices of neighborhood youth which link with Boal and Saldana, discussed later in this chapter, demonstrating persistence, resistance and hope. In the study of Tucker-Raymond et al., the lived experiences of the participants, through their poetry formed the data for analysis to inform change. The practice of participants' poetry as data is also explored by Lahaman et al. (2010) using poetry as qualitative research, where the value of participants'

verbatim was demonstrated through the poetry performance. Richardson (1993) argues that lived experience is demonstrated through the use of poetry, rather than demonstrated (p706) and examines who is present in the verbatim of the poetry (p703). Sallis (2014) also supports an arts-based research methodology through ethnodrama as an effective means of data generation, analysis and presentation, emancipating multiple voices to identify outcomes from ethnographic research and the effect on school communities.

Poetry may be presented in a range of ways through an arts-based research (ABR) methodology. I present the performance poetry in this study as using *poetry in qualitative inquiry* (Roberts et al., 2014). In their research into Poetry as Praxis, Roberts et al (2014) state that although the research poem presents a way to understand lived experiences of participants, it is the term *poetry as qualitative data* which refers to 'a *data-set of actual poems generated by participants, which are then analysed against a broader backdrop of various data points*.' (Roberts et al. 2014; p. 169). In analysing the poems, they are presented here in the format in which the participants composed them, and performed them, with no corrections to punctuation, spelling and grammar to ensure that they are read as they were originally written, ensuring the verbatim of the data (Saldana, 2006; Roberts et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2015). Richardson (1993) used scientific and poetic criteria to create a research poem from an in-depth interview, using the participant's exact words, and capturing the essence of her colloquial conventions for the poem to '*stand aesthetically and emotionally … to be faithful to my sociological understanding of Louisa-May's story of her life*.' (Richardson, 1993; p. 696). Richardson's poem was presented as a *research poem* as it was crafted from an interview transcript, as are the found poetry in this study in Chapter 5, but her intention to remain true to the exact words transcribed from the interview resonate with my intention to present verbatim poetry through *poetry in*

qualitative inquiry which is then analysed in chapter 5 through the emerging themes of emotion. In establishing validity and value of what is perceived as a 'good' standard of ABR, Lafreniere and Cox (2012) state that the work must accurately reflect 'something significant' about the study data and its findings that place the voices of the participants to the fore, with the aim of '*provoking some effect in a reader or audience*' (Lafreniere & Cox, 2012; p. 322). In this study, the poems are created by the participants using Spoken Word which is an arts form used to present the voices of those wishing to be heard, frequently used to highlight issues in communities, to provoke reaction and urge action. The participants have used this art form to vocalise their feelings and experiences to their community audience, to highlight their feelings as they prepare for their GCSE examinations, hoping to evoke support for themselves and for their peers. In the true essence of Spoken Word, it is also important to retain the verbatim of the participants' poems. Saldana (2006) ensured the verbatim of his research, presenting an ethnodrama scripted from interview transcripts: '*Rewriting and rewording a participant's grammar or vocabulary were not permitted in order to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the voices'* (Saldana, 2006; p. 189). In chapters 4 and 5 I present the poetry created by the participants in their true form, with no editing or amendments to retain the true voices of the participants and present their lived experiences in verbatim.

Tucker-Raymond et al. conducted an arts-based research inquiry using poetry in performance from students in two educational settings and community rural art. Similarly, to Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques used by Saldana (1998), they used spoken word poetry to enable their participants to voice perspectives on their social worlds, challenging the oppressive structures that affected their communities, suggesting new possibilities. They argued that the poetry, expressed through the voices of neighbourhood

youth is a '*tacit of persistence, resistance and hope, and one that is viable in schools*' (Tucker-Raymond, 2011; p. 272). Spoken word poetry transpires as a form of community activism, blurring the boundaries between the oral and the written voice, between the individual and the collective (Sutton, 2004), which is emphasised by the use of a polyphonic voice through the Verbatim Theatre performance as it seeks to create bridges between the lives of individuals and the collective issues in the community, with the aim of encouraging young people, and those who work with them in an educational, pastoral or support role, to critically examine the social spaces that they inhabit (Tucker-Raymond et al., 2011; p. 273). By using poetry to express the voices of the participants in this arts-based research inquiry, the aim is to raise awareness of the mental health and wellbeing of young people through arts-based practice and performance, a premise that weaves through the performance poetry crafted in the workshops and presented to an audience, prevalent in the found poetry emerging from the interviews and informal conversations. Education scholars have argued that poetry has the potential to amplify the voices of children who have been oppressed by mainstream institutions (Fisher, 2005; Reyes, 2006; Stovall, 2006). The poetry in this research inquiry presents feelings of having to conform within the educational setting, pretending everything is okay when, in reality, it is not, and of masking true feelings and emotions through not speaking out. The creation and reconstruction of their narratives though this artistic form is a representation of their contribution to social change, being reflective and active in both form and performance, presenting their writing as action. In using poetry as a way to reflect on their own experiences, the participants were able to understand their personal experiences as a part of larger social dynamics, developing the understanding that their lived experience is, at the same time, individual and collective, local and global (Tucker-Raymond et al., 2011; p. 278). The use of polyphonic voice was

applied to the verbatim theatre piece to amplify the lived experience of one participant in symbolising the voice of many and is discussed in Chapter 6.

In the context of the arts-based research inquiry through a practitioner/researcher lens, the lived experiences that the participants share with us should be seen as curricular resources, '*as texts to be studied. When students are allowed to use themselves as objects of study, rich trajectories of learning are possible*' (Tucker-Raymond et al., 2011; p. 284). The participants found the processes of both creating the poetry and performing it therapeutic and cathartic and were comfortable in sharing their experiences and learning from each other various ways of using Drama to support their mental health and wellbeing, particularly in coping with anxiety, stress and dark moods. The trajectory of learning would differ across a range of audiences, with themes and emotions being experienced in different ways by, for example, an audience of school Governors, teaching staff, trainee teachers, counsellors and mentors, pastoral teams, a group of students. The evocation of questions would invite further inquiry bespoke to the audience. In interpreting a piece of writing or performance work, individuals will each develop and offer their own, unique perspective on the work. In their proposal for Guided Arts-Based Research Assessment (GABRA) Lafreniere and Cox (2012) acknowledge this: '*we know that the same data generates different meanings and understandings; first, among those who created the artistic works, and later among the audience during the artistic performance*.' (Lafreniere & Cox, 2012; p. 326). O'Reilly (2009) supports this theory that a performance is open to interpretation and states that the data, in the form of the words of the participants, is brought to life. Braund (2015), drawing on Brook's (1968) notion of the theatre as an empty space, states that new interpretations, emotions and outcomes are possible for any performance, affecting our consciousness as an audience. Sauter (2008) argues that the performer and spectator should be understood and

analysed '*as a mutual relationship*' due to an '*inseperable unity*' and that the processes of experiencing and creating performance are '*united through the act of playing, through the mutual contact between performer and spectator within the theatrical event*' (Sauter, 2008; p. 128). This was observed during the Performance Poetry workshop and the Spoken Word performance to the selected community audience, an audience who were familiar with the participants. In studying the behaviours of theatre audiences, Sauter (2008) examines the emotional processes of the spectator and explores what causes the emotions experienced, identifying empathy, sympathy and identification in particular. In post-performance discussion, the Spoken Word audience members shared the impact that the poetry had on their emotions, and raised questions for further discussion around how the participants and their peers could be supported. In the Verbatim Theatre workshop which followed in the study, the poetry evoked emotional responses from participants, and this will be discussed and analysed in Chapter 6.

Bishop and Willis (2014) used free-verse poetry and acrostic poetry to explore the concept of hope with young people in Tasmania, Australia. Their aims were to offer participants ways of publicly expressing their personal hopes for the future, through exploration of how they conceptualise hope and the role that it played in their lives. They used multiple research methods which combined traditional techniques with arts-based methods such as poetry writing and body sculpting. The poetic inquiry applied in this research study consists of two approaches: found poetry and performance poetry. As with the lexicology of arts-based research, there are many terms for found poems and data poetry (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Parsons Emmett et al.,2011; Rapport, 2008). In the context of this study the term Found Poetry will be used to identify the poetry constructed by the researcher using the verbatim of the participants from interview transcripts and conversations (Bishop & Willis,

2014). The term Performance Poetry will be used to identify the poetry written by the participants in a workshop which was delivered by a professional performance poet and performed to a select audience. Found poetry, in some instances, are created by juxtaposing selected phrases from the transcripts where the researchers combine their own words with those of the participants (Bishop & Willis, 2014; p. 6). In the context of this study, only the words of the participants are used to ensure the verbatim in the poetry, emancipating the voice of the participants only, supported by the free verse structure in preference to the more formal style such as elegies (Glesne, 1997; Poindexter, 2002).

3:6 Rationale for poetry as data

Poetry has been used, and recognised, in many ways in social science research, particularly those connected with arts-based research (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Butler-Kisber, 2002; Roberts et al., 2014), raising questions about the effectiveness, validity and comparisons with more traditional social-science research and inquiry (Leggo, 2008). The aim of using poetry as data collection in this arts-based research inquiry was to ensure that the data presented remained verbatim, with performance poems which were written from the hearts of the participants to create emotion which then fosters connections and opens up spaces for dialogue to work towards further action (Pelias, 2004; Leggo, 2008). Leggo states that poetry, from the Greek *poiein* (meaning 'to make') creates or makes the world in words. In this arts-based inquiry the participants created their world through the performance poetry, with the found poetry presenting how they viewed the role of Drama within that world. Derrida suggests that every poem has its own language, '*it is one time alone in its language, even and especially if several languages are able to cross there*' (Derrida, as cited in Leggo, 2012; p. 409). Each of the participants has their own language

and ways of communicating which is included in the presentation of the poetry through the verbatim theatre piece, their voices coming together in a polyphonic, choral manner through performance. Leggo asserts: '*Poetry invites interactive responses – intellectual, emotional, spiritual and aesthetic responses. Poetry invites a way of uniting the heart, mind, imagination, body and spirit*' (Leggo, 2012; p. 4). Further invitation to interact with the poetry is evoked through the Verbatim Theatre performance, discussed in Chapter 6. Bishop and Willis (2012) believed that the reality of the experience of the young people they worked with was far removed from the traditional socially accepted belief that they are having the '*time of their life*', and that the true experience of their participants was diverse, with increasing numbers of young people experiencing anxiety and depression (McCann et al., 2012). This was also evident in the performance poetry written by the participants in this research study, discussed in Chapter 4, and in the found poetry which emerged from the interviews, observations and conversations transcribed throughout the research process, discussed in Chapter 5. Indeed, there are clear links in the arts-based methodological practice of this research study with that of Bishop and Willis (2014), in the use of multiple methods of research which combine traditional and arts-based practice, through traditional qualitative interviews and observations to gather data which was then transcribed in verbatim into found poetry, and the creative methods employed through the data collection, such as the range of activities in practical workshops to support the participants in expressing their true feelings through performance poetry, culminating in the artistic presentation of both found poetry and performance poetry as data. Similar arts-based research methods influenced Bishop and Willis (2014), such as Eckersley et al., (2007) who used Drama techniques and workshop activities to explore young people's perceptions of the future. By employing a range of Drama techniques and workshop exercises and

ensuring inclusion for participants of all abilities in this study, a safe space for working was established where they were able to express themselves freely. The ways in which multiple, arts-based activities are used to engage and encourage young people in deep thinking on a given topic are also supported by Leavy (2009). The arts-based activities within the performance poetry workshop were structured to support the participants in their exploration of their own mental health and wellbeing, and of how they visualise themselves, their identity, their true character, in a similar way to how they create their characterisations for the roles they take on in performances. Ice-breaking exercises were the primary activity, to create focus, trust and understanding within the group. There then followed a group discussion about performance poetry, led by the external workshop provider who was a professional performance poet. A range of socio-Drama activities were then employed using a range of Drama conventions which the participants were already familiar with through the Drama curriculum studied at school, including improvisation, games, freeze-frame and mime. At points throughout the workshop, the participants were encouraged to make notes, sketches or to write thoughts down which had emerged through the various practical activities and ensuing discussions. In structuring the performance poetry, the participants engaged in a range of writing exercises, through group, paired and individual writing tasks. The performance poetry created by the participants was then rehearsed and performed to an audience, the aims of which were to celebrate the artistic work created by the participants, to observe audience reactions to the shared lived experiences of the performers and to gather any comments arising from the performance. In performance, audience response and reaction are evoked as the performers invite the audience to 'feel' their experiences, rather than simply read about them in a manner which is unattached from the material. Poetry has its own particular capacity for evoking an

emotional response in the reader (Carr, 2003; Rapport, 2008). By performing their poetry, the participants therefore invited an audience to share in their lived experiences and evoke a response. The poetry data was effective in identifying the overlapping themes (Bishop & Willis, 2014; p. 14) that emerged from the performance poetry which were: self-esteem and image of self, emotions and feelings, and relationships. In a post-performance discussion, members of the audience expressed the effect that the performance had on them and identified themes which resonated with them. Furman et al state that the key aim of poetic inquiry is to create data that is '*highly consumable and emotionally evocative*' (Furman et al., 2007; p. 304), and this was evident in the post-discussion with members of the audience. Bishop and Willis view poetry as both art and data and used it effectively in their research, clarifying the poetry as 'earthy data' and confirming that the data fulfil the aim of qualitative science research by creating holistic insights into the subjective experiences and perceptions of people (Bishop & Willis, 2014; p. 15). Shapiro states that in poetry we can access '*additional layers of nuance and ambivalence not as easily found in prose*' (Shapiro, 2004; p. 175). In exploring the intersections between critical and creative discourse, Leggo acknowledges that the creative arts are separated from the social science disciplines on occasion, but states that his goal is '*to open up spaces for the creative arts to inform social science research*' (Leggo, 2012; p. 3).

As the participants involved in this arts-based research inquiry are all young people who are engaged in the study of the Performing Arts, they were confident and comfortable in engaging in the workshops, interviews and performances, framing their lived experiences through performance poetry and found poetry, and presenting an artistic window into their thoughts and feelings in the form of Verbatim Theatre – a style of theatre which they have

studied and explored, creating an ethnodrama which they believe emancipates their voices through performance and evokes further inquiry and exploration which leads to change.

3:7 Rationale for using Verbatim Theatre in arts-based research methodology

Verbatim theatre is a popular style of performance used in representing the lived experiences of real people to an audience, rather than presenting the fictional characters usually associated with theatre (Bellfield, 2018; Paskett, 2018; Wheeller, 2021), though this is argued by Eldridge (Taylor, 2010) who believes that the verbatim is filtered through the process of scripting, rehearsal and performance. This theory is explored and discussed in the verbatim theatre workshop detailed in Chapter 6. The script is derived from the actual words of people, be it spoken in interview or testimony, or written in the form of a letter or official document (Billington, 2012; Steward & Hammond, 2012). In the context of this study, the verbatim text takes the form of found poetry. The poetry was crafted from interviews with the Year 10 participants which focused on the research questions for this study, as discussed in Chapter 5. The poem discussed in Chapter 6 shares the lived experience of one participant in applying skills developed through the study of Drama to a GCSE English speaking and listening examination.

Verbatim Theatre is generally categorised as a *genre*, *style* or *form* of theatre (Billington, 2012; Bellfield, 2018; Wheeler, 2021), yet Steward and Hammond (2012) refer to verbatim theatre as a 'technique', alluding to the way in which the words of real people are incorporated into a Drama being a means rather than an end. For clarity, in the context of this workshop the participants were presented with the opportunity to work democratically to explore the poem as it was presented to them as a stand-alone piece of text and not as part of a larger script. In the workshop, verbatim theatre was applied as a *technique*, within

an OSL (Monk et al., 2015) *style* of working democratically to explore the text and create a performance for an audience of peers.

The purpose of the workshop was to emancipate the verbatim voice from a page of written text and create a visual representation of the poem. In aiming to emancipate the voice from a transcript, the words which had originally been shared in an interview and crafted collaboratively into found poetry were intended to be shared with an audience, to be given a platform on which to be heard, rather than being stored as words on a page. I was interested in how the Year 9 participants would react and respond to the poem, and in observing their interactions with the words to perform them using the verbatim technique in an OSL style. The poet was anonymised; however, the Year 9 participants were informed that it was a poem which had been crafted from a Year 10 interview transcript, as discussed in chapter 5. They had explored Verbatim Theatre through Drama lessons and were familiar with working with such material and with the methods used by writers and practitioners to create work that remained as close to the verbatim material as possible.

3:8 Ethical considerations

Traditional ethical points have been carefully considered in designing the study: informed consent, the right to privacy and protection from harm (Fontana & Frey, 2003). Relevant procedures for presenting the research proposal were followed through the ethics committee, and consent for participation in the research was secured through verbal and written documentation, with an understanding that participants may withdraw at any time. As a practitioner firmly established within the field of the study, there was a distinct awareness and understanding of the ethical guidelines set out in the school where formal permission was granted by the Headteacher and the Board of Governors. The participants

were all aged under 16 years of age for the duration of the study, therefore parental consent was required in addition to the consent of the participants. The research study was discussed in scheduled meetings with each participant and their parents/carers, where both verbal and written consent was acquired. During the meetings, the details of the proposed research were shared, and all parties were offered opportunities to ask questions at any time during the research period. Parents/carers were assured that at all times during the study I would ensure a sense of dignity and worth for everyone involved in the research process, with all parties being treated equally through collaborative practice in evidencing the voices of the participants (Oliver, 2010). Throughout the study, the research was conducted overtly, with participants and parents/carers being given as much information as they required to ensure informed consent remained. Participants were actively encouraged to contribute to the research to ensure that their own perspectives were given due weight (O'Reilly, 2009). During the crafting of found poetry, as detailed in Chapter 5, participants were encouraged to work collaboratively to ensure the verbatim of their words. This ensured that the power and status of the researcher was not enhanced and that the participants were not exploited or misrepresented. In emancipating the voices of the participants, it was vital that they were presented in verbatim, ensuring integrity: '… *an ethnodramatist's first responsibility is to the people he or she interviewed and observed*' (Saldana, 2011; p. 43).

3:9 Summary

Arts-based research is an effective methodology for reaching a broad range of people through its practice and performance, evoking political and emotive feelings and emotions for diverse audiences (Chilton & Leavy, 2014). The stories presented through performance

may resonate with audiences who recognise real and valuable symbols and metaphors. The expressions of lived moments have the power to open into emergent meanings and lived ideas (Saldana, 2011). The participants' lived experiences, thoughts, feelings, and emotions which form the data for the study are presented through the performance poetry and the ethno-dramatic verbatim theatre to evoke emotional reactions, resonance and an awareness of the mental health and wellbeing of young people in education. It serves as a platform for social change: for raising questions and searching for answers, through a multisensory experience of the lived experiences of the participants using ethnodrama, which has the potential to elicit transformative change (Cole & Knowles, 2008). The Verbatim Theatre performance piece is designed to present the true voices of the participants through the medium of Drama to a range of audiences, therefore evoking a range of reactions and a range of understanding, which could be used to explore ways of identifying and auctioning change in the field of education to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

Chapter 4: Performance Poetry Workshop

This chapter details the performance poetry workshop and discusses the validity of its place as the first stage in this arts-based research study. The Year 10 participants engaged in the three-day workshop, facilitated by a professional practitioner who had been commissioned by the local arts complex, experiencing a range of practical and literary exercises to support them in creating and performing original poetry to an invited audience. The work completed by the participants in the workshop form the first stage of the overall data for this study. The data is presented, discussed, and analysed, using examples from the work of the participants, and consists of photographs and performance poetry. A summary of the data concludes this chapter. The data from the workshop is used to inform the next stage of the research, discussed in Chapter 5, where the mental wellbeing of the participants is explored and analysed to facilitate further understanding of the themes arising from the performance poetry, using the arts-based methodology of found poetry. Leggo (2012) suggests that poetry facilitates the experimentation of using language to engage with experience through creativity and imagination. In using found poetry to present the themes arising from the participants' work, the data is presented in a visual form which, as discussed in Chapter 3, facilitates an emotive and personal representation to invite interactive responses which will then be used to address the themes arising from the performance poetry. The analysis of the data generated from the performance poetry and found poetry will inform planning for the school's mental health and wellbeing initiative through the ongoing development of the Drama curriculum.

4:1 The context of the workshop

The performance poetry workshop was conducted over three consecutive days at a local arts complex. The work was a collaborative piece between the school and the arts complex to celebrate language in performance as part of a national Festival of Languages and was facilitated by a professional performance poet. The Year 10 participants engaging with the workshop were awarded the Discovery Arts Award from the theatre on completion of the workshop in recognition of their work in the Arts.

The workshop was designed and led by a performance poet, whom I shall hereby refer to as Colin who specialised in performing Spoken Word, a form of performance poetry which embraces varied poetic and prose forms which may include rap, hip-hop and other musical forms (Damon, 1998; Fisher, 2007; Jocson, 2008), which is further discussed in Chapter 3. I accompanied the participants in line with safeguarding guidelines, in the roles of faculty leader, class teacher and observer, with an Initial Teacher Trainee (ITT) who had been on placement at the school and who had worked closely with the participants. I shall hereby refer to her as Laura. For the purposes of this workshop, I held the role of observer, with Laura and Colin supporting and guiding the participants.

The aim of the workshop was to develop the skills required for creating and performing poetry, over a three-day period, culminating in a performance to an invited audience of School Governors, the school's Headteacher and Pastoral staff, and ITTs from the local University. The rationale for the intended audience was to ensure that the performance would address those who were in a position to facilitate change within the school, and to provide insight into the lived experiences young people in secondary education. The Headteacher had shared with School Governors and Pastoral staff her intention to place the

mental health of staff and students as her key priority for the upcoming academic year. The workshop comprised of practical Drama exercises and performance tasks, and a range of writing activities, focused on creating original poetry for performance. Spoken Word was selected as an exploratory form as it embraces popular culture, personal and political beliefs, as discussed in Chapter 3. The performance poetry workshop offered the participants the opportunity to engage in Spoken Word practice and present their lived experiences to an audience. With collaborative exploration and creation of meaning being central to Spoken Word practice (Dymoke, 2017), the workshop was designed to offer creative inquiry processes, negotiation and opportunities to share ideas, informed by theories that children learn through discovery and invention (Neelands, 1984; Bruner, 1986; Bolton, 1998). Williams (2018) argues that Spoken Word is an art form that may be practiced through learning outside the classroom (LoTC), which in turn encourages creative expression and performance. In engaging in this workshop in a LoTC context, the participants had the opportunity to develop their performance skills through a performance medium with which they were not yet familiar. Though the participants had studied a range of performance styles, this was a new concept for them. Neelands' (1984) theory on how children learn through imagination, immersion in practical experience and sensory experiences, being 'active meaning makers' rather than 'passive recipients' has influenced the way in which contemporary Drama curricula is designed and developed, with models of his practice being applied to current Drama teacher training programmes. Neelands' preferred methods include learning through sensual and practical exploration which enables children to build upon their existing experience to make sense of new learning, therefore giving them a status as learners, which was applied to this workshop and critiqued in this Chapter. Neelands' theories are discussed in Chapter 2 through the balance of power

relations in Open Space Learning (OSL) (Monk, et al., 2015) and the power of the ensemble (Neelands, 2009).

Bolton supports the pedagogical argument for Drama teaching through play and practical experience, with his theories informed by the work of Cecily O'Neil and Dorothy Heathcoat, referred to as the 'pioneers' of Drama in Education (Bolton, 1998), supporting their theories that Drama engages emotions in addition to intellect through interactive ways, corresponding to everyday actions and language, and is an extension of play. It is this pedagogical approach which was applied in the Drama teaching and learning experienced by the participants, and which was actively reflected on through the development of the Drama curriculum. Bolton's (1998) reinforcement of Neelands (1994) argument that Drama is effective in enabling children to refine their learning through imagined experience is further discussed in detail in Chapter 2 and was evident in the structure of the workshop. As a precursor to creating performance poetry the workshop provided opportunities for the participants to engage in immersive, sensory and practical tasks and games to facilitate the sense of play and experimentation.

Weinstein and West (2012) and Williams (2018) agree that young people relate to the multimodal art form of spoken word as they can express themselves honestly and passionately, learning from the experiences of others, being honest about personal and social experiences, initiating and supporting revelations of unspoken feelings. The ensuing discussion will examine how the participants demonstrated their understanding of the power of examples of Spoken Word and discuss how they applied the style which Dyson (2005) described as a form which can contain within it '*experienced words awaiting articulation*' (Dyson, 2005; p. 152). Dyson stated that the composition and performance of

Spoken Word presents the artist's thoughts and emotions in a way that provokes a reaction from the audience. Spoken Word events are interactive, with several individual performers, inviting and encouraging responses from the audience, evoking emotion and raising awareness of genuine everyday issues. The performance of the work created by the participants was to be an event where they were performing to an audience of staff and governors already known to them, and with whom they feel comfortable in expressing themselves freely, in the Spoken Word style. As previously stated, the intention was for the participants to be able to use poetry as a vehicle for self-expression (Dymoke, 2017). Indeed, by performing their poetry, the participants were presenting their own material, and not those from a scripted text as previously performed in their curriculum study, they were being presented with a platform where their true voices could be heard (McGrath, 2002; Dymoke, 2017). McGrath suggested that theatre was a means to giving a voice to the minority and the excluded, to be allowed to speak publicly and freely without fear of retribution: '*theatre, of all the arts, surely works at the interface between the creative and the political, calling together audiences of citizens to contemplate their society or ways*.' (McGrath, 2002; p. 137). The choice of Spoken Word as the art form for the workshops was selected as a way to enable the participants to write and speak out about their true feelings and emotions, offering a social platform for creative performance, and anticipating the evocation of emotive response from the audience. By eliciting the immediate response of the audience, from a live performance, the reactions have a stronger impact on the participants and are not diluted by a reading or recording of the poetry. The participants had experience of engaging in live performance from scripted material and of the ensuing reactions from audiences and were interested in how the audience would react to their own material. McGrath (2002) argues that theatre teaches through its pedagogy of being

relevant to the deepest concerns and world experiences of its participants, accurate in terms of its truth to them: '*the theatre can only renew itself for audiences and for theatre-makers if it is part of the times it lives in. Pure art there has never been, least of all 'pure' theatre'* (McGrath, 2002; p. 137). Theatre presents an audience with a representation of a 'truth', with a story that may resonate with those who are willing to immerse themselves in the scenes being played out before them. What they see may be real to them, though the performance is not the original story. The workshop aimed to present the deepest concerns, world experiences, and truths of its own participants through Drama practice and Spoken Word.

4:2 Observations: Workshop Day 1

An OSL (Monk, et al., 2015) approach was used to frame all activities, with the workshop presented in a theatre space devoid of desks, therefore presenting an open forum for practical discovery and exploration, bereft of symbolic representations of power, for example a desk or whiteboard. The participants sat in a circle in the centre of the space enabling them to see each other clearly. The participants were comfortable with this way of working as they begin every performing arts lesson in this manner, establishing a sense of democracy, equality and openness. The participants were familiar with the term 'democracy' as it formed part of the study of British Values in the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum. They understood democracy as fundamental freedoms that belong to every person, regardless of race, gender, nationality, religion, or any other status. An open discussion outlining the aims of the workshop was shared, and expectations for all were agreed. Initial questions arising at this point alluded to how much writing would be required as some of the participants felt that they did not have the literacy skills to

create poetry. They were assured by Colin that the performance style to be explored would support their literacy skills through placing the emphasis on the performance rather than the writing, supporting Williams (2018) argument that through her study her participants reported an increase in self-confidence and improved writing skills, developing potential for developing speaking and listening skills, and addressing language development through reading and writing. This will be further explored through observations of Darren. Links were made between song lyrics and traditional poetry and using examples of how lyrics could be performed as Spoken Word, the participants were invited to perform song lyrics of their choice in this art form. Fisher (2007) and Jocson (2008) argue that Spoken Word poetry empowers students to speak freely about their experiences through the similarities that it holds with contemporary music forms such as blues, rap and hip-hop, with which the participants are familiar, recognising the storytelling nature of rap and hip-hop artists.

4:2 (i) Ice-breaker activities and initial writing exercise

The workshop commenced with ice-breaker activities, designed to effectively develop a practical working relationship between the workshop facilitator and the participants, and to establish trust (Boal, 2000). These included name games to personalise the work, call and response and improvisation tasks to develop focus and concentration, and vocal warm-up activities to prepare for practical vocal work. The activities and tasks were similar in structure and content to those experienced in the Studio in school, and in previous workshops with other performing arts practitioners. As the participants engaged in the workshop tasks, they were able to relate to their school-based practice, which was transdisciplinary in its pedagogical approach, and appeared comfortable in the rehearsal space, finding similarities with the Studio space at school.

Fig. 4.2.1 Initial writing as an inanimate object.

The participants were invited to engage in a writing task, where they were asked to write as an object, for example a shoe, a chair, a tree, which they completed enthusiastically (Fig.4.2.1). They were encouraged to write freely and to understand that if what they wrote made sense to them then it was a good piece of writing.

Fig. 4.2.2. Sharing notes

The participants shared their work with each other voluntarily, visibly and audibly showing pride in their work and the work of their peers (Fig.4.2.2). Writing was not only linear in structure, but also took the form of notes, mind maps and sketches.

The participants were encouraged to explore self-expression, looking closely inside life experiences to share life stories when creating a piece of writing. This was further demonstrated through practical examples of how to use improvisation to create a short monologue from suggestions of inanimate objects, which were workshopped and shared. Inspired by the practical examples of how to use improvisation to create a short monologue, the participants recognised how to use a practical stimulus to create text and began to structure their writing. This practice of using practical exploration is argued by Kuhl et al. (2003) who state that Drama provides a flexible social context for language development as working collaboratively through imagined worlds, language may be generated, listened to, analysed, stimulated and practiced. This was evident in the work of the participants in

developing the initial text further, with the less academic participants seeking some support from others, as seen in Fig 4.2.3.

Fig. 4.2.3. Adding metaphors and sentence structures

Fig. 4.2.3 presents some of the participants using metaphors and a range of sentence structures. All participants seemed confident in the practical work, but this small number appeared less confident in the written task, looking to the notes of others for support and further inspiration.

4:2 (ii) Guided writing exercise

Following the initial writing exercise, the participants were led through a guided writing exercise entitled 'Through the Carnival Door'. They had engaged in a similar exercise when studying the work of Stanislavski (2008) in the Studio at school, which we had referred to as 'Stanislavski's Door', where they approached an imaginary door, opened it and entered a room, applying a naturalistic style to their practical work. The relevance of Stanislavski to this study is discussed in Chapter 2. The participants were therefore able to relate to, and engage in, the written task in the workshop where they were directed to write down the first things that came to their mind following each step of narration, which began with envisioning a carnival door.

They were invited to briefly describe to a partner what their door looked like, using the open space effectively to create their own performance space (Fig.4.2.4). The participants clearly preferred the practical exploration of work to the written tasks, demonstrating greater enthusiasm and energy.

Fig.4.2.4. Describing the carnival door to a partner using the open space.

The participants applied a naturalistic style to their work and appeared confident and comfortable in the performance space as they worked more enthusiastically through practical exploration than they had in the written exercises.

There was greater understanding of the practical work as the participants were thinking physically, rather than intellectually, as argued by Monk et al. (2015), in OSL practice. In addition, they were developing ideas through imaginative exploration and play (Neelands, 1992; Bolton, 1998). This phenomenon had previously been identified through ongoing reflection in developing the Drama curriculum and supported the implementation of OSL practice in school to support students of all abilities, removing the focus on text and written work and opening practical opportunities for students to be successful in creating work, being evident in this workshop as presented in Fig.4.2.4.

Fig. 4.2.5. Listening to instruction

Once they had shared their ideas and identified how their carnival doors appeared to them, the participants worked individually to respond to the narrative. They returned to the seating area with their notes before them and were invited to continue through the narrative to envision a carnival door in front of them, unique to each individual.

They were informed that someone walks through the door and the door disappears. The participants wrote down notes, phrases, and descriptions of their immediate responses as they were assured that there was no right or wrong answer as the exercise is tailored to how you feel. Participants were again less enthusiastic about writing their ideas down than in practically exploring their ideas, but nonetheless completed the task, again with the less academic participants looking for support.

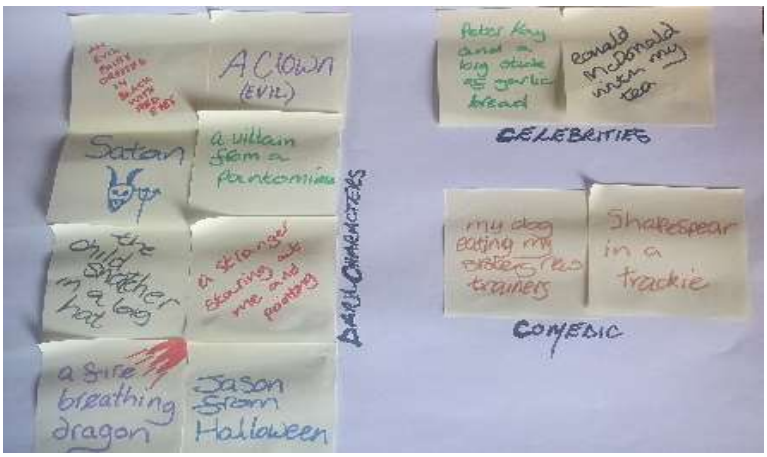


Fig.4.2.6. Individual responses to a stimulus.

The participants shared their work through verbalising their ideas. Initial responses to the stimulus of the narrative are presented in Fig. 4.2.6.

Eight of the participants shared negative experiences of the carnival door, with dark characters and threats to emotional and physical safety emerging. Two participants

imparted comedic experiences, a further two revealed celebrities with one participant (Darren) disclosing another member of the group to be emerging from the door to play a joke on everyone. His note is not included in the image as he stuck it on his friend's back, and it was subsequently misplaced. Darren was observed as the participant who engaged most enthusiastically with the practical elements of the workshop and was the primary volunteer for every practical task. Darren had also been identified as one of the most reluctant to commit ideas to paper which was an ongoing observation on his work completed in the Studio setting, with his evidence for assessment being comprised, through his own preference, of annotated video and photographic records, short notations and recorded presentations as opposed to extended writing evaluation. His work developed in the workshop more noticeably through practical elements than through the written tasks, yet he was able to create a piece of performance poetry through completing the practical exercises, demonstrating the use of his creative exploration to develop a piece of written text (Williams, 2018).

Saldana (2005) argues that art can access inner life through stories, metaphors, and symbols. In examining the participants' experiences of the carnival door in relation to the performance poetry created in the workshop, they exhibited some elements of lived experiences which were ultimately developed into the performance poetry later in the workshop. The experiences presented by the participants were indicative of themes which emerged from the performance poetry, linked to mental health and wellbeing and relative to both familial and academic contexts, which had been similarly argued by McGrath (2002) who states that the pedagogy of theatre is relevant to the world experiences and deepest concerns of its participants. Moreno (1946) believed that Drama provided a medium through which it was possible for participants to move real problems into the present

moment to enable them to develop their spontaneity and creativity which would lead them to make positive changes in their real life. In engaging in the carnival door experience, the participants in this study presented their lived experiences through a dramatic representation, recreating and ultimately re-enacting real experiences through the writing exercise and ensuing practical tasks. The participants' experiences can be seen to emerge in more detail in the developing work as the workshop progressed and the performance poetry was created and will be presented through the ongoing analysis of the work. Baldwin (2012) and Neelands (2010) argue that Drama has clear links with emotions, which could be observed in the presentations of the participants, in what, or who, emerged from the carnival door (Fig.4.6) and in the themes in the performance poetry and in the subsequent found poetry, which is discussed in Chapter 5. The participants verbally made links between Stanislavski's emotional memory methods and the characters emerging through the carnival door.

4:2 (iii) Stages of poetry

Colin then introduced the participants to Wordworth's four stages of poetry, explaining how Wordsworth had outlined the process of writing poetry in his essay, the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1800, in Wordsworth, W., Coleridge, S.T. & Roe, N., 2005), with the first stage being observation.

Fig. 4.2.7. The sensory exercise where participants closed their eyes.

Sensory observation became the specific focus for the exercise, with the participants encouraged to close their eyes and think about something that mattered to them (Fig. 4.2.7), then to make notes on what they could see, and how it made them feel, using any structure they chose or felt comfortable writing in.

The participants were familiar with, and had experienced in the school Studio setting, sensory, memory, imagination and emotion exercises in engaging in practical games to explore Stanislavski's method of emotional memory and in the work of Augusto Boal through their exploration of theatre practitioners and related this to their work, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Fig. 4.2.8. Closed body language with eyes closed.

Fig. 4.2.9. Some participants felt less comfortable than others.

However, some participants were less comfortable than others in closing their eyes, using closed body language as opposed to the relaxed stance of others (Fig. 4.2.8), and one participant preferring to keep his eyes open (Fig. 4.2.9).

Some of the work produced in this exercise related directly to the ideas generated and presented beforehand in the Guided Writing exercise.

Fig. 4.2.10. Character present in the Carnival Door exercise.

The Clown presented in Fig. 4.2.10 was evident in the character imagined stepping through the carnival door but was not included in any of the ensuing exercises or poetry. However, many of the notes made at this point in the workshop pertained to new ideas which were then developed and woven into the performance poetry.

Fig. 4.2.11. The starting point for Darren's piece of performance poetry.

In Fig. 4.2.11, notes produced by Darren, the image of a football is prevalent, with references to a poor season for a football club. The initials of the club are grammatically incorrect as he is a Liverpool fan which would be denoted as LFC, evidencing the literacy capabilities of this participant and his lack of focus on the written task, preferring the practical activities.

Darren developed his work using conversation in the ensuing practical exercise to create his performance poem, *My Poem,* with references to football in 2 lines of his poem: '*Football – happy and free,* and *Football – when your team's losing or doesn't have a game'.* His reference to his team's performance is present in his notes: '*no cups this season*' (Fig. 4.2.11). The development of Dan's poem will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Fig. 4.2.12. Melody's initial ideas for her performance poetry, *Scars*.

Melody's notes in Fig. 4.2.12 were the starting point for her performance poem, *Scars*, which describes a period of self-harming that she was experiencing. This was an issue the school were familiar with and for which she was receiving counselling and support. She developed her work further through the practical conversation exercise, being comfortable in discussing her feelings with her friends.

References to her original notes in Fig. 4.2.12 are evident in the lines of her ensuing poem: *'That look of disappointment'*, in relation to her notes on her Mum crying and the image of her Mum's disappointed face and refers to herself being sad and the depiction of tears in her original notes with '*and the tears in my eyes*'. The development of Melody's poem will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

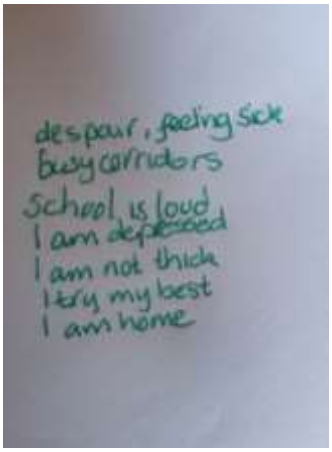


Fig. 4.2.13. Raymond's primary thoughts.

Raymond's performance poem *Best Days of Our Lives* developed from his notes from the Wordsworth writing exercise which are presented in Fig. 4.2.13.

The notation '*I am depressed'* in Fig. 4.2.13 is referred to in his poem as: '*It's the depressive mood that you can never get rid of'* and furthermore as *'the constant depression'*. His notated sentence *'I am not thick'* is evident in the final statement in his poem: *'To the one place that students used to call you thick'*. The performance poems are discussed further in this chapter.

Participants were then introduced to Wordsworth's second stage of poetry which was recollection. They were asked to recall where they may have experienced these feelings before and extended this by relating poetry to acting, to being in role, and more pertinently to Stanislavski as this was a style recently explored by the participants in the Studio at school, and in creating a backstory for a character, as discussed in Chapter 2. This was completed through discussion initially in contrast to the previous exercise, offering the participants the opportunity to converse with each other and share ideas prior to making further notes, an exercise in which the participants were more engaged than in writing independently. The intention to use discussion prompted a more creative and imaginative approach (Leggo, 2012) facilitating the development of the ideas generated in the previous

written task and sustaining engagement, particularly for those participants deterred by a lack of self-confidence in writing, as discovered by Williams (2018) in her study of Spoken Word and its effect on writing skills of participants, most noticeably Darren, with the contrast in his engagement where he demonstrated low energy and little interest, and in the high energy and high engagement in volunteering for practical exploration.

The next task in the activity, using Wordsworth's third stage of writing poetry, was to filter the details of the recollected emotions and feelings experienced by the participants in this exercise, to support the crafting of their writing to be more comprehensible and communicative before completing the fourth and final stage of composition, where the writing takes on a poetic form. The participants were confident and enthusiastic in sharing their poems in pairs, with 10 presenting their work to the whole group. The subject matter included family, friends, the weather, and schoolwork. The three remaining participants had shared their work with Laura and Colin as they were supported through the exercise which, again, focused on family and friends. This initial drafting was to form the starting point for the performance poetry, as alluded to in Figs. 4.2.11, 4.2.12 and 4.2.13.

4:2 (iv) Practical exercises to create conversations

To sustain engagement, support those who found the writing exercises challenging, and add a more practical element to the workshop, the participants were invited to place their chairs to one side of the space, creating a large practical working area. Drama lessons generally consist of a series of strategies, ensuring access to learners of all abilities, which may include multi-sensory and experiential activities, shifting pace and type of activity (Bolton, 1998; Monk et al., 2015).

Fig.4.2.14. Animated engagement in practical exploration of developing conversation.

Fig. 4.2.15. Reserved interest in non-practical activity following a writing exercise.

The contrast in engagement between the practical and non-practical tasks can be seen in Fig. 4.2.14 and Fig 4.2.15, where the participants are actively engaged and using the space on different levels (Fig. 4.2.14) as opposed to remaining seated and passive (Fig.4.2.15).

The participants were asked to get into pairs and strike up a conversation with each other. They were encouraged to talk about anything that came to mind and to focus only on their conversation, dismissing those around them. The space was alive with enthusiastic and clearly audible conversations, interspersed with laughter and a range of tone, pitch and intonation, in contrast to the passive listening and silence of the writing exercises.

On completion of the exercise, the participants were asked to reflect on their conversations, particularly in how easy they had found the exercise. They commented on how they like to talk to their friends, family and teachers, and in how they usually have something to talk about, so they did not find the exercise particularly challenging. In general, the students discussed events at home, at school and friendship issues. These themes emerged in the performance poetry created by the participants, discussed further in this chapter. There were conversations about the feelings of stress and anxiety with the ensuing GCSE examinations (Putwain, 2008) discussed in Chapter 2, issues within the family, bullying, and activity on the estate. Melody and Jasmine discussed how Melody‘s Mother had reacted to seeing recent scars on her lower arm and how Jasmine felt about her friend cutting herself.

Melody's poem *Scars* details her experience and was created initially from the notes she had made following the workshop exercises which was discussed previously, with her ideas further developed through her conversation with Jasmine. Bryony and Drew shared their thoughts on how they were going to revise for the mock examinations but still have time to go to the visiting fair. This conversation developed Bryony's idea of writing a poem about *Summer*. Darren and his partner had enjoyed a lively conversation about football which was of particular interest to them, discussing the weekend performance of their respective teams. Darren had made a point of asking Colin which football team he supported to create a conversation point between them, and quickly commenced to analyse the poor performance of Colin's team in comparison to his own in a recent fixture. Football features in Darren's performance poem, *My Poem,* as referenced previously and hitherto discussed further in this chapter.

Conversations are an everyday occurrence, something that we engage in every day without having to think about it, where you create language by engaging in conversation. Williams (2018) refers to young people engaging in literary practices outside of school which are not recognised formally in the school context, such as a shared language of social conversation and music pertaining to their culture and community. The performance poetry of the participants predominantly emerged from conversations and did not need to be initially created on paper, although the notes that had been made during the Wordsworth writing exercises had influenced some of the performance poetry, providing a stimulus for practical development. Darren, particularly, appeared more confident in the conversational practice than in writing his ideas down on paper (Fig. 4.2.14). As the participants were able to complete the conversation exercise with ease, responding to each other in a natural and creative social form which was familiar to them, they began to understand that their

performance poetry could emerge from conversations and did not need to be crafted through a purely written form, though some participants wished to refer to the notes that they had created. Drama provides a flexible social context for language development (Baldwin & Neelands, 2010) which was easily identifiable in this activity where the participants were open and honest in their conversations, sharing opinions, feelings and emotion and clarifying terminology for their partners who questioned them for clarity and confirmation, explaining reasons behind actions and placing events in a context which their partner could relate to.

4:2 (v) Committing conversations to paper

Returning to written work, the participants were instructed to write about anything that came to mind and suggested that they try not to make it too personal as this may make them emotional or unhappy, and to keep it as natural as they could. Most of the participants engaged immediately with the exercise, including Darren who expressed a wish to write his ideas down before they were forgotten, with three participants offered support to find a way of structuring their work. Once the writing task had been completed, the participants were invited to get into pairs and label themselves 'A' and 'B'. They were instructed to present their writing as a conversation, delivering a line each at a time, and hereby creating a surreal and fractured discourse. The participants expressed how entertaining the conversations were when performed in this way. This facilitated a discussion around finding connections with stories and words, using variations of words and the power of the use of pause and how it changes a sentence, creating a different mood. Through short practical vocal exercises rhythm, pace and repetition were explored, characteristics of Spoken Word (Williams, 2008), and a discussion evolved around how this

occurred naturally in conversations. The participants were able to identify ways of using rhythm, pace, and repetition in choral exercises, adding movement to their work to create a performance piece. They then repeated the paired conversation exercise, applying variance in volume, pace, and pitch, and using accompanying gestures to add to the communication of the words. Through combining written and practical tasks, the participants developed their work to be less of a written task and to begin to develop vocal techniques for *performing* their poetry rather than *reading* it as a text (Dyson, 2005), a key element of Spoken Word.

4:2 (vi) Practical examples of Spoken Word performance

Colin brought the workshop to a close by performing two pieces of his poetry, reinforcing practically how to use performance skills in presenting the written work through Spoken Word. This emphasised the performance aspect of Spoken Word, where the poetry was taken from the written form and presented through performance to an audience (Fig. 4.2.16). The delivery style was addressed in more detail the following day with the modelling of contrasting approaches to performing Spoken Word, as depicted in Fig. 4.2.17 and 4.2.18, which will be discussed presently.

Fig. 4.2.16

Demonstrating a practical performance of poetry

Fig. 4.2.17

How ‘not’ to perform in the style of Spoken Word

Fig. 4.2.18

Gestures and energy in performance

4:3 Observations: Workshop Day 2 and emerging Performance Poetry

The second day of the workshop was structured into two parts: the first section consisted of practical activities, with the second focused on writing exercises. The practical activities were planned to ‘hook’ the participants into energised and engaging activities and set a precedence for the day. They began with a warm-up game which the participants were familiar with which encouraged focus and concentration and continued with improvisation activities to develop creativity and engagement (Boal, 2018; Monk et al., 2015). The exercises demonstrated how Drama ‘hooks’ children through linking learning through imagined experience and playfulness (Neelands, 1992) as presented in Fig. 4.3.1 and Fig. 4.3.2.

Fig. 4.3.1. High engagement in volunteering to engage in improvisation tasks.

Fig. 4.3.2. High energy in practical exercises using movement to communicate.

Fig. 4.3.3. Low energy engagement in written tasks.

The practical exercises promoted the use of both vocal and physical skills in addition to ensemble work, establishing techniques used in performance poetry. All participants actively engaged in the exercises and demonstrated effective performance terminology and positive discipline in successfully adapting to the different tasks, as presented in Fig. 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. This contrasted with a more subdued engagement when presented with written tasks, as depicted in Fig. 4.3.3.

The participants were invited to volunteer for practical exercises where they would take a role and the ensemble would improvise without blocking the creative lead, demonstrating the imitation and mimicry of others used as recognised models in Drama activities and dramatic play, where skills are learnt through the imitation of those observed (Neelands, 1992, 2009, 2010). Darren was the first to volunteer, as seen in Fig. 4.3.1, taking the role as a party host. With the practical exploration of the themes, the participants were able to link

the techniques used in the improvisations to the skills required for the effective presentation of performance poetry. One notable improvisation exercise was to create a playground at a primary school. Initially, the scene was improvised in a naturalistic way (Stanislavski, 2008), a style recognised and performed with great competence by the participants in previous work on the performing arts course and discussed in Chapter 3; then in an exaggerated style to emphasise movement, gesture and voice, which had many of the characteristics of Commedia dell'Arte, another performance style with which the participants were familiar where slapstick comedy and mime are used to communicate in a non-verbal medium, and finally improvised in silence but with energy (Fig. 4.3.2). The participants again engaged enthusiastically in the exercise and found the final task more of a challenge with the restriction on using voice, particularly Darren who put his full energy into exaggerated movement. They were able to complete the challenge effectively, demonstrating how young children naturally use sound, gesture, and body language to communicate before they learn to use speech (Bolton, 2018; Baldwin & Fleming, 2003), skills which are diluted as they mature and become more reliant on verbal communication. The group related this task to a similar experience in the Studio when they had used a silent performance technique in rehearsal for a Shakespeare production, to focus on the running order of the performance rather than the text, finding this an effective way of remembering key moments in the storyline, relationships between the characters, entrances and exits and transitions between scenes. One of the participants, Angel, depicted in Fig. 4.3.2 as a ballerina leaping, made a link between that event and the challenge set in the workshop, enabling the group to transfer the skills developed in that production technique to the playground exercise. The participants demonstrated how they learnt socially through the multi-sensory experience of action and interaction, infusing emotion and motion, imitation

and mimicry (Neelands, 2011; Baldwin, 2012; Boal, 2018) by developing their work through accepting ideas and opinions, using both verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to tell a story, worked collaboratively and practically to ensure action was not blocked, reacting to action and demonstrating relationships through status and levels. This exercise enabled the participants to focus solely on non-verbal communication, emphasising movement and gesture, facial expression, eye contact and physicality. These non-verbal communication skills are used to enhance the vocal delivery of performance poetry and were recognised and demonstrated by the participants in their practical work.

Following the practical exercises, the participants engaged in a discussion about the relevance of adding movement skills to a performance to enhance communication and meaning and linking this to performance poetry. They used examples from their previous performances, highlighting strengths and acknowledging areas for development – a process applied regularly in work completed in the Drama Studio. There then followed a recap of the work completed in the workshop the previous day and explained that the participants would begin to write a piece of poetry for performance by engaging in structured writing exercises.

4:3 (i) Darren

The work of Darren will be examined here, illustrated in Figs. 4.3.4 – 4.3.7.

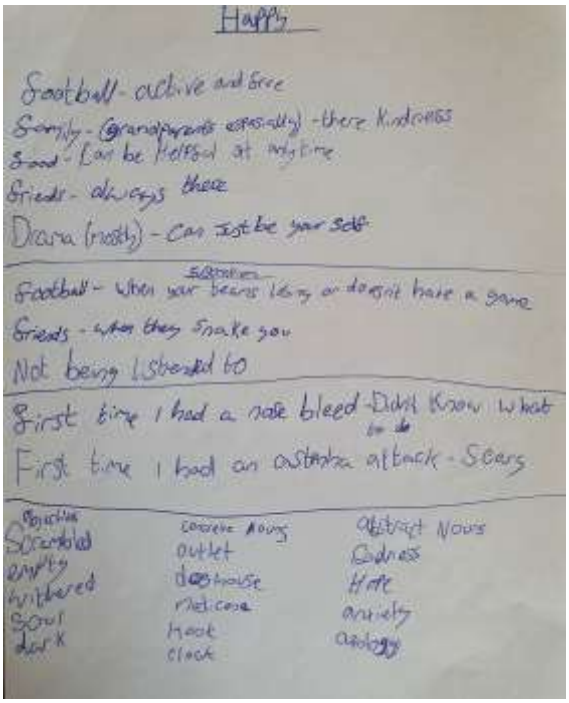
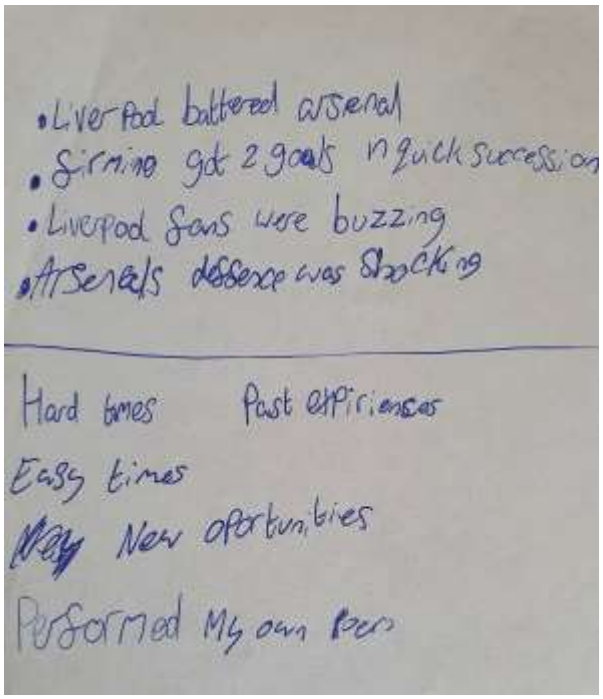


Fig. 4.3.4

Darren's notes on feelings



Fig, 4.3.5

Darren's notes on football

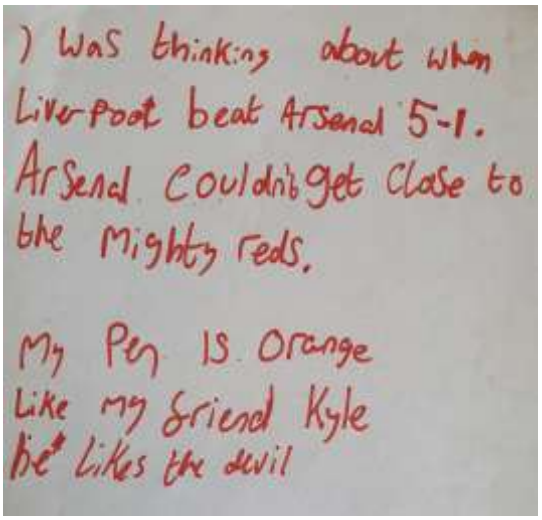


Fig. 4.3.6

Darren's notes following conversation

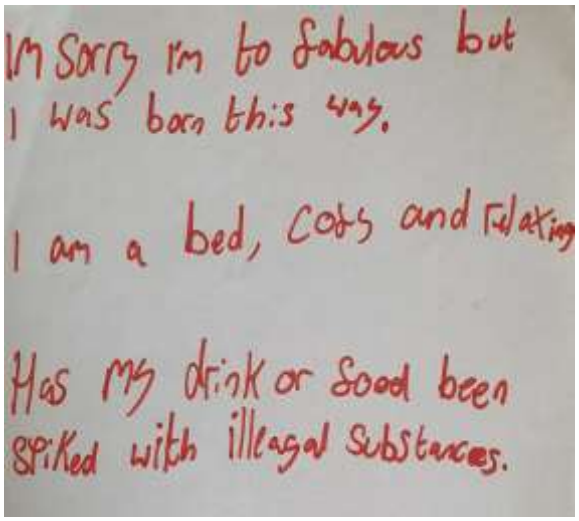


Fig. 4.3.7

Darren's notes in completing his poem

In the first writing exercise the participants were asked to write a list of things that made them happy. Darren's completed work for the writing tasks is presented in Fig. 4.3.4, where he lists football, family, food, friends and Drama, in that order, as things that made him happy. The most popular responses from the participants consisted of references to family and friends, with pets, sports, holidays, and shopping also frequently listed. The task for the second exercise was to write a list of things that frustrated them, resulting in shared opinions again on family and friends, and references to subjects (and topics within subjects) being studied in school, the compact size of the school diner and pressures they felt in working towards their exams. Darren listed football, friends and not being listened to in Fig. 4.3.4 as his frustrations. In listing frustrations around family and friends, including Darren's frustrations about friends 'when they snake you', there were many references to relationships and expectations and to not having their opinions or choices acknowledged or valued, again including Darren's frustration about 'Not being listened to', and in two instances on frustration over parents working shifts.

4:3 (ii) Themes arising on Day 2

Relationship issues emerged from the work of the participants. These included familial relationships: parental reaction to a daughter who is self-harming, the refusal of parents to accept the sexuality of their daughter, lack of parental support for a son with mental health issues, anxiety of a son whose Mother has mental health issues, and parents separating. Relationship issues between friends also emerged and included: changes in friendship groups, rumours about what a best friend had said behind her back, best friend spends more time with her boyfriend, and best friend had told her friend's Mother that she was self-harming. Frustrations around school emerged and were predominantly regarding

expectations from staff to make progress and reach targets, mock examinations, and in the amount of homework they were set, closely followed by frustration about long queues and overcrowding in the school diner.

For the third exercise, the participants were invited to list their 'firsts'. For this task, the participants were a little slower in creating their lists, taking some time to consider their responses. The most frequently listed were again related to family and friends, listing embarrassing things that they had witnessed or done, for example a parent or sibling falling over or tripping up (for seven participants the event was fuelled by alcohol); a family holiday, a sleepover or shopping trip, and in some instances fights or arguments. Darren's notes (Fig. 4.3.4) referred to health issues, indicating that he did not know what to do when he had a nosebleed and feeling scared when he had an asthma attack. One participant shared her parents' reaction to her disclosing her sexuality as being the first time she realised that they were not, in her opinion, a real family and that she would not get any support from them. Her disclosure had resulted in her parents' refusal to accept her decision regarding her sexuality. She felt bullied and oppressed by their subsequent treatment towards her following her disclosure. They refused her request to inform the school that she wished to be known by an alternative name and would not acknowledge her wishes. She approached a member of the family support team at school to seek support. There were many references to feelings and emotions, such as a first love, falling out with a family member or a friend, grief over the death of a family member or a pet, a dislike of someone/something. Three of the participants referenced their first feelings following the breakup of their parents' relationships, two listed the first time they self-harmed and six participants referred to first experiences of being bullied. The participants also recorded achievements: two participants listed the first goal scored in a football match, every

participant referred to their first public performance to an audience, eleven enumerated the first taste of foods or drinks, six commented on the first tricks learnt by a pet, ten listed a certificate of merit, and nine referred to their first day at school – five at primary school and four at secondary. This linked with the fourth exercise which required them to write a list of accomplishments. The participants all listed their first achievements under this category, demonstrating pride in creating a list with such immediacy. All participants noted their performance successes and confidence in performing in front of an audience, ten participants recorded scholastic attainment, directly related to their mock examination results and end of year assessments, three listed accomplishments in being elected to the school council and a further three listed sporting successes.

4:3 (iii) Similies

Following the listing exercises, the use of similes in poetry was addressed. The participants were tasked with writing a sentence using similes, which they were able to do with ease. Little support was required for the three participants with weaker literacy skills. Examples of work offered by participants to the whole group included: '*He slumps with the very meaning of surrender*; *Leaves rustling like the sea breeze*; *They were slumped like sloths at bedtime'*. The concept of sensory observations was introduced, establishing the participants' understanding of creating a sentence by using the senses. Participants volunteered statements such as: *'I hear crumpled newspapers'; 'I smell lunch cooking in the Diner as I taste the fear of failure'; 'I hear screeching on the corridors and smell the blood'*. Colin discussed with the participants the use of metaphors in poetry, and asked them to offer examples of adjectives, abstract nouns and concrete nouns to create a word bank. Examples of adjectives offered included: *scrambled, empty, withered, sour, dark*. The

concrete nouns presented consisted of: *outlet, doghouse, medicine, book, clock*, and the abstract nouns volunteered were: sadness, hope, anxiety, apology. When asked to construct a sentence using the word bank, two participants presented the following: '*The empty outlet of anxiety'* and '*The sour medicine of apology'*. The two sentences are dark and oppressive as the words offered for the word bank were also sombre and bleak. In analysing the performance poetry created by the participants there is an emphasis in most of the work on language and themes which are also pessimistic and gloomy. This analysis is detailed later in this chapter.

The final exercise in the workshop for the day was to draft a poem to be shared with the whole group at the end of the session. Colin again encouraged the participants to only write about the things they were comfortable writing about and sharing with others. Participants worked individually to create their work, but were encouraged to ask for support, discuss drafts and ideas and seek clarification at any time. Nine of the participants had elected to move to individual spaces within the room where they could write without distraction, with the remaining four sat in pairs to work. Some sat on chairs, using clipboards to write their poems, whilst others lay on the floor of the rehearsal room. Occasionally, one or more participant would walk around the space, seeking inspiration, practising sensory observations or reflecting on the writing process.

The general mood and themes of the poetry presented were dark and sombre, indicating possible emotions and feelings of anxiety and depression, though the poems were performed in a confident manner.

4:3 (iv) Darren's approach to writing a poem

Darren was uncomfortable writing about his emotions and feelings and asked for some guidance in creating a poem for performance. Darren had reservations about completing written work throughout his performing arts study, preferring to produce the required evidence for assessment in a practical, recorded or digital manner. This information had been shared with Colin prior to the workshop who proceeded to engage Darren in conversation about football, referring to discussions they had engaged in the previous day. Through informal conversation, Darren shared work he had completed earlier in the workshop with Colin on the topic of football, gesticulating and pacing as he did so, receiving applause from other participants who were observing him. Colin reiterated the value of conversations in creating poetry and praised Darren for the spontaneous work he had shared, where he had framed his written work through adding gesture and movement and relaxed into the conversation rather that dictating his notes, demonstrating interactive responses (Leggo, 2008) to the compilation of poetry. Responsive to praise, Darren was clearly moved and inspired by the reaction he received which motivated him to develop his initial thoughts into pieces of writing which he could ultimately perform as Spoken Word (Fig. 4.3.5). Darren was more engaged in creating work and began to work both independently and with another participant, Kieran, to begin to craft his performance poetry piece. He returned to learning through imagined experience (Neelands, 1992) by improvising conversations and movement pieces with his partner, referring to Kieran as his muse and indicating his appreciation of Kieran with exaggerated gestures and movement. He asked Kieran for feedback and questioned the quality and content of his work as a performance piece, again engaging in interactive responses (Leggo, 2018) to develop his work into a completed poem (Fig. 4.3.6 and Fig.4.3.7). This led to the composure of his

piece of performance poetry, *My Poem*, which was a culmination of work completed through the range of practical and written tasks covered in the workshop:

My Poem

Happy.
Football – active and free,
Family – Grandparents especially,
their kindness.
Food can be helpful at any time,
Friends – always there,
Drama mostly – can just be yourself.

Frustration.
Football – when your team's losing or doesn't have a game,
Friends – when they snake you,
Not being listened to.

Firsts.
First time I had a nosebleed,
Didn't know what to do,
First time I had an asthma attack
Scary too.

Thoughts.
My pen is orange
*Like my friend K***,*
He likes the Devil.
I'm sorry I'm too fabulous, but I was born this way.
I am a bed, cosy and relaxing.
Has my drink or food been spiked with illegal substances?

His poem evidences the references to football, initially written in note form, which was further discussed through the conversation exercises. He refers to family and friends in stanza 1, particularly his Grandparents, when sharing reasons to be happy:

Family – Grandparents especially,
their kindness.

He had a close relationship with his Grandparents who supported his Drama and sporting achievements and were a source of support to him following a sudden and recent hospitalisation in relation to his asthma and nosebleeds which scared him, as referenced in the third stanza of his poem:

First time I had a nosebleed,
Didn't know what to do,
First time I had an asthma attack
Scary too.

As a result of the hospitalisation Darren had been absent from school for a period of time leading up to his mock examinations, and had met challenges in completing the written work he had missed, feeling that teachers did not listen to him when he needed support and thought he was being lazy, alluded to in the line in stanza 2, '*Not being listened to'* when addressing times when he felt frustrated. In response to the improvised conversation he had held with Kieran he added to his poem:

My pen is orange
*Like my friend K***,*
He likes the Devil.

Kieran's name has been adapted to protect his anonymity; however he does have a dark strawberry blond colour to his hair and has the nickname '*Ginge'* at school – an appellation he is openly comfortable with. Kieran also professes an interest in representations of the Devil, particularly through music genres and lyrics and online gaming, with a preference to playing darker characters in Drama, such as the title role in Shakespeare's Richard III, as he acknowledges the '*torturous backstories to the darker characters*' (verbatim).

Darren alludes to his identity in the final stanza of his poem, stating:

I'm sorry I'm too fabulous, but I was born this way.
I am a bed, cosy and relaxing.

He presents a confident and self-assured identity, as he presents as a confident and self-assured individual on meeting him. He describes his physique as '*built more for comfort than for speed'* (verbatim) when discussing his sporting ability, which is suggested in the line '*I am a bed, cosy and relaxing.'* Darren concludes his poem with an apparent random phrase: *Has my drink or food been spiked with illegal substances?* However, during one of the practical improvisation exercises in which Darren had volunteered as a party host he had used that line when adding exaggerated movement through dancing and included it in his conversational exercise with Kieran.

4:3 (v) The sharing of poetry

In preparation for the sharing of poetry, a microphone was set up on a stand in the centre of the space and Colin demonstrated ways of performing a poem without holding on to the microphone. He explicated how it was important for a performer to keep their hands free to use gesture and body language in presenting their poem with emotion and commitment,

explaining that performance is an essential element of Spoken Word, and how the performance is a very different experience for both performers and audience than that of traditional 'page poetry' (Dymoke, 2017) where poems are merely recited and not performed. Spoken Word is performed from texts that are composed in notebooks, on mobile phones, or spontaneously delivered by the artist, but are only successful when the voice of the poet is present to emphasise rhythm and melodies (Dyson, 2005), bringing their words to life through performance. In performing their work, Spoken Word artists use a range of vocal skills to vary pitch, tone and pace – techniques that the participants were familiar through practical exercises in the workshop and which they have previously applied to their work in performing characters from different theatre styles – and by adding gestures to emphasise meaning and evoke response, and memorising their work to enable them to enact their poem without the constraints of holding it in their hand (Williams, 2018). Each participant was invited to perform their poem using the microphone. Only five participants felt confident enough to perform at this stage in the workshop. In presenting their poetry I observed the way the participants delivered their work to their peers in relation to the recognised properties of Spoken Word. As this was the first time the poetry had been shared it was accepted that no-one would know their poem without referring to the written text, therefore the poetry would be recited from the written text, with gestures inhibited by the paper drafts. It was also acknowledged that the participants would be self-conscious in presenting their written work to their peers for the first time using the microphone, as their prior performance experience consisted of projecting their voices without the enhancement of technology. In addition, although they were comfortable in sharing work through conversation and discussion, the physical presence of the microphone enhanced the performativity of the task.

4:3 (vi) Justine's poem

The first poem *Bonds* was shared by Justine, developed predominantly through the practical conversation exercises with minimal notations and was about the emotional bonds that are created within the family and between friends, sharing both negative and positive thoughts. The poem was constructed in written form once the practical tasks were complete:

Bonds

Before our bond was created, I always felt lost
and alone. I'm sorry for never trying. I'm
sorry for pushing you away. But I'm thankful
for all I have. I'm thankful for all the
Bonds. I'm thankful for, I'm thankful for everything.
As tears roll down my face like
rain on a window. As I feel your hand on
my cheek like a gentle breeze. I'm thankful.
I'm thankful for family. I'm thankful
for love. I'm thankful for friends, the bonds,
which can mend. Bonds are broken and love
is lost. I'm thankful for my past, all the negatives
that have fazed me. I'm thankful for my family
their bonds which one cannot question. Bonds
are there for a reason and no-one can change
the bonds in which we create friendship, family,
love!

Fig. 4.3.8. Justine with a relaxed posture focusing on the text.

Fig. 4.3.9. Justine presenting closed body language and no eye contact with the audience.

Justine presented a relaxed and comfortable stance as she started to share her poem, as shown in Fig. 4.3.8. Her delivery was representative of recital of page poetry (Dymoke, 2017) rather than of performance, delivered at a fast pace with little or no pauses and little intonation. Her vocal delivery demonstrated a nervous energy as she appeared to want to complete the task as rapidly as possible, therefore leaving no room for emotion and commitment to meaning. Her eye contact remained for some time on the paper in her hand and she gradually changed her body language from open to closed (Fig. 4.3.9) as she reached the line *'As tears roll down my face',* crossing her right leg over left where it remained for the remainder of her presentation.

Her eye contact remained with the text and her fast pace of delivery continued without falter.

Fig. 4.3.10. Justine applying some open body language in her performance.

On reaching the final sentence of her poem, Justine adopted an open body language, reciting the concluding line with her eye contact on the audience and her arms in a wide gesture (Williams, 2018) as presented in Fig. 4.3.10, delivering the words with a slower pace and a sigh of relief upon completion:

Bonds
are there for a reason and no-one can change
the bonds in which we create friendship, family,
love!

Nonetheless, Justine's presentation was well received by the participants, and she acknowledged positive comments shared during the applause and in the ensuing feedback.

4: 3 (vii) Melody's poem

The second poem was a dark and emotive piece about the physical and mental scars of self-harm, addressing anxiety, stress and a struggle to continue whilst acknowledging the effect that her actions have on those around her. Melody had developed her poem from the initial notes made in the Wordsworth writing exercise and further crafted through practical exercises in conversation with her partner Jasmine, as discussed previously in this chapter. Her poem was entitled *Scars*:

Scars

That look of disappointment
        it scares me
The look of anger on your face

shows that you care
The knives in my back
Show me they were never there
And the tears in my eyes
they show pain that you don't know
about
The scars on my arms
they help me sleep,
but they keep you awake
worrying that one day they
will be too deep
You can't pull me out
I will drown in my own sorrow
It worries me that I didn't want
a tomorrow
Now I act fine
Smile and wave
but sometimes I remember
wanting to dig my own
grave
Six feet under, with no
Return
like part of witchcraft
I wanted to burn
Safe at last
how am I here?
I think I can last one
more year …

Fig. 4.3.11. Melody demonstrating nervousness through body language.

When Melody first approached the microphone, she was nervous, her vocal delivery affected by giggling and the frequent masking of her mouth and face as she played with her hair (Fig. 4.3.11). She took deep breaths to focus herself, as she has practised before when performing in school productions and festivals, but still appeared nervous as she moved her weight from one leg to the other as she prepared to perform her poem.

Fig. 4.3.12. Melody appears more confident yet remains defensive.

As Melody commenced the performance of her poem, she became a little more confident, clasping her hands in front of her body, below her waist (Fig. 4.3.12). She appears both defensive, in creating a physical barrier between her body and the audience, but also self-comforting, in holding her hands to give her confidence, though she still appears nervous as she moves a ring up and down her finger.

Fig. 4.3.13. Melody receives peer feedback.

In receiving peer feedback Melody appears here to be happy, though she still nervously slides her ring up and down her finger (Fig. 4.3.13). Though she had not yet applied the conventional form required for a Spoken Word performance, she declared that she was proud that she had shared her poem and was thankful for the feedback and encouragement that she had received from her peers.

Melody was notably nervous about performing her poem in front of the audience, but this was recognised as usual practice for Melody prior to any public performance.

4:3 (viii) Raymond's poem

The third performance was a highly emotive poem by Raymond, dealing with anxiety, where he expressed hopelessness in a constant battle, not feeling good enough and failing. His poem had evolved from the Wordsworth poetry writing exercise, and was developed further in both the practical conversation exercises and ensuing written tasks prior to being completed as a performance poem, where it was entitled *The Best Days of Our Lives:*

Best Days of our Lives
Everyday I walk the long corridor.
Everyday it hurts a little bit more.
We're told these are supposed to be the best
days of our lives.
But what happens when that life becomes a 5
constant conflict between pain and anger

and pressure and anxiety.
All of a sudden these days have turned
cold.
The pain is like when you go to the doc
and say you're sick
But you're not sick, except your mind
is telling you complete nonsense.
Every single day we go into class and sit
down in a chair.
We wait in despair to hear what the
teacher has to share
The happiness in this place just seems
to fade a little bit more.
The only relief is at the end of the day
when you walk through that door.
But for the whole day you've been walking
round with your eyes looking at the floor,
Because you're scared that someone will
pick out your never-ending flaws.
Walking round wondering if you will ever know
your cause
Why were you put on this earth and what
part you have to play,
Or if anyone will ever listen to anything
you have to say.
It's the depressive mood that you can
never get rid of.
But it is the only thing you will allow
yourself to think of
Or will you rise up and say no to
the constant depression

Say no to these thoughts that have
been going through your brain.
Say goodbye to all the thoughts that
make you go insane.
Or will you sit there and constantly
complain.
Or will you just constantly find other
People that you can always blame.
All of this links back to one key
thing that makes you feel sick
To the one place that students used
to call you thick.

Fig. 4.3.14. Raymond in a relaxed and composed performance style.

Raymond was relaxed and composed in performing his poem, which he had already committed to memory. He placed his weight on his left leg and stood with his hands in his pockets, performing in a confident and controlled manner (Fig. 4.3.14). He sustained eye-contact with the audience and used projection and articulation effectively,

Fig. 4.3.15. Raymond presented a confident and assured delivery.

applying emphasis with emotion and facial expressions (Dyson, 2005; Williams, 2008). His application of gesture and emotion is demonstrated in Fig. 4.3.15 as he leans towards the microphone, grasping the stand with his right hand and lowering his gaze as he applies a range of vocal skills to his performance.

Raymond had rehearsed his poem, reading from his mobile phone, as is the practice for some performance poets, prior to presenting his work to his peers. His delivery was confident and assured with a range of pace and effective use of pause, emphasising meaning and evoking response from the audience of his peers (Williams, 2008). Although lengthy in comparison with other work created during the workshop, the poem was well organised and delivered with a good command of language.

4:3 (ix) Angie's poem

The fourth poem was about a breakdown of a relationship in the family, where anger and accusation prevailed, casting a shadow over the children who were fearful of speaking out in case the anger turned on them. It was written by Angie and was entitled *It's Gonna Be Okay, They Say*:

It's Gonna Be Okay
Everyday I have these thoughts
Everyday I get more and more

It's gonna be okay they say,
As they walk past in their uniform
The depression building, the pain hurting,
The anxiety worsening, the anger cursing.
Trying to escape its cage,
It's gonna be okay, they say,
To me I feel like that's all they say
Sometimes I just wanna get away
Away from all this pain
All those lies I get told day-to-day
I can't get no peace.
My mind's everywhere, words scrambling on the paper,
I can't tell my mates, I feel so ashamed, this isn't me,
I walk to the only place I feel safe,
Pick up guitar and start to play
Everything in my head just goes away
I don't wanna leave this place
I get asked nearly every day
I turn around and say it's all okay, then walk away
I look to the floor and walk brushing my hand against the wall
like any other day, they say it's all okay,
I get home and carry on with my day, hoping it gets better
Wanting to believe what they all say, will finally make me feel okay,
I tell myself to hold on, but I can feel myself slowly letting go
day by day, confidence dropping
it's gonna be okay they say
you don't need a doctor, it's okay, your mind's just
playing games.

Fig. 4.3.16. Angie adds gesture to the words.

Angie read her poem from her mobile phone as it was not yet committed to memory. She used her left hand to add gesture to the words (Williams, 2008), in Fig. 4.3.16 her palm is held open, as her hand is held out to the side as she reads 'It's gonna be okay, they say', which is initially stated in line 3, then repeated in lines 8 and 28.

As she performs her poem, Angie moves the mobile phone from one hand to the other continuing to gesticulate.

Fig. 4.3.17. Angie presents emotion through gesture and vocal technique.

In Fig. 4.3.17 we see her right fist clenched as she demonstrates her frustration and feelings of anxiety and stress, which was also emphasised through her vocal command of pitch and tone, emphasising rhythm through her delivery (Dyson, 2005; Williams, 2018).

In receiving peer feedback, Angie exclaimed how surprised she was at how her poem was received. She had redrafted it several times through the writing opportunities which followed the practical conversation exercises and was now pleased with the structure.

Fig. 4.3.18. Angie presenting an open body language.

Angie's open body language in Fig, 4.3.18 indicates how comfortable she felt with the comments made by the participants and by Colin in feedback. Angie responded well to praise, having little self-confidence in her own creative abilities.

4:3 (x) Kieran's poem

The final poem was delivered by Kieran and was entitled *Perception of Darkness*. In constructing his poem through the workshop, Kieran worked predominantly on his own in the writing tasks, though engaging in the practical exercises as a committed participant, most frequently with Russell or Darren. In practical conversation exercises, Kieran had shared his thoughts on the word *darkness* as he found it interesting that it is used in a negative way, particularly when depression is discussed: *'Who decided that darkness was a bad thing? Lots of dark things are good. Good things happen in darkness as well as in light. It's like saying that everything dark is evil'* (verbatim). He shared his belief that psychiatrists make judgements about personalities by how patients define darkness, referring to the Rorschach test used in psychology where subjects' perceptions of inkblots are recorded and then analysed. He had commented on how the test had been applied to examine a person's personality characteristics and emotional functioning: *'the ink blots are always dark'* (verbatim). He constructed his poem to be concise yet presenting contrasting views of darkness (lines 1 – 3), inviting the audience to '*Think about it*' (line 5) before asking them to think about what darkness means to them and to consider how others see their

personalities, '*it's as though we're all ink blots*' (verbatim). He wished to present his audience with '*food for thought*' (verbatim):

Perspective of Darkness

Depending on how you see darkness can define your personality
To some darkness is a fear to overcome
To some it is a beacon of home
But to some it is the natural instinct of humanity
Think about it *5*
What is darkness to you
How are you seen in this world.

Fig. 4.3.19. Kieran performs his work.

In confidently performing his poem Kieran maintained little eye contact with the audience, keeping his head bowed and making sweeping glances where he applied intonation and emphasis (Dyson, 2005; Williams, 2018), particularly on the last three lines which were questions directed at the audience (Fig. 4.3.19).

He emphasised meaning through his application of physicality and vocal delivery (Dyson, 2005; Williams, 2018).

Fig. 4.3.20. Kieran applies gesture and vocal techniques in performance.

Kieran applied gesture to his performance, with an open body language at the start of the poem, moving to clenched fists, transitioning to open palms, and returning to open body language (Williams, 2018) as seen in Fig. 4.3.20.

In using questions in the final two lines of his poem, Kieran invites the audience to respond to his work (Williams, 2018).

4:3 (xi) Informal discussions

As we gathered our belongings to leave the arts complex and return to school, the participants discussed the work they had completed that morning. When asked how they felt about sharing their work, three of the participants who had performed explained that although the poetry was written in the first person and was factual, they performed their poems as though they were in role and the protagonist was a fictional character. They removed themselves from the events in their work to perform to the group. This supports the theory that Drama provides a powerful social forum in which a child is distanced through role play (Neelands, 1992; Baldwin, 2012), where they can explore a range of attitudes, viewpoints, and opinions, detaching themselves from reality. Raymond shared that he needed to get his feelings off his chest and that in performing his poem he felt better about things, so he was pleased with himself for having the confidence to share his work with the group:

"*You just sort of bond with everyone in there. I would say that Drama's definitely made me more confident in front of a crowd of people 'cos, like, in year 7 I wouldn't have dared to stand in front of a hundred people. Now it's just like second nature*." (Verbatim).

This prompted Gina to state: *"Yeah! It's pretty much the same for me as well.* Moreno (1946), the founder of work approaches such as psychodrama and socio-drama, stated that drama provides a medium through which participants could move real problems into the present moment and offers them the opportunity to develop their spontaneity and creativity, leading to an ability to make positive changes in their real lives. Justine said:

"*I always felt like I could never speak in front of people. I was never confident enough to speak in front of people, like, I always felt embarrassed if I ever had to stand up in front of people, but yeah, before I took Drama I was just, like, the quiet girl in the corner. I never spoke."* (Verbatim).

The found poetry developed in the second stage of the research study presents the cathartic and practical effects of Drama on the real lives of the participants and is presented and analysed in the subsequent chapter. The participants who performed their poetry said that they felt safe in sharing their work with the group because no-one was judging them, and they trusted the people in the room.

Trust is a theme which is prevalent in analysing the data in the second stage of the research and is also discussed in the ensuing chapter.

4:4 Observations: Workshop Day 3 - Spoken Word Performance and audience response

On the third and final day of the workshop we again began the session with some warm-up games and a discussion on why Spoken Word poetry should be performed by the poet and

not by a second party, with participants commenting on how the artist's work would be more exciting and passionate if the emotions and feelings in the work were true and heartfelt, and in how one poem may be delivered a number of ways by different performers, due to interpretation and style. They made clear references to the examples of performance poets offered on Day 1 of the workshop, to the roles that they had performed during their course of study and in how different actors had portrayed the same characters in various contexts on stage. References were also made to verbatim theatre, a practice which was relatively new to the participants, and to the high profile of contemporary work from writers and directors such as Alecky Blythe (*London Road*) and Mark Wheeller (*Dan Nolan: Missing*). The participants demonstrated a secure understanding of the use of verbatim theatre to present actual events to an audience to bring about change from their study of the work of Blythe and Wheeller. Verbatim Theatre is discussed in detail in relation to methodology in Chapter 3 and in regard to the work of the Year 9 participants in Chapter 6.

Throughout the morning, the participants were encouraged to craft their work independently, ensuring that there was minimum outside influence on their work, applying elements of OSL practice through the power relationships in developing original work (Monk et al, 2015). They were encouraged to work in pairs or groups of three to share their work practically and engage in constructive criticism to develop the performance aspect of their poetry through a rehearsal process. It was clear that the participants were used to working in this manner as they demonstrated a competent and effective workshop discipline which facilitated development of their work, being respectful at all times of each other's writing and performance skills, applying ensemble skills (Neelands, 1992).

4:4 (i) Technical rehearsal

For the final session Colin returned to the workshop format, relinquishing power from the participants (Monk et al., 2015) and led a technical rehearsal for the performance. A microphone was set downstage centre, with the lighting programmed for a neutral, warm wash to highlight the performance space. The participants were invited to share their work in a final rehearsal in front of the whole group and created a running order. They requested that Colin be a compere for the performance and that he, Laura and myself also be included in the running order. It was agreed that I would participate as a performer only, with no 'power' or facilitating influence over the workshop or performance. They discussed the themes of each of the poems to be performed and designed the programme to begin and end with poems of a positive and uplifting theme to promote a good feeling in the audience. Of the 13 participants engaged in the three-day workshop, 10 participants were confident in their poems being included and wished to perform to an audience. Two who abstained felt that their work was not of a standard that they believed was performance ready but were happy to support the performance as part of the audience or stage crew. One participant was unable to commit to the performance due to a medical appointment.

In the course of the technical rehearsal the participants demonstrated a democratic and controlled practice (Monk et al., 2015) as they took on roles as both performers and stage crew, supporting each other in transitioning between poems, adjusting the microphone stand to accommodate individual performers (the height range of the participants was between 4 foot eight inches to six foot four inches), establishing running times, and blocking entrances and exits. They directed Colin, Laura and I, and kept notes on each individual performance to facilitate feedback. They applied the ensemble and production skills which

they have developed through the study of their Performing Arts course in an effective and professional manner, demonstrating confidence and respect. They were proficient in demonstrating the high level of discipline required to run a technical rehearsal, presenting as a democratic, confident and disciplined ensemble (Neelands, 1992) and understanding their individual roles and responsibilities both onstage and backstage. They had developed these skills through practical experience in workshops, rehearsals and performances in a range of theatre productions in national theatres and in the school's Studio and main hall performance settings. They had planned the running order, timings and staging to ensure that the rehearsal ran effectively. Following each performance, the participants initiated applause, offering positive comments and praise. In the concluding session of the workshop, Colin led a discussion where feedback was shared from the technical rehearsal, to support participants in developing their work for the performance the following evening.

4:4 (ii) Spoken Word performance and audience response

The atmosphere in the theatre space was relaxed and informal, with the participants engaging in conversation with audience members and showing them to their seats. As we neared the performance time the participants prepared themselves by engaging in breathing exercises and vocal warm-ups, wishing each other luck and getting into position. As the performance opened Colin welcomed everyone to the Festival of Languages and outlined the work which had been completed in the workshop, acknowledging that all work performed was that of the participants. The audience were supportive and welcoming, and the performance was successfully received and awarded a standing ovation. Though the participants admitted to feeling nervous, excitable and a little apprehensive prior to the performance, they were ecstatic and relieved following the applause. They were able to

relate these feelings to previous performances and were pleased with how the performance had gone. They formally thanked Colin for his work and for the opportunities he had presented them with.

Following the performance, I met with the Headteacher, the Pastoral Leader, school Governors and the Drama ITTs to gather reaction, thoughts and questions on the performance to establish audience reactions to the Spoken Word performance. They were presented with three questions about the performance that they had just experienced. The first question was about how the performance made them feel, the second asked what had resonated with them, and the third invited them to present questions that the performance had raised for them. These questions were presented in a post-performance discussion to establish the effect that a performance has on an audience and the evocation of feelings and questions raised, as was the case in the work of Saldana (2008) and Mienczakowski & Moore (2001), as this is a key factor in the arts-based methodology for this research study, in analysing the emotional and sensory effect of performance on an audience (Williams, 2018), and in measuring the impact of the work presented by the participants in sharing their feelings and emotions through their spoken word performances. Audience responses were recorded in the post-performance discussion.

Analysis of the audience responses discovered connections observed by the audience which opened up the opportunity for dialogue to work towards further action (Pelias, 2004; Leggo, 2012), as the audience had connected emotionally to the lived experiences of the participants through the performance of their poetry, furthermore supporting the theories of Saldana (2008) and Mienczakowski & Moore (2001) in relation to the evocation of feelings and questions from performance.

Answers to the first question clarified that all twenty of the audience members had experienced mixed emotions on watching the performance: 20 (100%) experiencing positive emotions such as pride, and 18 (90%) experiencing negative emotions such as sadness. This supports the theory that poetry evokes an emotional response in the reader (Carr, 2003; Rapport, 2008). However, by being presented through the Spoken Word performance, rather than a poetry recital, this further supports Saldana's theory that *'vivid and credible accounts of lived experience … will generate an aesthetic, intellectual and emotional response from the members of the audience*' (Saldana, 2008; p. 283). Similarly, support for these theories is evident in the analysis of the responses offered to the second question, which showed that emotions in the performance resonated with 20 (100%) of the audience questioned, whilst the confidence of the participants in performance and the stress experienced at school resonated with 19 (95%). Stress at home resonated with 17 (85%) whilst relationships and maturity resonated with 16 (80%), and positivity with only 8 (40%) of the audience. Responses to the third question revealed an awareness of the mental health and wellbeing of the participants and raised questions about how the school, Governors and ITTs could develop support and relevant interventions for students. There were questions around what we already know about students on role, how we could support and enable other students to open up about their mental health and wellbeing, and on the outcomes of the workshop and its impact on the participants, proposing that the workshop be adapted to be used in school. Further questions were raised in the post-performance discussion about how the students presented emotional work with confidence, the skills that the participants were developing through studying the performing arts, and how Drama may be applied in a cross-curricular context in addition to being taught at KS3 and as an option subject at KS4 and is also currently being threaded through SMSC

and PSHE lessons. The questions raised, alongside the analysis of the performance poetry, led to the second stage of the research study, with found poetry created from interviews with the participants, which is then used in stage three to create a verbatim theatre performance presenting the voices of the participants. These stages are detailed in the ensuing chapters.

4:5 Data analysis summary

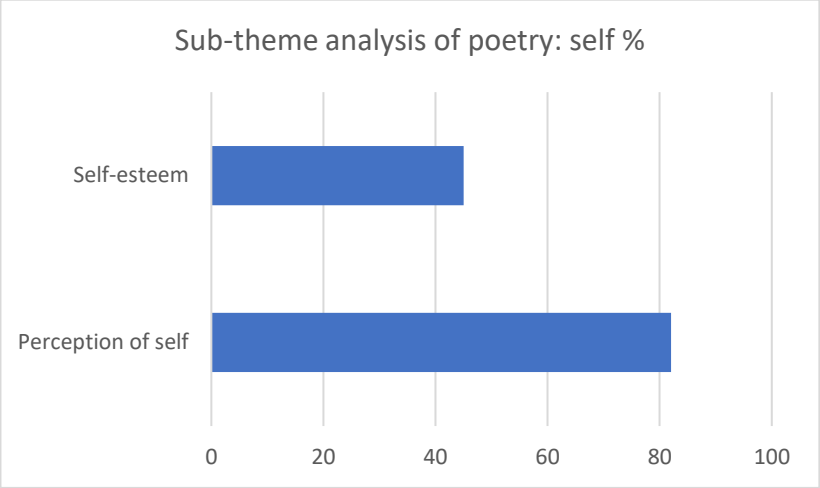
A range of data was collected in the first stage of the research study and has been discussed in this chapter at each stage of the workshop. The data was analysed, and three main themes identified in the poetry which was created during the performance poetry workshop. These themes are summarised in Fig. 4.5.1:

Themes in the poetry created during the performance poetry workshop											
3 MAIN THEMES IN THE POETRY	I Can't Help But Fall	Time	Perspective of Darkness	The Clock	Summer	Love Grows Better	Bonds	Scars	Best Days of Our Lives	It's Gonna Be Okay, They Say	My Poem
Perception of self	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Emotions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Relationships	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1

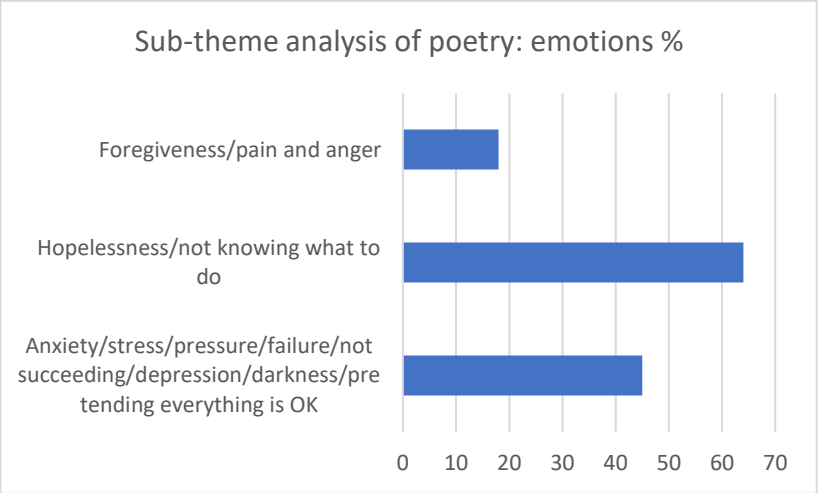
Fig. 4.5.1 Themes in the poetry created during the performance poetry workshop

In Fig. 4.5.1 it is clear that 100% of the poems created were focused on the participants' perception of self and of their emotions, with 55% of the poems alluding to relationships.

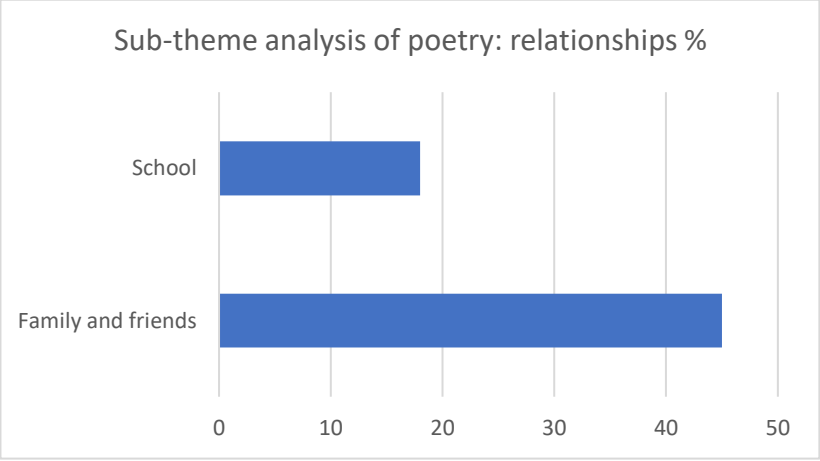
These themes were then discussed through sub-themes which are presented in visual form in Fig. 4.5.2, Sub theme analysis of poetry, to examine this in more detail:



The analysis of the theme of self was presented and discussed through references to both self-esteem and the perception of self.



The analysis of the theme of emotions was presented and discussed through references to three types of emotions in the performance poetry.



The analysis of the theme of relationships was presented and discussed through references to relationships both at school and with family and friends.

Fig. 4.5.2: Sub theme analysis of poetry

These sub-themes were discussed in this chapter in the commentary for the practical and written tasks, alongside the emerging themes as the work was created through engagement in the workshop, to give substance and clarity to the voices of the participants.

The audience response to the performance poetry is presented in Fig. 4.5.3, supporting the commentary presented earlier in this chapter:

Questions to the audience following the performance poetry workshop			
Question 1			
How did the performance make you feel?	**Positive emotion**	**Negative emotion**	
	20 (100%)	18 (90%)	
Question 2			
What resonated with you from the performance?	**Maturity**	**Confidence**	
What themes did you recognise in the Spoken Word performance?	16 (80%)	19 (95%)	
	Emotions	**Teamwork**	
	20 (100%)	17 (85%)	
	Stress at school	**Stress at home**	
	19 (95%)	17 85%)	
	Relationships	**Positivity**	
	16 (80%)	8 (40%)	
Question 3			
What questions has the performance evoked?	**Staff**	**Governors**	**ITTs**
What can we do to support the MH & WB of our students?	2 (100%)	8 (100%)	10 (100)
How have they been able to perform these poems?	2 (100%)	8 (100%)	8 (80%)
What do we already know about our students?	2 (100%)	8 (100%)	5 (50%)
How can we enable other students to open up?	2 (100%)	8 (100%)	10 (100%)
How has the workshop supported the mental health and wellbeing of the students?	2 (100%)	8 (100%)	10 (100%)

Fig. 4.5.3: Questions to the audience following the performance poetry workshop

Chapter 5: Found Poetry

In this chapter I will present the themes of trust, confidence, and the Drama Studio as a safe space, which emerged in the found poetry which had been crafted from interviews with four of the Year 10 participants who had engaged in the performance poetry workshop. I will analyse the data in the form of the Found Poetry.

5:1 Year 10 Participant Interviews

The interviews took place, as a group of four, in the Drama Studio at the school. This location was selected as it was familiar to the participants as the space in which they worked when engaging in Drama lessons, and where they were regularly videoed and photographed to document their work for the Performing Arts portfolios of evidence. The interviews were videoed, with the transcripts being crafted into Found Poetry. The poems were then shared with the participants to ensure that I had captured the true essence of their thoughts, prior to analysis, giving them ownership of the words that were shared, and ensuring that I had interpreted their responses in a form in which they wished their voices to be heard. This process also offered me the opportunity to ask for clarity around their responses to further ensure validity of the data. I purposefully retained the exact wording used by the participants to ensure verbatim, as I would be using the poems in Verbatim Theatre workshops with Year 9 Performing Arts students, as detailed in Chapter 6, and wanted to ensure that the participants' true voices would be heard. Three open questions were asked of each of the four Year 10 participants who were interviewed:

1. What are your thoughts on Drama and the effects it has had on your wellbeing?
2. Which skills have you developed in Drama that you have applied elsewhere?
3. How would you sum Drama up in one word?

The themes emerging from the found poetry were confidence, trust and the Drama Studio being a safe space where students felt less stressed or anxious. These themes are intertwined through the poetry, which is structured as free verse, using enjambment to symbolise the fast pace at which the participants were speaking during the interviews. They were eager to speak and share their thoughts, barely stopping for breath, hence the lack of punctuation. Some of the Found Poetry is presented as single stanza poems, with longer poems structured into stanzas when a breath was taken, or a natural pause occurred. These decisions were made as the poetry was crafted collaboratively to present what was agreed as a 'true' representation of the participants' voices.

I will analyse the found poetry against the theories of leading Drama and theatre practitioners in the field of critical pedagogical methods of Open Space Learning (OSL), Process Drama and Forum Theatre, acknowledging the habitus which the participants create through a pro-social ensemble approach. Although twenty-four poems were crafted, I will analyse four poems in consideration of the word count of the thesis.

5:2 Found Poetry: Gemma's responses

Question 1: What are your thoughts on Drama and the effect it has had on your wellbeing?

Question 2: Which skills have you developed in Drama that you have applied elsewhere?

Question 3: How would you sum Drama up in one word?

The three themes of confidence, trust and the Drama Studio being a safe space where students felt less stressed or anxious ran through the responses to these questions from all four participants. For example, in Gemma's poem *Yeah!* she alludes to developing trust and confidence, feeling comfortable and not anxious in Drama sessions:

Yeah!

Yeah!
Like …
In Drama
Like
We've been doing quite well
and we've started to adapt
to the people in our class
so it's easy to be with them all
and that helps.

We've like adapted to
The people in our class
So we can be ourselves
Around them.

And there's a way
To express yourself in Drama
Like
if you're given a part to play
you have
the background character
and what's in
your mind.

Yeah!
It's pretty much the same for me
as well.

I don't know,

it's just …
er …
more body confidence as well
'cos,
like,
we've progressed
in front of everyone else,
so,
with the people around you,
you've created more friendships,
so it makes me feel happier
that I've got people I trust.

In stanzas 1 and 2, Gemma alludes to developing trust and confidence in working with others and this is reflected in her beginning to make some eye contact as she engaged in practical activities and group discussions, something she was reluctant to do at the beginning of the academic year, appearing quiet and subservient to the opinions of her peers. She appears to have developed a nascent sense of trust in others and confidence in herself through her active engagement in the critical pedagogical approach to teaching and learning offered through ensemble-building strategies and experiences which have empowered her in an ongoing participatory experience of being together in the Drama studio. The emphasis placed on collaborative working appeared to appeal to Gemma as she appeared to be more comfortable in engaging in the OSL workshop model as the academic year progressed, acknowledging and respecting the opinions of her peers and confidently presenting her own. She states:

and we've started to adapt
to the people in our class

so it's easy to be with them all
and that helps.

We've like adapted to
The people in our class
So we can be ourselves
Around them.

She speaks of 'adapting' to her peers in the Drama Studio, which may be an outcome of working in the workshop method of an ensemble where participants form a bond (Monk, et al., 2015; Neelands, 2009; 2020) through working in a space conducive to practical exploration. Neelands (2020) states that through engaging in a pro-social pedagogy, theatre and Drama participants develop empathy as they work collaboratively as a collective. In this context they discover and recognise similarities and differences within the ensemble as they begin to work together in the first few months. On many occasions the participants have referred to their group as 'the Drama gang', the 'Drama family', or 'the Drama lot', perceiving themselves as a collective entity within the school community itself, with their own shared identity. This may also be what Gemma alludes to in 'adapting' and 'adapted', as they have developed shared identities since working collaboratively and forming their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), which Gemma appears to have accepted as their own set of predispositions for to approaching, thinking about and acting upon their social worlds that they have discovered through their practical and discursive learning experiences (Connelly & Healy, 2004). They have come together in the studio as a group, but from different groups of friends outside of the studio, from the wider student population within the school. In other subject areas Gemma works with peers who are not part of the ensemble. In the

Drama Studio the participants work in an open space, enabling practical exploration of themes, topics and character, using a range of theatre styles and approaches through physical and academic interaction with their peers. This is a different pedagogical approach to those practiced in many of the other subjects that Gemma studies in school, where students are set according to prior attainment, seated behind desks in a teacher-led approach to teaching and learning and movement around the classroom is predominantly discouraged.

Gemma may be alluding to how she has 'adapted' to being in a new peer group by developing her interpersonal and social skills through engaging more frequently in active learning by means of the critical pedagogy practiced within the Drama Studio, which offers empowerment through dialogue and movement (Sarroub and Quadros, 2015), where the learning space is opened up through the negotiation of power between the teacher and the students. Though the teacher remains as the facilitator, the participants take some ownership for their learning. Influencing Boal's Forum Theatre method, Freire (2002) believed that through his theoretical form of Theatre of the Oppressed, 'marginalised' participants can become 'beings for themselves' (Freire, 2002; p. 75). Participants may be marginalised socially or academically, but through enactive methods they have the opportunity to find ways of discovering and producing knowledge, enhancing their learning experience by taking responsibility for their own learning. Gemma's group are 'adapting' to working collaboratively through the OSL workshop method, which is applied to a range of themes both academically and socially, as they form a collective consisting of 'marginalised' students who have not worked together prior to the start of the academic year. In reviewing the impact of OSL on participants, in comparison to a lecture or seminar format, Monk, et al., (2015) state four key benefits which may be pertinent to Gemma's references

to ‘adapted’ and ‘adapting’ and to supporting self-conscious individuals: a substantial rise in confidence, a heightened ability to work in teams, an augmented openness to experiment and risk, and a greater disposition to take personal responsibility. Aitken et al. (2007) identified the outcomes of a study of the relational pedagogy of Process Drama through the negotiation of spaces, stating that many of the participants ‘grew socially in unanticipated ways’ (Aitken et al., 2007). They also identified an increase in confidence with quieter participants becoming more assertive, and in the greater focus and engagement of more behaviourally challenged participants. They believed that this was a direct result of the ongoing encounters experienced through relationships not only with the Drama, but with their peers and themselves. This could explain the development in Gemma’s nascent sense of trust in others and confidence in herself.

Sarroub and Quadros (2015) allude to Auerbach’s (1995) reference to critical literacies as the ‘rhetoric of strengths’, for focusing on cultural sensitivity, celebration of diversity and empowerment in social terms, rather than on the individual, and suggest that the ongoing negotiations of the power relationship in the learning space are an essential aspect of critical pedagogy, developing an understanding of how power dynamics may be applied outside education and to familial settings. Through the first half-term, the ensemble would develop as they became aware of each other and of the unique traits that they brought to the ensemble, developing a sensitivity and celebrating diversity within the group, which would, in turn, socially empower them. This may be how Gemma sees the group ‘adapting’. In stanza 1 she states that they have ‘*started to adapt*’, yet in stanza 2 she writes ‘*We’ve like adapted*’. This suggests a transition, a transformation from a starting point to where she is at the moment of interview. Taking the starting point as her first half-term in KS4 (commencing in September), the participants would be being introduced to Boal’s Forum

Theatre as a way of exploring themes and issues pertinent to them, as an ensemble, through a range of practical exercises and games, developing a shared critical literacy. It would be a new concept, a new theatre style, though building on the OSL style of learning that they had practiced in KS3 and were already familiar with. It may be argued that it was at this stage where Gemma believed she was at a starting point in establishing a relationship with her peers in the ensemble: '*We've started to adapt*'. Gemma may have been alluding to this starting point for the ensemble, before they developed a shared identity.

The interviews took place six months into Year 10, in the fourth half-term (March). By this point, the participants had demonstrated many strengths in their ensemble work, with the Forum Theatre exercises (Boal, 1999) and OSL workshop model (Monk, et al., 2015) facilitating active learning as they demonstrated critical thinking through questioning issues and a development of consciousness of their own community, empowering them to plan solutions to be explored collaboratively. Tabrizi & Rideout (2017) state that such methods employed by a critical pedagogy allow students to speak with more authority as they are sharing information about their own experiences, in an environment that promotes the creative and open form of thinking and questioning appropriate for active learning (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017; p. 3203), which is very different from the development of learning in a traditional classroom context. In the first half-term some of the participants were a little reticent in speaking out in front of the rest of the group, as they had been set in different groups in KS3 and therefore were unfamiliar with individual traits and abilities, but by the fourth half-term of working as an ensemble they had developed a bond (Monk, et al., 2015; Neelands, 2009), which is where Gemma may be referring to when she states in stanza 2:

'We've like adapted to
the people in our class

So we can be ourselves
Around them'.

She may use the term *'adapted'* to infer that the transformation from '*starting to adapt'* to '*adapted*' is complete. It could be argued that Gemma feels socially accepted within the ensemble and is accepting of others through the collaborative learning that she is experiencing, which offers a '*peered and tiered model of creative and educational knowledge transfer'* (Harris, 2013), leading to shared identities within the habitus of the group. In a study of a 'peered and tiered' knowledge transfer model, Harris argues that effective educational outcomes may be achieved through working interdisciplinary and inter-culturally. In the context of Gemma's references to the group having 'adapted' so that they can be themselves, this may be a result of the peered and tiered model, practiced through the participants' active engagement with the OSL workshop methods in a forum context, where they learn from and with each other, in addition to learning from the teacher. The participants have 'adapted'.

She infers developing trust and confidence in being herself, and in her peers being themselves:

So we can be ourselves
Around them'.

This evokes an image of being comfortable within the confines of the Drama studio, through the shared identities of the ensemble, which could be argued may be as a result of her active engagement, her choice (Neelands, 2020) to engage in critical pedagogy through practical Drama exercises (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017), where participants become active agents for their own learning, developing social skills (Katsavidou & Vio, 2016; Neelands,

2020; Aitken et al., (2007) and exploring work through ensemble exercises which require teamwork and problem-solving skills (Cicek & Palavan, 2015; Neelands, 1992, 2020). In critiquing the way in which Drama curricula are shaped, Neelands states that young people cannot be forced or coerced into engaging in Drama as they have developed a 'pedagogy of choice' (Neelands, 2020; p. 17). He argues that active learning cannot take place without a willingness which emerges from interest and engagement. In opting for KS4 Drama, Gemma has made a choice. When engaged in the range of practical Drama exercises, Gemma is engaged in the critical pedagogy of active learning, 'adapting' to becoming an active agent for her own learning (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017) through engaging practically in higher-order thinking tasks, particularly in Forum Theatre and Process Drama workshops which aim to empower participants to become agents of social change, which in turn may have made Gemma feel that she can be herself around her peers. As an ensemble, the participants are developing their social skills in establishing their shared identities, applying teamwork and problem-solving skills through practical exploration. In the study of negotiating spaces through the application of Process Drama's teacher-in-role, Aitken, et al. (2007) suggested that this strategy was effective in building skills of engagement, empathy and problem-solving through structured improvisations and a relational pedagogy which resulted in enhanced confidence and assertion. This strategy is used frequently with the participants and scaffolds the transition to an eventual 'dethroning' (Monk, et al., 2015) of power as the ensemble move into Forum Theatre methods of learning where the student-teacher relationship is negotiated to offer a more democratic model for exploration, therefore Gemma may feel that the ensemble members can "be ourselves" in this democratic way of working together.

Monk et al. (2015) argue for the transdisciplinary pedagogical model of open-space learning (OSL) and the positive effects on teaching and learning through workshop activities, which takes participants from the confines of classrooms and into the open space of a rehearsal room. Gemma tells us that she is comfortable in the Drama group: '*so it's easy to be with them all'* which infers that she has developed bonds with her peers and is developing social skills. Monk et al. argue that the OSL approach to learning produces more confident and actively engaged learners, with a more secure knowledge and understanding that that processed in a classroom or lecture hall, therefore it may be argued that Gemma feels more comfortable both physically and socially in the Drama Studio than she does in a traditional classroom context, seated behind a desk. In the studio she would prefer to sit on the floor rather than on a chair and enjoyed being able to move around the space as she worked, rather than remaining seated. Her words may infer that she finds it easy to be socially connected to the ensemble, in addition to being physically easy in the open space. Monk et al. (2015) suggest that classrooms are places of confinement, of constraint as opposed to the open forum concept of the studio space. This then raises the question of how Gemma may see constraint in a learning space other than the studio. It has been suggested by several practitioners and researchers (Aitken et al., 2007; Eisner, 2008; Chilton & Leavy, 2014) that Drama is a subject which opens up the teaching and learning experience through an amalgamation of play, exploration, risk, analysis and experimentation. Each area of this research is conducted through a professionally specified and focused lens, but they all infer that the practical and exploratory nature of the pedagogical approaches applied to the teaching of Drama, supporting learners both socially and academically in discovering and developing knowledge and understanding, are fundamentally rooted in a critical pedagogy which, when practiced in an open space, opens up the space for learning and for

acknowledging that it is normal, acceptable and expected for them to make mistakes to enable them to learn and develop from actively taking ownership of their own learning. Gemma may be relating to this relationship within the ensemble which enables her to feel at ease as it is acceptable, and indeed encouraged, to make mistakes, particularly when the exploration process is a 'rehearsal', defined in the Cambridge Dictionary online as a "practise in order to prepare for a performance". Chilton & Leavy (2014) state that the performing arts incorporate 'aesthetic, critical and participatory modes of knowing' through performance. It may be argued that it is not just the *performance* that employs these traits, but all work explored in Drama and the performing arts. The performance would be the result of hours of rehearsal, of exploration, improvisation and experimentation. The rehearsal would inevitably consist of practice that would need developing, adapting and improving to make progress towards the performance. The ensemble would need to connect, to bond, to enable successful pro-social and artistic opportunities through a critical pedagogical approach, where they are actively engaged in their learning. Gemma may share a recognition of this in her references to 'adapting', 'it's easier to be with them all', 'we can be ourselves around them, and 'you've created more friendships'.

Stanza 3 presents us with Gemma's thoughts on feeling more confident and comfortable when being in role.

And there's a way
To express yourself in Drama
Like
if you're given a part to play
you have
the background character
and what's in

your mind.

It may be debated that Gemma may be implying the confidence that she may be feeling when she is in role, where she alludes to the '*part to play'*, a confidence that arguably may have developed as she has progressed through KS4, but it does not indicate how confident she may feel out of role, as her true self, as there is no mention of this. In their study of the negotiation of spaces through the application of Process Drama, Aitken et al. (2007) state that participants '*always make links between the fictional world of the Drama and the world of their everyday reality'* (Aitken, et al., 2007; p. 3), but this is not what Gemma states. She implies that she can express herself in Drama, and refers to role play, '*a part to play'* not her 'everyday reality' as stated by Aitken et al. (2007). It may be inferred that by using the term '*express yourself in Drama*', Gemma may be alluding to the possibility that she is suppressed outside of the Drama Studio, in other learning spaces, outside of the school, possibly suppressed in being herself, or suppressed from voicing her thoughts or opinions within alternative pedagogical models practiced in other subject areas. Gemma may be alluding to the use of imagination in role play, of what she sees artistically, when she writes:

if you're given a part to play
you have
the background character
and what's in
your mind.

Here it may be implied that she creates a role from the background information she has been given and uses her imagination to develop that fictional character through the OSL and Forum Theatre workshop exercises which allow the active learning to take place, within the

habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) which is emerging as the ensemble develops in the Drama Studio. Neelands (2009) argues for the adoption of drama as a pro-social ensemble-based process for building community and a common culture, where participants share a participatory experience as an ensemble, learning in both social and artistic domains. It may be argued that Gemma can express herself in the 'imagined' world of the Drama Studio, in role as a member of the ensemble, in ways that she feels liberated and safe through the common culture of the ensemble, within their habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), which is unique to the Drama Studio as this is where they share their experiences as a collective, with shared identities and a developing cultural and social capital. Within the habitus which exists within the Drama Studio Gemma feels safe, included and liberated, but outside of the Drama Studio she encounters alternative habitus, different sets of socially ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions with which she may feel suppressed, a contrasting habitus to that outside the Drama Studio, which may possibly be conceived as one formed through symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1990), reproducing social class equalities within the school community. Connolly and Healy (2004) state that symbolic violence '*represents the way in which people play a role in reproducing their own subordination through the gradual internalisation and acceptance of those ideas and structures that tend to subordinate them*' (Connolly & Healy, 2004; p. 15). She may feel emancipated in the open space of the studio, but suppressed in the spaces outside of the room, which may be implied here, where she specifies Drama as a subject that she can be herself:

And there's a way
To express yourself in Drama

This may be further supported through Neelands's (2009) argument, where he quotes McGrath (2002) in arguing that Drama and theatre have a role in '*giving a voice to the excluded; giving a voice to the minority; demanding the right to speak publicly, to criticize without fear; questioning the borders of freedom'* (McGrath, 2000; p. 137-8). This may be applied to the context of Gemma's active engagement in exercises from Boal's Forum Theatre method for both actors and non-actors (1999), one of the four strands of Theatre of the Oppressed, which emerged from Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, where she finds her voice and ways to express herself. These exercises were integrated into the OSL workshop model with which the participants were familiar to encourage them to take on a more directorial, leading role in their learning, in developing their ensemble skills and establishing a democratic shift in the teacher-student relationship to empower the participants in being active agents in their learning, where Gemma becomes an active agent in expressing herself. It may therefore be argued that Gemma, through her active engagement in ensemble based and Forum Theatre exercises and workshops has found her voice, feeling included, equal, confident and emancipated, and is therefore able to express herself, when she states in her poem:

And there's a way
To express yourself in Drama

In stanza 5 Gemma refers to body confidence, progression, friendships, trust and feeling happy. Again, it may be argued that this may have been influenced by the habitus that the ensemble have created on their KS4 journey in the Drama Studio. These feelings could arguably be attributed to the collaborative academic and social skills developed through the critical pedagogical approach of the OSL and Forum Theatre workshops which have created

the habitus with which Gemma has identified and found her voice, either in or out of role. This may explain the context of Gemma's words within the cultural and social capital of the habitus, progressing both academically and socially as a collective:

more body confidence as well
'cos,
like,
we've progressed
in front of everyone else,
so,
with the people around you,
you've created more friendships,
so it makes me feel happier
that I've got people I trust.

Neelands (2009) argues for a pro-social model of ensemble as a democratic process in art and life, for building community and a common culture. He states that the democratic ensemble approach to Drama provides young people with '*a model of democratic living and a means of continually re-imagining and questioning the idea of how best to live as interdependent human beings*' (Neelands, 2009; p. 2). Indeed, through exploring work through OSL and Forum Theatre workshop methods, this may be what Gemma means when she says '*we have progressed*', possibly in the context of social progression and '*with the people around you'* being the community within the Drama Studio with whom she has '*created more friendships'*, as they have bonded as an ensemble in democratically exploring themes and issues which support them in progressing both academically and socially, and in '*I've got people I trust*' indicating that she recognises building trust.

In their research in the impact of Drama education on the self-confidence and problem-solving skills of students in primary school education, Cicek & Palavan (2015) concluded that 'self-confidence levels have improved after being introduced to the Drama education' (Cicek & Palavan, 2015; p. 24) and stated that Drama contributes to both levels and confidence and problem-solving skills, suggesting that the social group study environment of Drama addresses both mind and body through being consciously and actively involved. This may explain why Gemma feels more confident when she specifies '*body confidence'*. It may be argued that she feels more confident in the habitus of the Drama Studio, where trust has already be established *('I've got people I trust'*), and the emphasis is on discovery and freedom ('*we've progressed in front of everyone'*), rather than on dictation and suppression, where the power relationships are negotiated to enable democratic exploration and a freedom to express opinion ('*it makes me feel happier'*). Through the development of the ensemble, the rehearsals for performances are student-led, embedding a sense of collaborative ownership of the work. The strong relationships developed in the ensemble enable academic progress, to which Gemma may be alluding in the line:

we've progressed
in front of everyone else.

Gemma's line '*in front of everyone else'* may also be studied under the context of rehearsal and public performance. The development of trust and confidence through ensemble facilitates a strong and effective rehearsal discipline, where the participants are empowered to take ownership of the rehearsal process, preparing for public performance.

5:3 Found poetry: Raymond's responses

Question 1: What are your thoughts on Drama and the effect it has had on your wellbeing?

Question 2: Which skills have you developed in Drama that you have applied elsewhere?

Question 3: How would you sum Drama up in one word?

In Raymond's poem *The First Experience*, he alludes to trust, identity and status. He is a higher attaining student who had not always been confident and was receiving support from a school counsellor to address stress and anxieties of the high expectations on him to secure a fully funded place at Grammar School through the Hope Opportunity Trust for post-16 education (as discussed in Chapter 1).

The First Experience
I feel like the first experience is
Like …
When you first take Drama
There's always this stigma attached to it.
Boys taking Drama, you know,
are obviously gay.

But like,
Obviously,
when you get in there
there are other boys doing it as well.
And popular people in there, like!
You just sort of
bond with everyone in there.

A popular person is someone who's
like
higher up on the chain, so
like
above everybody.

They're like,
They have more to say,
More powers with people than you would.

In stanza 1, Raymond shares his experience of the perceptions of his peers versus the reality regarding his decision to take Drama as an option subject for KS4. He uses the word 'stigma', synonymous with the words 'shame', 'disgrace', 'dishonour' and 'humiliation', to present the views of his peers, and their belief that all boys who study Drama must be homosexuals. In examining the reduction in the number of boys studying Drama, Cohen (2019) comments on how Drama and theatre are viewed as a more feminine activity than it is masculine, with boys experiencing a fear of being judged on their masculinity if they study Drama. Following interviews with members of a local Drama Club, Cohen concluded that there is a stigma associated with being a boy in the performing arts which dissuades boys from studying it as it is viewed as a "feminine" subject. In researching how students perceived the study of Drama, Wilson (2017) states that boys who considered studying Drama in school faced taunts from their peers in regard to their gender and sexuality. She found data collection from an all-boys school challenging as many traditional boys' schools do not offer Drama due to the misconception that it is a "feminine" subject. Raymond alludes to this when he shares the misconceptions of his peers:

Boys taking Drama, you know,
are obviously gay.

Risner (2009) states that the Western European paradigm places dance as primarily a "female" art form, (Risner, 2009; p. 58). This can also be argued for Drama, a 'stigma' noted

by Raymond, and by Cash (2020) who has experienced, as a Drama teacher, how frequently 'straight' boys studying Drama would be labelled 'gay' by their peers. Holdsworth (2013) comments on the gendered meanings associated with boys engaging in the arts, stating that '*the social construction of gender and the gendered meanings associated with dance play a pivotal role in influencing young people's involvement in dance*' (Holdsworth, 2013; p. 170). She believes that the peripheral status of dance in schools contributes to the perception that boys who dance are engaging in a subject which casts 'social suspicion' on their heterosexuality and masculinity, as opposed to their peers who engage in team sports and athletics. This may also be argued for Drama, which Raymond infers is viewed as a "feminine" subject where all boys are 'gay', another arts subject with 'peripheral status', often perceived as a gender-appropriate activity for girls in comparison to the more masculine team sports and athleticism of Physical Education, for example. Holdsworth (2013) argues that secondary school boys will not study dance as they are '*rapidly learning and synthesising appropriate male behaviour*' (Holdsworth, 2013; p. 170), refraining from engaging in anything that may be perceived as 'feminine, homosexual or *unmasculine* to any degree' (Risner, 2009; p. 58), which Raymond may be experiencing through the 'stigma' that boys who study Drama are 'gay'.

In stanza 2 he states the hypocrisy of these perceptions as there are other boys in the group and '*popular people'* who have also chosen to study Drama:

when you get in there
there are other boys doing it as well.
And popular people in there, like!
You just sort of
bond with everyone in there.

Raymond, like Gemma, has experienced a transition from the KS3 to KS4 curriculum, where the dynamics of the group have transformed from an academically banded model to a mixed ability collective, where a new habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) is yet to be created and developed, under which he will develop his social and cultural skills as the ensemble '*bond*'. He alludes to his perception of social acceptance amongst his peers as the newly formed group will impact on peer relationships with '*other boys'* and '*popular people'*. In a study of adolescents' perceptions of social acceptance, McElhaney et al. (2008) argue that the importance of peer relationships 'increases dramatically' in adolescence, at a time where young people spend more time in school and with their friends than they do with their families, resulting in opportunities to select one's peer group, a group with whom they feel accepted. Raymond appears to be recognising the presence of peers from groups outside of his other peer group, the '*popular people'* as he identifies them in his poem. The relationships formed in the transition from KS3 to KS4 may be seen as 'threatening' to some young people in pre-existing peer groups, but Raymond's exclamation mark may have been used to indicate his joy at being in a group with not only other boys, but with '*popular people*', and states that the positive peer relationship of the group started to develop immediately through his use of the words '*bond*' and '*everyone*':

You just sort of
bond with everyone in there.

Here, Raymond may be alluding to the relationships that have developed with his peers in the Studio (McElhaney et al., 2008; McGrath & Noble, 2010). As he recalls his first

experience of KS4 Drama, Raymond recognises social change in the collective with whom he would work, with some peers with whom he is unfamiliar, from different friendship groups:

there are other boys doing it as well.
And popular people in there, like!

He appears pleased that there are other boys in the group, despite the stigma that he recognised regarding boys taking Drama as an option. With his reference to '*popular people'*, in both stanzas 2 and 3, Raymond infers that he does not identify as a 'popular' person, but also that he is not intimidated by this, hence the exclaimed punctuation. McElhaney et al. (2008) examined the ways in which popularity was perceived by adolescents, stating that the word 'popular' was identified by two means: assessment of popularity by peers, and a self-sense of acceptance. Raymond appears to be inferring that he identifies through both means of association, by identifying his peers as 'popular people', and not himself. Nelson & Crick (1999) stated that young people who see themselves as socially accepted would be more confident in developing and establishing friendships, therefore establishing themselves as 'companions' for their peers. It may therefore be argued that in this context, Raymond may feel socially accepted within his peer group, yet not identify immediately as being 'popular'. Perhaps, if you asked one of his peers about Raymond they would identify him as a 'popular person', highly respected for his ensemble work, inclusion of others and suggestions for developing collaborative work, and frequently looked to by his peers for direction (Hill, 1989; Tyron & Keane 1991; Aitken et al 2007).

It may be argued that Raymond refers to the positive relationship culture within the Drama studio, in developing interpersonal and social skills through collaborative and democratic exploration of, and engagement in, the ensemble work when he closes the stanza with:

You just sort of
bond with everyone in there.

As a countable noun, in a context of a bond between people, the word 'bond' is defined as: 'a strong feeling of friendship, love, or shared beliefs and experiences that unites them' (Collins Dictionary). It can therefore be argued that Raymond may be inferring that the 'bond' has been created through the collective nature of the ensemble work (Neelands, 2009) and the shared learning experiences (Monk et al., 2015) in developing a positive relationship culture, and in creating a negotiated and unique habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) within which the ensemble are influenced in the Drama studio space, as with Gemma in her poem '*Yeah*!'. McElhaney et al. (2008) contend that '*self-reported social acceptance is likely to most accurately reflect the adolescents' success within their own uniquely defined social milieu*' (McElhaney et al. 2008; p. 720). It may be argued that Raymond has developed a self-reported social acceptance within the ensemble peer group, despite the initial melee of different, smaller, individual peer groups which presented when they first came together at the beginning of their KS4 journey. It may also be argued that these separate peer groups still exist outside of the Drama studio, but within the studio Raymond acknowledges a 'bond' which has been established which facilitates a positive relationship culture operating within the self-constructed habitus of the ensemble.

In his second poem as a specific response to question 1, *Second Nature*, Raymond shares his thoughts on how he believes that studying Drama has helped him to develop his confidence:

Second Nature
I would say that Drama's definitely made me
more confident

in front of a crowd of people
'cos,
like,
in Year 7
I wouldn't have dared
to stand in front of 100 people.

Now it's just like second nature.

Dillon (2008) argues for the concept of an empowered consciousness through critical pedagogy, citing the arts as a 'primary pedagogical means for achieving its goals' (Dillon, 2008; p. 179). It may be argued that Raymond has developed an empowered consciousness as he states that he feels more confident as a result of studying Drama:

I would say that Drama's definitely made me
more confident
in front of a crowd of people

Tabrizi & Rideout (2017) also argue that critical pedagogy empowers students in enabling them to become 'agents of social change' (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017; p. 62). They recognise that some students may feel uncomfortable in becoming active agents of their own learning, experiencing ambiguity in offering an opinion that may be perceived as 'wrong'. It may be argued therefore that Raymond is stating that Drama has helped him to discard notions of ambiguity and developed the confidence to speak '*in front of a crowd of people'*, without fear of his words being ambiguous. He uses the word '*definitely*', an adverb which is defined as meaning '*to emphasise that something is the case, or to emphasize the strength of your intention or opinion*' (Collins dictionary online). The Cambridge

Dictionary online defines 'definitely' as meaning '*without a doubt*'. Raymond has selected a strong adverb to declare the impact that he believes Drama has had on him.

Raymond refers to Drama helping him to become more confident over a period of time, over three years, from year 7 to year 10, when the interviews took place:

in Year 7
I wouldn't have dared
to stand in front of 100 people.

Now it's just like second nature.

It may therefore be argued that the social skills that Raymond has developed through his study of Drama have made him more confident, skills developed through the critical pedagogical approach of OSL and Forum Theatre workshops, developing ensemble and problem-solving skills which place the participants at the centre of the learning experience, empowering them to become active agents of their own learning, (Neelands, 1992; Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017), empowering them to find a voice as relations of power are transformed through the 'dethroning' of the teacher (Monk et al., 2015). Aerbach (1995) states that the empowerment of individuals through critical pedagogy should be regarded in social terms, rather than in individual terms, through the ongoing negotiation of the power relationships and the power dynamics within the classroom. Neelands (2009) also argues for the pro-social nature of ensemble work in learning '*how to act together in both social and artistic domains*', (Neelands, 2009; p. 9), supporting Raymond's confident social actions in addressing an audience. In developing his social skills, through Drama practice, it may be argued that Raymond has a greater confidence '*to stand in front of 100 people*' than he did

three years ago, being engaged in the defined milieu (McElhaney et al., 2008) of the Drama studio, influenced by the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) created by the ensemble of which he was an active participant. In Drama, through the OSL and Forum Theatre workshops, the ensemble work in an environment that promotes a creative and open form of questioning and thinking that facilitate active learning, where participants are actively engaged in practical activities, developing social skills and techniques which enables them to become active agents in their own learning. In this pro-social environment, it may be argued that Raymond has developed, over a three-year period, the confidence to stand in front of 100 people and speak out, feeling that it is '*second nature'*, nothing out of the ordinary, not something to be feared.

5:4 Found Poetry: Bryony's responses

In her poem *Everything*, Bryony shares her thoughts on how Drama has developed her confidence, trust, and helped her to address her anxieties around completing her GCSEs. She alludes to differences in studying Drama in KS3 and KS4, and how she enjoys working as an ensemble:

Question 1: What are your thoughts on Drama and the effect it has had on your wellbeing?

Question 2: Which skills have you developed in Drama that you have applied elsewhere?

Question 3: How would you sum Drama up in one word?

Everything!
Everything!
Because in Drama we can be ourselves.
And with the people that are in Drama,
They're all, like, so nice,

And when we do plays and that,
They're like always there for you.
If you mess up, they like help you through it.
They don't just make fun of you, and that,
And it makes you really confident.

In Year 7 and Year 8 I didn't really like it
because we weren't doing stuff like this.
Now we're like
being more ourselves
and doing stuff to help each other.
Like more group work.
I really like the group work now,
and the talking to people

- *That's really good.*

Well,
before doing Drama,
when Miss said get into groups,
I was like …
well,
my anxiety was so high.
My anxiety got worse over the years.
When we did GCSE English
I was getting really worried,
but then I remembered
how to do the breathing exercises.
And it helped a lot,
with the anxiety and that.
In other subjects,
We don't really focus on stuff like that,

do we?

But in Drama we're always there for each other,
caring and that.
Like now,
'cos we're doing Drama,
we're always in groups.
I speak to my friends,
or just do the breathing exercises,
and just tell myself
it's going to be O.K.
It's a lot better.
I'm more confident with that as well.

In stanza 1, Bryony alludes to her confidence developing as she works with peers who she feels comfortable with and who she trusts. She presents a vision of a supportive ensemble within which she is comfortable with her identity and ability to succeed:

Because in Drama we can be ourselves.
And with the people that are in Drama,
They're all, like, so nice,
And when we do plays and that,
They're like always there for you.
If you mess up, they like help you through it.
They don't just make fun of you, and that,
And it makes you really confident.

She appears to have developed a positive peer relationship with the ensemble, describing her peers as being '*so nice*' in supporting each other, and stating that they are always there

for her, ready to support her if she makes mistakes. This indicates that Bryony has recognised the development of a collective support system where the group has established a shared understanding of the way in which each of the participants feels confident, as Bryony states in the last line of stanza 1. It may be argued that the development of such a positive peer relationship has been facilitated through the critical pedagogical approach of introducing Forum Theatre (Boal, 1999) to the OSL workshop (Monk, et al., 2015) methodology within the Drama Studio in addition to other Drama conventions applied through the KS4 study of Drama and Performing Arts. As with previous poems presented in the chapter, there is suggestion of being able to be yourself, though no definition of being in or out of role. It may be argued that the power relations of the OSL and Forum Theatre workshops allow for the participants to develop a deeper understanding of their own personalities through the exploration of characters and relationships through a democratic and practical methodology as they become active agents for change through their engagement in the workshops, developing and embracing their individual and collective identities. This strand of thought continues to weave through stanza 2 where Bryony repeats her feeling that '*we can be ourselves'* and explains how she prefers the content and structure of the KS4 Drama course in comparison to the KS3 curriculum: It may be argued that the KS4 curriculum supports personal and academic development through the focus on OSL workshop methods of developing a critical pedagogy (Monk, et al., 2015) with an extended and more immersive timetable rather than the limited one hour per fortnight offered at KS3. In the extended timeframe of KS4, there is room for exploration, experimentation and rehearsal, as opposed to the limited timetable of KS3.

In Year 7 and Year 8 I didn't really like it
because we weren't doing stuff like this.

Now we're like
being more ourselves
and doing stuff to help each other.
Like more group work.
I really like the group work now,
and the talking to people

- *That's really good.*

In stanza 3 Bryony shares that she used to experience high anxiety which then began to grow:

my anxiety was so high.
My anxiety got worse over the years.

She explains how she applied breathing techniques learnt and practiced in Drama sessions to her study of GCSE English, and how this strategy helped her to reduce her levels of anxiety.

When we did GCSE English
I was getting really worried,
but then I remembered
how to do the breathing exercises.
And it helped a lot,
with the anxiety and that.

In her Drama lessons, Bryony engaged in a range of breathing exercises, designed to prepare an actor for effective performance. She frequently led these exercises with the ensemble as the power relationship was negotiated through the OSL workshop practice. She would

direct her peers to focus on their breathing, taking breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth, being aware that positive energy flowed in on inhalation, and negativity was exhaled. She was interested in guided meditation and would suggest this as a starter activity following a lesson she found to be stressful, such as a Maths test or an English assessment. Edwards (2008), researching breathing in sport, believes that breath-energy is usually unconscious and that in order to address stress and anxiety conscious breathing is required:

"*If full breathing is complemented by conscious intent, felt bodily sense, imagery, gesture, movement, dramatic re-enactment and reconstruction of events, a new more meaningful and adaptive personal narrative and way of life emerges*."

Conscious breathing is practised through the breathing exercises with which the ensemble engages in practical workshop sessions. In exploring the physical theatre work of Gecko, a leading theatre company studied at KS4 as part of the BTEC course, the participants had focused on the use of breath and in how the breath can be manipulated and controlled to communicate with the audience and deepen the performance experience for both actor and audience. Bryony regularly engaged in such breathing exercises to develop her vocal skills for performance, focusing on diaphragmatic breathing, developing character through accent, register and tone. She also used breathing exercises to help her in situations outside of the Studio which impacted on her anxiety levels, which she shares with us in her poem.

In stanza 4 Bryony recognises how she feels that her peers care for each other, as she states *in Drama we're always there for each other* and refers again to how she uses breathing

techniques when she feels her anxiety levels climbing in addition to talking to her friends, and concludes her poem by sharing how she is more confident in dealing with her anxiety.

But in Drama we're always there for each other,
caring and that.
Like now,
'cos we're doing Drama,
we're always in groups.
I speak to my friends,
or just do the breathing exercises,
and just tell myself
it's going to be O.K.
It's a lot better.
I'm more confident with that as well.

It may be argued here that Bryony feels that the breathing exercises and the support she feels from her peers in the ensemble have helped her in developing her confidence through managing her feelings of anxiety both in and out of the Studio, and that she is able to apply some of the habitus from the Studio to her learning in other subject areas.

5:5 Found Poetry: Jenny's responses

In response to Question 3, Jenny's poem is concise, consisting of just two sentences in one stanza, focusing on character:

Question 3: How would you sum Drama up in one word?

Self-portrayal
Self-portrayal.
Because in Drama,
with a certain character,

you can portray yourself
as that character.
You don't have to
do it
certain ways
with
that
character.

There is ambiguity in this poem as Jenny appears to be referring to the portrayal of a character, rather than the portrayal of herself, though she uses the term 'self-portrayal'. She alludes to portraying herself through a character, rather than, as the title suggests, a self-portrayal. There appears to be some confusion here, which may be due to a misunderstanding of the term 'self-portrayal', or a misconception of how portraying a character differs from self-portrayal. There are similarities in her allusion to being in role as a character with Gemma's poem '*Yeah*!', where there is no comment made on her own identity, but on taking on a role. Again, this contradicts the argument by Aitken et al. (2007) that participants can make links between their own reality and that of fictional worlds in Drama. It appears here that she is presenting herself through the imagined world of a fictional character, which may suggest that this is where she feels most confident, where she masks her true self. Or it may suggest that she uses a mask to support her portrayal of self, as she was someone who didn't speak in class until she studied Drama:

the quiet girl in the corner.
I never kind of spoke.

5:6 Data analysis summary

The recurring themes which emerged from analysis of the found poetry were confidence, trust, and the Drama Studio as a 'safe space'. When this is considered alongside the themes which emerged from the performance poetry workshop, themes of image of self, relationships and emotions, there are strong links between how they presented their mental health and wellbeing through Spoken Word and the ways in which their found poetry states that Drama supports them. There are references to changing ways of thinking, of adapting and of overcoming anxieties that exist outside of the Drama Studio. It may be argued therefore that the habitus which emerges within the Studio, with the ensemble, though democratic and explorative ways of learning is unique to the space in which it is formed and to the participants within that space. Participants who enter the Studio come from independent habitus, formed through their relationships and peer groups outside of the space, yet are able to come together to explore, learn and develop, forming a collaborative habitus which is influenced not only by the habitus they bring with them, but informed and shaped by the emerging habitus created by their OSL practice. This was explored further in the third and final stage of the research study: the Verbatim Theatre workshop which is discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Verbatim Theatre workshop

In this chapter I will present my findings from the Verbatim Theatre workshops with Year 9 participants, using found poetry created from the transcripts of interviews with the Year 10 participants. They were given a creative freedom in interpreting the poetry and presenting their work through applying performance skills and techniques of their choice but were instructed not to change or omit the actual words. This was to endeavour to retain the truest possible essence of the original words in the Found Poetry, to emancipate the voices of the Year 10 participants through creative practice. The Found Poetry had been transcribed from interviews with which followed the Performance Poetry workshops. The Found Poetry had been structured collaboratively to ensure that the verbatim voices of the participants had been presented in the work. The creative freedom for the Verbatim Theatre workshop was framed by conditions created within the Studio to allow the Year 9 participants to work democratically, rather than under the constraints of assessment criteria and curriculum, which would be in place during a timetabled lesson. These conditions existed within the extra-curricular context of the workshop where creative insight was welcomed in a democratic environment as artistic inquiry rather than the work of the participants being controlled by predetermined criteria for achievement. The workshop was conducted using an Open Space Learning (OSL) approach, as discussed in Chapter 2, and the participants worked in groups of their own choosing to remove me from the role of director, giving them a sense of shared ownership of the work they were creating with the poem, and eliminating any creative influence I may have over their work. Their 'ownership' would be in the way that they shaped the Drama but not the 'ownership' of the words as they remain, as text, as the words of Year 10 participants which were crafted collaboratively with myself into found poetry. However, as the workshop progressed, it became apparent that in using

the OSL approach to creating performance the verbatim text became diluted as the ensemble brought in their own experiences to their work, which were triggered by Raymond's words and applied as embellishments in the performance. The democratic process in shaping their experiences into a performance highlighted moments where the Year 9 participants resonated with the verbatim of one of Raymond's found poems, *That's No Big Deal*, which the ensemble had not previously read. There were correlations between the found poetry and the resulting performance relating to peer relationships and the study of Drama.

6:1 Ethical considerations across the year groups

The material used in the Verbatim Theatre workshops were found poems from interviews with the Year 10 participants. It had been agreed by all parties engaged in the research study that all work would be anonymised and that the year 9 participants would have no information shared with them that may identify year 10 participants. The found poetry was presented to them in a booklet entitled 'Verbatim Theatre'. The format was similar to texts they would access in their Drama lessons and in Drama Club. The booklets bore no identifying features as to the identity of the poets or the origins of the work. The year 9 participants were respectful of verbatim work, experiencing the work of such playwrights as Wheeller and Blythe in the Drama curriculum, and demonstrated understanding that the text originated from the life experiences of real people who were high school students. They treated the found poetry texts as they would any published verbatim script.

Year 10 participants agreed that the booklets may be made accessible for non-specialists supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people within the school, for example form tutors, school mentors and family support workers, to share with them the life

experiences of a sample of young people in the school in the hope that it may encourage others to speak up about their feelings and emotions and to get the support they required.

6:2 The validity of Verbatim Theatre

In gathering verbatim material from interviews, Taylor (2010) observed that one of the most prominent and established verbatim theatre writers, Robin Soans, takes notes during the interview and then adds material from memory, whereas writers Ben Freedman and Mimi Poskitt (*Look Left Look Right Theatre Company*) and established verbatim writer David Hare use a tape recorder to capture every word and intonation. In comparing these two methods, it may initially appear that Freedman, Poskett and Hare are gathering material which is of greater verbatim value than that of Soans, where the true essence of the interviewee's voice, feelings and emotions are recorded prior to being interpreted by an ensemble in the creation of performance material. In recalling details from memory, Soans is not presenting a 'true' account, as the transcription will be subject to his recall and interpretation, and not to an actual recording, a true record of the interview. However, it is not just the *gathering* of material which threatens the verbatim of the transcribed text, as was observed in the workshop. A range of approaches are used by verbatim theatre practitioners in *rehearsing* with the text: Alecky Blythe presents her actors with transcribed interviews played through headsets as the ensemble work in devising and rehearsal to ensure that the spoken verbatim is as pure as possible (Blythe, as cited in National Theatre, 2014); Ben Freedman and Mimi Poskitt use taped recordings played at rehearsals and altered to where emotional and intellectual emphasis lie (Taylor, 2010); Mark Wheeller utilises interview transcripts formalised as script (Wheeller, 2021). Each approach uses verbatim as the source material, whether it be a spoken or written account, nonetheless

each is shaped through subjective interpretation as the words are moulded into the visual image for performance. Freedman and Poskett (Taylor, 2010) edit the recorded material for greater emotional and intellectual prominence whilst Wheeller (2021) retains verbatim interview content in his writing. For this study, favouring Wheeller's method of working with verbatim material, the found poetry was used as a script rather than taped recordings or headsets to ensure anonymity for the Year 10 participants. Wheeller's practice was preferred as the Year 9 participants have used his material in explorations of verbatim theatre in their study of Drama through his preferred ensemble approach to creating theatre, and it was considered by the participants to be the closest replication model of verbatim material for performance. The verbatim material for the workshop had been recorded and transcribed, in line with Wheeller's method, prior to being crafted into found poetry. However, as the text was explored through the workshop, the verbatim of the script, whilst remaining true to the text itself, was embellished with visual imagery of secondary verbatim emerging from the subjectivity of the Year 9 participants who reacted emotionally to the text and adapted a visual representation comparable to the practice of Freedman and Poskett (Taylor, 2010).

The material presented to the Year 9 participants may be considered to be pure verbatim at the point of interview, when the Year 10 participants answered open questions in interviews. It was original and live, an exchange between researcher and participants. The process was video recorded to capture the nuances of the interviews and the reactions of the participants. Once the interviews were transcribed, the verbatim material became tainted, by taking spoken words and committing them to paper, applying punctuation to identify pauses and beats in the responses. In crafting the transcribed interviews into found

poetry, albeit with collaboration with the Year 10 participants to ensure verbatim was as close as possible to the initial responses, verbatim was once again diluted as the original responses took on a poetic form. There is argument therefore for the validity of verbatim material when offered as a script, as stated by Fritz et al. (2011) as they commented on the distortion of verbatim material as is processed from interview to performance. In the context of this workshop, it is recognised that there is a distortion of the material, but it is argued that at each stage of transcription and crafting of the poetry the Year 10 participants were involved in sustaining the validity of the words that were shared in the initial interviews and that the words themselves did not change. It was the *forms* in which those words were presented that were changed. Therefore, the found poetry is no longer purely verbatim. When the found poetry was transformed into performance, the literal precision of the idea of the verbatim has become distorted in the visual representation and symbolism.

Rose (2014) states that '*Visual imagery is never innocent*' due to the range of knowledges, practices and technologies which are applied to the construction of the image (Rose, 2014; p. 17). This argument would be credible in the context of this workshop as the verbatim words were transformed into a visual representation through the complexities of the subjectivity of others, creating a sullied representation through different gazes and a layering of interpretation, from initial interview to transcript, the crafting of the transcript into found poetry, and the practical exploration of the workshop. However, in applying a verbatim approach to the found poetry, the aim was to construct as 'innocent' and pure an image as possible, being true to original words spoken in interview, whilst acknowledging that the material would be subject to interpretation as is the case with scripted

performance work. In an interview with Taylor (2010) playwright David Eldridge was sceptical about verbatim theatre, claiming that the work was filtered through various subjectivities, from the initial interviews to the editing and shaping of the script and the performance style of the production. In crafting the found poetry, there was open collaboration between the participants interviewed in ensuring that the original voices were transcribed authentically and without subjectivity. However, in presenting the found poetry in the verbatim workshop the Year 9 participants were invited to explore ways in which the text could be performed to add visual representation whilst remaining verbatim. Whilst the text itself remained verbatim, this devising process would clearly be subject to their interpretation of the text, the themes with which they identified and their own social and cultural capital. In contrast to Eldridge (Taylor, 2010), Paskett (2018) views verbatim theatre as a 'filter-free' way of offering an audience truth and authenticity, serving those whose words are being voiced rather than the fictional words of a playwright. This does not acknowledge the 'filters' which are applied to text when it becomes a script for performance, which were clearly practiced in the verbatim workshop as the ensemble interpreted the text. The interpretations of the director, the actors and the audience impede on the exactness, precision and dismantling of the primary source of the text – the verbatim. Indeed, it is acknowledged that in this workshop the verbatim material was filtered as it was exposed to subjectivity in ways in which the Year 9 participants related to the lived experience of one of their peers, in their identification of key words, phrases or themes with which they resonated, and in establishing and staging their responses to a piece of verbatim text. They interpreted the material through multiple gazes, agreeing on ways in which to present the words through the frame of performance. However, the aim was to use the findings to inform future planning in the development of how Drama could

be used to support the mental health and wellbeing of students in Secondary education, and the verbatim theatre style of working was considered the most effective way of ensuring that the voices of the participants could be heard in a way in which the audience feel they are being addressed personally, in a manner which was as close to verbatim as was possible. Indeed, within the workshop, the same text was presented in varied ways by each group of participants as they interpreted the text through multiple lenses.

In contemporary theatre it is argued that verbatim theatre is considered to be an '*honest*' and '*confessional*' mode of performance which helps the audience to understand the world, as a '*democratic tool for democracy*' which provides the audience with greater access to important information than conventional theatre (Steward & Hammond, 2012). However, the verbatim material is again tainted in the processes of transcription, editing and directing as the poem and the performance are a representation of the verbatim of the initial interview, and not purely verbatim. In an interview with Steward and Hammond (2012) actor and verbatim theatre playwright Robert Soans stated that the audience are more open to the emotional and philosophical journey of a play if the writer can convince them that they are witnessing an actual conversation. In using the verbatim of a Year 10 participant in the workshop it became apparent that the Year 9 participants were indeed open to the emotional and philosophical journey of the poem, being '*honest*' and '*confessional*' in sharing their own experience of 'their world', which shaped their representation of the found poetry text, as detailed in this chapter. In applying the democratic OSL approach to working, the Year 9 participants harnessed their own lived experiences to the verbatim text of their peer in creating the visual imagery which framed the poetry as a performance. It was hoped that the visual imagery of the performance, combined with the verbatim of the

text, would invite an audience of their peers to embark on their own emotional and philosophical journey and reflect on their 'world', highlighting shared experiences and encouraging discussion around mental health and wellbeing, and how Drama develops confidence.

6:3 Year 9 participants' interpretation of the Found Poetry

In recognising the word count limitations for this Thesis, I have focused on one of the interpretations of the found poetry from the Verbatim Workshop, with four Year 9 participants working as a group. In the found poetry Raymond shares how he feels Drama has supported him in applying skills developed through the study of Drama to a GCSE English speaking and listening examination. The structure of found poetry in this study has been discussed in Chapter 5. In the verbatim theatre workshop the found poetry presented as text was interpreted directly by the ensemble, the details of which are now discussed.

That's No Big Deal

You see,
obviously,
in English,
you've got to do a speaking and listening exam as well.
Drama sort of like
gives you an edge above everyone else.
And that's because
you're already used to speaking
in front of a group of people.
It's only your classmates in that room as well,
so,
like,

we've performed in front of strangers,
so performing and speaking
in front of your classmates,
that's no big deal.

In collaboratively crafting the transcript of the interview into a piece of Found Poetry, Raymond stated that this was a *'true record'* (verbatim) of the answer he gave in interview when sharing how Drama had supported his mental health and wellbeing by enabling him to develop skills he could apply to other subjects within school. This supported the intention of presenting text which was as close to verbatim as possible. However, multiple elucidations of this poem were applied in the workshop, which immediately tainted the verbatim of the material, though retaining the actual words. As previously stated, the Year 9 participants applied multiple interpretations to the poem when it was presented to them as a text for performance. The initial interview with Raymond took place in the Studio, however the Year 9 participants staged the action in a classroom setting, which they created in the Studio using classroom desks and chairs (Figure 6.3.1).

Fig. 6.3.1

Creating a classroom setting

In the found poetry, which I shall henceforth refer to in this chapter as 'the text', Raymond offers one voice. In their interpretation of the text, the Year 9 participants, whom I shall henceforward refer to as 'the ensemble', presented multiple voices. They presented themselves as four individual characters in the scene. Their justification for this was that they believed that the text was relevant to more than one person in that situation. They each related to the pressure that they had felt in classroom situations when they were asked to speak out in front of their peers, and shared ways in which they were more confident in other subjects through their experiences of performing theatre, therefore suggesting that a chorus would be more effective in performance than a single voice. The ensemble referenced their experiences in the use of choral techniques in classical theatre to inform the audience and alluded to a sense of safety in numbers when speaking aloud in front of their peers. In discussing the text, they interpreted themes of friendship and bullying within a classroom situation which they believed contributed to anxieties in speaking aloud in front of their peers and related personal experiences which supported this. They discussed words from these experiences which were both audible and inferred, which they wanted to include in their performance of the material through adding symbolism to the verbatim text, adding visual commentary rather than verbal.

In the first four lines of the text, the ensemble identified with their own experiences of a classroom and the preparation for an exam:

You see,
obviously,
in English,
you've got to do a speaking and listening exam as well.

In the text presented to the ensemble Raymond did not give any detail of the English classroom, and merely made a statement, but the ensemble wished to embellish the verbatim and present the text to an audience through visual imagery which they believed their audience would relate to and which they believed would support them in '*getting the storyline across to the audience*' (verbatim). Whilst applying Wheeller's method of verbatim as script to the workshop, this embellishment was indicative of the practice of Freedman and Poskitt (Taylor, 2010) though focusing on the visual representation whilst applying Wheeller's approach in retaining than the verbatim voice, and in adding symbolism for emotional emphasis. The ensemble explored how to elaborate the text through performance with the use of lighting, levels, movement and props which diluted the verbatim of the text. They made a conscious decision to place the desks symmetrically in the performance space to represent the uniformity of a classroom setting but offset them to ensure that the actors could be seen clearly by the audience and to symbolise reluctance to conform to a predetermined conformity in facing forwards. They identified the desks as symbols of power and as barriers between themselves and others, suggesting that they could use the desks and chairs as ways of creating levels to represent status within the peer group in the classroom setting. They drew the stage curtain behind them to create an entrance through which the opening line would be delivered, representing the start of a play when the stage curtains open to the audience therefore formally structuring the text as a performance piece rather than the original interview. The ensemble explored ways of creating a 'chaotic' environment to represent their lived experiences in classroom situations where learning was impeded by the behaviour of peers. They represented this visually, as pictured in in Fig. 6.3.2, where there is no formal physicality of being seated and engaging in learning as status within the peer group is symbolised by students sitting on desks. Instead,

we see a pencil being thrown between two students who are sat on desks, one person seated on a chair with their feet up on another chair and a fourth student walking around. Raymond does not allude to any of this in his verbatim poetry, but the ensemble have embellished the text presented to them to create a structured performance piece through their own lived experiences.

Fig. 6.3.2

Symbolising peer group

Raymond had alluded in the text (and in informal conversations) to the confidence that he had developed through studying Drama through performing to an audience:

Drama sort of like
gives you an edge above everyone else.
And that's because
you're already used to speaking
in front of a group of people.
It's only your classmates in that room as well,
so,
like,
we've performed in front of strangers,

so performing and speaking
in front of your classmates,
that's no big deal.

The ensemble agreed with the points made by Raymond in these lines in the text and continued to communicate the confidence that they inferred from the text through further visual representations of their own lived experiences of how Drama had given them '*an edge*'. They shared, through discussion, experiences of how peer relationships had impacted on their confidence and self-esteem, referring to examples of words directed to them, in both an obvious and a subtle manner, which were heard and seen by peers but unheard and unseen by the teacher, particularly the 'labels' which had been placed on them. This, however, diluted the text further, focusing on the experiences of the ensemble rather than Raymond's verbatim, though some of the experiences resonated with another of Raymond's found poems which the ensemble had not read. Nonetheless, there were correlations relating to peer relationships and the study of Drama, which will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

The ensemble wanted to foreground some of the terminology used in verbal exchanges towards them by combining stage lighting and classroom highlighters to present their experiences to the audience, to give visibility to the words that were directed at them but unheard by the teacher, words that were not in the verbatim text, but which the ensemble believed should be heard through dramatic representation as they felt that Drama had given them an 'edge' to speak out through performance, as shared by Raymond in lines 5 - 16. They performed their interpretation of these lines with a lighting change using an ultra-violet (UV) lighting state to present words inscribed on their bodies with the highlighters

(Fig. 6.3.3), with the aim of making visible the words unheard by the teacher but heard by their peers. They used physicality and levels to add further inference to the words they had selected.

Fig. 6.3.3

Using ultra-violet light

This was intended to emphasise the value they placed on Raymond's text as they resonated with his statement and wanted to share this in a marked way with the audience, albeit diluting the verbatim of the text. To ensure that the focus of the audience was brought to this point they added physicality and levels. Lucy, centre stage, stands on a chair with her arms outstretched, facing the audience. The highlighted text is verbalised in this commentary as it was written, in verbatim, by the ensemble.

The text on Lucy's arms reads: 'SHOW YOUR TRUE colours, as depicted in Fig. 6.3.4. Odette sits stage right, Fig. 6.3.3, hidden behind papers with the words 'FAT!' and 'SLUT' visible on her lower arm (Fig. 6.3.5). Robyn, head down as she focuses on her work, sits stage left, Fig. 6.3.3 displaying the words 'MORE WORK' on her left arm (Fig. 6.3.6).

Fig. 6.3.4

Lucy, centre stage

Fig. 6.3.5

Odette, stage right

Fig. 6.3.6

Robyn, stage left

The ensemble considered the blocking of lines 5 – 16 in emphasising the relevance of the words they inscribed on their bodies. They used words from three different perspectives: words directed at them by peers which were unheard by teachers, words they recognised as being directed at them by teachers, and words of encouragement and support shared between themselves and intended as a direct message for the audience. In Fig. 6.3.4 the ensemble intended the words inscribed on Lucy's outstretched arms to be a focus, placed centre stage and raised to a high level as a positive message to the audience about valuing identity and being non-conformist to peer pressure. These were words which they identified as words of encouragement and support. The words visible on Odette's lower arm in Fig, 6.3.5 were an example of words directed at them by peers which were unheard by teachers, and those highlighted on Robyn's arm in Fig. 6.3.6 represented one of the

phrases they identified as being repeated to them by teachers. The selection of words used in the performance transpired through an exercise to identify and map the source of those shared by the ensemble by using a 'target board', a visual guide to the verbatim voices (Bellfield, 2018). This exercise was introduced to support the ensemble in selecting the words which they believed would present the verbal exchanges experienced daily in the classroom. Their mapping can be seen in Fig. 6.3.7.

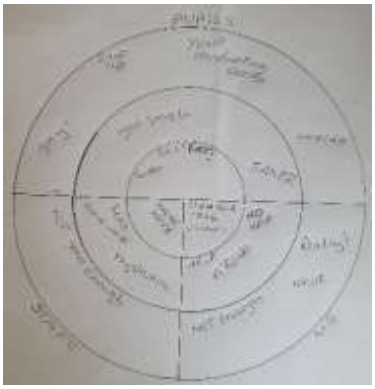


Fig. 6.3.7

Mapping on a target board

The words were initially shared through open discussion and filtered using a 'target board' activity (Bellfield, 2018; pp. 25-27). Bellfield suggests this method as a way for verbatim practitioners to identify key voices and supporting voices, selecting the voices which are judged to be more central to the context of the verbatim work. This highlights a filtering of verbatim material as judgements are made in selecting the voices to be heard, and in further judgement around which voices are the most prominent. Initially, the intention of the verbatim theatre workshop was for Raymond's voice to be heard, however the ensemble had not only selected a *chorus* of voices, but now also added *secondary* voices to the work. This substantiates the scepticism of verbatim theatre by playwright David

Eldridge (Taylor, 2010) who questions the authenticity of verbatim theatre, referring to it as 'the reality television of the theatre' and arguing that it is subjectively edited from the transcription of the initial interviews to the performance and style of the production. However, in acknowledging the democratic practice of OSL in which the ensemble was working, the production of performance material remained under their control as they applied the practice of highlighting emotional emphasis to Raymond's voice by supplementing it with secondary voices from their own experiences. This resembled the practice of Freedman and Poskitt (Taylor 2010) in creating verbatim theatre from taped recordings which were adapted through the rehearsal process into performance work, though they had initially consciously embarked on the work applying Wheeller's methods of using verbatim as script. The ensemble was creating their own democratic way of working with the text which subconsciously linked with a range of practices from the field of verbatim theatre making, using their own voices and those directed at them, adding layers of verbatim to the initial text.

The ensemble began with writing words on sticky notes and placing them on a blank target as suggested by Bellfield (2018; p. 25). They then identified the source of the voices using Bellfield's example (Bellfield, 2018; p. 27) and created a new target board (Fig. 6.3.7) which they divided into three sections: words from their peers, from staff and from themselves. They placed the sticky notes into the three sections to identify the sources, allowing half of the target area for 'pupils' (peers) and dividing the other half between 'staff' (teachers) and 'us' (their own voices) as seen in Fig. 6.3.7. They initially had many sticky notes in the 'pupils' section, but eliminated the words which were heard infrequently to establish the voices audibly present in a classroom on a daily basis, leaving significantly less words in this section of the target board. This exercise enabled the ensemble to identify significant words

for their performance to prevent them from diverting even further from the verbatim text with which had initially stimulated their exploration. They then inscribed the selected words onto their bodies and added the UV lighting to identify which words would be used in their performance (Fig. 6.3.8), further eliminating secondary voices from the verbatim text of Raymond's found poetry.

Fig. 6.3.8
Ultra-violet words selected for performance

6:4 Data analysis summary

The workshop provided a platform for the Year 9 participants to explore how verbatim texts from Secondary School students may be used effectively to emancipate voice and bring about change through removing the stigma surrounding discussions about mental health. Through the application of a range of techniques, working through an OSL workshop as an ensemble in the Drama Studio, the participants identified themes in the poetry relating to

their own experiences and added their own ideas for symbolism and staging to the text to create a performance piece which they believed was true to their interpretation of the poem.

The main themes emerging from the workshop were confidence, image of self and self-esteem, and peer relationships. These themes correlate with those previously identified in the performance poetry workshop and in the found poetry. The year 9 participants identified Drama as being the vehicle for developing confidence and building self-esteem through not only verbally sharing Raymond's voice in vocal verbatim, using his words, but by adding their own chorus through visual symbolism to emphasise the '*hateful*' (verbatim) words used by peers, instructions directed at them by teachers and words of encouragement and support shared between themselves. They staged the work as a piece of theatre, utilising stage curtains, lighting, and large props, to frame their performance to an audience. Their intention was to present a collective lived experience in the hope that an audience would identify and acknowledge areas for support and action.

The single voice was transformed into a chorus, resulting in a cacophony of participating voices, aimed at evoking responses from an audience and stimulated ideas for incorporating the piece into a one-act play to be created in the style of theatre-in-education (TIE) to inform and support staff and students in Secondary Education. It was acknowledged that though the text remained verbatim as a piece of found poetry, the performance piece had diluted the 'pure' verbatim of the poem by the embellishment of imagery and symbolism. However, this was defended by the ensemble who argued that Raymond's words could be relatable to more than one voice and that there would be people in the audience who would be '*triggered*' (verbatim) by the poem, the staging of a classroom '*in chaos*'

(verbatim) and by the symbolism of the highlighted text presented under the UV lighting, which would subsequently encourage them to share their experiences with family, friends and teachers, and support others in developing skills through Drama to improve their confidence in speaking out. The participants acknowledged that they had developed the initial text into a performance by embellishing it with their own lived experiences but defended their work as verbatim by offering the following statements, which are hereby transcribed in verbatim, presenting the concluding statements in this chapter, embellished with images of some of the UV text created by the participants and presented in Figs. 6.3.9 – 6.3.12.

Fig. 6.3.9

Odette

'*You can't always speak out in class when someone says something nasty to you 'cos you'll get in trouble off the teacher, so you just have to deal with it. I've lost count of how many different names are thrown at me just because I'm gay. This performance is our way of speaking out to let teachers know what is said to us. We haven't changed any words, just added our own experiences by showing them rather than speaking. It's like a non-verbal way of communicating the truth*.' (Odette)

Fig. 6.3.10

Robyn

'You just have to keep your head down and get on with it, even when there's paper and insults flying around everywhere, or you'll get no work done. That's not right. No-one should think that's right 'cos it's wrong and it really happens. I want the audience to see that'. (Robyn)

Fig.6.3.11

Geraldine

'It's what we see every day. I don't know what the teachers see but it can't be the same as us can it? I hope people in the audience see something that makes them speak up and find someone to talk to. Sometimes you just need to know that you're not alone.' (Geraldine)

Fig.6.3.12

Lucy

'*I'm so glad I did Drama. It's made me more confident so I can tell people to just get on with it and leave me alone. I'll get better grades than them anyway. I can show my true colours in being myself but they just hide behind being bullies and they will fail*.' (Lucy)

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this chapter the key findings emerging from the study will be presented; the use of poetry and verbatim theatre in arts-based research will be evaluated, acknowledging challenges to the study, and possibilities for further research will be suggested as the argument for the value of the study in contributing to knowledge in the field of Drama education is expounded. This study set out to investigate, through an arts-based research methodology, the extent to which Drama supports the mental health and wellbeing of students in a secondary school setting, and how the inclusion of Drama in the secondary school curriculum supports the social and academic development of young people. The rise in the number of young people presenting with anxiety, stress and depression, and the increase in cases of self-harm, low moods and suicidal thoughts became key factors in the ongoing development of the school curriculum. The analysis of the data confirmed that students were experiencing greater levels of stress, anxiety and depression than previously recognised by the school. With a professional awareness of the social and emotional benefits of an effective Drama curriculum in secondary education this study intended to promote debate on current practice to provide insight, and include improvements, for students in secondary school, arguing the value and place of Drama in the whole school curriculum at a time when Arts provision is being marginalised, underfunded, and undervalued. The study aimed to generate understanding and insight to inform, empower and assist future teaching, planning and current development in Drama, contributing to the whole school curriculum in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Secondary education. The research focused on two key areas: the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Secondary education and Drama as a subject within the whole school curriculum.

The emerging themes presented in the data gathered from the research study, in the form of performance poetry, found poetry and verbatim theatre were analysed and examined through Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, field and symbolic violence, supported with arguments for a more inclusive curriculum in secondary education. Data from the three stages of the study presented the influence of habitus through peer and familial relationships through the impact of the multidisciplinary approach of the critical pedagogical OSL methodology which supported social development through confidence, aspiration and the development of social skills.

7.1 Key findings emerging from the study: themes in the data

Data was gathered through an arts-based research methodology comprising of a triangulation of Drama practice: performance poetry, found poetry and verbatim theatre, as presented in Chapter 3 in Fig. 3.1.1: The triangulation of Drama practice applied in three stages.

In analysing the themes emerging from the arts-based research inquiry, perceptions of self, emotions and relationships were prominent in the performance poetry, the found poetry and the verbatim theatre workshop. The analysis is woven through the work.

In considering whether the themes needed to be specifically analysed in this chapter rather than in the chapters detailing each section of the triangulation of Drama practice, I believe that the analysis of each section were more pertinent applied through the relevant chapters pertaining to each of the three disciplines: analysis of the Performance Poetry in Chapter 4, analysis of the found poetry in Chapter 5, and the analysis of the Verbatim Theatre workshop in Chapter 6. This enabled a more detailed and relevant analysis.

In summary, the themes emerging from stage one of the study, the performance poetry workshop, presented 100% of the participants disclosing their emotions and the perception of themselves, with 55% imparting their thoughts and feelings around both familial and peer relationships. This is detailed in Fig. 4.5.1: Themes in the poetry created during the performance poetry workshop. Analysis of the poetry produced in the workshop revealed that 100% of the participants presented mental health and wellbeing concerns and feelings through their Spoken Word performances, distributed throughout the emerging themes, presented in Fig. 4.5.2: Sub-theme analysis of the poetry. The performance poetry workshop evidenced the engagement and creativity of the participants as they crafted poetry to be performed in the style of Spoken Word, taking inspiration from their lived experiences with the data presenting themes of emotions and relationships, and more specifically stress, anxiety, and depression. The collation and analysis of post-performance audience response to the Spoken Word event facilitated the opportunity for dialogue to work towards further action (Pelias, 2004; Leggo, 2012), as the audience of staff, Governors and ITTs had connected emotionally to the lived experiences of the participants through the performance of their poetry, evidencing the evocation of feelings and questions from performance (Mienczakowski & Moore, 2001; Saldana, 2008). As detailed in Fig. 4.5.3: Questions to the audience following the performance poetry workshop, 100% of the audience wanted to know what could be done in school to support the mental health and wellbeing of the students and how we could enable other students to open up to seek support. The data presented shows that 100% of staff and Governors wanted to know how the participants were able to write and perform their work to an audience. It may be argued that this evidences a lack of knowledge and understanding across the school of the value of a Drama

curriculum in empowering confidence and self-esteem, a knowledge and understanding that it is hoped the findings of this study will support in developing the school curriculum.

In stage 2 of the study, in the found poetry data, the themes consisted of trust, confidence, and the perception of the Drama Studio as a 'safe' space as the participants shared their experiences of studying Drama through semi-structured interviews. Following the interviews, the transcripts were crafted into found poetry, with a collaborative approach between researcher and participants to ensure that the poems were as close to verbatim as was possible. In interviews and in informal conversations, the participants made repeated references to the Drama Studio being a 'safe' space, a space where they feel able to develop work without judgement and where they can apply creative practice in exploring feelings and emotions, experimenting with different Drama techniques to examine themes and topics, characters and context, mental health and wellbeing. There were correlations between the performance poetry and the found poetry with the ways in which the participants used Drama skills to present their mental health and wellbeing through their Spoken Word performances, and in the statements in the found poetry alluding to the ways in which Drama supports them in school, particularly in developing confidence and self-esteem, overcoming anxieties, adapting their learning and understanding through ensemble work. Findings from this stage of the study have been applied to the ongoing development of the Drama, SMSC and PSHE curricula within the school.

In the third and final stage of the research study, the verbatim theatre workshop, the data emerged from the participants' interpretation of a piece of found poetry, and the influence of their lived experiences on the rehearsal and performances, layering interpretations of the found poetry through a polyphonic representation, presenting a chorus of voices rather

than a solo recital of experiences. The themes emerging from this workshop were confidence, self-esteem, and peer relationships, correlating with the two prior stages of the study, with visual symbolism and a performance structure applied to the verbatim text. The findings from the study will be presented to SLT and Governors to inform future curriculum planning and support the argument for the value of Drama and Performing Arts as valued subject areas in the Options Process for KS4 study.

The data from the three sections of the study presented the influence of the development of habitus through peer and familial relationships, and the impact of the multidisciplinary approach of the critical pedagogical open space learning methodology applied in the teaching of Drama, which supported social development through confidence, aspiration, and the development of social skills. In the performance poetry workshop the participants shared insights into the development of independent and shared social habitus in both familial and peer settings. It became clear though the analysis of the found poetry that both the individual and shared habitus of the participants was influenced and developed through the ensemble work experienced in the 'safe' space of the Studio, as they engaged in the critical pedagogical model of OSL, democratically exploring ways of working and developing knowledge and understanding. They accepted the views of others, particularly those with whom they did not socialise with outside of the Studio, and supported each other emotionally, physically, and academically to create work, feeding the habitus which developed within them. They were able to leave some dispositions affecting habitus outside the Studio and inform their habitus as they entered the space, through Drama pedagogy, adding to their habitus, adapting it through influencing and transforming thought processes and dispositions.

7.2: The use of poetry and Verbatim Theatre in arts-based research

In examining the found poetry as data, overlapping themes emerged: stress and anxiety and not being good enough, school and friendships, and Drama as a coping mechanism. When the themes were analysed from both the performance and the found poetry the overarching themes from the research were identified as: image of self, emotions, relationships, and Drama as a coping mechanism. This is discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. In unpicking each theme, there emerged a commonality of factors. In exploring the image of self, there were not only references to experiencing low self-esteem as a young person, but there were also concerns from participants of how they believed that they were perceived by others, the 'others' being family, friends, peers and teachers. Examining the theme of emotions, the most prevalent emerged as stress, anxiety, depression, dark thoughts – emotions stemming from their image of self and how they believed that they were not good enough, or clever enough to achieve as they did not measure up to the expectations of others. The theme of relationships is intertwined through the image of self and the emotions experienced, with the use of Drama as a coping mechanism emerging as a way in which the participants are able to work towards a more positive mindset.

The study focused on participants in Year 9 and Year 10 who had opted to study Performing Arts, exploring and analysing the impact of engaging in Drama practice on their mental health and wellbeing. The case study of Georgina (Chapter 1) initiated the inspiration for the research, with the performance poetry workshop presenting mental health and wellbeing issues through Spoken Word performances, as detailed in Chapter 4 forming stage 1 of the study. Stage 2 consisted of interviews with Year 10 participants presenting similar experiences to Georgina's, in that they stated that Drama gave them a voice through which

they could communicate their thoughts, feelings and opinions in the Studio, in a 'safe space' (verbatim). These interviews were crated into found poetry (Chapter 5) which, in conjunction with the performance poetry (Chapter 4), gave the participants a voice and presented data which correlated with the performance poetry in presenting the lived experiences of young people in a secondary school setting and the ways in which Drama supported their mental health and wellbeing. The found poetry was developed through the Verbatim Theatre workshop (Chapter 6) in stage 3 of the study to present the lived experience of the participants, framing and shaping the verbatim with Drama techniques for performance. The Verbatim Theatre style was applied to give a pure representation of the participants' voices.

Through the arts-based methodology applied to this study, the participants have been empowered to produce pieces of art that represent experience (Leavy, 2020) which has produced data that would be invisible and unavailable through other research methods. The use of poetry and Verbatim Theatre has produced data around sensitive issues, pertinent to education, which can be visually and audibly presented to an audience, therefore widening the audience for the findings from journal readers to a range of community audiences (Leavy, 2020), evoking emotive responses and creating emotional connections. The data will be interpreted in different ways by individual members of the audience at any given time, dependent on a range of factors, as with any research findings where interpretation of data will turn it into different kinds of information (Sullivan, 2014), but the data in this study, at all stages, is verbatim.

The use of poetry and Verbatim Theatre as data has presented the individual and collective habitus existing in the Drama Studio, and how it may be shaped through a triangulation of

Drama practice. The school sits at the heart of the community, within an internalised habitus of symbolic violence, (Bourdieu), historically influenced by familial experiences which have subsequently had a subordinating and coercive effect on the younger generation - a phenomenon recognised by some stakeholders, particularly staff and Governors of the school. Frequent adaptations to the whole school curriculum have been applied to address this, to endeavour to develop the cultural and social capital of the students in the school. Drama continues to be marginalised within curriculum planning and destination data evidences a high number of post-16 students dropping out of education and remaining in the community, their field influenced by familial economic status, the community and their chosen friendship groups (Zakiroh & Zengenene, 2023). The data in this study, in the form of poetry and Verbatim Theatre, demonstrate the habitus around the destination data to be influenced by a lack of emotional support, poor relationships and a lack of confidence and self-esteem. This study argues that the field of the community could be enriched through the Drama curriculum in adding social and cultural capital to develop a more positive habitus, a more proactive and creative way of thinking through exploring social reality through the democratic critical pedagogical approach of Drama practice.

This study has evidenced the validity of a Drama curriculum in empowering participants to explore, share and vocalise their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, engaging in democratic and shared experiences in a safe space where their voices are valued as they develop social skills, confidence, and empathy. The emotions presented in the performance poetry were recognised by stakeholders as key areas for further development in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students. The found poetry resonated with the participants in the Verbatim Theatre workshop as they recognised feelings, emotions, and experiences, and

inspired them to add their own voices to their interpretation of the verbatim text, layering the voices presented to the audience in a cacophony of expression.

7.3: Possibilities for further research

The Verbatim Theatre work created in the workshop may be presented to a range of audiences to raise awareness of some of the issues affecting young people in Secondary education. Each audience would develop their own interpretation of the material, dependent on their field, capital, and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), but the representation of characters with identities, rather than names on the school roll, would ensure a more personalised approach to school development. For schools requiring support in developing the Drama curriculum, coaching may be offered from Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) within the Local Education Authority (LEA).

In developing the performance, data from the media and from charities could be used to provide the audience with some context around mental health and wellbeing, with guidance and support signposted. This could be integrated into the performance with verbatim testimonies. The layering of experiences, through vocal and visual representation would present a range of scenarios around the chosen theme for the piece, for example transition to a new school, making friends, bullying, peer pressure, exam stress, social issues. There is scope to tour performances to schools, which is common practice for theatre companies to deliver on PSHE and SMSC curriculum content. However, specific research and development through Drama which is conducted by a school into the students on roll would be more effective to curriculum development than generic research.

Following performances, feedback may be analysed to identify areas for development within that field. For Initial Teacher Training (ITT), a visual performance may highlight social

and emotional issues for trainees to consider as they commence placements in teaching practice, supporting electronic and hard copies of national and school data in addressing teaching standards. Similarly for Early Career Teachers (ECTs) and support staff.

For school Governors and Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) a visual presentation would be beneficial in identifying students as visceral rather than statistics in the minutes of meetings, to support the decisions made for ensuring that the mental health and wellbeing of the young people in the school.

A performance to students may be effective in identifying and establishing themes and issues with which the audience could relate to, to break the stigma of talking about mental health and to show that they are not alone in experiencing a range of feelings and emotions.

The transitional phase from primary to secondary education may benefit from further research in this field, using Drama to address the mental health and wellbeing of young people as they transition from an intimate environment where they feel nurtured as a whole group with one teacher in an individual classroom base, to a multi-functional environment with voluminous classrooms and several teachers, each with their unique subject-specific pedagogical approaches. They have evolved from being the eldest students in the school to being the youngest, faced with such challenges as changes in friendship groups, navigating new environments and understanding new ways of learning. Drama is not taught in the primary schools which feed into the school in this study, therefore research into this area would inform a transitional Drama curriculum at KS3 better suited to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in the community as they embark on their journey into secondary education. Findings from the Centre for Mental Health (2015) state that one in five children will have experienced mental health problems

at least once in their lives by the time they leave primary school. Statistics from mental health charity Young Minds (2019) show that one in 10 secondary age children in the UK have a diagnosable mental health problem: an average of three children in every classroom. NHS statistics state that one in six children aged five to 16 were identified as having a probable mental health problem in July 2021, which correlates to five children in every classroom (NHS, 2021). If left untreated, poor mental health in childhood will inevitably lead to a lifetime of difficulties.

In a report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Howarth (2017) states: '*The time has come to recognise the powerful contribution the arts can make to our health and wellbeing'* (Howarth, as cited in All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2017; p. 4). The report found that creative activity developed increased confidence, self-esteem and better mental health. It was observed that engagement in the Arts also contributed to a greater sense of responsibility and self-reflection, supporting a positive sense of wellbeing. Refson (2018), President and Founder of national charity Place2Be, argues for the place for creativity in giving children and young people the opportunity to explore and express their emotions through imaginative play: '*I believe the arts can give children a vital creative outlet to express and make sense of their emotions, in particular when they might not always have the words to describe what they're feeling … the creative process can help children work through their problems and find ways of coping.*' (Refson, as cited in Cultural Learning Alliance, 2018; p. 1). Drama empowers exploration through creative play and would support the transition from the primary playground to a 'safe space' within the secondary school Drama Studio. The participants in this study referred to the Studio as a 'safe space', where they could switch off from pressures they found themselves under. By using creativity through Drama, transitioning

students could discover dimensions and strengths of their personalities previously unexplored and create life-long habits as a result of creative exploration, providing them with valuable life experiences and equipping them to cope with life's challenges as they mature.

Current empirical research in the power of Drama in primary education, particularly during the Coronavirus pandemic, presented solid arguments for the importance of Drama in the curriculum to enhance and support creativity and wellbeing (Stephenson, 2023), engaging children in creative arts learning. From the pioneering work of O'Neill and Heathcote in the 1970's, in the power of learning through dramatic play and exploration, to the pedagogical innovation in Drama practice through the contemporary work of Neelands on imagined worlds and OSL, research findings have demonstrated that Drama can transport young people to alternative plains, where they are able to explore their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgement or stigma. This supports the emotional development of young people as equally as the academic attainment, as they find alternative ways to express themselves that may not be fitting in conversation, creating a curative process through which to share thoughts and feelings which would otherwise be supressed. There is a need for further research in this field to address the ways in which the Arts support not only learning, but also the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

To address the complexities of establishing a Drama curriculum within secondary schools, particularly financial and political restraints, this research could also be extended to a wider field to develop the understanding of senior leaders responsible for whole school planning; Governors responsible for overseeing the budget and ratifying school policy, including curriculum design; trainee teachers preparing to enter teaching practice in placement

schools, and existing teachers across all key stages of education. This would hopefully highlight the power of OSL as a critical pedagogical approach which supports the development of social and emotional skills in addition to academic achievement, and the validity of a creative and democratic pedagogy which empowers young people to balance power relationships conducive to the development of social and emotional skills and the emancipation of student voice.

7.4: Challenges to this study

This study aimed to explore how Drama supports the mental health and wellbeing of young people in one secondary school in England, through an arts-based research methodology where performance poetry, found poetry and verbatim theatre created data. This method enabled me to explore how Drama gave participants a voice with which they were empowered to break the stigma of talking about mental health, and to share their lived experiences. However, this research study focused on one school, and not on a sample of schools nationally. Nevertheless, the findings within the study offer insight for curriculum planning when considering the mental health and wellbeing of young people and the value of studying Drama in secondary education. Formative assessment in Drama was not explored, as the intention of the study was to focus on mental health and wellbeing which impacts on pupil attainment. There may be opportunities for the exploration of formative assessment in Drama and how it is impacted by the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

As a small-scale research study exploring mental health and wellbeing, in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of young people was built on safeguarding the participants through a prior knowledge and understanding of their backgrounds, within the safeguarding policy of

the school in which the study was completed. This facilitated the identification of key themes within a field which the participants recognised in relation to their Drama practice. Ethical considerations were key to the study due to the nature of the themes explored and required a safe space in which the study could take place.

The study focused solely on two year groups, Year 9 and Year 10, and not across the school. This enabled a more intimate exploration of the lived experiences of participants approaching their GCSE examinations, without impeding on Year 11 students who were focused on revision and completion of these examinations. I believe that there is scope for further research across a wider range of year groups to explore how Drama supports mental health and wellbeing, enabling curriculum planning to be more effective and supportive from the earliest opportunity.

7.5: Contribution to research and knowledge

This study has presented the lived experiences of a group of young people experiencing a Drama curriculum in a secondary school setting, using an arts-based methodology to evidence how Drama supports the mental health and wellbeing of the participants through the emancipation of their voices. They have presented this through a triangulation of practical dramaturgical approaches: performance poetry in the style of Spoken Word, found poetry and verbatim theatre. There is a focus within education to address the mental health and wellbeing of students, though usually through PSHE and SMSC programmes which sit outside the National Curriculum. This study has evidenced the support that Drama offers to young people when included in secondary education as part of the whole school curriculum, and the validity of poetry and verbatim theatre in evoking sensory and emotive responses from an audience, raising questions and inviting further research into the themes

highlighted through performance. It is intended for the findings of this study to enthuse curriculum planning that will recognise the value of a Drama curriculum to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people in secondary education. To address the complexities of establishing a Drama curriculum within secondary schools, particularly financial and political restraints, this research could be extended to a wider field to develop the understanding of senior leaders responsible for whole school planning; Governors responsible for overseeing the budget and ratifying school policy, including curriculum design; trainee teachers preparing to enter teaching practice in placement schools, and existing teachers across all key stages of education. This would hopefully highlight the power of OSL as a critical pedagogical approach which supports the development of social and emotional skills in addition to academic achievement, and the validity of a creative and democratic pedagogy which empowers young people to balance power relationships conducive to the development of social and emotional skills and the emancipation of student voice. This is particularly pertinent following the impact of the Covid pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of young people during key developmental years in their education, as there has been a sharp increase in symptoms and diagnosable mental health conditions. In addition to personal and individual circumstances such as relationship and familial breakdowns, peer pressure, bullying and other forms of trauma there are further contributing factors such as the cost of living crisis, domestic politics, global conflicts and climate change which are all brought to the attention of young people through the advent of social media which makes them more aware of financial concerns, instability, academic pressure and demands on the National Health Service and mental health services in particular, contributing to heightened stress levels (Millington, 2024). By integrating support for mental health and wellbeing in the curriculum we can address the immediate

needs of our young people and cultivate a more empathetic and understanding culture where their voices can be heard, rather than internalised.

Presenting verbatim information in booklets as play text is not solely applicable in Drama but could also be used in a cross-curricular context, for example using transcripts from news reports in Geography when exploring environmental concerns; presenting primary sources through diary entries in History to explore medieval power struggles and the battle conditions that soldiers were subjected to; the experiences of apprentices embarking on a range of courses in Careers lessons to support students in making options choices. Students are presented with a range of learning materials to support their learning experience, but when the information presented is explored through practical work it becomes more memorable. When presented as verbatim, the information on the page becomes more believable and further applicable to students as they may relate to the factual content.

This study emancipated the voices of the participants – real people captured in a moment of time, sharing their experiences through Drama practice. They were empowered to step out from the wings and to stand centre-stage, projecting their voices for everyone to hear. They deserve an audience.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Research Information and Consent Letter to Parents

Dear Parent/Carer

RESEARCH PROJECT

Your Son/Daughter has expressed in interest in participating in a Doctoral research study which I am conducting. The project is entitled *Emancipating Voice: exploring the role of Drama in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students in a secondary school setting* and is being conducted to explore the effect that the study of drama has on the mental health and wellbeing of a sample group of students studying Performing Arts.

I am conducting this study to ensure that the students are being supported in their learning and exploration of Performing Arts to the highest standard and that their thoughts, views and opinions on the teaching and learning within the department are taken into consideration when planning the delivery of their course of study, ensuring that their wellbeing is supported at all times.

Your Son/Daughter has been invited to participate in the study and all information gathered will be kept confidential. The results of the study will be published in an academic thesis, where the names of all participants will be anonymised. Interviews, group discussions and workshop rehearsals will lead to a performance piece in the style of verbatim theatre which will present the findings of the study through performance poetry and found poetry. The activities will be video recorded and photographed. Photographs will be used in the academic thesis with pseudonyms used to refer to individual participants. Students may withdraw from the study at any time.

In keeping with ethical guidelines, I require your consent for your Son/Daughter to participate in the study. Please complete and return the consent slip below to me.

Should you have any questions or require any further information pertaining to the study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Salisbury
Head of Performing Arts

SMALL SCALE RESEARCH PROJECT

Please return reply slip to Mrs Salisbury

Student Name:_____ Tutor Group:_____

I agree to my Son/Daughter participating in a small scale research study.

Please note any medical conditions that you may have:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signed:_____*(Parent/Carer)* Date:_____

Appendix B: Performance Poetry

POEM 1: I Can't Help But Fall

So many emotions, I can't express
These feelings inside me, that thy
Holy God may bless
The Earth feeling as though it's
collapsing beneath you
Shallow breathing as people come closer
You can push yourself harder
You can push yourself further
Like a burglar of imagination, you
recollect your thoughts and continue
on through the maze, the maze of
further destruction. Why does something
so wrong feel so right?
Whatever happens, it's your life
everything I do, wrong, nothing
ever right
An ongoing fight between feelings and emotions
Jumping to conclusions day after day
Whatever you say goes against the
bullet
Running out of pellets, you're still
shooting your shot? Just give up now
whilst you still can
They say love falls but all in all
My wall still built up high
It was not your fault, but mine.
I can't help but fall, once more.

POEM 2: Time

Sometimes I wish

I could just go

back in time.

But the cold breeze blowing

My memory away

Not remembering my past

Like a fish not

remembering where to swim.

POEM 3: Perspective of Darkness

Depending on how you see darkness can define your personality

To some darkness is a fear to overcome

To some it is a beacon of home

But to some it is the natural instinct of humanity

Think about it

What is darkness to you

How are you seen in this world.

POEM 4: Summer

Flowers blossom

Sun shines

The weather is looking mighty fine

Trees are swaying

Children are playing

Oh what a lovely day

Water parks become popular

Everyone becomes funnier

Oh how nice is Summer

It's the season for love

Happiness is in the air

Everyone goes to the fair

We're all in a pair

Oh how beautiful Summer is

Don't we all love picnics

And family spending time together

Oh how we wish Summer would last forever.

POEM 5: The Clock

I look at the clock.

I feel the sudden punch of fear hit me

We're 1 – 0 down.

90 minutes in.

I feel like I am slowly sinking into my seat.

The last attack.

Their defences fell back,

we can't get past.

But then

We break through.

That's it!

No …… it's disallowed.

The defender is fouled.

They take the kick.

The ref blows his whistle.

That's it.

The dream is over,

The chance is gone.

Maybe next year…

POEM 6: Love Grows Better!

They say that love grows
better with time, it thrives on
patience and trust. Well there's
no doubt within my mind this
Fact was based on us. It's
just the things you do which
lets me know it's true, that
no-one else within this world
can take the place of you. For all
times we've thought bad, for
all the time you've forgive me
for making you mad, all the times
we've held each other through
sunshine and the rain, for all the
time we've comforted one another
to ease away the pain, these
words are just to let you know
your heart is connected to mine
and also hopefully make you see
our love grows better in time.

POEM 7: Bonds

Before our bond was created, I always felt lost
and alone. I'm sorry for never trying. I'm
sorry for pushing you away. But I'm thankful
for all I have. I'm thankful for all the
Bonds. I'm thankful for, I'm thankful for everything.
As tears roll down my face like
rain on a window. As I feel your hand on
my cheek like a gentle breeze. I'm thankful.

I'm thankful for family. I'm thankful
for love. I'm thankful for friends, the bonds,
which can mend. Bonds are broken and love
is lost. I'm thankful for my past, all the negatives
that have fazed me. I'm thankful for my family
their bonds which one cannot question. Bonds
are there for a reason and no-one can change
the bonds in which we create friendship, family,
love!

Poem 8: Scars

That look of disappointment
it scares me
The look of anger on your face
shows that you care
The knives in my back
Show me they were never there
And the tears in my eyes
they show pain that you don't know
about
The scars on my arms
they help me sleep,
but they keep you awake
worrying that one day they
will be too deep
You can't pull me out
I will drown in my own sorrow
It worries me that I didn't want
a tomorrow
Now I act fine
Smile and wave
but sometimes I remember

wanting to dig my own

grave

Six feet under, with no

return

like part of witchcraft

I wanted to burn

Safe at last

how am I here?

I think I can last one

more year …

POEM 9: Best Days of our Lives

Everyday I walk the long corridor.

Everyday it hurts a little bit more.

We're told these are supposed to be the best

days of our lives.

But what happens when that life becomes a

constant conflict between pain and anger

and pressure and anxiety.

All of a sudden these days have turned

cold.

The pain is like when you go to the doc

and say you're sick

But you're not sick, except your mind

is telling you complete nonsense.

Every single day we go into class and sit

down in a chair.

We wait in despair to hear what the

teacher has to share

The happiness in this place just seems

to fade a little bit more.

The only relief is at the end of the day

when you walk through that door.
But for the whole day you've been walking
round with your eyes looking at the floor,
Because you're scared that someone will
pick out your never-ending flaws.
Walking round wondering if you will ever know
your cause
Why were you put on this earth and what
part you have to play,
Or if anyone will ever listen to anything
you have to say.
It's the depressive mood that you can
never get rid of.
But it is the only thing you will allow
yourself to think of
Or will you rise up and say no to
the constant depression
Say no to these thoughts that have
been going through your brain.
Say goodbye to all the thoughts that
make you go insane.
Or will you sit there and constantly
complain.
Or will you just constantly find other
People that you can always blame.
All of this links back to one key
thing that makes you feel sick
To the one place that students used
to call you thick.

POEM 10: It's Gonna Be Okay

Everyday I have these thoughts
Everyday I get more and more
It's gonna be okay they say,
As they walk past in their uniform
The depression building, the pain hurting,
The anxiety worsening, the anger cursing.
Trying to escape its cage,
It's gonna be okay, they say,
To me I feel like that's all they say
Sometimes I just wanna get away
Away from all this pain
All those lies I get told day-to-day
I can't get no peace.
My mind's everywhere, words scrambling on the paper,
I can't tell my mates, I feel so ashamed, this isn't me,
I walk to the only place I feel safe,
Pick up guitar and start to play
Everything in my head just goes away
I don't wanna leave this place
I get asked nearly every day
I turn around and say it's all okay, then walk away
I look to the floor and walk brushing my hand against the wall
like any other day, they say it's all okay,
I get home and carry on with my day, hoping it gets better
Wanting to believe what they all say, will finally make me feel okay,
I tell myself to hold on, but I can feel myself slowly letting go
day by day, confidence dropping
it's gonna be okay they say
you don't need a doctor, it's okay, your mind's just
playing games.

Poem 11: My Poem

Happy.

Football – active and free,

Family – Grandparents especially,

their kindness.

Food can be helpful at any time,

Friends – always there,

Drama mostly – can just be yourself.

Frustration.

Football – when your team's losing or doesn't have a game,

Friends – when they snake you,

Not being listened to.

Firsts.

First time I had a nosebleed,

Didn't know what to do,

First time I had an asthma attack

Scary too.

Thoughts.

My pen is orange

Like my friend Kyle,

He likes the Devil.

I'm sorry I'm too fabulous, but I was born this way.

I am a bed, cosy and relaxing.

Has my drink or food been spiked with illegal substances?