FROM FUNCTIONING TO FLOURISHING: HOW DOES DRAMA-LED PEACE EDUCATION HELP PEOPLE KNOW, EXPERIENCE AND TRANSFORM CONFLICT?

A PARTICIPATORY ACTION-RESEARCH PROJECT IN A SINGLE SCHOOL

By Anna Gregory, BA (Hons)

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AUTHOR DECLARATION

I declare that the main text of this thesis is entirely my work. This work has not previously been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature Date: 16th July 2022

ABSTRACT

Building on my peace-education experience, this inquiry explored a more creative way to co-construct knowledge around conflict and transformation. As well as documenting the development of my educational praxis, this research details how social justice, liberatory education, creativity and action aligned for me and twelve child co-researchers through a participatory action research (PAR) experience.

The study comprised four action-research cycles: two group cycles (the Peace PAR project) bookended by two solo-practitioner cycles. The Peace PAR project took place in an English primary school in the Midlands over two school terms, involving 12 inner-city youths aged 10–11 and four adult participants. Together, we undertook a collaborative and democratic inquiry into transformative solutions to complex relational problems.

The Peace PAR Project's process revealed the co-research group's underlying relational conflict, including the unjust ways we treated each other and were treated by others (including adults). Our developing consciousness initiated our transformation towards radically new senses of self-perception and agency, stimulating more action as we upheld our right to be considered differently by each other and school staff. Using cycles of action and reflection to develop understanding and practice, we co-created an alternative research focus through a radical, inclusive epistemology.

Four key themes emerged from the study. First, the project demonstrated how values-led, arts-engaging practices enabled the co-researchers and I to step beyond dominant discourses and rationality to deconstruct our personal and social worlds and offer alternatives. Second, blending PAR and Theatre-of-the-Oppressed methods provided a unique epistemological framework, pedagogical approach and creative methodology based on sensory knowledge substantiation: we

understood by seeing, hearing and feeling. Third, the inquiry offers an original contribution to knowledge by shedding light on how young people understand peace, peaceful methods, and peaceful mechanisms of dialogue about conflict. Finally, the study demonstrates the benefits of a short-lived democratic peace education in a school environment dominated by more regulated arrangements of space, time, and bodies.

As well as investigating values, oppression, conflict and peace in exploring how arts-engaged research and drama-led peace education might help people experience, know and transform conflict, this study revealed how I taught others and how others taught me within the contextual influences of our shared learning conditions. Our restorative-based, values-led inquiry valued human complexity over procedural simplicity. We concluded that radical change doesn't need to be violent. Within the Peace PAR project, we made Our Peace.

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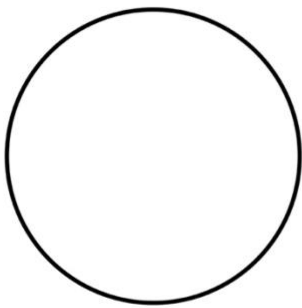
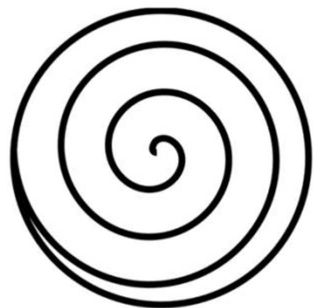
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Action Research
DfE	Department for Education
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
EBacc	English Baccalaureate
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDPR	General Data Processing Regulation
KS	Key Stage
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RA	Restorative Approaches
RI	Requires Improvement (Ofsted judgement)
RJ	Restorative Justice
RP	Restorative Practice(s)
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
SDW	Social Discipline Window
SPaG	Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar
TO	Theatre of the Oppressed
YPAR	Youth Participatory Action Research





1. Introducing me and the research

I start with an account of my professional journey to introduce myself and my research. This provides essential context as it was through my work that I first noticed feelings of discomfort around how young people were talked about concerning peace and conflict (I had yet to discover the term 'youth narratives'). My experience being in dialogue with young people did not match their portrayal in the media. My unease grew stronger as I encountered school cultures, suspecting that children's perceptions of peace and conflict were misunderstood there too. Ultimately, this felt contradiction became a catalyst for investigation.

In 2011, I left a job supporting young homeless people to start a new post as Schools Programme Coordinator at a peace education project in Birmingham, UK. That summer, riots erupted across England in response to the fatal police shooting of Mark Duggan. Birmingham protestors marched in outcry and smashed shop windows, and local communities organised collective clean-up operations. Responding to the riots, Prime Minister David Cameron re-orientated policy to address what he called Britain's 'broken' society, yet 'broken' did not chime with what I saw and experienced day-to-day.

Through peace education, I learnt more about the concept of 'circles': spaces where people cooperated, had fun, brought ideas, and enjoyed meaningful interactions with one another. Providing a break from the curriculum-driven day, these circles yielded moments where teaching and learning became more human experiences for both adults and children. Given the heightened social context, I began to wonder about their greater social potential. I did not feel Britain was broken while I interacted with children and young people. Instead, I felt I was involved in a pedagogy-in-action that could have profound social consequences.

Flash forward to 2018, when our peace education project received funding from the Home Office and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver an 'anti-knife crime' programme to schools. Our *Minus Violence Plus Peace*[1] project aimed to engage people in dialogue around peace-making and peace-building (Bickmore, 2011; Galtung, 1969, 1976, 1990, 1996, 2008; Johnson and Johnson, 2005) to counter the prevailing media, popular culture and policy narratives around violence evidenced by the 'anti-knife crime' terminology itself.

While preparing for the project, I discovered that 690 West Midlands schoolchildren aged 10–16 had been victims of knife crime in 2018 (Parveen and Halliday, 2019). Moreover, victims' names were often omitted from articles, thereby presenting them as statistics rather than real young people who had lost their lives.

Now a more seasoned peace educator and circle keeper, I therefore prioritised ensuring people in a circle knew each other's names and used them to address one another. For example, a regular circle check-in for a new group was simply to ask, "what is your name, where does it come from, and how do you feel about it?" In taking turns to answer this question, the group quickly learnt a person's name and a bit of personal history too. Participants are always interested, meaning focused listening and a deep appreciation of the personal insights shared. Our names are vital to our identity, linking us personally, culturally, and historically to society and the larger world. To not use names is to risk distancing ourselves from each other, potentially dehumanising people and reducing empathy and mutual care.

In 2019, following three fatal Birmingham stabbings over 12 days, police chiefs declared a city-wide knife-crime 'crisis'. This increased police 'stop and search' powers and the legal ability to take children and young

[1] The *Minus Violence Plus Peace* project is not a feature of this study. However, I mention it here because my involvement had a profound impact on my thinking and research.

people off the streets and into police custody. The secondary school children I worked with discussed these measures in our facilitated circle sessions. They recognised the measures as short-term solutions that failed to support young people or those caring for them to find a long-term remedy. Furthermore, such reactionary measures did not account for the complex cultural, political, social, and trauma-informed factors that can lead to young people carrying or using a knife.

I became increasingly concerned that the stakes for learning how to understand, respond to and transform conflict had never been higher. Was there a role for peace education's potential to cultivate creative and emotionally and socially healthy young people?

> **"**The old question of what a kid needs to become an informed 'citizen' capable of participating in making the large and small public decisions that affect the larger world as well as everyday life receives honourable mention but not serious consideration. These unasked questions are symptoms of a new regime of educational expectations that privileges job readiness above any other educational values."
>
> (Aronowitz, 2008 p. xii)

As an allied education professional, my role was once-removed from formal teaching but sat comfortably alongside it. My oblique educational view made me curious whether it might be possible to facilitate knowledge construction about conflict and peace more creatively and usefully. Using my previous experience as a theatre-in-education practitioner, I had brought more creative and embodied activities into the circle, with interesting results.

I began to consider whether post-graduate study might help me ground an innovative, creative, and transformative peace-education approach and develop my own educational praxis. Once I embarked on an MPhil and had my candidature transferred to a PhD, this personal inquiry

transformed into a 'research problem' and associated set of research questions.

1.1 Research problem

Since the school context I operate in often negates my educational values, I frequently experience living contradiction. The classrooms I work in operate under the active assumption that the teacher alone possesses valuable knowledge, with nothing to learn from the learners. This assumption is challenged the moment a circle is formed and understood by its community: children and adults alike become teacher-students and student-teachers. Under the right conditions, a sense of hope sustains a shared dialogue different to formal 'chalk and talk' lessons.

Pupils experiencing the UK education system in the twenty-first century will shape future society. To be healthier and safer, we need to understand more about teaching and learning the skills, attitudes, values, and behaviours needed for conflict transformation, dialogue, and peace. To build peace in our schools, we must first recognise that marginalised peoples' concerns (including children's) are not being addressed by curriculums or school experiences as a whole (Milbourne, 2002).

In the face of seemingly dominant positivist and punitive educational attitudes and prevailing exhaustion within the education community, Freire's (1992) appeal for hope is pressing.

1.2 Statement of purpose

As hope needs to be anchored in practice (Freire, 2014), this study brings together the theories of participation with a restorative and emancipatory research approach and Theatre-of-the-Oppressed methods (Boal, 1979) to work constructively with young people. This thesis accounts for how arts-engaging participatory-action research processes (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014) can contribute to the growing field of radical, critical and creative peace education (Cremin and Bevington, 2017; Kester,

2008; Lederach, 1995 and 2010; Parker, 2016a). It also documents the creative contributions young people make as knowledge producers in social justice work. Lastly, it describes how critical arts pedagogies in educational settings can provide a robust and supportive process for young people to share their views, expertise and knowledge (Wright, 2020).

This inquiry was informed by my experience delivering peace education for a UK charity that works in schools to develop social and emotional learning and demonstrate how to resolve conflict creatively. Although the work is informed by the Quaker[2] testimony of peace (1996), I am not a Quaker, and this work does not contain any religious content. The work involves dialogic and creative techniques to help people build, maintain and repair relationships. From 2011 to 2021, I developed a programme to help schools develop more peaceful learning environments using a restorative[3] philosophy and method.

The charity's work has already been the subject of several formal studies, including Sellman (2003), Crowley (2009), Harber and Sakade (2009), Cremin and Bevington (2017) and Cremin (2018). This study differs from these insofar as it provides a unique account of the work from the 'inside'. My intention was to use my lived experience of peace education to:

- explore more creative ways to co-construct knowledge; mainly around conflict and the experience of transformation;
- understand and, if possible, improve the experience of a restorative encounter (Van Ness, 2016); and,

[2] Quakers are members of a group that began in England in the 1650s. With origins in Christianity, the movement's formal title is the Society of Friends or the Religious Society of Friends. Core Quaker values, often called 'testimonies', include integrity, equality, simplicity, community, stewardship of the Earth, and peace. The peace testimony encourages people to be a living witness to peace by making choices about work, relationships, politics, consumerism, and family life. (Quaker Home Service, 1996).

[3] A summary of terms is included as part of a review of the literature, chapter two.

- develop my restorative practice by moving away from a dependence on the scripted, verbal element of the process towards a greater sense of perception and a heightened awareness of the mind-body experiences of everyone involved.

I understand restorative practice as a moral compass that guides and sustains me personally and professionally (Zehr, 2019). As a navigational life tool, this compass is best articulated by Howard Zehr's call for an approach that:

> "Favors compassion and collaboration above competition; emphasizes responsibility as well as rights; encourages respect and dignity instead of promoting shame and humiliation; promotes empathy and discourages 'othering'; acknowledges the subtlety and power of trauma and the importance of trauma healing; and reminds us that we as human beings are not isolated individuals but are interconnected with one another".
>
> (Zehr, 2019 p. 7)

This restorative compass became an essential tool helping me navigate research and academia during this study, and one outcome from this work is an actionable and achievable set of recommendations for using PAR and restorative approaches in research (see section 6.4).

My previous theatre-in-education experience (informed by Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed) brought fun, participation, and activism into learning. Combined with my more recent experiences around peace education and the current educational system, this inspired me to contemplate how these different approaches might blend. The desire to ground a transformative peace education in the context of aesthetic ethics (Page, 2008) and involve others yielded a practical inquiry, and the intentional development of my own educational praxis informed its approach. I

needed to know how social justice, liberatory education, creativity and action might align for me and twelve child co-researchers through participatory action research (PAR).

However, the moment I committed to a participatory methodology and epistemology and engaged co-researchers, the focus of the research changed. Committing to an intentionally relational inquiry resulted in us 'naming' (Freire, 1996 [1970]) issues we brought into the room and exploring our relationship with the research and each other in unexpected ways. This thesis tracks the naming process and its influence on the research questions behind the inquiry. I account for how I translated my embodied knowledge as a peace educator into public knowledge.

1.3 Research question(s)

My initial research question was:

1. *How does drama-led peace education help people experience, know and transform conflict?*

This question signposts the study's initial direction and delineates its scope and scale. True to other 'fractured future' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) arts-related qualitative studies (Beck et al. 2011; Conrad, 2004; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983), I modified this question once:

a) I encountered the research group.
b) The research progressed and we collectively began to address emergent issues.

As the twelve co-researchers and I engaged in a radical and extended epistemology, participating in cycles of action and reflection to develop our understanding and practice, two supplementary questions emerged and shaped the study:

2. *How can we use each other's talents to find out more about each other and ourselves?*
3. *What factors influence participation and building, maintaining, and repairing relationships within the PAR group*?

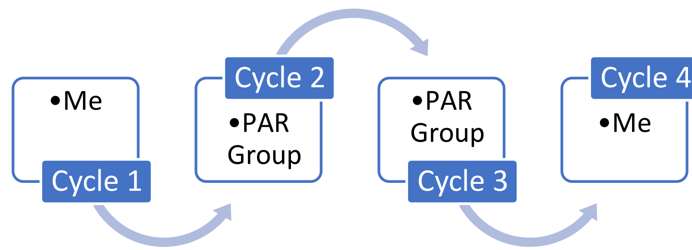
The difference between the original research question (number 1) and the subsequent co-constructed research question (number 2) highlights the praxis's influence on the inquiry. I defend this deviation in my research journey as a necessary and unavoidable part of staying true to the participatory paradigm and principles of conducting research *with* not *on* others. I explore the reasons for this divergence in my research journey in sections 3.2 and 5.6.3

1.4 Research design

The emergence of these questions roughly mirrors the overall approach whereby I, alongside a group of co-researchers, undertook a collaborative and democratic inquiry seeking transformative solutions to complex relational and systemic problems (McNiff, 2017; McTaggart, 1997; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). In essence, we asked ourselves what we were doing, whether we could do it better, how to make improvements and how best to share our learning with others.

Our iterative research cycles included an initial cycle of first-person inquiry (Reason and Bradbury, 2008b), followed by two cycles of group work over eight weeks in which I engaged "face to face with others into issues of mutual concern" (Reason and Bradbury, 2008b p. 6). The final cycle was one of personal reflection and change where, through this thesis, I sought to influence broader academic and educational communities.

Figure 1. **Peace Participatory Action Research Project cycles**



Cycle one consisted of an investigation of and commitment to my values. Here, I experienced a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989; 2008) that led to a living theory: that a drama-led peace-education experience might enhance my understanding of a restorative process. Furthermore, I hoped this study might draw attention to how conflict and peace are narrated by or through youth (Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 2015).

Cycles two and three built on Paulo Freire's processes of *Conscientização* (conscientisation) through which a marginalised group (in this case, children) developed a heightened awareness of the forces affecting their lives and relationships with one another through participation in knowledge production. My choice of research design and methods (Theatre of the Oppressed) was political, as I explore in detail in sections 2.3.1, 2.4.6 and 2.4.7.

Solo, cycle four documents my attempts to work according to an anti-oppressive ideology honouring the lived realities of people in school and describes the contradictions arising between my values, beliefs and actions on the one hand and how the school sometimes operated on the other.

The research setting was a single primary school. The cohort of co-researchers was twelve children aged 10–11 who were selected via a hybrid approach of stratified purposeful sampling (age, previous mediation experience and parental consent necessary) with the addition

of other subgroups of interest (drama, research). The collaborative methods included Theatre-of-the-Oppressed techniques (Boal, 1979) dialogic circles, interviews, drawing, photos, and film.

As the lead researcher, my role was as a facilitator offering problem-posing questions (Freire, 1996 [1970]) and opening up new communicative and creative spaces for the group to co-create knowledge. As part of this, I interviewed four members of staff. I provide a comprehensive account of the interview guides and protocols I used in section 4.4.3.

1.5 Rationale and significance

I work in up to eight schools a year (mostly in one UK city), each with around 460 pupils. Alongside the adults who care for and instruct them, this small minority of around 3680 children represent a much larger group, important enough to me to try and understand the nature and growth of educational knowledge about conflict and peace.

We have all been through an education system that embodies our society's beliefs about educational knowledge (Whitehead, 1993). In England, the government and leaders of educational organisations, define what counts as valid knowledge (Hordern, 2018). The Department for Education (DfE) has identified a preferred research institute (the Education Endowment Foundation) responsible for "improving and spreading the evidence on what works in education" (Department for Education, 2016 p. 13). Here, educational knowledge is produced to meet specific policy objectives. This preferred knowledge is then distributed to schools.

I want to participate in the generation of *new* knowledge. Knowledge that is specific to a local context. I want to engage in practice to generate knowledge about peace and conflict that can be 'applied' in educational contexts (Hordern, 2018). Facilitating classroom discussions about social and political concerns – including peace – is an essential educational

component for democratic citizenship. These discussions encourage pupils to be active and critical citizens, disrupt the status quo (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, Parker, 2016b) and activate change. However, teachers do not feel confident facilitating dialogue about conflict (Bickmore, 2005, Parker, 2016b) or enacting the "thoughtful naming provoked by dissonance" (Bickmore, 2005 p. 164) necessary for critical thinking, reflection and discussion. Avoiding these conversations and maintaining tight control over classroom knowledge reinforces the transmission of simplified content and reduces demands on pupils in exchange for order and compliance (McNeil, 1999).

My experience as a peace educator provided a research opportunity to study the potential for peace education in which young people could "practice roles, skills, understandings and relationships for participation in democratic dialogue about the inevitable conflicts of social life" (Bickmore, 2012 p. 115) within a state-funded school. The PAR methodology provided a framework in which I could:

a) create a democratic space in which the values of respective cultures could be expressed, respected and upheld (Parker, 2016a)
b) develop the skills of critical thinking to deliberately engage with difference.

The combination of the framework and skills development resulted in a confrontation and examination of diversity, peace and conflict (Parker, 2016a), creating a more inclusive, just and person-centred experience: the 'Peace PAR project'. I discuss these results fully in chapters five and six.

This study's unique research design represents an original contribution to existing knowledge, synthesising Whitehead's (1989) Living Educational Theory with Theatre of the Oppressed and participatory-action-research methodology and methods. This distinctive design generated evidence of how young people conceptualise the idea of

research, the role of a researcher and how a researcher might look. As a result, my co-researchers and I came to recognise our agentic power to act and construct realities around research (Cammarota and Fine, 2008b). Additionally, this thesis goes some way to capture the co-researcher's role in conceptualising, knowledgeably observing and speaking up about peace and peaceful-research processes (Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 2015).

More specifically, this dissertation documents the messiness of a context-bound PAR project that addressed real-life problems (Attia and Edge, 2017; Canosa, Graham and Wilson, 2018; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007). The problems this project documents include indirect and direct structural and cultural violence (Bickmore, 2011; Cremin and Bevington 2017; Cremin and Guilherme, 2016; Galtung, 1969, 1976, 1990 and 2008). It shows how sensitive adult attunement coupled with dialogic methods and methodology might help build, maintain and repair group relationships. Additionally, reflections on action reveal different conceptualisations of PAR. Over time, shifting the focus from methods (with an emphasis on the tools and processes of PAR) to methodology (and a more developed understanding of my philosophical assumptions, theoretical framework and researcher worldview) (Cordeiro, Soares and Rittenmeyer, 2017).

Although this inquiry utilised creative and theatrical methods, this thesis does not include a performance, filmed or otherwise. It is not a work of art but the exegesis of my original contributions to knowledge (Brabazon, 2016). The exegesis will demonstrate rigorous scholarship through my substantiation of values-committed research. Due to this inquiry's creative and responsive nature, its outcomes are not repeatable or transferable. However, there is scope for repeating specific processes, as the unique synthesis of values-committed PAR processes combined with Theatre-of-the-Oppressed methodology and methods is a significant and original contribution to knowledge. As a review of the existing knowledge in chapter two will demonstrate, this was the *only* way I could

have conducted this research. What was lost in repeatability and transferability was gained in innovation and originality.

1.6 Role of the researcher

I initially approached this inquiry through self-reflection, aiming to make thoughtful changes rooted in critical reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). What follows is a record of my initial first-person inquiry (Reason and Bradbury, 2008b), which helped me understand my values and perspective on the world. I hope this personal narrative – this view into my *weltanschauung* or worldview – resonates and engenders critical thinking and self-discovery for the reader, too (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

In blurring the lines between the researcher and the researched, I hoped the perspectives and practices of those I participated with might challenge existing theories. Our engagement helped shape the conditions and experiences of both school and research life (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

As the study progressed, I became more aware of my ability as the lead researcher to model ways for the collective to strengthen its capacity by identifying talents. During this project phase, I drew on facilitation and mediation skills to address issues and devise action (Castro et al., 2004, Forester, 1999).

My use of the first person throughout this thesis emphasises my commitment to informed, committed and intentional educational action (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010 pp.34-41). I believe what I am saying is valuable and significant, and I hold myself accountable to my message. If I can communicate in a way that touches you, if I can share my theory of knowledge as it lives and grows in a way you understand – perhaps even makes you smile – then I believe you might think more deeply about the experience of education in the twenty-first century. I hope these thoughts may come to inform your actions. I invite you to develop this living knowledge with me. If you are engaged in the story of this research,

then you will have tested my claims to knowledge and gone some way to validating them.

As this research story progresses, I will introduce you to the school where the project took place (Fosseway[4]). You will also meet the key players via quotes and occasional pictures. I have permission to use this material and have changed all names – including the school's – to preserve anonymity. The narrative includes accounts from children and adults I engaged with. I have tried to respect and value their autonomy and freedom as they report on and interpret their educational development (Whitehead, 1993). I wish to clarify that I am not 'giving voice' to others through these accounts – it is not my role to provide others' voices. However, by making this thesis public, I aim to *amplify* participants' voices. This amplification is political, as I also intend to engage the ears of those who (I believe) need to hear these voices.

In this next section, I consider my prospective reflexive ability to think on my positionality as a researcher (Attia and Edge, 2017). In later sections (6.7.2 and 6.7.22), and in an attempt to move beyond existing self-knowledge (Doyle, 2013), I will detail how retrospective reflexivity informed research cycles (Attia and Edge, 2017).

1.6.1 Researcher assumptions

My ethical standards and commitment to authenticity and social justice informed and guided my role as a peace educator and my choice of post-graduate study. This meant a prompt and conscious investment in an ethical strategy encompassing early researcher subjectivity and scrutiny of practice (Canosa et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2013). As I enact my values and beliefs in the teaching and learning spaces I occupy, a reflection of my own education experience was paramount as, to some extent, I am re-enacting the education I value – the one that worked for me (Kidd, 2015).

[4] This is a pseudonym

Although primarily schooled through the British education system, I enjoyed a formative educational experience at a diverse, international primary school in Botswana until I was eight. The student body was mixed: the largest groups were African, white (Afrikaans and British) and Indian and a typical class featured up to 15 first languages. I remember a creative learning environment with time spent painting, cooking, and playing – experiences similar to the contemporary UK Early Years Foundation Stages. I could remove my shoes in lessons and breaks as the school considered it normal for children to play barefoot, and I remember eating lunch outside and making decisions about where I played during breaks. These examples mark differences between Botswanan and English schooling norms and profoundly affected me.

A move to Guildford, Surrey, to join a Year Three class in a Church of England primary school in 1986 was a culture shock. I remember being confused by noisy indoor lunches, where we were trained to put our hands up to have our plates cleared away. I recall a sense of indignity at not being allowed to perform such tasks. Adults seemed overly concerned - frantic even - with endeavours such as lining children up and organising our play during breaks.

Due to my parent's separation and subsequent house moves, I attended more schools, sometimes joining partway through a school year. As the 'new girl', I quickly learned to establish myself in different situations with new people. My willingness to perform saw me cast in school plays. Outside of the performances, I continued to create a 'role' for myself (outgoing, friendly, bubbly and dramatic) and my teachers and peers confirmed and reinforced this. I learned that an association with drama helped me form a socially approved identity.

I feel challenged when I reflect on my powerful voice back then. Could privilege and peer esteem have led me to put my hand up more in class, participate in school plays and establish friendships across diverse groups? Did the privilege of a white, middle-class upbringing, an

international foundational school experience and supported engagement in extracurricular activities give me the confidence to engage in groups more ably?

My drama activities in and outside of school exposed me to people who celebrated creativity, performance and rehearsal-process discipline. I became used to working with people older than me or with a peer I may have known - but not engaged with - from school. Involvement in drama gave me a useful identity when navigating various school groups and sub-groups; I remember observing friendships, relationships and entrenched groupings and feeling comfortable moving within these.

Building knowledge creatively through drama satisfied me. I preferred to learn in a group rather than study in isolation, and I was motivated to help others learn their lines, develop a character, and accompany them on a learning journey. As part of a group, drama allowed me to respond, reimagine and reinterpret the world, which felt more valuable than completing an assessment or receiving an award.

These memories have a common theme: a circle. We started school drama lessons in a circle on the floor; at an evening drama group, the director would encourage us to form a circle of chairs to read a play together; in my current role as a peace educator, the circle is a fundamental element, assuming equal worth and dignity for all. The structure provides a crucible for forging patience, humility, deep listening, acceptance, a willingness to sit with uncertainty and shared responsibility (Pranis, 2014). Working in a circle is second nature for me, and I feel uncomfortable if asked to function differently.

As a natural group-gathering formation, the circle has led me to reflect that working with others has been integral to my development as a practitioner. For me, group working is an experience in creative synergy: I enjoy the back and forth of reflected and refracted ideas and am energised by an idea's evolution within a circle, emerging from one

person, taken up by another, growing and unfolding as more people contribute. I find this sense of being fully involved in the present moment – this complete absorption in a collective activity – deeply satisfying.

1.6.2 My applied ideology

This study's self-reflexive nature has spotlighted my formative experiences, clarifying their guiding influence on my beliefs and practice.

Although I taught theatre at a further education college after graduation, I never seriously considered a guiding theory or labelled my own or others' teaching and learning style. I relied primarily on that indeterminate, ephemeral sense *intuition* to inform my teaching. I *intuitively* felt that learning was taking place and people were developing knowledge. I *intuitively* refined techniques that worked for me and evaluated them to determine if I needed to try something else.

I saw teaching and learning as interdependent (Miller, 2002), a distinction that allowed me to create question-friendly and question-inviting (drama) classrooms that welcomed ambiguity and diversity and celebrated the co-creation of knowledge. Without the words or theory to articulate it at the time, I saw the (drama) classroom as a site for mutually democratic and humanistic appreciation, based on my hunch that we (students and teachers) learn better reciprocally. I invited students into my practice rather than keeping them at a distance. My intuition told me not to rely on a text, theory, or concept alone; that to be effective, ideas needed to involve others, including a commitment to action, discourse and (often) ritual. To be understood and really *known*, I believed a concept needed to be embodied, enacted, and played with.

I saw teaching as a performative act and performing as a learning act: both were something I did in participation with others and a mutually engaged audience (hooks, 1994). As an act of performance, teaching was not about showing off and commanding the space but about

provocation to learn, an invitation to be involved in a shared process of knowledge creation.

As a peace educator today, my engagement with people in learning processes is still practical, involving circle-based work, games, play, group work, talking, self-reflection, performances, and rituals. Discussions about conflict are much easier to navigate and promote if learners have participated in an activity designed to assist maieutic[5] action, e.g. the 'pushing against each other' activity in Boal (2002 p. 58). Boal advocates blending exercise and physical expression through play (referred to as "gamesercises"), followed by a process of maieutic inquiry (talking about and questioning what has arisen for participants from the experience of the "gamesercise"). I continue to utilise this approach as part of my (thus-far intuitive) educational approach.

A desire for more such moments led me away from teaching into making theatre in education and community settings. Freed from the constraints of curricula, I began to use improvisation, dialogic circles, and personal stories to create theatre unique to the groups I worked with. An exposure to Forum Theatre[6] as a theatre-in-education practitioner paved the way to Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (1979). Here, the democratisation of theatre struck a chord and helped me transition from a theatre of presentation, where the audience (young or old) were mere viewers or reactors (invited at best to comment on a play post-performance), to a theatre of active "spect-actors"[7] (Boal, 1979).

It is clear that creativity and group-working were celebrated in my school, home and early career. This process of first-person inquiry (Reason and Bradbury, 2008b) enabled me to critically examine the impact those

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[5] *Maieutic*: The Socratic process of asking questions to stimulate critical thinking and challenge underlying presumptions/assumptions.
[6] A summary of terms is included as part of the literature review in chapter two.
[7] *Spect-actor*: A contraction of *spectator* and *actor*. A spect-actor is a spectator who takes on the role of actor and is no longer a passive observer. The spect-actor is on equal footing with the actors and can change the action.

experiences might have had on what I now do. Am I involved in peace education and theatre-in-education because those disciplines mirror the experiences I valued growing up? Kidd (2015) invites me to explore this further, stating:

> "We all have an ideology. Our values and beliefs as practitioners are always enacted in classrooms. Often this is done subconsciously - we re-enact the education we value, which is often that which worked for us."
>
> (Kidd, 2015, p. 10)

Is it possible that I actively seek to recreate my worldview for others via my role as a peace educator? More worryingly, was my education experience so socially and creatively successful that I want to recreate it for others without considering alternative experiences, specifically Black and Asian British children's experiences in the school I proposed to do the project in?

I acknowledge the position and privilege I bring to this account as a university-educated, white, 42-year-old, able-bodied, heterosexual female. I often reflect on the make-up of a school's teaching staff: primarily white and female. I recognise that I have neutralised my accent and present as southern-ish. In agreement with Weinblatt (2011), "symbolically, and in other ways, literally, I am the oppressor" (pp. 23). However, as Weinblatt makes clear in his essay on using the Theatre of the Oppressed and privilege to support social justice, this work is not about "bashing straight, white, able-bodied men of means as the source of all problems" (Ibid). Likewise, this peaceful participatory action research project is not anti-adult, anti-teacher, or anti-education.

I further acknowledge that I am a non-Indigenous researcher drawing on Indigenous philosophies and epistemologies. I was exposed to some of these prior to academic study (including Theatre-of-the-Oppressed methods). I cannot un-know what I was taught (intentionally or

unintentionally). However, I can recognise my responsibility for identifying and interrupting the cycles of oppression I am part of (Tatum, 1992).

I recognise that I embody the white-settler role that has perpetuated white supremacy. I recognise that Whites and western ways of thinking currently dominate peace-education and restorative practice in the UK and that restorative practitioners and peace educators of colour face inequality and disparity. I see the complacency in some restorative corners about recognising colonialism's structural and institutional harms (Valandra, 2020). I hope not to have fetishised methodologies and ways of knowing not frequently carried out by non-Indigenous researchers. Instead, I hope to account for how my white worldview was disrupted during this inquiry, changing my definitions of wisdom and experience.

> "When we recognize that we have been misinformed, we have a responsibility to seek out more accurate information and to adjust our behavior accordingly"
>
> (Tatum, 1992 p. 3)

I hope to have increased my own racial and social awareness in the restorative peace work I undertake and, in publishing this work, not to have kept these issues at a distance. I acknowledge my part in perpetuating white-body supremacy (Menakem, 2017) by being a white circle-keeper and a white restorative-programme coordinator working for a white-dominated peace-focussed charity.

I am conscious this thesis will largely be seen by others within the 'alabaster academy' (Lampert, 2003) who, like me, enjoy positions of relative power. With this in mind, I hope to influence the project of decolonising methodologies by speaking "to my own mob" (Aveling, 2013 p. 203) and sharing these learnings. I choose not to present a detached, seemingly 'academic' thesis. I write in the first person as a conscious

decision to make my racialised-self part of the inquiry (Lampert, 2003). At the same time, I acknowledge the unease I feel in writing about race-related issues, as articulated by the 'Ah, but the whiteys love to talk about themselves' (Leibowitz et al., 2010) sentiment.

1.6.3 A continuing prospective reflexivity

I engaged in a process of values exploration to continue cultivating my prospective reflexivity and investigate the effect of the whole-person-researcher on the research (Attia and Edge, 2017). I understand values as the deepest motivations for doing what we do (Dyck, 2008 p. 536). By investigating my motivations as a researcher, I hoped to achieve a values congruence: a sense of wholeness where what you see is what you get (Attia and Edge, 2017).

Table 1 lists my personal, professional, educational, and social values (in no particular order). This value exploration was essential as I later carried out a similar activity with the co-researchers. Please note that this table is a time-bound snapshot of my values, the product of ongoing exploration and personal reflection on what they are and how they relate to peace. I revisit these values in section 6.2.1.

Table 1. **Values at the start of the inquiry**

Personal Values	**Professional Values**	**Educational Values**	**Social Values**
Generosity	Competence	Competence	Fairness
Engagement	Adaptability/flexibility	Authenticity	Inclusion
Authenticity	Inclusion	Creativity	Opportunity
Fun	Communication/ feedback	Engagement	Freedom
Growth	Creativity	Adaptability	Participation
Work/life balance	Trust	Fun	
Autonomy/freedom	Teamwork	Growth	
Hosting	Freedom	Freedom	
Warm social relationships	Participation	Participation	
Participation			

I have primarily managed to work according to my values so far. Exceptions include stints in more corporate, profit-driven, hierarchical organisations where my values felt compromised. Employment in a Quaker organisation concerned with how values (and more specifically, peace) are lived out has undoubtedly informed my research practice. My deep appreciation of creativity, engagement, growth, and freedom initially drew me to theatre, education and community work. Living out these values through my peace-education work has only confirmed them for me.

By systematically identifying my values beforehand (see Table 1), I came to this research with a greater sense of clarity about my aims. However, operating from such an open position generated encounters where my values conflicted with those of other people and institutions, including the University of Nottingham – the institution judging my capacity as a doctoral researcher. I experienced some tension around my decision not to repress my values merely to realise others' (Bognar and Zovko, 2008), particularly those I perceived as embedded within the culture of academia. I discuss this further in chapters six and seven.

1.7 How should I study the world?

Ubuntu is a Nguni word from South Africa that is shorthand for the proverb "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu", which translates as "I am because we are/we are because I am" or "I/we" for shorthand. The concept is known as Botho in Sotho languages, and in Setswana (a language native to Botswana) reads "Motho ke motho ka batho". Again, the meaning is similar: a person is a person through other people. This African adage encapsulates that we are first and foremost social beings and that no person is an island. Ubuntu/Botho is not in direct contrast to Cartesian thinking as it recognises and celebrates the individual. Therefore, this study acknowledges the spirit of Ubuntu by accepting that both individuals *and* groups can care for and respect one another.

The concept of Ubuntu/Botho supports the building and maintaining of community and can be seen and felt in the spirit of participation, cooperation, warmth, openness, compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity. Botswana's political stability and success could, in part, be traced to Tswana culture and traditions (Molomo, 2009). These include bogosi (chieftainship), botho (humility) and the kgotla (a circular meeting place in the centre of the village where each person had the right to ask questions or give opinions).

Desmond Tutu stressed the importance of Ubuntu in informing the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He argued that it was the spirit of Ubuntu that gave rise to a process that had at its core an acceptance that the humanity of apartheid's perpetrators and victims were intertwined. Since apartheid dehumanised both the oppressor/perpetrator and the oppressed/victim, their healing was inextricably linked (Murithi, 2009). In his role as chairperson for the Commission, Tutu distinguished between punitive, retributive, and restorative justice and claimed a restorative approach was in the spirit of Ubuntu, with relationships as the central concern. I will later argue that this worldview has significant research implications.

I respectfully acknowledge the influence of Ubuntu/Botho on this study: the idea that human beings are in relation with the rest of the world underpins my ontological and epistemological beliefs. In a socially constructed world, there are as many realities as people constructing them. Because reality is defined by any given situation's context, space, time and individuals or groups, it cannot be generalised into one common reality, making conceptions of realities from all cultures legitimate.

My journey to embrace community-based study moved me from a constructivist/interpretative research paradigm to a transformative/emancipatory and, closer still, postcolonial/Indigenous one (Chilisa, 2012). As such, I now describe my ontology as relational and transformative, based on an I/we relationship.

I believe people create or co-construct knowledge together. Knowledge is not out there waiting to be found, but something we construct and give meaning to. Knowledge emanates from peoples' interactions, experiences and cultures. As truth lies within the human experience, true-or-false statements are context-specific, socially constructed and determined by a person's culture and history. Therefore, communities' stories and belief systems (which include spiritual, earth and cosmic beliefs) count as legitimate knowledge. For me, this subjectivist epistemology confirms that people cannot be separated from their knowledge: there is a direct link between the researcher and research subject(s).

Within this paradigm, Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) and participatory-action research (PAR) provided me with an epistemological framework, pedagogical approach, and research method (Wright, 2020) to ask critical questions within a group. These included 'what are you interested in?', 'what is important for you to understand better?' and, of me, 'how might I improve my practice?' (Whitehead, 1989, 1993, 2004, 2008; Whitehead and McNiff, 2004).

From the outset, I knew I wanted to actively involve children as co-researchers constructing their own realities through Theatre-of-the-Oppressed methods. However, my reasons for undertaking this research shifted from purely wanting to describe and represent human nature (through theatre) to a desire to expand prevailing thinking in people's experience of education and facilitate my own and others' transformation.

As this inquiry exceeded an interpretive description of human nature, I include reflections on my current practice and articulate and reorder my values as a researcher. In chapter five and seven, I make a claim to knowledge by offering to:

- describe my practice;
- explain my actions;

- develop my epistemological accountability - what I know and how I come to know it[8];
- seek validation for my claims to knowledge[9];
- go through a personal and social validation process by explaining the values on which my practice was grounded and using them as standards of judgement (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006).

1.8 How my thesis is structured

As PAR methodology differs from more traditional physical and social sciences, so this thesis's structure and style will also differ. Identifying my research topic did not depend on establishing a gap in the literature, as the research question emerged from my commitment to improving practice. An investigation of PAR's theoretical and practical applications will form a significant part of the *overall* thesis.

To illustrate my evolving research journey, I shape this thesis using three visual representations (see Figure 2). These 'forms' also act as analysis methods, helping me assess the work's complexity and developing my ability to communicate tacit ideas (Redden, 2017 p. 5).

Figure 2. **Three forms: Circle, Labyrinth and Spiral**

[8] I acknowledge that I am at the start of my research practice. As such, knowledge is still emerging in the present and ahead of me in the future.
[9] This emerged as a multi-way process as I engaged with co-researchers (children), colleagues, critical friends and my supervisors for validation.

1.8.1 The circle

I used the two-dimensional circle to ground myself, the literature, and the emerging research design. In my mind's eye, the circle was located at ground level and provided a space for gathering people and information and developing understanding. As such, the circle encompassed a discussion on my position as a researcher (chapter one), the literature (chapter two), PAR methodology (chapter three), and the design of the research inquiry (chapter four).

Throughout the thesis, I describe how I came to incorporate insights from existing propositional theories in the literature in developing my own living theory of practice. I demonstrate this through in-depth discussions of the issues *as they occurred*. Consequently, I interweave relevant literature references in a coherent and integrated fashion. Because of the relevance of concepts such as peace education, Freirean pedagogy and TO, I examine these in detail in chapter two, where I explore definitions of key terminology, and weave them into other relevant chapters.

Chapters three and four explore PAR methodology and detail the research design of what came to be known as the 'Peace PAR project'.

1.8.2 The labyrinth

The shape remains grounded and two-dimensional when presenting and discussing findings in chapter five. However, added complexity helped form a labyrinth. This purposeful deviation from a more linear presentation and analysis symbolised the circuitous thinking within a PAR inquiry committed to social justice. Within the labyrinthine chapter five, I describe three pathways: engagement, values, and learning.

1.8.3 The spiral

The spiral form represents the latter section of the thesis, where I reviewed the research journey from new vantage points to share final comments. I am grateful to Beverly Tatum's (1992) description of a spiral

staircase that helped give metaphorical form to my personal development during this inquiry.

Chapter six responds to Call-Cummings-and-Ross's (2019) appeal to bring the word failure into the research discourse-and-inquiry process. In sections 6.7.12 and 6.7.23 I discuss moments of tension, discomfort, and failure and how I came to see these hurdles and challenges as gifts of knowledge and opportunities for learning (Dickson and Green, 2001).

Chapter seven presents final comments and concludes the thesis. An extensive appendix is attached, including all information pertinent to the project: consent forms, information sheets, letters, guidelines, interview schedules and a transcript of the final performance.

To those readers nervous about my ethics and research-design consideration, I emphasise this thesis's non-linearity: rest assured I provide a full account of the methods, ethics and design implications in chapters three and four. I offer the circle, labyrinth and spiral forms to help guide you through this thesis's organic nature and account for the standards of rigour, creativity, and integrity I hope to be judged by.

2. The (reluctant) literature review

I begin this chapter by owning and investigating my initial reluctance to review the literature, charting my transition from intuition to theory via practice and reflection. I also critique education as I see and experience it in primary schools in England. This critique acknowledges the critical-peace lens I view education through and my methods for teaching and learning with others, particularly drama. I also explore overarching themes such as the right to research, transformation and how to research restoratively. Towards the end, I appraise some of the literature on participatory action research (PAR). The significance of epistemological and ontological alignment to this methodology meant that I gave it greater prominence over time. A more critical appraisal of the PAR literature begins in chapter three (methodology) but continues throughout the thesis.

As practice was a central component of the inquiry, there was a delay in identifying the research problem (Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2014). I argue this is both defendable and necessary because the problem formation was not orderly, methodical or foreseeable. This review kick-started a messy, unfolding relationship with knowledge, discourse, and praxis as they evolved and informed each other.

I begin with my personal perspective on education – as informed by my lived experience first and by selected literature second.

2.1 The "reluctance"

> "A natural education is by practice, by doing things, and not by instruction".
>
> (Cook, 1918 p. 2)

Enrolled on a master's programme (and later a doctorate), I accepted that I needed to undertake and evidence a comprehensive review of the literature associated with my research area to further my education. I learned several prerequisites to post-graduate study, including a clear

statement of aims, demonstrable familiarity with the literature, sensible planning, organisation, and clearly expressed and evidenced systematic thought and argument. I also learned that a post-graduate study requires careful observation and presentation of the conventions of academic discourse, including length and referencing requirements:

> "We are frightened of initiative, and cling to what we fancy is established. But it is only established because we cling to it. It is not knowledge we store in books, it is ourselves we bury."
>
> (Cook, 1918 p. 8)

At the time, the conventional way of doing a literature review did not sound or feel enjoyable to me; my heart wasn't in it. I felt that my intuitive, practical, playful knowledge was not valid or legitimate.

In Cook's (1918) manifesto for play as an educational method, he questioned education's eternal enslavement to books. He urged educators to remember the oldest truths: that playing and doing are legitimate educational methods, and if asked to think before acting, we should also act before thinking. The concept of a literature review felt like thinking before acting, evidencing a dominant and deeply rooted Euro-Western research tradition.

My early resistance epitomised Schön's (1995) description of academia's 'high ground', occupied by the intellectual elite, and the 'swampy lowlands' occupied by the practitioner, me. I feared that only theoretical, conceptual, and propositional knowledge found in books and papers and relayed by an 'expert' was valid.

I experienced a paradox reading and presenting such knowledge as a literature review: so much of what I read concerned activity, play, creativity, and movement, yet I sat statically appraising it all. The paradox continued as I began undertaking participatory action research –

spending considerable periods alone, *not* participating. This research lark felt too lonely, linear, and ordered; I could not see how to link the creative chaos and uncertainty I experienced teaching and creating theatre with analysing and synthesising the literature (Haseman and Mafe, 2009).

However, as a theatre practitioner, I acknowledge and appreciate the traditional practices one must respect and develop within the arts – implicit and explicit rules that must be followed in theatre for the presentation to be considered 'successful'. Remembering this was comforting and constructive, helping me recognise the necessity of academic traditions. This supported me in seeing patterns and links in what I read and, as they unfolded, understanding how my drama experience might enliven the research process (Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2014). I let go of my resistance and settled down to a good read.

2.2 Literature review process

Faced with a literature review of liberatory education, peace education, restorative approaches (RA), Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) – and anticipating including a literature review around participatory research methodology (PAR) – I started where I was comfortable: Boal and his canon of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Re-reading Boal's catalogue (1979, 1994, 2002, 2006) helped me discriminate against other drama and/or theatre models in education and ground my research work into justice-orientated education through stories, imagination, and the body.

Boal unsurprisingly led me to Paulo Freire, given their shared heritage and history. The title of Boal's book *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) pays homage to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996), presumably as a nod to Freire's influence on his work. The notion of a dialogic philosophy of education allowed Boal to situate Freire's ideas "within the context of theatre and performance to incorporate participant interaction and community reflection" (Berlia, 2015 p. 8). As with Boal, I

wanted to start with the core Freirean texts (1996, 2005, 2014) as these works influenced other practitioners and academics I encountered.

'Researcher' status within the University gave me access to research journals for the first time, and I was both thrilled and frustrated at the sudden accessibility of information. However, my initial excitement about the wealth of available books, journals, and databases faded as I reflected on the apparently deliberate concealment of these resources from those outside the academy. Why should a university login (dependent on access to cultural and financial capital) be necessary to unlock this knowledge? This injustice compelled me to question how access to knowledge might be broadened, and how my inquiry could be more inclusive, legitimising others' knowledge.

To build an initial sense of the PAR literature, I first searched the ProQuest[10] Central database. Using the term 'participatory action research' yielded 212,974 results, of which 133,185 were dissertations and theses, 73,109 scholarly journals and the remainder trade journals, books, conference papers and other sources. Publication years ranged from 1979 to 2018, suggesting that PAR is a relatively new field of scholarly enquiry.

I applied the following steps to ensure a manageable and relevant search strategy:

- Narrowed the timeframe of interest to between 2010 and 2018, producing 56,616 records.
- Applied filters to identify only peer-reviewed articles written or translated into English and available as full-text that appeared in scholarly journals, yielding 29,324 results.

[10] The ProQuest database is a source of scholarly journals, newspapers, reports, working papers, and datasets, along with millions of pages of digitised historical primary sources and over 450,000 eBooks.

- Reviewed the ProQuest databases and removed those I judged outside of my research interest from the search criteria, e.g., Ocean Technology, Policy & Non-Living Resources, leaving 24,488 results.
- Added “education” to the original search term, yielding 18,804 results and suggests a growing field (several accounts were grounded in school environments).
- Added the terms ‘drama’ to the existing search/filters, yielding 910 results.

I then conducted another ProQuest search of publications from 1993 to 2017, this time using ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ and ‘participatory action research’ as search terms. This search yielded 17,782 results, of which 17,209 were dissertations or theses and 551 scholarly journals. Submissions peaked at 24 records in 2014, suggesting that the intersection of PAR and TO is relatively new. From here, I narrowed the date range to 2009–2019. To make this second search manageable and relevant, I took the following steps:

- Applied filters to ensure I captured peer-reviewed, English-text articles in scholarly journals.
- Reviewed ProQuest’s databases, excluding those not applicable to my area of inquiry. This left me with 203 results.

A third search included the terms ‘participatory action research’, ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’, ‘education’ and ‘restorative’[11] yielded seven results. Adding the term ‘peace’ to the above filters reduced this to five results:

1. Tuck, 2008.
2. Fisher, 2011.
3. Conrad, 2015.
4. Janzen et al., 2016.

[11] I purposefully excluded the term ‘justice’ as this might have misdirected the search towards criminology/sociology, etc.

5. Kang, 2018.

From these five results, Conrad's (2015) case study of youth participatory research and cultural democracy in action and Tuck's (2009) description of paradoxes involved in PAR appeared most relevant to my area of inquiry.

In 2020, I conducted a fourth search including 'young people' and 'youth' alongside the existing search terms 'participatory action research', 'Theatre of the Oppressed', 'education', 'restorative' and 'peace'. At the outset, I limited the search to full text and peer-reviewed publications available in English. For a final comprehensive scan, I expanded the search timeframe to publications from 2002 to 2020.

To maintain relevance, I broadened the search's source types to include artistic and aesthetic works, audio and video works, blogs, podcasts, websites, newspapers, dissertations and theses, scholarly journals, speeches and presentations.

Within these categories, I included the following document types: research topic, speech/lecture, literature review, dissertation/thesis, conference, conference paper, conference proceeding, case study, blog, book, book chapter, annual report, article, audio/video clip, website/webcasts, transcript and translation. I included the latter since some relevant literature may have originated from non-English speaking writers such as Boal and Freire. Also, as with Boal's translator Adrian Jackson, his connection to the author provided useful additional source material.

Conversely, I excluded the following source types: standards and practice guidelines, trade journals, wire feeds, working papers, reports, encyclopaedias and reference works, evidence-based medical resources, government and official publications, historical newspapers, historical periodicals, and magazines.

This final search yielded three results, two of which had appeared in the previous search:

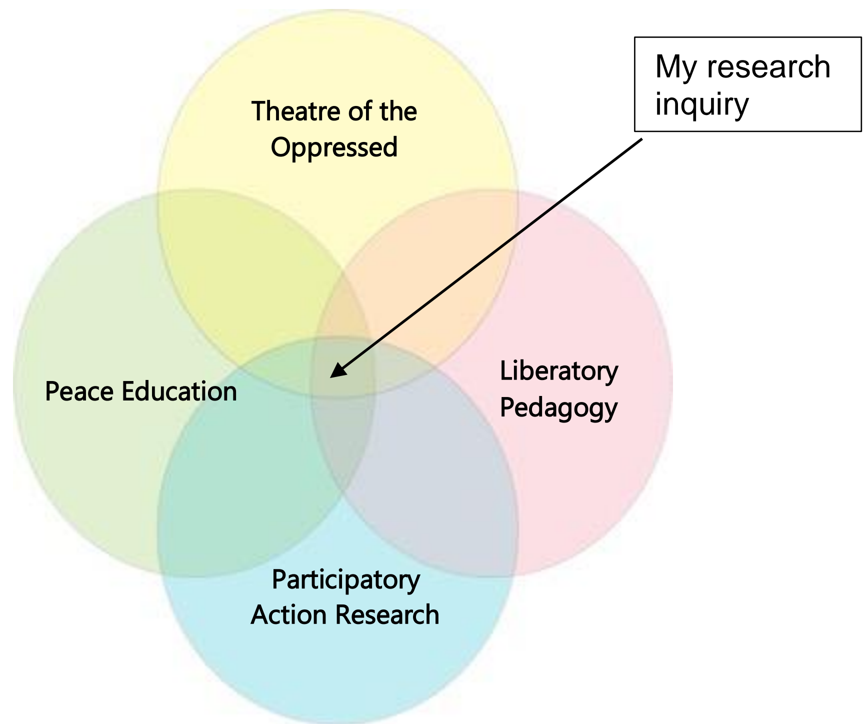
- **2017 search:** Tuck, 2008; Fisher, 2011; Conrad, 2015; Janzen et al, 2016; Kang 2018.
- **2020 search:** McDonald, Antunez and Gottemoeller, 2006/7; Conrad, 2015; Kang 2018.

Beyond online searches, I identified additional key references via relevant articles' bibliographies and while browsing libraries and online resources.

The literature review remained recursive and iterative, with no clear endpoint. For example, my increasing familiarity with PAR processes and practices revealed the need to immerse myself in the literature around children as co-researchers (Call-Cummings, 2018; Call-Cummings and Martinez, 2016; Foster-Fishman et al., 2010; Johnston-Goodstar, 2013; Leitch et al., 2007; Malone and Hartung, 2010; O'Brien and Moules, 2007). Chapter three (Research Methodology) provides a more comprehensive review of the literature on PAR methodology, while chapter four (Research Design) addresses PAR ethics.

My aim in what follows is not to provide an in-depth review of Boal's canon of work or Freire's contribution to educational theory, critique western peace education, or comprehensively assess action-research methodologies. Instead, my expertise emerges from the lived intersection between the TO, Freirean liberatory pedagogy, peace education and PAR approaches. I thus present a disciplined analysis of these fields' intersections, overlaps, and reciprocal feedback loops in the context of a time-bound research project.

Figure 3. **The lived intersection of research inquiry**



Bound within arts-based research practice, this enquiry's research focus and associated knowledge resources emerged from theory *and* practice; therefore, this literature review's theoretical ideas and tools only represent part of the overall inquiry. However, it is an important first step in developing my transformative-emancipatory perspective. Identifying the depth and scope of the existing knowledge base is essential, since I cannot report on unpublished community knowledge. Building relationships within the community of inquiry was critical to developing new knowledge in this study.

My relationship with knowledge, discourse and praxis was constantly evolving due to my professional interconnectedness with the research theme, with each domain informing the other (Savin-Baden et al., 2014). Moreover, the artistic methods, materials, and processes that contributed to my research focus undoubtedly influenced the enquiry's emergent

nature (ibid). Therefore, literature references are identified and referred to throughout the thesis according to the methodology used.

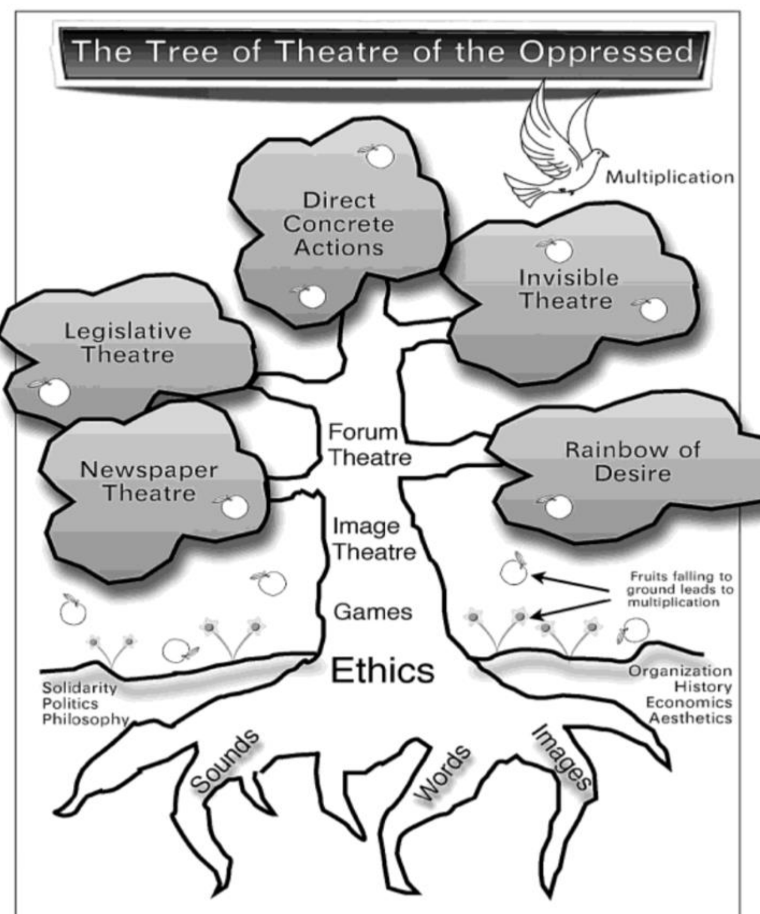
2.3 Definitions

I have chosen to define key terms and phrases at the outset, paving the way for fuller discussions as they arise. This section then moves to explore the conceptual frameworks underpinning these definitions.

2.3.1 Theatre of the Oppressed

The Theatre of the Oppressed is a body of work developed by Augusto Boal that uses theatre as a tool for social change, combining Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Newspaper Theatre, Legislative Theatre, Invisible Theatre, and Rainbow of Desire techniques.

Figure 4. **Tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed**
(Emert and Friedland, 2011 p. 5)



The Theatre of the Oppressed continues to be used worldwide for social and political activism, education, conflict resolution, community building, therapy, and government legislation. It is also practised at a grassroots level by community organisers, activists, and educators.

For Boal, all theatre is necessarily political because all human activities are political, with theatre being just one. The vision set out in his book, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979), comes to life through the idea that the passive audience or spectators are empowered (moved to action) to become '*spect-actors'*, rehearsing strategies and techniques for social change.

2.3.2 Oppression

The notion of oppression is fundamental to Boal's approach to theatre and Freire's pedagogy. However, there is some western discomfort with the words 'oppression' and 'oppressed', and subtle changes to the language as the method transitions across countries and cultures.

> "Oppressed, as a word and as a concept, does not fit well with bourgeois values. We prefer softer, euphemistic language that de-emphasizes the condition of the oppressed."
>
> (Patterson, 2011, p.11)

In the West, this linguistic softening has given rise to Theatre for Living (Diamond, 2007), Theatre for Liberation (Van Erven, 1991), Theatre for Change (Landy and Montgomery, 2012) and Participatory Theatre (Kaptani and Yuval-Davis, 2008).

However, both Freire and Boal used the word 'oppression', holding that the 'oppressive' situation must be seen and named for to enable dialogue and transformation. Freire did not offer a precise definition but *examined* oppression, oppressors and the oppressed. Similarly, Boal insisted on

naming the oppressive *situation* but did not define oppression per se (Patterson, 2011).

However, Boal expanded his concept of oppression during his self-exile in Paris – during which he developed the theatre therapy techniques resulting in the Rainbow of Desire (1995) – to include “intimate, familial and societal norms and expectations (as exercised by lovers, parents, siblings, peers, teachers, bosses, spiritual leaders) that obstruct one’s will and foster passivity” (Burleson, 2003 p. 25).

I, too, was wary of using the term *oppression* in my school-based practice, substituting it with *harshness, force, injustice*, or *control*. Indeed, I looked to develop a physical vocabulary of oppression amongst primary-school-aged children as part of this research project. Beginning with an exploration of *values* (what is important to us/ what helps us live as our best selves) and what it would be like if our values were compromised, I hypothesised that by identifying a value (e.g. having fun), children-as-researchers could explore its opposite (e.g. being bored) and so identify an oppression. In this research project’s context, the notion of oppression thus came to be known as a ‘counter-value’. Boal and Freire’s unbounded use of ‘oppression’ gave me the confidence to leave its meaning similarly unrestricted in my work.

2.3.3 Image Theatre

Also known as still images, freeze frames or tableaux, Image Theatre is commonly used as a preparatory technique for other Theatre of the Oppressed work across dramatic forms. Crucially, the images are performed without language, depicting people’s lives, feelings, experiences, oppressions and, in this research project’s case, values and counter-values. Based on a suggested title or theme, performers use their bodies to depict or sculpt an image, sometimes enlivened through movement and sound. Performers are encouraged to physically respond to one image with another, building a responsive set of related pictures.

In this way, Image Theatre is never static but the creative evolution of a group's shared language.

In Image Theatre, each image is fully witnessed and honoured; people are discouraged from naming what they see or feel in response too quickly. Words and labels applied too soon lead to rigid, inflexible thinking, limiting future responses and exploration. However, multiple meanings and interpretations are invited once the image has been allowed sufficient time to permeate people's consciousness.

The democratic, inclusive nature of Image Theatre's performance images helps transcend language and cultural barriers, allowing communication through physical expression. In this enquiry, images provided a level playing field for children whose first language was not English, removing any disadvantages compared to more articulate, verbal, or confident native speakers.

Theatre-of-the-Oppressed approaches consider the 'monologue' as a form of oppression, forcing one person to stop speaking. The aim, then, is to enter 'dialogue': the joint act of speaking and listening, whether verbal or physical (Davies, 2003). To enter aesthetic dialogue, e.g. via images, is to enter into anti-oppressive practice. To (re)establish dialogue is to experience humanisation (Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, 1993), bringing about "new and previously hidden meanings and understandings" (Davies, 2003 p. 216). Recognition and naming of oppression and the emergence of new understandings help us unlearn oppression (Berlia, 2015), beginning the process of humanisation.

2.3.4 Practice-based and arts-related research

There are typological differences between an artistic process and arts-related or practice-based research. In research, the artistic *process* is "something that blends the relationship with the medium with emotion and pursuit of quality" (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014 p. 4), often requiring the artist to express their views about life through their work.

In contrast, I took a *practice-based* research approach, using art (theatre) to facilitate learning through investigation. Therefore, in this research project, the term ‘practice-based research’ represents the:

> “most appropriate term to capture the dynamics of a powerful and distinctive research strategy which meets the needs of both the artist/researcher and the expectations of the research industry.”
>
> (Haseman and Mafe, 2009 p. 213)

In chapters five and six, I describe transitioning from using theatre to teach inquiry and enable exploration-based learning (an arts-*inquiring* pedagogy) to using theatre to engage a community of co-researchers (an arts-*engaged* pedagogy), generating new forms of representation (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014).

2.3.5 Peace

The concept of peace is personal, contentious, often abstract and difficult to describe. I thus follow Cremin and Bevington’s (2017) lead, attempting to make “peace practicable without compromising or commodifying its essence” (p. 8).

I start with the notion that peace is a process: a journey towards something, not a destination. Peace has hope at its core. The peace process may often be circuitous, complex, and tortuous even, but most of us can conceive of, dream of or hope for a peace that makes personal sense.

Some cultures emphasise the idea of *internal* peace, i.e., peace experienced *inside* us. Understood as a state of being, this might involve offering ourselves compassionate kindness in our thoughts. For others, peace is understood as a state between people or countries, i.e., a peace *outside* of us. Outer peace concerns the external world and our relation

to it, including the natural environment, organisational cultures, international relations, communities, and families.

In this research inquiry, peace is understood as an ontological concept shaped by the personal interpretations of reality, human nature, human relationships and life's purpose that make up my worldview (Danesh, 2006). I am concerned with the interconnectedness of our inner and outer peace and the peace *between* us, i.e., how we relate to ourselves and each other.

Peace can also be interpreted in relation to violence: "just as a doctor in medical school learns to minister to the sick, students in peace education classes learn how to solve problems caused by violence" (Harris and Morrison, 2013 p. 12). Under this conception, peace is defined by the absence of its opposite: violence. It follows that to define or express peace, we must understand violence (Lentz, 1955, Borrelli, 1979).

I propose defining peace differently: as a proactive, intentional, collaborative and value-centred attention to justice (Reardon and Snauwaert, 2015). While I recognise that the *absence* of violence and conflict is integral to human welfare, I think there are other, more local ways of defining peace.

Galtung's (1969) conceptualisation of positive and negative peace is particularly useful. In this, negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence, e.g., a ceasefire during a war. Such an example is classified as 'negative' peace because something undesirable has *stopped* happening.

Galtung goes on to examine the difference between the direct and indirect violence that makes up negative peace. Using schools as an example, direct violence such as bullying/fighting is often visible and easy to spot. However, subtler, more *indirect* forms of violence also occur. Examples include the differential treatment of particular cultures, gender-

specific assumptions and approaches in sport, or the perpetuation of colonial attitudes through outdated curriculums (Cremin and Bevington, 2017). Such systematic impairment of individuals or groups' progress represents structural violence. Mechanisms that reproduce inequalities in schools include exclusionary practices and inadequate infrastructure, such as old or unhygienic toilets or using cabins as classrooms.

Positive peace describes the combined absence of both *direct* and *indirect* violence - both cultural and structural - and the presence of harmony and social justice. In schools, positive peace is an active, dynamic process that focuses on building relationships and creating just social systems that serve the school community's needs (Bevington and Gregory, 2019). Positive peace activities such as circles are used to promote "pro-social attitudes and behaviours to build a culture of care" (Cremin and Bevington, 2017 p. 5).

2.3.6 Peace education

Like peace, peace education is an elusive concept and is often grounded in a progressive and pragmatic philosophy of experiential and democratic education (Dewey, 1916, Freire, 1996 [1970], Montessori, 1949, 2005 [1914], Page, 2008). UNICEF has defined peace education as the:

> "process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level."
>
> (Fountain, 1999)

Based on my lived experience as a peace educator, I understand peaceful means and methods to include group work in circles, dyads and triads, problem-solving, affirmation, appreciative inquiry, drama, and

games. Through these, we build relationships, learn to dialogue with each other and explore how to foster meaningful and constructive alternatives to violence.

My conception of peace education embraces positive peace as a counter to oppressive pedagogies and addresses the violence limiting human flourishing (Bajaj, 2008b, Galtung, 2008, Galtung, 1969). As such, peace education is a means to surface conflict safely and constructively, providing an opportunity to learn (Parker, 2016). I believe we can *teach* peace because humans intrinsically know and understand how to be peaceful. As a peace educator, I believe I can impart knowledge, teach skills, and help foster attitudes of peace; as a learner, I believe I can be taught by others, particularly young people, about their experiences and conceptions of peace. This hopeful peace education contends that the future is never preordained unless we relinquish our agency: we may be conditioned, but we are not determined.

Like most education, peace education is political in that it is values-orientated and can be value-explicit[12]. Later in this chapter (see 2.4.1), I will highlight OFSTED's promotion of values such as meritocracy and neoliberalism in education through its requirement that schools teach "fundamental British values" (Nash, 2014). I, too, promote a set of values and attitudes. The peace education I practice is participatory and dialogical, with a libertarian pedagogy at its core.

2.3.7 Restorative approaches and practices in education

Restorative practice (RP) has its roots in the UK's criminal justice system. However, I aim to move away from descriptions of RP rooted in pre-existing harm/violence towards a narrative that recognises the healing power of transformation and redress and embraces a broader ambition towards fair and just relations.

[12] The Peace Education Network in the UK defines the following attitudes and values that underpin peace education: respect; empathy, belief in positive change by individuals and groups of people; appreciation of and respect for diversity; self-esteem; a commitment to nonviolence, equity and social justice; a concern for the environment and understanding of our place in the eco-system, and a commitment to equality.

Simply put, a restorative approach is an alternative framework for thinking about wrongdoing (Zehr, 2003). The term ‘restorative’ encompasses a variety of programs and practices. However, “at its core it is a set of principles, a philosophy, an alternate set of “guiding questions.” (p. 3). Typically, these questions are:

1. What happened?
2. What were/are you thinking?
3. What were/are you feeling?
4. Who else has been affected?
5. What needs to happen now to put things right?

Restorative practices can range from formal to informal processes, including developing emotional literacy, expressing affective statements that communicate emotions, asking affective questions in a non-judgemental way, facilitating peace-making circles, and conducting program planning (Umbreit et al., 2005). Beyond its programmatic function, a restorative approach is “a philosophy, in action, that places the relationship at the heart of the educational experience” (Corrigan, 2012). Restorative practices are ways of *doing*, making a restorative approach a way of *being* in the world.

I will later (in section 2.4.4) detail how I came to conceptualise restorative practices as dynamic, peace-building processes promoting hope and enabling connection with self and others, expanding RP’s exclusive focus on negative peace. Re-positioning RP as a positive peace-building practice recognises its proactive potential to address structural and cultural violence and promote social justice and learning.

2.3.8 Data

I decided early on to limit the use of the word ‘data’, a term I find problematic when working with human beings. The noun data[13]

[13] I do refer to ‘data’ when discussing information storage and use as part of my ethical considerations in chapter four (Research Design).

commonly refers to facts, figures, statistics, and specifics. However, in the context of *social* science – where subjects can talk, think and interact with their environment and with me – I consciously chose to use the terms *material, information,* and/or *insight*(s) when describing responses.

Encountering words such as *data, protocol, respondent, fieldwork, field,* and *gatekeeper* in my researcher training brought up questions for me regarding their use outside a research setting. How would co-researchers feel if their school – and the time we spent together – were described to the academic community as a *field*? How would Kaliesha[14] feel about being abstracted to a *respondent*? While appreciating alternatives such as *field texts* (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) that avoid perpetuating the notion that data exists in and for itself, I chose not to use this term. Instead, I reclaimed and re-humanised some existing research language, consciously re-labelled interview protocols as *guides,* for example, and interview respondents as *participants*.

2.3.9 Participants and co-researchers

Working firmly within a qualitative, participatory paradigm, I chose to engage those involved in democratic dialogue as co-researchers and co-subjects (Heron and Reason, 1997) to find creative ways to research, develop and document collective meaning. As such, I refer to the children who voluntarily took part in the research project as co-researchers and the adults as participants.

As well as in this account, I actively used the term co-researcher in the school during the project phase. I hoped thereby to distinguish the co-researcher's role from a passive object (i.e., known by others and acted upon) to a 'Subject' who knows and can act (Freire, 1996 [1970]). This was a conscious repositioning of the role of the lone, expert, academic researcher as data collector towards a shared role in which all participants actively co-produced knowledge. I explicitly aimed to

[14] Kaleisha is the Pastoral Manager at the school and accompanied me and the co-researchers in our eight-week inquiry.

privilege the children-as-co-researchers and positioned them as active agents in the process as they came to co-construct the research agenda (Mauthner, 1997). This aimed to redress the academic research that mutes young people's voices "through being tested, surveyed, observed and interviewed" (Leitch et al., 2007 p. 460).

By recognising research as a dialogical practice, I thus challenge the paternalistic view that children lack the knowledge or insight needed for research or that research must be 'fun' to engage them (Christensen, 2010). I consider children capable and proficient in determining their lives and informing and transforming decisions that affect them (Fox, 2013, Lansdown, 1995). I assert that all people involved in research, regardless of age, have the right to be taken seriously and treated as sincere and authentic partners. Moreover, as a joint venture, I am aware that this inquiry required hard work and considerable time investments of us all. As such, we should experience shared ownership and acclaim. As co-researcher Anthony[15] candidly replied when asked why it is important children's voices are heard in research:

> "So, we can get our share of the credit of the research project"
>
> Co-researcher Anthony, 2017

2.3.10 Decolonising methodologies

I am attentive to Tuck and Yang's (2012) description of decolonisation in research as unsettling since it recentres whiteness. I want to state that my use of the term is:

a) political and highlights the wrongs of colonial domination
b) included to purposefully evokes a Eurocentric counter-narrative (itself a form of epistemic deviance (Mignolo, 2009)) by acknowledging the contributions of colonised populations across the globe

[15] This is a pseudonym.

c) used as an ethical marker in relation to social justice for people oppressed during forms of coloniality (Zembylas, 2018) and beyond.

In explicitly acknowledging decolonisation as indigenous sovereignty, the return of stolen resources and by continuing to name the contributions of Indigenous researchers and thinkers, I hope to avoid an easy (settler) adoption of decolonisation as a metaphor for other things that might improve life and research (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

I have attempted to recognise my colonised and uncritical mind (Chilisa, 2012) and the limitations of Western research paradigms. This study is guided by relational accountability that aims to promote respectful representation and reciprocity (Held, 2019). As this inquiry advocated for social justice, rights, and democracy in education, it allowed me to include alternative knowledge systems and stories, deconstruct the power relations underpinning the production of knowledge and envision other ways of doing research (Cram and Mertens, 2016). With an explicit emphasis on a transformative paradigm and methodologies, I hope to legitimise other knowledge production processes that accommodate the shared knowledge and insights of those suffering the oppressive structures of traditional research and education (Chilisa, 2012 p. 39). I am, however, aware that my pursuit of transformative agency (see section 6.7.9) assumes an all-knowing liberator perspective, positioned to emancipate the oppressed through consciousness-raising pedagogies and civilising peace-making activities.

I respectfully acknowledge the indigenous and feminist methodologies and knowledge systems that influenced this study (PAR, Theatre of the Oppressed, storytelling and circle work, among others). As bricoleur[16], I

[16] Levi-Strauss first used the term bricoleur in *The Savage Mind* (1962). There is no precise equivalent in English but roughly translates a 'Jack of all trades', someone adept at performing many diverse tasks. I have followed Kincheloe (2001) and chosen to interpret the noun as gender-neutral.

have combined what is useful from different schools of thought and integrated relevant knowledge systems. Doing so has involved strategic borrowing of the less dominant Euro-Western knowledge bases (e.g., action research) alongside selected indigenous and feminist research methodologies (e.g., circles). I recognise the resulting overlap. Although emboldened by Wilson's (2008) advice that research methods may be borrowed from other paradigms (as long as they fit the "ontology, epistemology, and axiology of the Indigenous paradigm" (Wilson, 2008 p. 12)), I am conscious that this self-positioning adds to the "gnawing sense of mayhem" (Smith et al., 2016 p. 132) within academia as I try to consolidate indigenous knowledges for my white settler-self.

I have not engaged in a comprehensive critique of Euro-Western research systems, paradigms and methodologies with their mainstream Anglo-European epistemologies and exclusive, androcentric, universalistic approaches to knowledge (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001). Nor am I fluent in critical race theory or postcolonial discourse, accepting that postcolonialism is a "useful invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to redefine the world" for some (Smith, 1999 p. 14). My modest critique of Euro-western research norms (e.g. frame-working, research questions, literature, data collection, and analysis) evidences a tension between the interest and knowing of the West and that of the 'Other' (Smith, 1999 p. 2). Within the Peace PAR project, the knowers (me, the co-researchers, and the adult participants) were evidence sources and truth verifiers. We drew on the cultural knowledge systems of heritage, youth, schooling, relationships, conflict, and peace. Where explicitly permitted, I have named the 'Other' in this enquiry, showing their faces, telling their stories and sharing their insights. However, I have protected identities and safeguarded information where permission has not been given.

I acknowledge my power as a researcher to organise, label and describe material that is not mine (Vidich and Lyman, 1994). As such, I am aware of my responsibility in ascribing and authorising ways of knowing to the academy, recognising that this knowledge will potentially inform other literature and research activities. I recognise that pursuing a doctorate affords me an elite status in terms of my professional class, the privileges afforded to my race, and as a member of an elite international institution in a dominant nation (Addelson, 1992).

2.4 Conceptual umbrellas: education, peace education (restorative approaches), and drama-led peace education

Having defined the meaning I attribute to this study's key terms (oppression, Image Theatre, peace, peace education, restorative approaches and practices, and other research terminology), I now describe the conceptual umbrellas under which they sit. This description includes a non-exhaustive but relevant overview of the critical literature and concepts relating to education, peace education (including restorative approaches), Theatre of the Oppressed and Participatory Action Research.

2.4.1 Education: my lived experience

Education is a political activity; it involves a minority (usually in a position of power) determining decision-making processes and outcomes affecting the majority. Schools are sites where struggles for meaning, freedom and liberation take place. I do not consider these political struggles disruptive or unsettling but choose to engage with them critically; to do so is to move towards education that is inquisitive, empowered and able to challenge the status quo and move away from an education based on tradition, acceptance and complacency. Therefore, throughout this thesis, I document my observations and experiences of politics in my interactions with schools generally and in the school where the research took place specifically. I emphasise that all education is political, whether students or teachers acknowledge it or not.

This section outlines how educational politics are discernible at a macro, governmental level, within curricula and within the relationships and discourse of day-to-day school life. I critique a philosophy of education based on the external targets that children (and their teachers) must meet to demonstrate learning progression (Rasmussen et al., 2015). I argue that this performativity agenda limits more holistic approaches to teaching and learning that can better respond to significant social, emotional, political, moral, and spiritual life experiences.

Furthermore, anxiety around the perceived threat of extremism has permeated education's social, emotional, and creative domains. I explore how the educational curriculum enacts this ideology of anxiety – pertinent to this study since teachers often position peace education within the citizenship, PSHE[17] or SMSC[18] curricula. To offer an expanded vision of peace education in schools, I must be clear where it might sit, its potential and its limitations. I finish by exploring the potential for an 'aesthetic' peace education (Page, 2004, 2008), one that that integrates body, mind, heart and spirit (Cremin, 2015).

As part of continuing post-war modernism, today's western education system reflects a society that promotes a global knowledge economy, technology, economic productivity and is more risk-averse (Lees, 2007, Rasmussen et al, 2015). The result is an education system premised on the assumption that the world is an ordered, rational place that can be measured and tracked.

The belief that science is the foundational basis of all true knowledge assumes that scientific methods, techniques, and procedures offer the best framework for investigating and establishing our social world's truth

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[17] Physical, Social, Health and Economic education. PSHE is a non-statutory subject.

[18] Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education. All schools in England must show how well their pupils develop in SMSC.

and objective reality. As science strives for a consensus, we see the rise of standardisation. This standardisation culture runs through the curriculum (both seen and unseen) and informs how schools consider and promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual, and cultural (SMSC) development.

Specific to England is the mandated, statutory expectation that schools will facilitate pupils' spiritual, social, moral, and cultural development, thereby promoting fundamental British values. The 2021 School Inspection Handbook outlined how schools will be held accountable for the social development of future citizens by:

> "developing and deepening pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance."

(Office for Standards in Education, 2021)

Through SMSC, schools are promoting a sense of individualism and nationhood. For example, the School Inspection Handbook judges a school's ability to promote:

> "acceptance of and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. They will develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain."

(Office for Standards in Education, 2021)

In a culture of accountability, this guidance spotlights and cements specific values. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) appears to assume that society (i.e., the nation and state) is the modern world's natural social and political form, leaving little room for alternative

narratives. This assumption presents a dilemma for educators, as the concept of ‘Britishness’ becomes a grand ideological narrative, effectively hegemonising smaller narratives. Values-education becomes regulated rather than democratically explored or critiqued. The mandate to promote British values is embodied in classroom-wall displays up and down the country; however, there is seemingly little critical investigation or agreement on what makes up the values of democracy, liberty, respect, tolerance, and the rule of law.

The fear of leaving no child behind and standards-based educational reform has resulted in a universal educational experience seeking absolute and generalisable answers and conformity. School cultures are created in which “consistency and accountability (are) emphasised over creativity and autonomy” (Lees, 2007 p. 54). Standardised testing is a way of exercising and achieving a position of governance over others, which can be seen in the grading, measuring, and tracking of both students and teachers. When I comment on a child’s ability to communicate as a peer mediator, the teacher might reply that ‘they’re a 2’ or ‘they’re working at expected level’, reducing the child to a level or a grade. There seems to be little scope to commend the student on her social or personal qualities outside of English Reading, Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) and Maths. The ‘what’ (the grade) is prioritised over the ‘who’ (the person), and an absence of humanity and relationality only serves to privilege normative identities (Llewellyn and Parker, 2018).

This resurgent positivism in education does not consider that schools experience dynamic and constant change (Cremin, 2015). A negation of the complexity and diversity of schools precludes how each school might interact and interrelate with its surrounding communities. Furthermore, this educational orthodoxy denies the possibility that individual and group construction of reality is based on interactions within this social context. Moreover, indigenous, and local knowledge is not valued.

Politics is embedded in the discourse of schools: the ways students and teachers talk to each other in the classroom; the ways teachers and other staff talk to each other in the staffroom; where people take their breaks and with whom; the type of questions asked at staff meetings, and the type of answers expected. It is also evident in the silences.

For example, my entrance into a staffroom can silence discussions. Here, silence is exercised as a political choice and can result from an awkward question I may have previously asked that prompted someone to reflect more deeply. Moreover, the awkward questions I ask are political, influencing how people think about the world and act in it. A room going quiet when I enter could be a way of subconsciously internalising the oppression I represent or actively resisting me and any views I hold that challenge the occupant's worldview (Giroux, 1985).

Curricula's direction and the subjects chosen and *not* chosen are also political. A Department for Education report (2014) on the effectiveness of pre-school, primary and secondary education asserts that primary schools significantly influence students' long-term academic outcomes at secondary school. Likewise, the direction of the curriculum at secondary school affects how primaries operate. As secondary schools move toward the more 'academic' subjects privileged by the English Baccalaureate (EBacc[19]) and shift away from arts-based subjects, primary schools respond accordingly.

The pressure to prepare primary students for secondary school was lived out by the Deputy head teacher at Fosseway school, Jo Pindar[20], who described an increasingly "pen and paper-driven curriculum". Jo was keen to support the Peace PAR project as a medium for creativity and expression and as:

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[19] The EBacc is a set of subjects at the GCSE level that include English language and literature, maths, the sciences, geography or history and a language. The EBacc is a performance measure for schools, not a qualification for pupils.
[20] This is a pseudonym.

> "a change from SATs practice and… um, English and Maths and more English and Maths".
>
> Deputy headteacher, 2018

The class teacher reported feeling similar constraints:

> "It's so pressured trying to fit it all into the week. The focus is all on English and Maths (…) You're reported on for SATs things, GCSEs, and things so they're the biggies. I think a lot of, it's a problem with this system at the moment is every… all our time is… and all our pressures are on that, which is a shame. A real shame".
>
> Class teacher, 2018

In short, the primary curriculum's demands make it difficult for teachers to fit in anything beyond numeracy and literacy. There may be, at best, a weekly citizenship, PSHE or SMSC session. More often, citizenship is given a token 'nod' via laminated classroom displays proclaiming fundamental British values. This experience is not limited to England; in Europe, civic education is reportedly a matter of knowledge transmission, with critical thinking and political engagement likely to receive less attention (Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

Within this context of an expanding, dominant positivist education paradigm, I reflected on the possibility of offering a more democratic, humanistic, and creative peace education experience. Through first-person inquiry, a methodical review of the literature and – later – practice, I extended and developed my knowledge of peace education and theatre to embrace a more aesthetic, participatory, and equal peace education.

However, Bickmore's (2001) appraisal of a democratic education program's capacity to exist within the context of a school timetable (e.g. peer mediation) made for salutary reading. Citing centralised curricula

and a culture of "high stakes standardised achievement testing" (p. 158), Bickmore criticises the potential and opportunity for guided critical thinking and problem solving afforded to pupils through a peer mediation experience outside a universal education offer.

Despite this warning, I was curious whether a personalised, drama-led peace education experience nested within an alternative education system *was* possible. Was there a case to be made for a drama-led peace education that adds criticality – and therefore balance – to assimilationist conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education? How might I challenge the concept of a universal offer by designing something that was by nature self-aware and critical, and so naturally more "inclusive, respectful and collaborative, flexible and 'reflexive'" (Lees, 2007 p. 50).

The notion of criticality within peace education is a complex one. Constantly critiquing the current order of things, highlighting limitations of present circumstances, has not led to revolution. Indeed, the struggle to become conscious can sometimes lead back to subjugation (I explore my own experience of this in chapter six). At this early stage, I resolved to stay committed to hope, love and care within peace education and not fall prey to the negativity of critique.

Nor did I want to abandon existing approaches to peace education and re-invent the wheel (Attia and Edge, 2017). To this end, I approached this study with a genuine and gentle curiosity about how best to explore the values, skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to help people in schools cooperate more harmoniously.

I acknowledge the pedagogical spectrum this approach sits on, with an individualistic and assimilationist emphasis at one end (rote learning and standardised testing) and a socially constructed and liberatory one at the other end (participatory, embodied and aesthetic). My claim is simple: if

education can be an instrument of oppression, it can also be a tool for liberation.

Buoyed by Frere’s assertion that hope is an ontological need requiring anchoring in practice (Freire, 2014), I committed to a methodology that complemented and reflected Freirean epistemological assumptions and was grounded in participation. This performance of praxis (Fox, 2013) demanded complementary methods to embody the underlying philosophy. By making an early commitment to participatory action research, I moved beyond a desire simply to understand the world to aspire to change it. Crucially, this change was concomitant with being in dialogue with others, particularly children, as they came to know, experience, and transform peace and conflict.

2.4.2 Peace education

I briefly explore a variety of conceptions of peace education before moving to an assessment based on positive peace. The Cambridge dictionary (2022) defines peace as ‘freedom from war and violence’. This western conception of peace as the absence of war has its roots in Pax Romana – the Roman Empire’s roughly 200-year-long period of relative peace, order and sustained imperialism. In the west, the narrative around (negative) peace as the absence of conflict has existed for over 1500 years and informed peace education.

Harris (2004) outlines five main categories within the peace-education ‘family’: international/global, development, human rights, environmental and conflict-resolution. Though they seek to explain different forms of violence and provide information about alternatives to violence, they differ in terms of content and context.

International or global education often construes peace as a peace treaty, a ceasefire, or a balance of power. In contrast, development education describes intercultural peace as an amicable equilibrium between people living together from different ethnic and religious

communities. Similarly, human rights education focuses on harmonious living, peaceful interfaith dialogue, multicultural communication, and respecting diversity, highlighting how a peaceful civic society depends upon full employment, affordable housing, access to health care, educational opportunities and an end to economic and political oppression. However, environmental peace educators explore human relationships with one another as part of their relationship with their environment, raising environmental awareness and championing sustainable and peaceful ways of living. Finally, conflict resolution education concerns interpersonal conflict, raising awareness of the positive interpersonal communication skills that can resolve differences (Harris, 2004 p. 6).

Irrespective of which member of the peace education family is in focus, Harris compares peace-education implementation to that of a medical doctor. Just as a doctor learns about the body and how to tend to the sick, peace educators teach people how to solve problems caused by conflict and violence:

> "Social violence and warfare can be described as a form of pathology, a disease. Peace education tries to inoculate students against the evil effects of violence by teaching students' skills to manage conflicts non-violently and by creating a desire to seek peaceful resolutions of conflict".
>
> (Harris, 2009 p. 78)

In a rather assimilationist manner, Harris advises educators to deposit their peace-knowledge into children's waiting minds. Harris focuses on the individual responsible for change and pays little attention to the oppressive structures potentially responsible for the conflict, e.g., family, education and politics.

Salomon (2002) describes conflict resolution, mediation, democratic education, civil education, and multicultural education, among others, as

close relatives of peace education. Salomon condenses peace education's key elements to:

- Changing mindsets
- Cultivating skills
- Promoting human rights
- Environmentalism, disarmament, and the promotion of a culture of peace

(Salomon, 2002 p. 4)

Hakvoort (2010) lists various program descriptions, including values education, violence-prevention programs, conflict-resolution programmes, anti-bullying programs, citizenship education, peace education and social and emotional learning. Although programs may differ in terms of focus and theoretical foundations, Hakvoort confirms that:

> "most programs aim to combine intellectual frameworks with practice, giving students their opportunity to test their newly learnt knowledge and skills in simulated conflict environments."

(Hakvoort, 2010 p. 159)

Danesh's (2006) integrative theory of peace education (ITP) draws on the experience of over 100 schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 2000, these schools have implemented the principles of ITP within an education-for-peace curriculum. The ITP describes four prerequisite conditions for and components of peace education indistinguishable from each other and self-generating:

1. Peace education can only take place in the context of a unity-based worldview.
2. Peace education can best take place in the context of a culture of peace.

3. Peace education best takes place within the context of a culture of healing.
4. Peace education is most effective when it constitutes the framework for all educational activities.

(Danesh, 2006)

Here, peace is a requirement for successful peace education *and* for the condition of peace (Danesh, 2006, p. 56).

I accept the diversity of political, theoretical, and methodological peace conceptions held by academics and practitioners. I also accept concepts that help unify those in the field, primarily that the process of education imparts a sense of possibility and optimism in pupils alongside certain social 'goods', such as the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for peace and social justice. Once equipped with this knowledge and relevant experience, pupils can be empowered within their communities as agents of peace, promoting local, national and international peace (Bajaj, 2008b p. 2). This form of consequentialism maintains that an action's morality can be evaluated by its consequences. Implicit in this view is that reforming society through education has an implied benefit. The consequentialist ethics associated with peace education are "implicitly the ethics of modern mass society, emphasizing the well-being of the greatest number of people" (Page, 2004 p. 6). However, Page warns against a blind acceptance of peace educations benefits, arguing that faith, independent of reason, does not provide a necessary educational rationale to educate for peace (Page, 2004).

Kester, Archer and Bryant (2019) highlight the prominence of rational psychosocial peace education, with the majority of literature focusing on the rational mental structuring of curricula and pedagogy to achieve pro-social behaviours (Fountain, 1999, Johnson and Johnson, 2005). Within a rational psychosocial framework, peace education is conceived as an intervention within an ordered and nonviolent society. Therefore, the

individual mind is the site of aggression and conflict is addressed and corrected through educational interventions (Kester et al., 2019). This notion is to the detriment of the emotional and embodied dimensions of peace education which acknowledge ontological, material, and embodied realities in conversation with each other (Kester et al., 2019 p. 275).

To place peace education within the participatory/relational and transformational paradigms, I must accept that the individual mind is not the only site for interpreting reality (Kester, 2018). Instead, we construct multiple realities within relationships, and must accept that peace can be seen, experienced, and felt from these multiple perspectives.

In line with Shapiro (2002), I extend my understanding and experience of a peace pedagogy to include the need to "address not simply how we think and cognitively know the world but the extent to which we develop our capacity for feeling, empathy, and emotional connection to ourselves and to others" (p. 144). Pedagogically, this peace education is "process-oriented, inquiry-based, reflective, experiential, dialogical/conversational, value-based, imaginative, critical, liberating, and empowering" (Snauwaert, 2011 p. 329).

One critical element of peace education is the practice of positive thinking and self-empowerment supported by affirmation activities (Seligman et al., 2009), which could be considered misguided and shallow (Suissa, 2008). A happiness agenda might also exclude people as the guiding philosophy and associated methods "exclusively promotes a particular personality type: a cheerful, outgoing, goal-driven, status-seeking extrovert" (Kristjansson, 2012 p.88). Indeed, I find it challenging to make space for introverts and ambiverts in my own practice. The loud and the brave are often favoured in group work since their voices are heard more. Making space for quiet, for silence even, in a classroom requires vigilance and discipline.

Jackson (1995) declares happiness to be the end goal of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Crucially, however, Jackson does not mean "happiness as a static condition, a laid-back nirvana" (pp. xxiv), but as a "busyness, as an aliveness, a full capacity, a firing on all cylinders" (ibid). For me, this is when peace education flourishes and what inspired me to research. For me, peace is not a static state or goal to arrive at; on the contrary, the 'peace' I engender in the classroom is often noisy, chaotic, and fun. People relish a sense of engagement in the activity of building, maintaining, or repairing peace. In a creative peace-making, there can be a sense of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) when experiencing a concentrated state of absorption in learning activities.

In describing the Rainbow of Desire work, Jackson describes the sense of purpose people feel after seeing their oppressions brought to life by dynamic theatre: "when it's working, people often seem to leave the workshops with a sense of clarity and a sense of determinism to sort things out" (Jackson, 1995 p.xxiv). This dynamic sense of sorting, surfacing and messily learning moved me to locate restorative approaches in education as peace work. Instead of seeing peace as reliant on conflict, I believe that living with and being present with conflict can bring about peace. Moving beyond a clumsy connection between peace and conflict resolution, this conceives of an energetic and transformative peace education embracing the ethics of aesthetics, relationships, and diverse sources of knowledge.

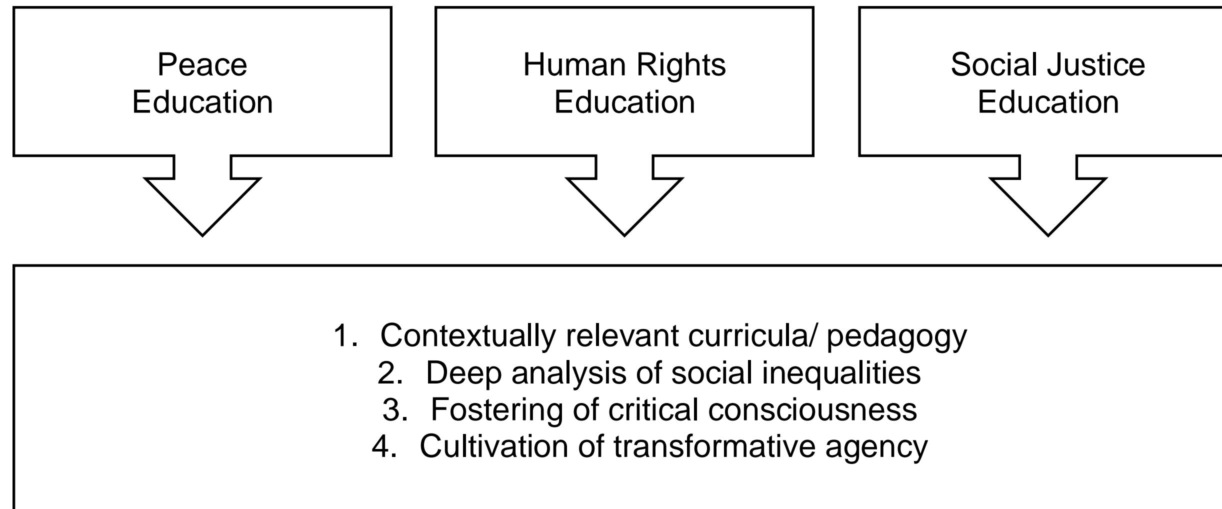
In reviewing the literature and ascertaining what does and does not fit with my conceptualisation of peace, I settled on a local, relational notion of peace: not simply the absence of violence, but the presence of positive relationships, justice, mutual respect, creativity, and participation. Thus, peace is a form of liberatory education.

2.4.3 Liberatory education

A liberatory education aims to raise the learner's critical consciousness and equip them with the skills, knowledge, and connections to advocate

for positive social change (Freire, 1996). Though important, a comprehensive characterisation of liberatory education is beyond the scope of this study's broad and intersecting topics. However, certain precepts identified by Bajaj (2018) are worth noting here (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. **Common tenets of liberatory education** (Bajaj, 2018)

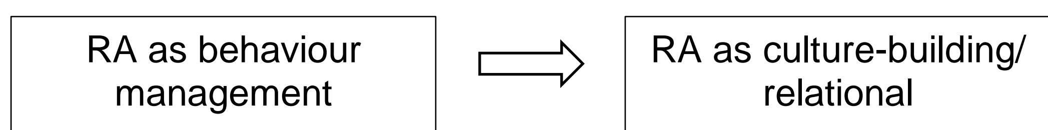


Central to a liberatory form of education are critical inquiry, engagement, relational practices, contextual endeavours (Bajaj 2018), emancipation and resistance (Jeffrey, 2012, Fox, 2013), and agency (Bajaj, 2018). Students come to question power and, in turn, challenge educational content and presentation. When students study their place in an unequal world alongside others, the resultant consciousness can be transformative, leading to personal and social change. A liberatory education uses interdisciplinary conceptual frameworks to examine how multiple forms of oppression intersect structurally, politically, and representationally (Adams and Bell, 2016). Some liberatory education is situation and content-specific (power, race, history) and tailored for specific populations (Bajaj, 2018). However, there are complexities: mainstream liberal conceptions of social justice might claim such identity categories as social constructs and remnants of biases, attempting to undermine their significance. Crenshaw (2016) argues that demarcating difference can be an important "source of political empowerment and social reconstruction" (p.1).

2.4.4 Restorative approaches as peace-building

Restorative approaches (RA) in education are gaining significant ground in the UK. In the *Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education* (2016), Evans and Vaandering describe how schools initially engaged with restorative approaches to reduce incidences, suspensions and exclusions. They report that, over time, other changes became apparent in schools' social 'ecosystem', such as an improvement in the quality of relationships. The authors chart how schools moved away from applying restorative justice as a behaviour management tool toward RA as a vehicle to nurture healthy school climates (pp. 21-22).

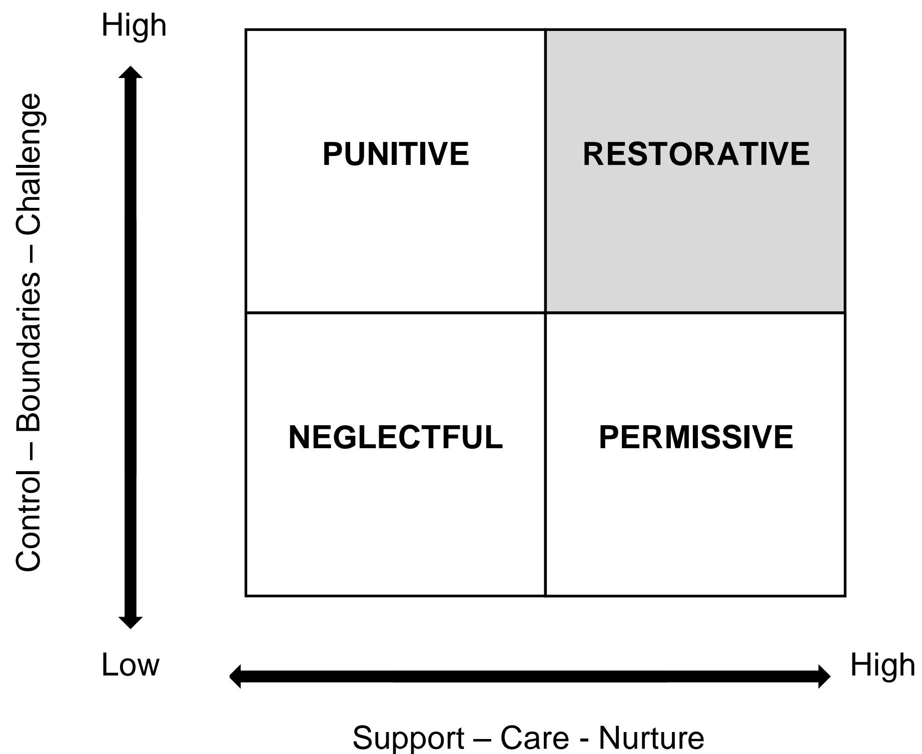
Figure 6. **Shifts in the understanding and development of RA in schools**



I, too, hear people in schools adopting RA describe concomitant relational and environmental changes, reporting calmer, healthier, and more peaceful school people and places.

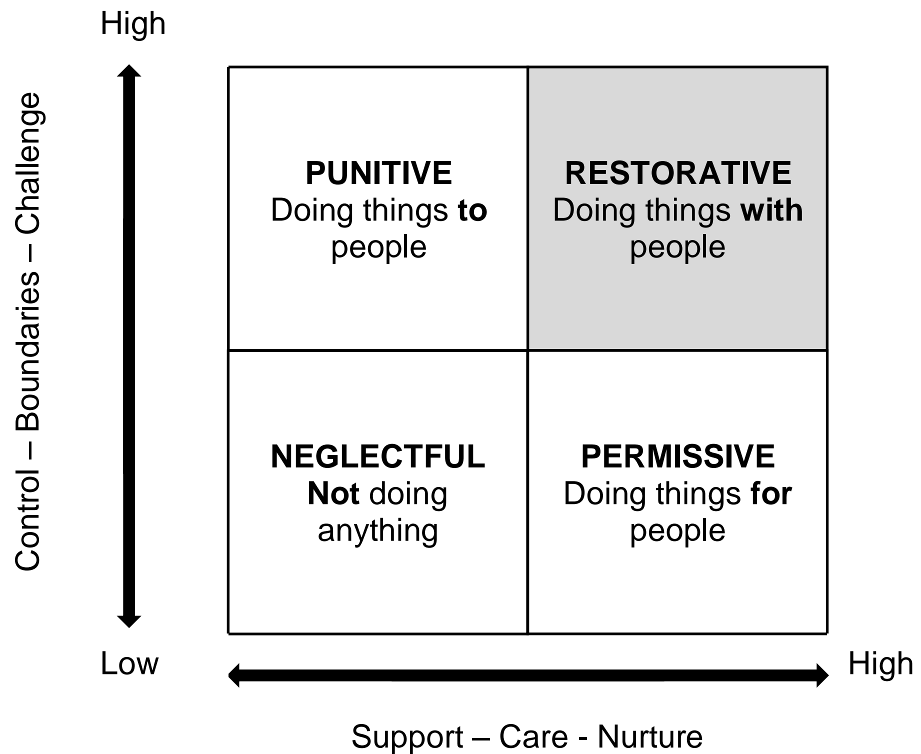
Vaandering's (2013) re-examination of the Social Discipline Window (McCold and Wachtel, 2003) helps demonstrate this shift in thinking and practice. McCold and Wachtel's original (2003) Social Discipline Window describes the four basic responses society uses to maintain social norms.

Figure 7. **The Social Discipline window** (adapted from McCold and Wachtel 2003)



The four quadrants (see Figure 7) represent different combinations of high or low control/challenge and high or low support/care offered to someone(s) who has erred. The restorative domain (top-right quadrant) combines a high level of control/challenge with a high level of support/care, characterised by doing things *with* people rather than *to* or *for* them – or not doing anything at all (Wachtel, 2013 p. 3).

Figure 8. **To/Not/For/With window** (adapted from McCold and Wachtel, 2003)



These renowned diagrams encourage educators to think beyond a punitive-permissive response to inappropriate behaviour towards a restorative one where adults work with pupils in more engaged and relational ways (Vaandering, 2013).

As a teacher, Vaandering observed colleagues' initial positive engagement with the Social Discipline Window (SDW), seeing a clear desire to work *with* young people. However, they resorted back to punitive or permissive measures over time, leading to "inconsistent and ineffective implementation of rj[21] and its ability to nurture the relational school cultures desired" (p. 312). Vaandering traced this relapse to how educators are introduced to the SDW, arguing for a more critical

[21] The terms restorative justice and restorative approaches are often shortened to RJ and RA. Here, Dorothy Vaandering is deliberately using the lower-case to abbreviate restorative justice to rj, arguing that treating it as a proper noun risks representing it as "a particular approach, practice or strategy instead of a more generalised way of being" (Vaandering, 2013).

examination of the original theory to identify the key assumptions outlined below.

Wachtel (2013) acknowledges that the window is an adaptation of Glaser's (1964) study of parole officers. Glaser's study categorised an officer's style as either 'punitive' (high control, low support), 'welfare' (low control, high support), 'passive' (low control, low support) or 'paternal' (high control and high support). McCold and Wachtel's SDW projects this classification into a broader constellation of terms, such as authority, regulation of behaviour, maintaining social order, enforcement of behavioural standards and social control (McCold and Wachtel, 2003; Wachtel, Costello and Wachtel, 2009; Wachtel, 2013). These perceptions can serve to reinforce punitive-permissive responses.

Those in authority often assume an element of patronising beneficence within the SDW. For example, Wachtel's (2005) hypothesis that "human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior (sic) when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them" (Wachtel, 2005 p. 87) assumes the necessity of compliance over cooperation, potentially ignoring and reproducing the more hidden inequities contributing to conflict.

The SDW suggests that justice is concerned with changing the behaviour of those who have caused harm and restoring things to their customary pre-offence order. However, this assumes that the pre-existing order is a desired state, when quite often it is not. What are we restoring?

The SDW also fails to address theories of justice underlying the practices, reinforcing the concept of a right-order justice where rights are bestowed on society members by the institutions and legislation that make up the state. Right-order justice (Wolterstorff, 2008) is typically procedural, seen as being delivered (or restored) when an institution declares it. Justice in this sense applies to the system, not to people, and is considered

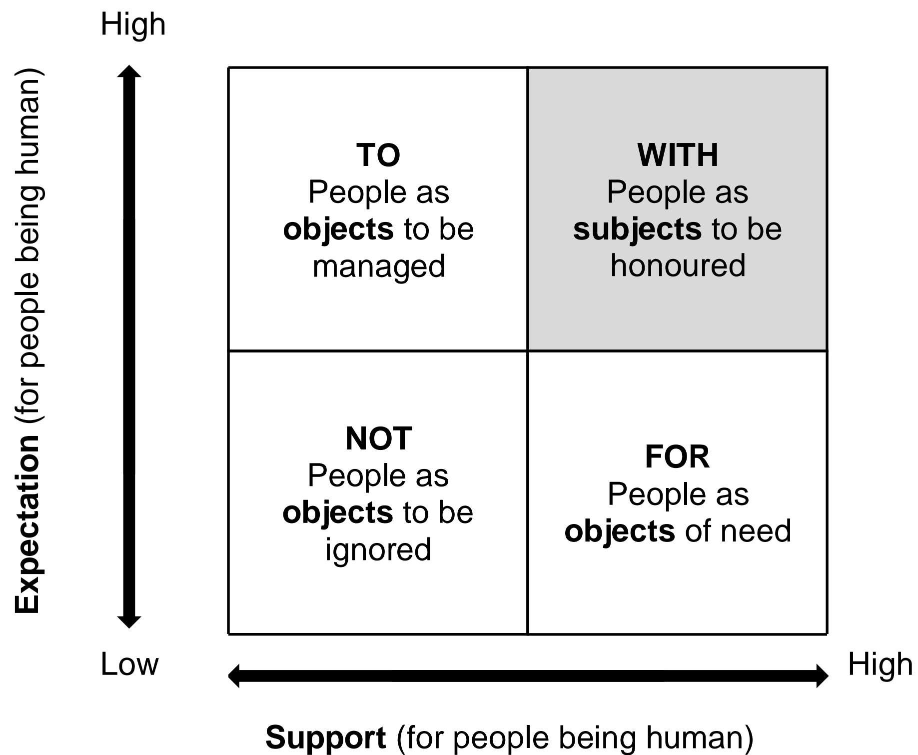
‘restored’ if the *system* is perceived as fair. This type of justice can favour privileged norms and identities.

Re-examining the roots of restorative justice reveals a broader conception of justice as part of our humanness, emphasising all people’s worth and well-being (Bianchi, 1994; Wolterstorff, 2008; Zehr, 1990). Such human-rights justice holds that rights are inherent rather than conferred. Once we see humanness as a non-negotiable, justice is understood to be ‘done’ when people are seen for their intrinsic worth, thus restoring their humanity.

At the heart of this distinction are judicial justice (right order), highlighting what ought to be and social justice (human rights), examining how to live (Vaandering, 2011). From this human, relational stance, Vaandering presents an alternative window more consistently aligned with the philosophical foundations of human-rights-based restorative justice[22].

[22] My examination of justice and peace sits firmly and exclusively within an educational context, not a legal one.

Figure 9. **Relationship (subject-object relationship) window** (Vaandering, 2013)



Vaandering's relational window (Figure 9) provides me with a platform from which I built my conception of restorative work as peace-building work. The relational window offers the possibility of becoming more fully human (Freire). By changing the name of the axis, Vaandering helps expose different types of relationships according to their expectation levels "*for being human' (where expectation includes accountability)*. And the level of support one gives *for being human"* (Vaandering, 2013 p. 324. Original italics). The four quadrants reveal exchanges that either diminish or nurture people's inherent worth as human beings (Vaandering, 2013 p. 324).

The top-left quadrant combines an elevated expectation for the other with a low offer of support. This combination results in a hierarchical power relationship characterised by disagreement, dominance and disruption, "as people are turned into *objects* that are acted upon so that they contribute to what the giver wants" (Vaandering, 2013 p. 324). Like the

SDW, the relationship is characterised by what is done *to* another; there is a neglect of relationship.

In the bottom-left quadrant, little is expected of the relationship, and minimal support is offered. Thus, people are neglected and ignored as unworthy of attention; there is a neglect of relationship.

The bottom-right quadrant combines high support with low expectations. This combination often results in unhealthy interactions and co-dependency because people in need tend to be seen as objects over time and fulfil the giver/fixer's desire to be needed. The relationship is thus characterised by what is done *for* another.

Harm is perpetuated rather than repaired in all three quadrants. If we harm the relationship or objectify the other, dehumanisation is maintained. Only by moving to the top right quadrant, where *expectation* and *support* can be given and received by anyone of any age, can humanisation happen for both parties.

Vaandering's explicit focus on relationships helps move attention away from authoritarian notions about how we might get people to do the right thing and/or effect more authority over others. Offered by Vaandering and others (Morrison, Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012), this relationship-based focus on the cultivation of social and human capital is less about how we manage others' behaviour and more about how we honour one another's inherent humanity.

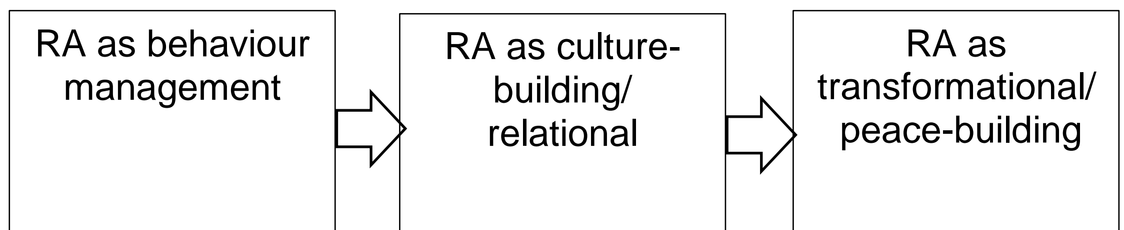
Such relationality allows people to see each other as subjects to be honoured (Vaandering, 2013) by sanctioning "time for people to get to know each other in their own right and holding each other up for their unique gifts and assets" (Goessling, 2019 p. 22).

Restorative practices are structured ways of eliciting 'relational depth' (Mearns, 1997, Mearns and Cooper, 2005), described as a state of profound contact between two people. Although initially couched to

describe the therapist-client relationship in person-centred counselling, the term parallels elements of restorative practice and people's ability to find peace through a deep connection with one another.

A relational focus and experience of relational depth mean that engagement with RP has moved beyond a process or outcome for some. The encounter relies on more than merely reciting a pre-prepared 'script' of affective questions (Hansberry, 2016; International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2022). Building on this body of work with my co-author, Terence Bevington (Bevington and Gregory, 2019), I propose that a restorative approach has the potential to move beyond a relational exchange towards something more profound, transformative, connected and healing in some situations (Evans and Vaandering, 2016).

Figure 10. **Further shifts in the understanding and development of RA in schools**



A school operating at a peace-building/transformational level has reshaped its reality (Fals Borda, 2006a). Circles become an embodiment of peace where we feel different and see changes in our peers and colleagues, and people become subjects to be honoured rather than objects to be managed (Vaandering, 2013). Beyond the classroom, e.g., in staff meetings and conversations with colleagues, people engage more deeply and broadly in building peace. They have thus moved beyond a basic restorative approach for managing behaviour, extending the tools (scripts), values and attitudes used beyond culture-building toward something more transformative: peace (Bevington and Gregory, 2019).

How we understand and treat each other, seeking meaningful connection rather than merely tolerating each other's differences, is an essential element of positive peace. In this way, RA offers a similar notion of community to Ubuntu, where everyone's wellbeing is interconnected, and my peace depends upon yours. The values of peace (connectedness, dignity, safety, transformation) are congruent with restorative values. Therefore, my definition of restorative approaches is nested within my understanding of peace education as I know and experience it in 21st century English primary schools.

2.4.5 Peaceful - Restorative - Research

To date, restorative research has mirrored the dominant justice system's values by recreating control trials, quantitative methodologies and external, expert-centred critique (Bonell et al., 2018; Skinns, Du Rose and Hough, 2009; Wong and Wing Lo, 2010).

Toews and Zehr (2003) draw comparisons with the justice professionals and argue that restorative researchers often:

> "view ourselves as objective experts (…), assuming responsibility for the stories of the people we study. We collect data and stories, interpreting the meaning without consulting or giving benefit to our subjects."
>
> (Toews and Zehr, 2003 p. 258)

As restorative practices become more lived, personal, and healing (McCold and Wachtel, 2003; Evans and Vaandering, 2016), the need for better alignment of research processes to the paradigm becomes apparent. For example, within a restorative meeting, we have re-ordered the roles by recognising all parties connected to the event and, within the process, moved the third party from the role of judge to facilitator. Therefore, in our roles as researchers, academics and practitioners, we are failing to coherently conduct research consistent with our beliefs (Toews and Zehr, 2003, pp. 257-88). We must adapt to the research

setting and move researchers outside-in, from a position of judgment to one of shared inquiry. Additionally, we know that meaning cannot be externally imposed in restorative practices but must be created and communicated from within. So how might research better reflect restorative values?

Toews and Zehr (2003) call for a transformative inquiry within research emphasising social action rather than 'pure' knowledge. This approach favours working *with* rather than doing research *to* or *on* people. As RP builds social capital, relational depth, connection and thus peace, this social encounter must be achieved through participatory, co-created and peaceful methods. I have responded to this call as part of this inquiry.

Zehr's appeal to expand the capacity of restorative approaches to inform a day-to-day moral compass from the activity of research:

1. "Take relationships seriously, recognizing you are one part of a web of people, institutions and the environment;
2. Be aware of the impact of your actions on others and the world around you;
3. Take responsibility for injuries you have caused – acknowledge and try to repair harm;
4. Treat everyone with respect, including those who offend you;
5. Whenever possible, involve people in decisions that affect them;
6. View conflicts in your life as opportunities;
7. Listen to others deeply and compassionately – try to understand even when you disagree;
8. Engage in dialogue with others even when that's difficult – remain open to learning from them;
9. Be cautious about imposing your 'truths' and views on other people and situations;
10. Sensitively confront everyday injustices such as sexism, racism, and classism."

(Zehr, 2019 p. 1)

2.4.6 A drama-led peace education

Read (1949) argued that creative aesthetic activity should be at the core of an educational experience, irrespective of subject matter. Furthermore, peace and art (in all its forms) are complementary and can help remodel social relationships. Like his contemporary Montessori (2005 [1914]), Read argued that humans have the creative potential to overcome destructive violence. Page (2008) regenerates an association between peace, education and aesthetics in the 21st Century, stating that:

> "All of education is undergirded by aesthetic judgements or judgements as to what is beautiful or desirable. If we believe that peace, that is harmonious and cooperative relations between individuals and societies, is a beautiful thing, a valuable thing in itself, then we should not be reticent in encouraging this as a stated objective for education".
>
> (Page, 2008 p. 158)

I find this view inspiring. If peace is attractive and desirable, it should be part of education.

I will now formulate an argument for drama as a necessary tool to balance the liberal assimilationist conceptions (Banks, 2008) of citizenship education. I will also highlight the potential for drama, specifically Theatre of the Oppressed, as an art form with the potential to promote a justice-orientated education through stories, imagination and embodiment (Rao, 2008). Through education in the arts, emphasising the development of the imagination, we can envisage previously unimagined possibilities (Collinge, 1997).

Drama allows us to see ourselves and others as humans in our own right, not as unformed or unknowing. A drama class treats young people more

equally, nurturing their potential to take on as-yet-unknown roles or roles beyond their years.

> "Drama develops the imagination's ability to construct and make believe unfamiliar contexts and situations: it demands that we respond to them as if they were actually occurring…offers young people an opportunity to express their developing view of human experience"
>
> (Neelands, 2010 p. 39)

Drama is a tool for creating and sharing a narrative and co-creating meaning. Opposing arguments are welcomed and considered as this approach thrives on imagination, possibilities, and multiplicities. Different to single truth or single answer or correct answers demanded by other subjects. There is a move from the 'what would you do if…?' instructional questions found in English and the humanities, to 'you are…' statements that require imagination to respond in character, as true to the time, setting, environment of that character as possible.

By repositioning the classroom from a knowledge-transmission site to one of transformation, the drama classroom can become a politically and culturally expressive space for humanisation. Unlike traditional, didactic, directional, and one-way banking-style education, Freirean-emancipatory and Theatre-of-the-Oppressed experiences are both animated by a "shift from the discourse of reproduction and critique to language of possibility and engagement" (Giroux, 1985 p.xvi). The potential to 'rehearse' scenarios and subsequently apply learning in real life celebrates polysemy, exploring diverse personal narratives to elicit group resonance (Boal, 2006). Rather than passively accepting domination or oppression or analysing cultural reproduction from afar, this is about getting 'down and dirty' with the production of meaning.

Emboldened by Cremin (2018), Kester (2018) and Page (2008) to use the aesthetic to inform peace education, my next step was to engage a

group of children in a way that was meaningful and reflected the values I associated with restorative ways of working.

2.4.7 A repositioning of power

There are two interrelated arguments for involving children in research: respecting children's right to be involved in research about them or affecting them and recognising "the unique perspectives that children can bring to bear as experts, actors, and stakeholders in their own and other environments" (Barratt Hacking et al., 2012 p. 438).

In addition, this study aimed to position children as active agents (Mauthner, 1997) engaged in matters of central significance to them (Leitch et al., 2007). Recognition of children's agency places them on an equal footing with adults, as actors whose contributions can make "a difference to a relationship or decision, to the workings of a set of social assumptions or constraints" (Mayall, 2002 p. 21).

Appadurai (2006) considers the *right* to research a fundamental entitlement regardless of education, age, or expertise. Appadurai asserts that the academy's research has become parochial, focusing on high-end technical expertise, scientism and professionalism. In response, Appadurai (2006) calls for researchers and research institutions to "recognise that research is a specialised name for a generalised capacity, the capacity to make disciplined inquiries into those things we need to know, but do not know yet" (Appadurai, 2006 p. 167).

By framing research practice within human rights, Appadurai helped strengthen my conviction in a participatory, drama-led research inquiry that would help me and the participants better understand our shared contexts and practices.

> "Research, in this sense, is not only the production of original ideas and new knowledge (as it is normally defined in academia and other knowledge-based institutions). It is also something

> simpler and deeper. It is the capacity to systematically increase the horizons of one's current knowledge, in relation to some task, goal or aspiration."
>
> (Appadurai, 2006 p. 176)

Concerning expertise, Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) reminded me that everyday actions towards peace-building are expressed by those involved within the spaces they operate. Those closest to conflict situations mobilise to minimise risk; those on the ground can more effectively foster relationships to build the structures and practices of peace. In a youth project, these experts are young people.

Chilisa (2012) invited me to imagine a research process where the community could contribute equally and theorise together. In response, I envisaged a research space where I could work in solidarity with children and adults in schools to explore our lives, recognise our resources (Dickson and Green, 2001), create action and experience a sense of flourishing (Walker, 2009). In this space, I could respond to Wright's (2020) call for educators to develop approaches disrupting asymmetrical power relations by blurring the distinctions between adult and youth roles.

I considered how I might use Theatre-of-the-Oppressed methods, dialogic circles, and journaling to counter methods associated with traditional research (observation, interviews, surveys) that potentially mute young people's voices and characterise them as objects. As identified, these democratic, emancipatory, and participatory methods reinforce this enquiry's social-justice objective to counter prevailing ideologies around research, education, and youth and democratise the research process.

2.5 Living literature

This section will review recent studies combining youth participatory action research (YPAR) and the Theatre of the Oppressed. I subsequently review studies also incorporating peace education

(including restorative approaches). Chapter four provides a broader discussion of PAR methodology.

If Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a collective inquiry undertaken by the people directly affected by an issue, then Youth PAR (YPAR) is an extension of this process (Cammarota and Fine, 2008b). YPAR recognises that young people are often socially and culturally constructed in ways that do not match their realities, lived experiences or potentials (Lesko, 2001, Wright, 2020). In line with Freire, Cammarota and Fine (2008) describe YPAR as a "formal pedagogy of resistance" in which young people "undertake critical and collective inquiry, reflection and action focused on "reading" and speaking back to the reality of the world, their world" (Cammarota and Fine, 2008b p. 2). Furthermore, a YPAR process enacts Freire's notion of praxis, as "students study their social contexts through research and apply their knowledge to discover the contingent qualities of life" (Cammarota and Fine, 2008b p. 6). For Call-Cummings (2018), YPAR is a way to confront and demolish mainstream conceptualisations of power and empowerment whereby oppressed individuals and groups can "potentially lay claim to power as they/we engage in participatory approaches to knowledge production" (p. 385).

Beyond the political, YPAR is also pedagogical, relying on the "acquisition of knowledge on injustice as well as skills for speaking back and organising for change" (Cammarota and Fine, 2008b p. 5). I build on YPAR's pedagogical nature in chapter five, discussing how we learnt *about* research through the process of *doing* it (Knudson, 2015), including discovering what research meant to us and what a researcher 'looked like').

For Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2010), young people involved in PAR rarely engage in all PAR phases, which include problem identification, analysis, intervention, and feedback. Citing Gaventa and Cornwall (2001), Foster-Fishman et al. (2010) identify three incentives for involving young people in all stages:

- Expansion of own knowledge and contribution to local knowledge production processes.
- Development of critical thinking and conscientisation.
- Inspiration to act.

For Foster-Fishman et al. (2010), each research phase provides different learning, outcomes and experiences, with young people least meaningfully involved in the data-analysis stage. Since critical consciousness is most likely to be raised in the problem-identification and data-analysis phases, this presents a challenge.

Despite these authors' assertion that young people should be involved in all stages of a youth research process, it seems that in their YPAR project; Youth ReACT (Research Actualising Critical Thought), some problem identification took place before young people became involved. This community development initiative, of which the YPAR project was part) identified two critical aims at the outset:

- To develop young people's awareness of their value within the community and of the issues facing their community.
- To promote local organisations' understanding of how better to engage with youth.

Not only had the 'problem' of youth (dis)engagement already been identified, but funding had been secured to design a strategy for heightening people's awareness of young people's value in the community. Here, youth participation seems to be driven by adult concerns. Whether participation was truly 'voluntary' is also questionable, since school staff identified the young people who took part. However, the participants appeared to take more control of identifying problems and analysing the resulting data over time.

> "I took a picture of the drug-free school zone sign at the front of my school because I think it's important that drugs stay out of school…"
>
> (Youth ReACT particpant in Foster-Fishman et al., 2010 p. 71)

Using a camera as a communication tool, this participant identified a 'lived' problem, shifting the conversation's emphasis from youth engagement and education to their need for a drug-free school and community.

Photovoice was identified as a creative medium through which the goal of social change and critical dialogue might be achieved (Wilson et al., 2007). This was in response to learning from a previous community-based prevention research inquiry called the YES! Project designed to explore youth empowerment strategies. In the YES! Project (Wilson et al., 2007) a large amount of transcription data was produced via a free-write process in which the young people were asked to describe each of their photos by writing answers to five questions (see the SHOwED questioning method initially formulated by Shaffer (1983). See also Wang (2003) for a useful description of the method and questions).

Although some initial filtering of the data was carried out by the adult research team in the YES! Project, the Youth ReACT authors critique the project's photo-elicitation methods and extensive discussion transcripts, arguing that the vast quantity of extraneous information involved in reviewing them distracted the young people. Reporting on the Youth ReACT for Social Change project, Foster-Fishman et al. (2010) identify a need for developmentally appropriate methods and processes to capture critical thinking. They suggest that overly focusing on writing, for example, can exclude some people from engaging in the collective critical consciousness-raising.

Another gap in the literature concerns the lack of practitioner accounts detailing appropriate methods to use in YPAR. In their 2008 research project in a Croatian school, Bognar and Zovko highlighted the lack of examples of adults (specifically practising teachers) supporting children to adopt the role of action researchers. Bognar and Zovko felt confident that pupils *could* become action researchers, giving examples of ten-year-olds taking over the whole action-research process. The authors also recorded methods for engaging pupils "on their own terms, on the basis of their own needs, interests and self-chosen values" (p. 1).

While youth-involved PAR projects focusing on external change or tackling structural problems are evident in the literature (Foster-Fishman et al., 2010; Fox, 2013; O'Brien and Moules, 2007), more subjective and transformative experience of PAR or methodological insights into empowerment through research are less so (Call-Cummings, 2018). I believe this is because adult researchers generally seek to publish such information in theses and peer-reviewed journals, forms that celebrate traditional, patriarchal, adult-centric and propositional scientific knowledge.

However, it appears that the inclusion of theatre-and-drama methods in YPAR enriches knowledge production. As such, I now investigate other studies that have drawn on one or more of the conceptual frameworks I use in this one, namely PAR, Theatre-of-the-Oppressed, peace-education (including restorative approaches) and values-led approaches.

Vettraino (2010) writes about her experiences using Theatre-of-the-Oppressed techniques with mainstream primary school children in Scotland. Encountering the Theatre of the Oppressed while working as a teacher and youth worker, she began to understand the concept of oppression in her professional roles within a system that felt suffocating to her. She describes the paradox of "wanting to be an enabler of children's dreams and hopes whilst simultaneously being employed in a

system that, for much of the time, felt more like a lead weight of expectation" (Vettraino, 2010, p.64).

Vettraino powerfully documents a twelve-year-old's experience of Image Theatre:

> "When you show (your oppression), it sort of makes it real doesn't it? And if it's real and it's wrong and shouldn't happen then showing it means someone's got to do something about it… I've got to do something about it"
>
> ('Lisa' in Vettraino, 2010 p. 64)

Lisa's oppression has been made real. She expresses discomfort in seeing it (the image) and this compels her to act, to do something about it. Lisa is moved to political activism that has been theoretically informed through the social practice (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007) of Image Theatre. Though she facilitated this process, Vettraino does not see her role as enabling liberation but as one that creates spaces for children to free themselves.

Schroeter's (2013) use of Theatre of the Oppressed as a research method and critical pedagogy to explore notions of identity, belonging and culture among French-speaking secondary students incorporates elements of PAR. The project aimed to help students cope with schooling and use their "identities, symbolism, and ambiguity to challenge authorized (sic) discourses and show how their identities intersected in their educational experiences" (Schroeter, 2013 p. 394). Schroeter's case-study methodology goes some way to addressing the lack of practitioner accounts detailing appropriate methods for use with young people (Foster-Fishman et al., 2010, Bognar and Zovko, 2008). The study also demonstrates how critical, arts-based pedagogies can create spaces for marginalised students to explore their school-based problems

(Schroeter, 2013 p. 411). Specifically, drama gave students a vehicle for expressing an alternal

tive narrative to the authorised discourse (Bourdieu, 1991). The latter positioned their school as a “good school” where people got along regardless of language, race, and study area (Schroeter, 2013 p. 402).

Duckworth, Allen, and Williams (2012) carried out a qualitative assessment of a theatre peace programme called ‘what do students learn when we teach peace?’ The researchers point out “an insufficient amount of qualitative data regarding the actual effects and impact of peace education programmes” (Duckworth et al., 2012 p. 82), specifically studies that listen to children and young people.

I find the authors’ assertion of positive peace interesting, as the peace program under investigation used methods predicated on violence (e.g., an experience of bullying)

> “Many of the stories of violence and bullying within the play had been drawn from the lived experiences of the young actors themselves, and typically the character’s monologues were written by the student who had experienced it”.
>
> (Duckworth et al., 2012 p. 86)

Harden et al. (2014) investigated the synthesis of restorative practice, participatory action research and theatre, but contextualised their study within a trauma-informed approach. Though I welcome the inclusion of psycho-education, trauma-informed practice, positive youth development and restorative practice informing research design, I question the enactment of the guiding theories in practice.

For example, Harden and colleagues (2014) emphasised that restorative principles informed planning, implementation, and evaluation of the ‘Truth N’ Trauma Project’. However, restorative principles in this context

were placed firmly within the justice paradigm. The authors cited evidence relating to the positive effects of *restorative justice,* such as victim and offender satisfaction, reduced recidivism, and increased perceived safety (Umbreit et al., 2005). I propose that this promoted a right-order justice paradigm, with little discussion of relationally restorative principles such as innate worth, universal wellbeing and humanisation.

The 'Truth N' Trauma Project' also drew on several other theoretical positions, including youth-adult-partnership promotion, critical consciousness, youth-identity development, and cultural affirmation. Additionally, the project emphasised empowerment as a philosophical stance. However, I find empowerment as a goal or objective problematic, as I discuss further in section 3.8.

Within the 'Truth N' Trauma' project (Harden et al., 2014), youth-adult partnerships were described as social and emotional spaces where "*youth* can explore aspects of identity in a safe way, learning to define, articulate and affirm who they are" (Harden et al., 2014 p. 66. My italics). The responsibility to explore, define, articulate, and affirm their identity relative to adults appeared to be the young people's alone. This inequitable focus on young people also denied the adults involved the opportunity to experience critical consciousness, and thus humanisation.

One of the 'Truth N' Trauma' project's aims was the promotion of resilience and protective factors. Though understandable, this approach is also limited, involving less exploration of the structures and systems contributing to young people needing to be resilient and develop protective factors in the first place. Similarly, the use of restorative practices such as circles was intended as space for the young people to "explore their healing, and support others in healing from exposure to violence" (Harden et al., 2014 p. 67), not to challenge the structures co-creating the trauma. Encouraging young people to accept and cope with the oppressive structures contributing to society's suffering rather than developing the awareness to challenge and transform them has been

described by Sellman and Buttarazzi (2019) as “adding lemon juice to poison”.

The ‘Truth N’ Trauma’ study incorporated some YPAR training, including human subjects’ protocol, data collection, data entry and analysis, and presentation. I posit that the study’s scientific, positivist research language conflicts with the philosophies of restorative and trauma-informed approaches. Furthermore, the programme evaluation took a positivist stance with an end-goal focus: outcome was evaluated using a pre-and-post questionnaire asking participants to rate changes to self-esteem, academic achievement, empowerment, etc., on the scale provided. It does not appear that the young people were involved in designing the evaluation or feedback process (Foster-Fishman et al., 2010).

The project was strongly creative, employing Theatre-of-the-Oppressed techniques where participants embedded “complex ideas, emotions, and concepts into the physical storytelling of theatre through the creation of evocative tableaus (sic) and short scenes” (Harden et al., 2014 p.68), creating a movement-based theatre piece. The authors present the Theatre of the Oppressed as a healing experience whereby “participants were able to process the concepts they had acquired through the trauma-informed practice training as they also voiced their own social concerns around such topics as family, friendship, gossip, trust, sexuality, and identity in looking at their past, their present, and their future” (Harden et al., 2014 p. 68-9). However, although the authors claim the young people “found the act of performing empowering”, there is little evidence that the young people themselves identified with or used this term.

Kervick and colleagues (2019) also blended Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and Restorative Practices (RP), this time with Critical Service Learning (CSL), as part of a US graduate teacher-training programme. The project aimed to train student-teachers in YPAR and RP and provide opportunities to apply their new knowledge and experiences with US school pupils eager for change. Although

presenting data relating to course outcomes, the authors do not report on a formal research study. Instead, they offer a practitioner lens on how universities might partner with local schools to design learning opportunities elevating the student voice.

While Kervick and colleagues locate RP and PAR as emancipatory approaches aiming to amplify marginalised voices to challenge hegemonic structures and promote equity, restorative practices are again presented as reactive post-conflict measures. The authors identify practices such as circles but emphasise them as conflict-prevention methods rather than proactive strategies for positive relationships.

> "We used talking circles as a mechanism for high school students to voice problems of interest".

(Kervick et al., 2019)

However, recent state legislature mandating the education system to explore the impact of RP on schools' suspensions, exclusions and educational outcomes may have influenced the study's context.

In addition, a useful description of circle set-ups and use (e.g. talking pieces, centrepieces, mindfulness moments, check-ins/outs, question rounds, etc.) indicate the application of sound restorative practices in a school setting. Additionally, the sample session content correlates clearly with YPAR stages, including problem identification, data collection, data analysis, and action. The authors recognised that the course timeframe (ten days) restricted the comprehensive implementation of all four YPAR phases.

2.6 Conclusion

The consensus among peace and conflict, restorative, citizenship and liberatory education practitioners and scholars suggests that young people need guided opportunities to engage with creative methods and

stimulating activities to help them identify problems, develop critical thinking and act. However, there appears to be a gap in the theory and practice of creative interpersonal dialogue for restorative peace-making (Bickmore, 2012). Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of critical peace pedagogies that unite the mind and body, the rational and the emotional (Shapiro, 2002). By explicitly supporting youth agency, there is also an opportunity to examine and explore pedagogical approaches that bolster subjectivity, community-building, power, agency and knowledge production (Wright, 2020).

Following this review, a period of self-study steered me toward a more thorough grounding in the concepts of participation, emancipation, and transformation, which helped identify my motivations for this research. These were:

- To better understand and describe human nature for myself and those I am in relationship with.
- To encourage change in myself and those I am in relationship with.
- To challenge child pathologising and enter into as egalitarian a researcher relationship as possible.
- To co-construct a hopeful body of knowledge promoting transformation.
- To explore an embodied, vulnerable, aesthetic, performative and critical peace education.
- To legitimate peace as a desirable educational rationale for this project.

Furthermore, as I engaged with the restorative-approach literature, I committed to an inquiry process sympathetic to the investigative area (Biesta, 2007; Toews and Zehr, 2003; Zehr, 1990). More specifically, I resolved to design a values-led inquiry based on restorative principles valuing human complexity over procedural simplicity, hypothesising that people could experience a more meaningful experience of peace education when undertaken creatively.

I started this review reluctantly. As a practitioner with little motivation to engage in the theoretical aspects of research, I was content to wallow in the (self-imposed) 'swampy lowlands' (Schön, 1995). Having hauled myself out of the mire, I was not yet on the high ground seemingly occupied by academic elites. However, I was able to leave this review with a renewed sense of lightness and confidence and move on to chapters exploring methodology and research activities. I concluded that I am both a practitioner and a theoretician. As Lederach (2010) affirmed for me, "I have a sense about the way things work in my every day and adjust action accordingly" (Lederach, 2010 p. 124). I claimed the right to research and the right to robustly inquire into something I did not yet know but needed to (Appadurai, 2006).

Having mapped some of the relevant intellectual terrain (Golding, 2017), chapter three now builds on and expands the ontological and epistemological positions described in chapter one and I elaborate on how my philosophical position came to influence the methodology.

3. Research methodology

This chapter builds on the relational, participatory and transformative ontological and epistemological positions described in chapters one and two and their implications for my methodological choices. As part of this discussion, I explain how new knowledge was created through informed, committed reflective action (praxis).

I start by positioning PAR as a philosophy, not just a methodology, noting that a participatory paradigm incorporates epistemic, political and corporal principles. In epistemic terms, any propositional knowledge resulting from research is grounded in the researcher's experiential knowledge (Reason, 1994, Reason and Torbert, 2001). From this assumption, it follows that the researcher is also the subject. At the same time, a political approach accepts research subjects' right to participate in designing research that affects them and seeks to gather knowledge about them (Appadurai, 2006). Correspondingly, this notion places the subjects as researchers in their own right. Finally, the corporal perspective holds that, as a shared inquiry, knowledge formation develops through collective embodied judgements with others. As such, these judgements "can only ever be partly rational, and are related to developing researcher identities" (Hodkinson, 2004 p. 9).

This chapter's structure reflects the evolution of my methodological understanding through time and engagement, epitomising my critique of "empiricism which presents educational inquiry as governed by methodological prescriptions that are designed to guarantee objectivity, producing knowledge that facilitates prediction and control" (Hammersley, 2005 p. 7). Nonetheless, chapter four provides full details of the research design, including setting, sample, information-collection methods and analysis and trustworthiness issues.

PAR is situated in practice: PAR engagement does not involve conscious rule-following but the capacity to effectively participate in a communal

task. Therefore, this chapter reflects PAR's creative, practical, communal, and affective experience. Through personal reflection on PAR *practice* (Schon, 1991), I offer explanations for the action and for my educational influence on my own and others' learning and the learning contexts I operated in (Whitehead, 2008 p. 104). I contend that our action research was committed and intentional, emphasising values I hope to be judged by and am ready to defend.

3.1 Participatory action research

PAR differs from other qualitative-research forms in that the researcher is also a participating and knowing subject able to base their propositional findings on their own and their co-subjects' experiential knowing (Heron and Reason, 1997). This contrasts with, for example, an ethnographic or phenomenological study, where the researcher bases their findings on the research 'objects' – the people being studied or observed – rendering the researchers' experiential knowing secondary.

Since PAR is participatory and social, it recognises first, second and third-person research approaches, inspiring learning through experience and action. In this inquiry, first-person work took the form of intentional reflection, perception and conception shifts, and personal-reality changes in response to engaging with the literature, academic community and this inquiry's co-researchers. The project assumed a secondary research approach once we collaborated as co-researchers and co-subjects to co-create knowledge (Heron and Reason, 2008). Because the methods were often corporeal, learning was experiential, creating knowledge in the body through shared experiences. Third-person research manifested through a final performance in which the research group shared their learning with the teaching staff, Deputy and Headteachers and each other. This thesis is another form where I have abstracted meaning to share beyond the co-research team.

In PAR, knowledge primarily emerges via engagement in authentic practices within a community (Hodkinson, 2004, Hammersley, 2005,

Lave and Wenger, 1991). This project engaged researchers and co-researchers to investigate the meaning of events in our lives, with our mutual unpacking of a researcher's role being a case in point (see section 5.5.5). At the start of the project, most co-researchers understood the researcher's role as an archetype: an older male in a lab coat using computers and electronics, sometimes described as a 'mad scientist' with 'crazy hair'. By the end of the project, the children (and I) were self-identifying as researchers in drawings and discussions. Together we co-created a 'living knowledge' that evolved and diversified over time and space. I expand on these findings in chapter five.

My relationship with my co-researchers – and what we came to know together – also changed temporally and spatially across our collaboration. I employed methods to strengthen collaborative self-reflection, including journalling, drawing, dialogic circles and drama-based idea-activation. I also created time and space within sessions to share our reflections purposefully. While I discuss the methods in more detail in chapter four, examples of such self-reflection methods included:

- a circle 'go around' to share our thoughts
- a series of still images to help create thoughts and feelings in sculptural form
- improvisations based on stories and experiences shared by the co-researchers
- reflective journals
- photos of still image work and/or film or moving work, and
- semi-structured interviews with staff.

3.2 An unavoidable shift

My research journey was side-tracked by a move towards practical knowing (Heron and Reason, 1997), a deviation I hold was necessary and unavoidable to stay true to the participatory paradigm and principles of doing research *with* and not *to* others. I document this shift below.

I had hoped to explore my interest in restorative practice, convinced this focus would appeal to others. However, my co-researchers rejected my proposition, thus requiring us to re-align and collectively agree on a new focus.

I describe below how the original research question changed as I engaged more meaningfully with the methodology. Though initially frustrating, this process became a "practical and morally satisfying" paradigm (Fals Borda, 2006b p. 32) in which a socially just methodology could better function.

I initially sought to understand (and possibly improve) the experience of a restorative encounter. Having facilitated face-to-face restorative meetings, I was intrigued by the emotional ebb and flow people experienced in relationship with each other (usually through the experience of harm) and that I experienced facilitating the process. I grew curious about the physical movements, body language, eye contact and utterances people expressed during the meeting. As the encounter unfolded and participants' emotions changed according to the information revealed to (or concealed from) them, their body language also changed.

Lederach (1995) describes an 'expressive scheme' – a vehicle for communicating intended meaning. Underpinning this scheme is a knowledge base on achieving this expression of intent, which can take the form of silence, eye movement, breathing, verbal coaxing and physical impulses (Lederach, 1995 p. 41). Although each meeting was different, I observed and was affected by a consistent pattern. As the participants intuited or understood what the other was (or was not) communicating, their bodies would relax or tense, turn toward or away, and hold or break eye contact. This form of expression appeared to be preverbal and widespread. As I facilitated more meetings, I began seeing a form of presentational knowing (Heron and Reason, 1997) – a non-verbal 'dance' between participants. I thus wondered if, by becoming

more attuned to this physical language, I might enhance my skills as a restorative facilitator.

I wanted to develop my restorative practice by moving away from a dependence on the scripted, verbal element of the process towards a greater perception and awareness of participants' mind-body experiences. To understand our feelings (and thus ourselves), we must do more than talk about them. Using body movement as a critical and creative tool to help connect what is known internally but unexpressed externally (Shapiro, 2002) was central to developing my living theory.

At the start of my research journey, I was eager to progress my agenda to explore how a restorative encounter might be better understood using Theatre-of-the-Oppressed techniques. I had a skilled group of co-researchers trained for nearly a year in mediation and used to resolving conflicts, whom I believed could jump straight in to help me analyse my area of interest. However, in reality, my co-researchers behaved like the unique human beings they were – not the static, fixed mediators I had imagined. These beautifully complex humans brought with them an ever-shifting relational dynamic that manifested itself in an endless variety of behaviours that were, at times, bewildering to me.

On the one hand, I wanted to understand and improve restorative encounters. On the other, I wanted to place values (mine and theirs) at the centre of the inquiry. On reflection, my desire to be pragmatic – to solve a practical problem and use action research – conflicted with a commitment to participatory praxis. My initial desire to stick to a conceptual, academic and cyclical framework to drive change and achieve outcomes conflicted with the emergent model of values-led PAR. The difference between the original research question (mine) and a later (co-constructed) research question makes clear the influence praxis had on the inquiry:

- **My initial research question:** How does drama-led peace-education help people experience, know and transform conflict?

- **The group's subsequential research question:** How can we use each other's talents to learn about and understand ourselves and each other?

Chapter five outlines these questions' development. For now, I acknowledge that my conception of action research shifted from a Northern-Hemisphere tradition to a Southern-Hemisphere one. This shift changed our co-research group's research focus and questions, transforming our individual and collective experiences of relationships and conceptions of reality – including my own.

Northern-based action research aims to solve a social problem, provide social development or carry out organised, efficient action to help the practitioner (Lewin, 1946). In contrast, southern-based action research is emancipatory and community-focused, enacting social justice to transform communities (Wallerstein and Duran, 2018). Transformation is not just operational or technical problem-solving, but also political, aiming for social liberation. For Latin American Fals Borda, this type of 'ground-up' participatory inquiry involves investigating reality to transform it (Fals Borda, 1979).

These differing conceptualisations reveal different aims for action research focusing on either method (northern) or methodology (southern) (Cordeiro et al., 2017). The different aims depend on the researcher's interest and worldview. At first glance, my emphasis on this inquiry's methods to plan, act, observe and generate knowledge (evidenced in section 4.4) places this research in the northern tradition. However, the accompanying democratic, participative and reflective Freirean and Boalian methodologies helped me shift away from Eurocentric/western educational research paradigms and embrace other conceptions of the social world. The latter included but was not limited to Latin America and

Africa. Although they grew out of different historical and political contexts, both action-research traditions sit along a continuum of values: the northern tradition values system improvement while the southern values emancipation. Finally, in appreciation of Glassman and Erdem's (2014) radical analysis of PAR, I acknowledge some dissatisfaction with the term 'southern PAR'; by suggesting that the point of origin lies in the Southern Hemisphere, southern PAR potentially loses the central roles played by African and Asian regions.

For now, I offer this account of my early PAR misjudgment in a spirit of research transparency. After all, PAR learning happens through experience and action: only through *doing* could I have come to *know*. PAR is a form of *vivencia*, a life experience that converts practitioners into 'thinking-feeling persons' (Fals Borda, 2006b p. 31). Over time – and in participation with others – I, too, became 'thinking-feeling' and more critically engaged with the methodology.

3.3 A values-committed qualitative methodology

I initially operated within a constructivist paradigm, only moving towards an emancipatory one later, and subscribed to relational axiology. As such, I accepted that values are an integral part of social life and, therefore, an important part of social research. In line with other qualitative researchers (Whitehead, 1989; Whitehead and McNiff, 2006; Reason and Bradbury, 2008 Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2007; Torre, 2009; Stringer, 2014; Brydon-Miller and Coghlan, 2019), values were ever-present in this inquiry (see section 1.6.3). An intentional inclusion of values mark a purposeful departure from traditional or positivist research strategies that claim to be value-free or value-neutral.

I am clear about my values but accept that other peoples' diverge from mine: none are wrong, only different. We explicitly promoted values in this inquiry, congruent with peace education and informed by the work of Bognar and Zovko (2008), Whitehead (1989) and Whitehead and McNiff (2006), who affirmed that participatory research is not just values-led but

values-committed. This is evidenced in the first cycle of self-reflective study (chapter one), in cycles two and three exploring the research group's values (see sections 5.6 and 5.6.2) and through an exploration of my values in the final cycle (see section 6.3.2).

3.4 A living theory

I found inspiration in Whitehead's (1989) commitment to values informing his notion of living theory. Whitehead (1989) openly charts his academic journey from a positivist phase – where he viewed knowledge as propositional – to a living-theory phase grounded in lived experience (*vivencia*). As he defines it:

> "A living theory is an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work."
>
> (Whitehead, 2008 p. 104)

By investigating and committing to my values, I experienced a living contradiction that precipitated a living theory as part of this study. As a peace educator and (now) emerging arts-engaging researcher (Savin-Baden, 2014), I aim to work in a way that honours the lived realities of people in school from an anti-oppressive ideology. However, contradiction arose from the dissonance between my values, beliefs and actions and those enacted within the school. On the one hand, I experience ontological security when I feel my life has meaning and purpose and I can engage creatively with others in life-affirming education. On the other hand, I experience ontological despair when I feel a loss of meaning and purpose relating to my experience of educating for peace. Ultimately, it is this living contradiction that moved me to research.

Living theory, self-study, or first-person researchers (such as McNiff and Whitehead, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011 and Marshall, 2016) are

concerned with embodied, living forms of knowledge and theory emanating from the researcher-in-action. First-person researchers give conscious attention to their intentions, strategies and behaviour and the effects of their actions on themselves and their situation.

McNiff and Whitehead (2007) uphold that philosophical writing and knowledge emerges from a ‘knowing’ subject within a social context. Therefore, accounts aiming to communicate such knowledge need to be personal (McNiff and Whitehead, 2007), using the first person ‘I’. Rather than denying theory’s importance, ‘I’ questions help focus attention on the living practice. Whitehead encourages researchers to prioritise their own practice and values rather than shoehorn them into others' or relegate them below a general theory (Whitehead et al., 2017). Action research uses first-person ‘I’ questions to provoke an investigation (Whitehead, 1989, Whitehead, 1993). For example:

- I experience problems when my educational values are negated in my practice.
- I imagine ways of overcoming my problems.
- I act on a chosen solution.
- I evaluate the outcomes of my actions.
- I modify my problems, ideas, and actions in the light of my evaluations ... (and the cycle continues).

These questions help articulate an “imperfectly understood felt concern and a desire to take action” (McTaggart, 1994 p. 316), aiming to solidify the idea that improvement or change is desirable. The inclusion of ‘I’ as a part of the claim to knowledge sets living-educational-theory methodology apart from other forms of research. The living ‘I’ challenges the notion of exclusive propositional knowledge favoured by traditional research.

While I accept that focusing on ‘I’ questions helps emphasise values and engagement approaches when faced with the practicalities of research,

I took issue with using the individual ‘I’. The concept challenged my commitment to participatory and relational practice: did the individualised ‘I’ negate the possibility of a group or a community to perceive problems of mutual concern and consequence (McTaggart, 1994)? As much as possible, I needed to include the others alongside me on this journey and define them as ‘knowers’ from the outset. This meant going beyond asking ‘what am *I* doing’ and supporting myself and the co-researchers in asking, ‘what are *we* doing?’

I am not alone in critiquing Whitehead’s use of ‘I’ and its impact on participatory and relational models. At the 2004 British Education Research Association conference, Whitehead and McNiff conceded a shift while integrating learning from postcolonialism and peace education. Whitehead detailed personal correspondence between himself and Murray (Whitehead and McNiff, 2004) where Murray suggested that using the singular ‘I’ reflects western and Eurocentric attitudes towards research and therefore limits participation in the spirit of Ubuntu: an I/We relationship. In his address to the conference, Whitehead accepted that, within his research, the ‘I’ and the value of Ubuntu do not migrate easily from west to east and north to south, respectively.

This shift in understanding is an example of Whitehead’s commitment to conceiving himself as a living contradiction, Together, Whitehead and McNiff assert that such thoughtful engagement with criticism helps researchers avoid divisiveness and megalothymia (the desire to be recognised as superior to others) and establish new inclusionary norms (Whitehead, 2004).

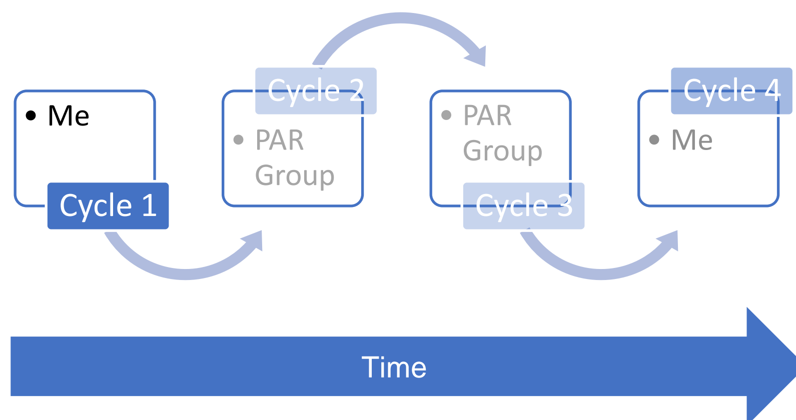
I acknowledge that this study has been influenced by feminist methodologies that seek authentic collaboration and use intersubjective dialogue to develop and refine ways of knowing. Oakley’s (1981) poignant study of motherhood describes the ‘neutral’ interview as absurd, rebuking the idea that an interview is a one-way process. She catalogues the number of times her respondents ‘ask back’ during her encounters

and upholds the interview – among other methods – as a way of validating women's experiences. Without fully entering a 'we' relationship, researchers risk continuing individualistic, male, hierarchical research models. Oakley's call to promote the social researcher as a tool "for making possible the articulated and recorded commentary of women on the very personal business of being female in a patriarchal capitalist society" (Oakley, 1981 p.48-49) paved the way for me to develop a more inclusive, living, and qualitative methodology.

From this foundation, I proposed four action-research cycles carried out by myself (as the lead researcher) and, later, as part of a co-researcher group. Cycles one and four highlight the integral role of lead-researcher reflexivity (Hall, 2003). Cycles two and three, where 'I' becomes 'we', are about the *shared* research experience.

3.4.1 Peace PAR project cycles

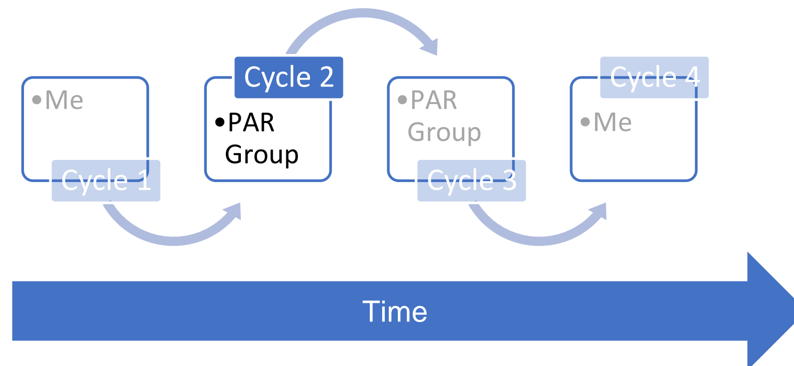
Figure 11. **Cycle 1 (Me)**



- ***I*** *experience problems when my educational values are negated in my practice.*
- ***I*** *imagine ways to overcome my problems, including using drama (specifically Theatre of the Oppressed) as a peace-education method.*
- ***I*** *act on a chosen solution by enrolling on an MPhil and engaging in research.*
- ***I*** *explore and identify my values.*

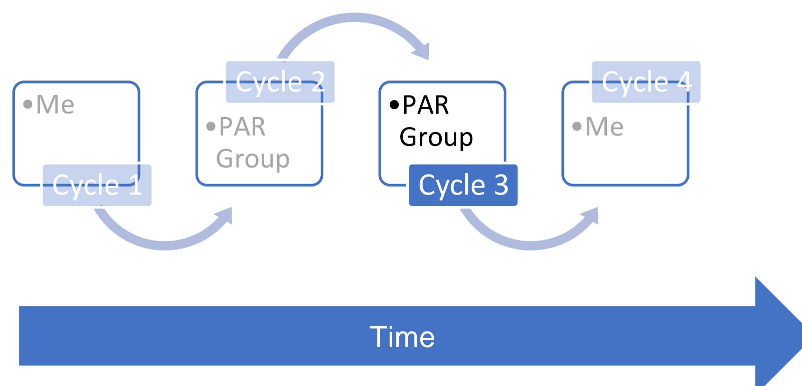
- ***I*** *evaluate the outcomes of my actions. I review the literature.*
- ***I*** *modify my problems, ideas, and actions in the light of my evaluations (literature) and embark on PAR.*

Figure 12. **Cycle 2 (PAR Group)**



- ***We*** *explore and identify our values.*
- ***We*** *explore ways our values are negated (we experience oppression).*
- ***We*** *imagine ways of overcoming our oppressions and enact them using drama.*
- ***We*** *evaluate the outcomes of our actions through dialogic circles and reviewing images both live and recorded.*
- ***We*** *modify our problems and change our research question.*

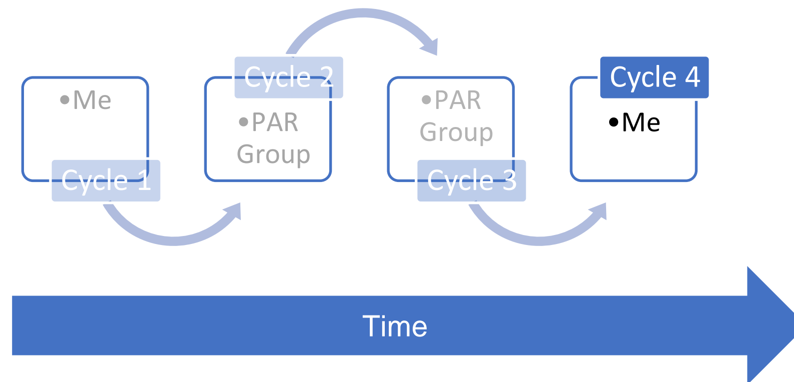
Figure 13. **Cycle 3 (PAR Group)**



- ***We*** *explore and identify our talents.*
- ***We*** *explore how our talents are lived and enact them using drama.*

- ***We*** *evaluate the outcomes of our actions through dialogic circles and reviewing images both live and recorded.*
- ***We*** *modify our actions and create a performance.*

Figure 14. **Cycle 4 (me**)



- ***I*** *experience problems when my relationship with the academy negates my educational values.*
- ***I*** *imagine ways of overcoming my problems, including challenging the dominant paradigm in social science research.*
- ***I*** *act on a chosen solution by engaging in PAR as fully as possible and applying an arts-based practice to an educational research setting. I change my academic course from an MPhil to a Doctorate.*
- ***I*** *evaluate the outcomes of my actions. I review the literature and develop a living theory.*
- ***I*** *modify my problems, ideas, and actions in the light of my evaluations and submit my thesis.*

The design of solo, then shared, then solo inquiry rest on the following assumptions about knowledge construction, informed by Susan Hall (2003):

1. Evidence comes from authentic data that has resonated with the experiences of the researcher(s).
2. The relations between researchers and participants are as democratic as possible.

3. The lead researcher's theory-laden view is not privileged over the participants' views.

In depicting the cycles this way, chapter six describes how I recognised my constitutive role in the data, inquiry process and outcomes. It also documents my sometimes-skilful ability to act reflexively during the empirical and analytical phases (cycles two and three) and my developing reflexive reporting (cycle four) (Hall, 2003).

The neat manifestation of these cycles on paper does not reflect the sense of anxiety I experienced throughout this process. Although I confidently presented these graphics to colleagues, supervisors and critical friends, my research approach felt detached from the established academic norms. I found it difficult to champion a creative, practice-led research process in the face of traditional academic life, where research activity is often defined in scientific and technological language and methods (Sullivan, 2009). I was fearful that my overt subjectivity and inclusion of 'I' might infect the research; section 5.6.3 details how I moved with and through this anxiety by going back to classroom practice.

3.5 The value of freedom

In acting to change the conditions I faced, I creatively brought ideas into being and developed a pedagogy for freedom (Giroux, 2010 p. 715). I began this journey by committing to the value of freedom, by which I mean humanisation. My reflective journals and conversations with supervisors and colleagues helped me to identify how and when the value of freedom was alive for me, as outlined below:

- Freedom through PAR to engage critically with others, leading to
- Freedom to change my mind
- Freedom to reject social and educational practices I felt were limiting
- Freedom to embrace social, educational and aesthetic practices I found liberating.

As I accepted the value of freedom[23] and allowed it to form the basis of my living theory, freedom became "an embodied living form of what is happening for me" (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011 p. 12) – a form of theory in action.

In connecting to the value of freedom, I was better able to see bringing ideas to life as an act of creativity. In moving from theory to action in a creative way, I could begin extrapolating what *was* to what *could* be. This act of imagination was "empowering and exhilarating, opening up new vistas of self-confidence" (McDonald et al., 2006/7 p. 269), and supported humanisation.

> "The end purpose of creativity is the human being who has produced their own humanity."
>
> (Bognar and Zovko, 2008 p. 5).

As the artist, actor, musician, and dancer know well, it is in personal engagement in a values-based creative process (including freedom, for me) that we find 'truth'. In this inquiry, neither the subjects nor researchers yet knew 'truth'. Therefore, this values-committed and creative research inquiry could not "separate artistry, theory, action, and epistemology" (Bognar and Zovko, 2008 p. 4). Agreeing with Lederach (2010) then, this inquiry became more "akin to the artistic endeavour than the technical process" (pp. ix).

Reviewing the literature and familiarising myself with PAR and TO methodologies led me to hypothesise a circular process, as shown in Figure 15.

- [23] I recognise that the economic security in part-time employment influences the freedom to choose what I do.

Figure 15. **The circular process of valuing freedom leading to humanisation**

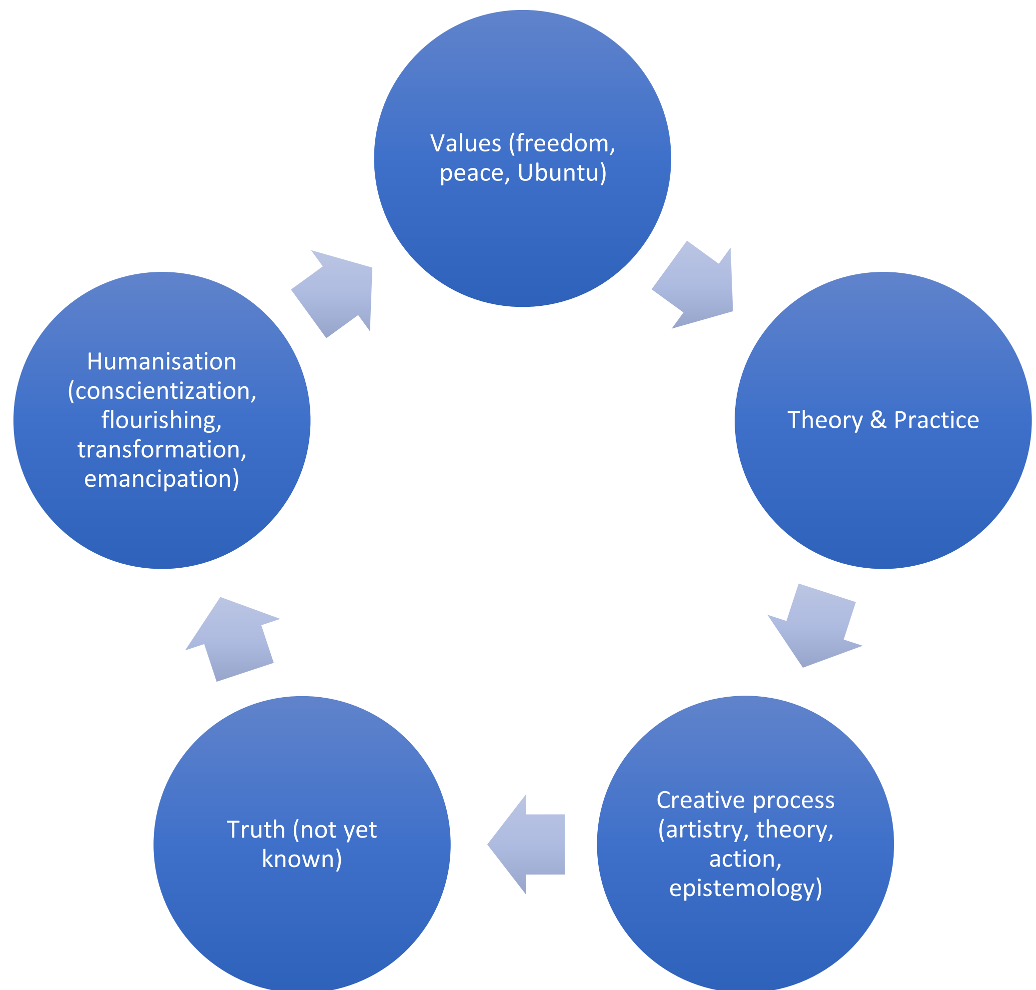


Figure 15 shows a process in which naming values (see 1.6.3) identified a living contradiction (see 3.4.1). This dissonance prompted me to read and engage with theories, either validating or countering my ideas. My experience of ontological despair triggered a creative response: the desire to learn more about how drama and peace education can help me and others understand how we experience, come to know, and ultimately transform conflict (see 2.4.6 and 3.6). Deeply embedded within the nature of a creative process is the understanding that there is a truth, but it is not yet known: it is still to be created (see 3.7). Central to the Theatre of the Oppressed creative process is that truths are relayed by one who *becomes* the singer, the actor, or the artist and is transformed through that process (McDonald et al., 2006/7).

Inherent within this depiction is the understanding that reality is a *process* undergoing constant transformation. In transforming our reality, we engage in our vocation: humanisation (Freire, 1996 [1970]).

The reinforcing nature of the cycle (Figure 15) means that values and beliefs are explored further *because of* the creative output. To summarise, we enacted this hypothesis as the Peace PAR project: a creative, participatory process that led to a freeing and empowering humanisation and critical-consciousness shift. The evolution of this theory via praxis is evidenced from section 6.2 onward.

3.6 Knowledge construction through drama (methods)

As qualitative research promotes a deep understanding of a social setting – emphasising exploration, discovery and description – its information-collection techniques must align (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019 p. 91). This section considers the critical relationship between using an art form (e.g., drama) and knowledge construction (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014). I stress the importance of locating methods (such as Image Theatre) within a paradigm/methodology (such as PAR) to demonstrate a robust philosophical and researcher stance (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014).

Henry (2010) clarifies the connections between drama and qualitative research. Both require a thoughtful and self-reflexive response to the context. This sensitivity relies on a preparedness to improvise, to take risks, take on multiple roles and adapt to and changing settings. Both drama and qualitative research demand of its actors:

- "a tacit knowledge involving affect and intuition
- an ability to draw on personal and social realities, seeking coherence in multiple voices while acknowledging a script – the playwright's script is like the researcher's strategy."

(Henry, 2010 p. 51)

Additionally, both drama and qualitative research techniques can be democratic and co-created (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), employing:

- "linguistic figures like metaphors and symbols to structure and communicate meaning
- innovative forms in which means and ends, thought and action, intertwine in an unpremeditated, improvisational fashion
- ways of knowing that people use in their everyday lives, i.e., existential knowledge."

(Henry, 2010 p. 51)

The synchronicity between PAR and drama became methodologically noteworthy for me, as "both traditions are centrally concerned with dialogue, praxis, participatory exploration and transformation" (Cahill, 2006 p. 62). Furthermore, drama's aesthetic emphasis had the potential to enrich PAR "through its use of multi-modal dialogic forms that incorporate aural, oral, visual, kinaesthetic and symbolic modes of 'conversation'" (ibid). This inquiry constructed knowledge as part of the vicarious experience of drama, consisting of face-to-face exchanges, dialogic circles, image work and improvisations.

One possible criticism of drama as a methodology is its potential to undermine PAR. Participants do not always represent themselves but are instead acting, placing themselves apart from the experience. As social beings, I argue that it is impossible to separate our lived experiences from imagined ones. Even in role-play, we draw on our own subjective experience and knowledge. When someone shouts at me during an improvisation, I may quickly respond (in character) by shouting back, cowering or walking away. As Anna, I have choices informing how the character might respond in that given situation; thus, I must already 'know' these various responses somehow, identifying with the situation and selecting from a range of possible responses. Furthermore, the dramatic moment is experienced by the actors *and* the spect-actors (Boal, 1979). Both groups can **recognise** the character in front of them

(*I am not like that, but I recognise that in others*) or even **identify** with the character (*I am just like that*). More compellingly still, they may **resonate** entirely with the character and their experiences (*that is me*) (Boal, 1995).

Image Theatre is the 'vocabulary' used within the Theatre-of-the-Oppressed canon, which uses still images to explore abstract concepts such as oppression, emotions or relationships. The group then analyses the images and shares stories, which can be 'dynamised' or brought to life through movement or sound. As such, the Theatre of the Oppressed is an embodied knowledge system that embraces the aesthetic, the kinaesthetic, the affective and the emotional. Image Theatre creates a shared language for the group.

Figure 16. **Examples of Image Theatre**

We did not include activities such as Image Theatre to develop physical skills or abilities (though some of the created images celebrated physical endeavours such as kickboxing, football and gymnastics). Instead, image creation provided a means for co-researchers to embody aspects of the findings that might (in a more traditional format) have remained discursive or visual. I provide further examples of Image Theatre as information-collection and analysis tools throughout the thesis.

I contend that using Theatre-of-the-Oppressed techniques revealed the value of an aesthetic dimension that enhanced both the research process

(when used within a PAR framework) and the representational phase (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014 p. 27).

> "Forum theatre and its derivatives can be seen as a form of participatory action research, in that players and 'spect-actors' gather to identify their (real world) oppression and to rehearse for change."
>
> (Cahill, 2006, p. 63)

There needed to be congruence between freedom, creativity and peace values, the PAR philosophy and the creative processes and methods. Emboldened by practice-led researchers such as Haseman and Mafe (2009) and Savin-Baden and Wimpenny (2014), I explored the intersection between PAR and Theatre-of-the-Oppressed methodologies, ultimately claiming PAR as an epistemological and methodological choice.

> "Coming to know through our bodies means to understand how our desires, beliefs, values, and attitudes have been shaped and instilled in us. To know through our bodies means to recognize how our deepest loves and hates, loyalties and prejudices become part of us. Knowing through our bodies means, too, understanding critically the way our deepest feelings and passions have been structured by the culture in which we live. No peace education aimed at human transformation of our beliefs and attitudes can ignore this deep substratum of embodied knowledge"
>
> (Shapiro, 2002 p. 146-7)

3.7 An epistemic search for meaning and truth

Kvale's (1996) miner-and-traveller analogies about knowledge construction helped me better understand what truths I valued. The researcher-as-miner's role is to dig down through the soil of inquiry to

reveal nuggets of gold (truth). These nuggets are subjected to a process of refinement, extracting and identifying essential elements that the researcher uses to prove or disprove a theory.

Kvale's constructivist, researcher-as-traveller allegory asserts that knowledge is not given but constructed and negotiated; the researcher and the researched accompany one another on a journey towards knowledge. PAR design thus encourages a sense of conversation in which knowledge is co-constructed, enabling potential transformation for all those involved.

This values-led PAR project and its methods prioritised discovering meaning over searching for external truth. Moreover, we founded our creative methodology on the notion that there are multiple truths and that studying such a manifold reality necessitates active participant involvement. To be clear, I was not a solitary, researcher-miner objectively reporting on a scientifically defined stable situation.

Through reflexive examinations of the researcher's role, PAR helped me recognise the relationship between the *researcher*, the *researched* and the *research* and question how knowledge is constructed (Langhout and Thomas, 2010).

An example of constructed versus negotiated knowledge was when I asked the co-researchers to use their bodies to create a coherent shape together. From my perspective, the task kept falling apart; individuals were failing to perform their part in building the whole image, nudging and kicking at each other instead, or wriggling off to a corner of the room. Worried about safety, I stopped the activity, concluding, '*I don't think this is working* and asking, *'can you tell me what's going on*?' Expecting tale-telling and accusations of 'he said/she said', their responses surprised me: they told me they *were* doing the activity. I was confused, as I could not see the image we had agreed to make – I could only see a wriggly mess of children poking and kicking each other. They then qualified *their*

interpretation of success:

- Working together (albeit a bit more physically that I might have liked)
- Involvement (they maintained that no one had removed themselves)
- Having fun.

These points outline how successful group work looked and felt *for them*. After asking for another image, they appeared to form another indistinguishable mass of bodies on the floor, and I was momentarily confused. Later that day, I read what Natori wrote in his journal:

> "I love it the way I can work with other people I don't really play with like Tyonna, Maceo, Kaari, Jaqweisha. The reason why I like working with different people is because I can see what they like and what they don't like. So, when it comes to working with them again, I know how they like working. I also like action research because it's a new kind of learning and it involves practical work."

Co-researcher Natori, journal entry, 2017

More entries talk positively about the activity like this, naming children with whom they had previously conflicted but were now cooperating. Co-researcher Ihan writes:

> "I like action research because you learn new things and all the other people that we don't get along with, other people like Tashelle, Maceo and me worked together."

Co-researcher Ihan, journal entry, 2017

As evidenced above, people's unique experiences and social interactions refract into multiple mental conceptions of reality. Therefore, we face myriad socially constructed realities, all of which are 'true'. Although such truths are subjective, dynamic and contextual and may conflict and

change over time (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), they are no *less* ‘true’. As Ledwith (2007) explains, an acceptance of many truths helps to elevate the diversity of human experience:

> “A participatory paradigm for research, one based on true democracy, aims to give autonomy to the voices of subordinated groups, accepting that there are many truths rather than one universal truth.”
>
> (Ledwith, 2007 p. 599)

This view contrasts with modernist social science research, which would separate me (as the researcher) from Natori and Ihan’s experiences. Instead of co-creating knowledge, I would only analyse (objectify) them as data *after* the activity, reporting a single-loop result in a third-person voice to the academic community (Torbert and Taylor, 2008).

However, a discussion on truth and meaning in research cannot leave the notion of validity untouched. Positivist interpretations assume observable phenomena or truth-based conclusions, reliable empirical data, internal consistency, replicable methods and uniformly reproducible data, outcomes and findings.

In contrast, I contend that multiple truths exist and commit to describing this inquiry’s interactions in a manner ‘true’ to my own and my co-researchers’ experiences. Therefore, I ask that this work be judged by its *authenticity* rather than its scientific validity. I understand authenticity in research as an “expansion of the conventional conception of singular truth” (O’Leary, 2004 p. 61). Capturing authenticity assumes that what is studied may not be reliable, consistent, or standard (O’Leary, 2004). Therefore, the methods used must be credible and dependable. Chapter four presents my research design, protocols and guides, which I maintain are logical, systematic, and well documented. Validation of authenticity in PAR is ultimately judged by those undertaking or encountering the

research, such that authenticity is consensual and achieved through interaction.

Sharing and enacting personal stories via Image Theatre during PAR sessions was a way of validating and making public the stories we told and the truths we shared. We achieved intentional critical reflection by sharing the action-research process through performance (documented in film). By writing this thesis, I also engage you – the reader – in evaluating this project's authenticity and determining the credibility of what I say (Whitehead, 2008). You will know if I am masquerading, presenting a copy of something or someone else.

3.8 PAR and me: a critical reflection

My own experience of involvement in (and objectification by) an evaluation study as part of my professional work was unfavourable. I engaged in many lengthy interviews, often by up to four researchers at once, but felt they were mining my experiences for their own benefit. Though exhilarating to have experts show an interest in me and my work – seemingly of value to them and their field – it was also exhausting. Moreover, the research team apparently changed their minds midway through the study, utilising a pre-post questionnaire that dominated the final report instead of the inquiry I contributed to. I felt disappointed that they did not include the information I unearthed as part of those interviews. I also felt crushed that they did not acknowledge or present my contributions in the final report.

The above experience strengthened my resolve to design and implement as inclusive, just, and participatory a research inquiry as possible. My experience as a research 'object' was unsettling and disempowering. Despite this, I did not feel compelled to explore empowerment as an inquiry outcome.

For Call-Cummings (2018), empowerment as a research end-goal can "smack of patronizing and paternalistic desires to 'give' or 'bestow'"

(p.385) control to the research subjects, reinforcing structural inequality and leading to *disempowerment*. The PAR *journey* is the empowering factor, not the destination. For Call-Cummings, empowerment needs to be negotiated and agreed on. She defines empowerment as:

> "the process of gaining control over knowledge production as well as the process of coming to see one's own authentically produced knowledge as valuable and useful to society"
>
> (Call-Cummings, 2018 p. 400)

Biesta (2019) differentiates between empowerment and emancipation, describing empowerment as a process that only provides power within a given order (p. 48). By this definition, one achieves empowerment by obtaining an identity pre-determined by those already in power. In contrast, emancipation is a process challenging the orders that grant individuals the power to act. As a result, new ways of speaking and acting are realised (p. 48). In short, emancipation involves a 'dis-identification' with established ways; emancipation means being 'out of order'.

PAR encourages emancipation by democratising knowledge production, re-allocating the power to define what constitutes 'valuable' knowledge and changing who produces it and how. As a practice-led researcher, I prioritised practice over theory in this inquiry, initiating research-in-practice, where we collectively formed questions, problems, and challenges. Within this emancipatory praxis, enacted through the value of freedom, we formed creative ideas that contributed to theory.

> "*I* don't need to *enable* liberation, I just need to open up the space and let the children find their own freedom to breathe. Sounds easy? It isn't"
>
> (Vettraino, 2010 p. 64)

Adopting the bricoleur's role – using all materials at hand via a pragmatic

and eclectic research approach (Rogers, 2012) – helped me account for the multiple techniques and tools (primarily drama-based) I pulled out of my 'kit bag' at any given moment. Rather than follow set procedures, I chose to "adapt the core principles of emancipatory action" (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014 p. 102). I thus became confident in my role as a 'jack-of-all-trades', utilising processes and methods from peace education, theatre in education and restorative educational approaches.

I accept that modernists distrust the concept of bricolage, seeing it as a muddled, tricksy, goal-post-shifting way of working. At worst, the bricoleur is considered a fraud, at best a well-meaning amateur. However, I consider my research position comparable to an artist or craftsperson: someone who can use the tools at hand to sculpt and shape a process. As a bricoleur, I utilised my experiences in novel and creative ways (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). Indeed, bricolage's emergent nature allowed our group to undertake bite-size research chunks with particular meaning for practice and then piece them together to create a more meaningful whole (Wibberley, 2012). Chapters five (Presentations and Discussion of Material) and six (Reflection on Findings) describe how, through trial and error, I worked with and around the disruptions that took place during this research process.

There were also gaps within my praxis. For example, I often lapsed into *doing* rather than *thinking* – or *thoughtless action* (Ledwith, 2007). This tendency previously manifested as a desire to create workshops and utilise techniques that, though enjoyable, led to little discernible outcome or action. I also failed sometimes to deliver the "connected, courageous, honest and powering learning experiences" (Pointer, McGoey and Farrar, 2020, p. 2) that I sensed a group needed and were capable of responding to. For me, the danger lies in people-pleasing. Therefore, a key development was overcoming my concern that people 'have a nice time' in a workshop/session and turning my attention to developing a sound critical practice for engaging others instead.

Throughout the Peace PAR sessions, I had to be vigilant to the desire to showcase whizzy techniques and the danger of becoming distracted or diverted. To this end, I utilised discussions with my supervisors and colleagues alongside co-researcher dialogic circles to help me maintain the ongoing dynamic between emancipatory action research, critical reflection, and collective action that was necessary (Ledwith, 2007). Using a reflective journal was also particularly helpful in heeding Freire's warning about activism that sacrifices reflection through action for action's sake (1996 [1970]). Action without reflection precludes dialogue. Similarly, sacrificing action for pure verbalism equates to idle chatter and failure to transform. To engage in critical, reflective praxis is to engage in the research in a more meaningful way.

> "For researchers with emancipatory aspirations, doing empirical research offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that the research process enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations."
>
> (Lather, 1986 p. 263)

My frustration at not successfully exploring the question I, as the lead researcher, had imposed on the group paved the way for me to closely monitor my personal development both inside and outside the research project. One unexpected outcome was my ability to explore issues of mutual concern face-to-face with others (Reason and Bradbury, 2008a) and develop second-person research skills. By fostering a mindful and inquiring approach to my life and evaluating my actions' effects on the outside world, I embarked on a rigorous first-person inquiry. My supervisors and colleagues supported me in this, continuing to hold up mirrors to my unseen biases and prejudices. Chapters six and seven explore this more fully, presenting and discussing selected material and its implications. Finally, this thesis demonstrates my commitment to engage third-person research by extending this project's learning to academic and educational communities.

This contribution to educational research counters the positivist paradigm elevating science by using big data and metrics to promote a view that the world is predictable, stable, cumulative, exact, and singular. This view often serves specific interests (adult and male) and leaves no room for the multiple, unpredictable, subjective voices of lived experience. Believing that the nature of reality is relative and co-created, I wanted to challenge the dominant epistemology within education that claims knowledge as “certain, factual and objective rather than contentious and subject to change and interpretation” (Harber and Sakade, 2009 p. 173). In doing so, I aimed to support the transformation of people’s realities. Identifying fundamental differences between my understanding of inquiry and conventional academic approaches helped me commit to a purposeful, participatory and rigorous study of innovative peace education in schools (Johnston-Goodstar, 2013, Reason and Bradbury, 2001). At heart, this inquiry was a commitment to a relationship-based social epistemology recognising different conceptions of knowledge and its relation to practice (Reason and Bradbury, 2008a).

Therefore, chapter four is not limited to a detached description of research design, process and methods followed by a clinical accounting of outcomes but builds on the previously outlined relational ontology and my assertion that PAR is not just a methodology but a philosophy.

4. Research design - bringing PAR to life

"Life is much wiser than science"

(Boyes-Watson and Pranis, 2012 p. 270)

Acknowledging this research's changeable and emergent nature, I use this space to reflect on the research process as an object of study while articulating the research design (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014 p. 83). I hope to bring PAR to life and account for how I came to appreciate the impact of action *within* the research process through a practice-led PAR inquiry.

My original contributions to knowledge in this chapter include the fusion of liberatory, participative and emancipatory theories associated with a relational and transformative paradigm. I assert that the Peace PAR project cultivated an educational environment fostering critical consciousness, surfacing meaning, and helping young people participate in creating new knowledge. I also offer a contribution to knowledge and practice concerning TO principles via an account about exploring oppression with children.

Additionally, in combining Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework and Tomlinson's (1989) method of hierarchical focusing, I systematically developed and refined an interview guide for increased interview depth and reliability. I later extended and flattened this combined IPR-and-hierarchical-focusing model into a labyrinth form (see chapter five).

This chapter accounts for my research strategy, describing the study's core setting, methodological frameworks, methods, key players and ethical considerations.

4.1 Research Strategy

To ensure rigour, I identified design objectives at the outset to verify that

the inquiry was congruent with the PAR philosophy. My research objectives were to:

1. Recruit and develop a team of co-researchers, fully informing participants about the research's purpose, methods and intended uses, the exact nature of their involvement, and any possible risks.

2. Undertake participatory action research, ensuring that the research was well designed, reviewed, and of high integrity and quality.

3. Conduct ethical research considering how best to build upon existing work. Had the literature review already answered the research question, for example, I would have considered it unethical to research the issue again. I also aimed to ensure participants' confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation and avoid any possible harm (including emotional and reputational). I was prepared for the risk of participant-upset and took steps to manage this, including activities in the first session (titled 'Training') and as part of the participant's Learner Journal (Appendix F) to discuss options if they felt upset. The development of trust contributed significantly to the co-researchers' participation and shaped their assessments of risk (Crane and Broome, 2017).

4. To transparently address independence, partiality, and conflicts of interest in the research design. In this action-research process, students acted as researchers *for themselves* (not for the rest of the student body or the school). The relationship between the students-as-researchers and action research itself was of primary concern. However, this does not imply that discoveries or actions resulting from this research lack potential as an evidence base for further research, either by research-group members, the wider school community and/or the academic community.

Having identified these objectives, I then confirmed the following emerging design characteristics with supervisors and critical friends:

- Uniqueness - using drama to create a series of extended focus-group-style sessions with children
- Subjectivity – making choices according to personal thoughts, feelings, opinions and biases
- Action-based – developing meaning and theory through action
- Small-scale – mitigating against the danger of losing control and meaning for the group

Although the research design was responsive, it was not without an agenda. To communicate with the school's staff, children, and children's parents, I carefully formulated the research question and considered how best to communicate the study's TO methods and qualitative, participatory, relational, and arts-based paradigm in accessible language. This approach presented a 'double agenda' dilemma (Tomlinson, 1989), requiring me to balance my research agenda with the participants' interests and the school staff's output priorities.

I collected most information through collaborative workshop-style focus groups among myself and co-researchers. Twelve (child) co-researchers and four (adult) participants were the primary information sources. Our research group gathered insights from each other as part of dialogic-circle discussions, collectively making sense of or analysing information. I filmed some sessions and took notes during them and after impromptu conversations with staff, using my reflective journal to contemplate such school-based interactions. I also used secondary resources, including pages from the school's website and photos of the school's displays.

I provided the co-researchers with Learner Journals to help them make sense of the PAR journey and communicate with me between sessions, elements of which I refer to in chapter five. I photographed all Learner

Journal entries (written and drawn) before returning them to the co-researchers.

Photos and films of session elements provided recorded evidence and in-the-moment reflection tools for myself and the co-researchers and are presented here for illustration purposes only. While significantly informed by the co-researchers, any meaning I ascribe is my own.

Films and images were a reflective tool (helping with critical thinking and analysis) and evidence of the success of planned changes for co-researchers. We enjoyed looking back on initial ideas or drawings and comparing them to our current thoughts and ideas (our knowledge). By evidencing embodied knowledge, representational multimedia use was important in this study.

4.2 Core setting

Since PAR is practice-based, I conducted this inquiry in a real-world school setting where no day is the same. The core setting was an inner-city school in England called Fosseway[24], a Church-of-England primary school with approximately 210 pupils and 30 staff. The school converted to Academy status in 2013, appointing the Headteacher in September 2015. Almost all pupils were from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups from Black Caribbean and Pakistani heritage. Although the proportion of pupils who spoke English as an additional language was above the national average, the vast majority spoke English.

In 2016, the school was categorised under 'Requires Improvement' (RI). Schools judged as RI are subject to re-inspection within 30 months, placing the school under more scrutiny from the Inspectorate team and the newly formed board of Academy Trustees. The pressure for Fosseway to raise standards increased staff workloads, with additional work improving teaching and learning quality and preparing documents

[24] This is a pseudonym.

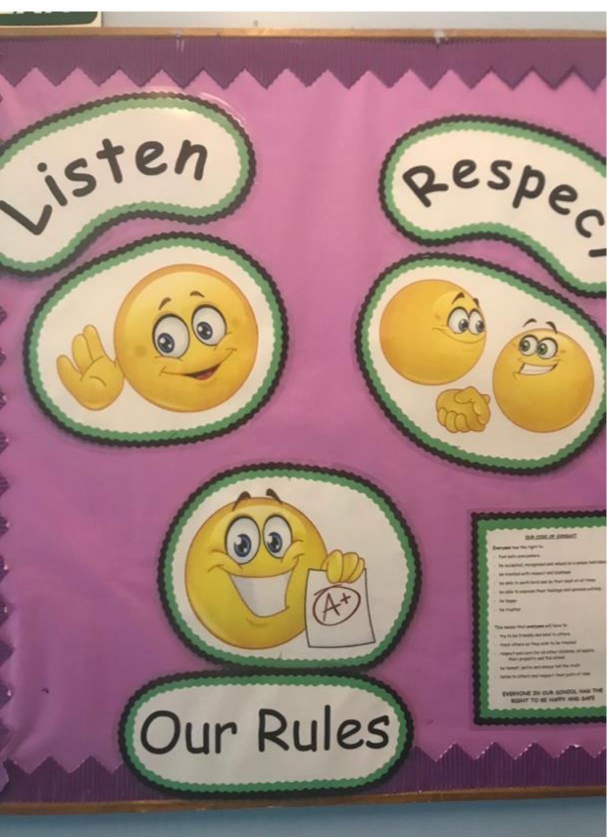
for the next Ofsted visit. Given this pressure, the discourse around school behaviour related very much to the external demands and expectations placed on the school.

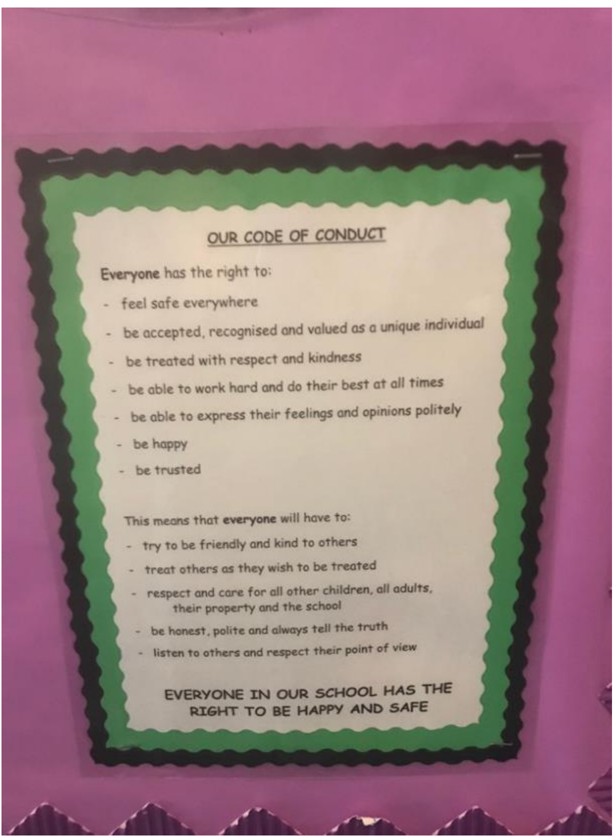
Although I could supply national deprivation indices or details from the Ofsted inspection report to characterise the school, I choose not to reproduce power structures by replicating a ‘poor kids’ narrative (Coleman et al., 1966; Liu et al., 2015). Attainment is a matter of politics as much as social science (Edmonds, 1979). Aspiring to challenge assumptions and enable those involved to tell their stories, I instead focused my investigation on the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of people in school as *they* experienced them.

As evidenced by testing and accountability regimes, a performativity agenda now dominates education’s increasingly positivist paradigm, elevating curriculum content above learning processes (Cremin, 2015). This context is essential to bear in mind when interpreting staff behaviours and policy enactments, since it is their job to endorse the prevailing approach. While some staff members’ values may well have diverged from the broader policies and dominant performative systems they worked within, the school’s RI label meant that performance management strategies were underway, jobs were under threat and a third inspection loomed. Such a heightened performance culture undoubtedly impacted people’s perceived agency to respond differently.

Through observations and interviews and in my limited interactions around the school and classrooms, I witnessed behaviourist strategies relying on high levels of teacher control (illustrated by Figures 17 and 18).

Figure 17. **Photo of school display**





OUR CODE OF CONDUCT

Everyone has the right to:

- feel safe everywhere
- be accepted, recognised and valued as a unique individual
- be treated with respect and kindness
- be able to work hard and do their best at all times
- be able to express their feelings and opinions politely
- be happy
- be trusted

This means that **everyone** will have to:

- try to be friendly and kind to others
- treat others as they wish to be treated
- respect and care for all other children, all adults, their property and the school
- be honest, polite and always tell the truth
- listen to others and respect their point of view

EVERYONE IN OUR SCHOOL HAS THE RIGHT TO BE HAPPY AND SAFE

Figure 18. **Behaviour Policy (taken from the school's website, 2018)**

Discipline at Fosseway

The staff and children have worked together and agreed on seven School Rules. Parents have also been consulted. The rules are consistently and fairly applied by all the staff and encourage the children to build up their own self-discipline. The Behaviour and Discipline Policy had a major review in the Summer Term of 2014 and will continue to be reviewed and monitored by the Governing Body every academic year.
Currently the rules are:

1. I will do as I am told the first time.
2. I will speak to and treat everybody with respect.
3. I will not disturb others who are working.
4. I will put my hand up when I want to speak to an adult.
5. I will keep my hands and feet to myself.
6. I will help to take care of our school and its environment.
7. I will work to the best of my ability at all times.

The aim of our Positive Discipline approach is to provide a clear structure for both staff and children. Everyone concerned knows the School Rules and the rewards for keeping as well as the consequences for choosing not to keep our school rules.

Our children are rewarded for doing good work and behaving well. They receive verbal praise, have stickers, are sent to see other teachers or the Headteacher and can have their names put on the "Happy" board. At the end of each week children who have had their names on the "Happy" board are awarded a prize from their class prize box and their achievement is celebrated during Merit Assembly.

Every Friday, there is a Merit assembly where children who have done some good work or behaved well are encouraged to tell the other children about what they have done. These children are given an Achievement Certificate to take home.

A group of children or the whole class can earn cubes to put into a jar. When the jar is full the class is given the opportunity to have a "treat" such as 5 minutes of extra playtime.

Sanctions

If the rules are broken, there are consequences for the children. The consequences for breaking the rules are:

1. Name on the "Sad" board.
2. Time out in partner class (10 mins. maximum)
3. Time out with the Headteacher + Detention the following day
4. Exclusion (Internal & External)

Rules 3 & 7

1. Work not completed within a specified target time will be completed at playtime and / or dinnertime.

Continual breaking of this rule

2. Sent to Headteacher with unfinished work to discuss the situation.

The behaviour-management methods I observed included the enforcement of pre-established rules, directions, environments, punishments, and rewards that clearly defined acceptable and unacceptable behaviour limits for the pupils. The sense around the school (and particularly towards the Year Six cohort) was for pupils to engage in a curriculum-driven learning process uninterrupted by other pupils' misbehaviour, using rules, consequences (punishment) and rewards to control student behaviour (Slee, 1999 p. 6). The behaviour-management techniques I observed (see section 5.5.4) in the Year Six classroom sought to reinforce positive behaviours and minimise or 'extinguish' negative behaviours (Skinner, 1968).

Since I do not subscribe to the (behaviourist) view that external events dictate our behaviour, I found such behaviour-management techniques problematic. Like Porter (2007), I contend that our inner thoughts and feelings drive us to act and that "all that the outside world can ever give us is information; we choose what we do with it. Thus, all behaviour is instigated from within" (pp. 128). This view conflicted with some staff, who preferred to make environmental adjustments – such as moving the children perceived to be pestering others – rather than exploring their inner workings (thoughts, motivations, and feelings) with them. Along with other instances where a third party made post-incident decisions (usually an adult/teacher and often leaving out those involved or affected), this example produced little understanding of the root causes of behaviour. There appeared to be little institutional support and few opportunities for staff to develop the skills and confidence to facilitate dialogue about conflict or support activities to build peace (Bickmore, 2012).

4.2.1 Staff

Four adult participants were directly involved in the PAR peace project, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. **List of adult participants by role**

Adult Participants
Deputy headteacher
Pastoral manager
Y6 class teacher
Y6 teaching assistant

There was a sense from the staff involved and those outside the project (whom I spoke with at break times) that it was their job as educators to prepare the children for the 'real world', perceived as a world of harsh realities. Adults were concerned with teaching the children 'manners', which seemed to be a way of teaching obedience and reinforcing domination (hooks, 1994 p. 4) to cope with the world outside school. However, I suggest that the focus on obedience was used to retain adult authority, resonating with a broader culture of security where adherence to rules is evidence of being a good citizen. Nevertheless, I accept that rules are important for the people responsible for safety and order within a school who are held to account when things go wrong (Raby, 2012). I am also sensitive to the broader economic, political, and social formations and practices within schools and how difficult it might be for educators to step out of their academic boundaries and ally themselves with more progressive and libertarian thoughts (Giroux, 2005).

4.2.2 Class

I proposed working with a cohort of 12 Year Six children (aged 10–11) I already knew from working in their class when they were in Year One (aged 5–6). Working with their (then) teacher, I facilitated a term-long circle-time course designed to support social and emotional learning.

My selection process was a form of homogenous sampling. Given my access to schools, I could have undertaken my research with many groups who met the following criteria:

- Key Stage 2[25]
- Prior experience of peace education through peer mediation training
- Voluntary participation
- Parental consent given

However, it would be disingenuous not to disclose the subtler elements behind my choice to work with this group and their choice to work with me.

Revisiting the school in 2016 as part of my work with the peace education charity, the deputy headteacher invited me to lunch with her in the dining hall. Lining up for our food, I heard my name called across the hall. A group of pupils approached and asked if I was 'the lady from circle time from Year One', which I confirmed I was. The deputy seemed intrigued that the children remembered me from four years ago and specifically asked them what they remembered about their time with me. Comments from the pupils included sitting in a circle, talking about feelings, and having fun. The deputy was clearly struck by their recollections, particularly from a group that was suffering some negativity within the school, and mentioned the encounter as part of her interview:

> "I know how much that meant, and years later, when you walked in, you hadn't been here in a while, *that* cohort targeted *you* as someone that they really respected. And why did they respect you? I'm not suggesting that they shouldn't have! But it was pretty evident that the work that you'd done with them in year one had mattered. And they could still recount sessions that had gone on there. And I kind of think that says it all."

Deputy headteacher, 2018

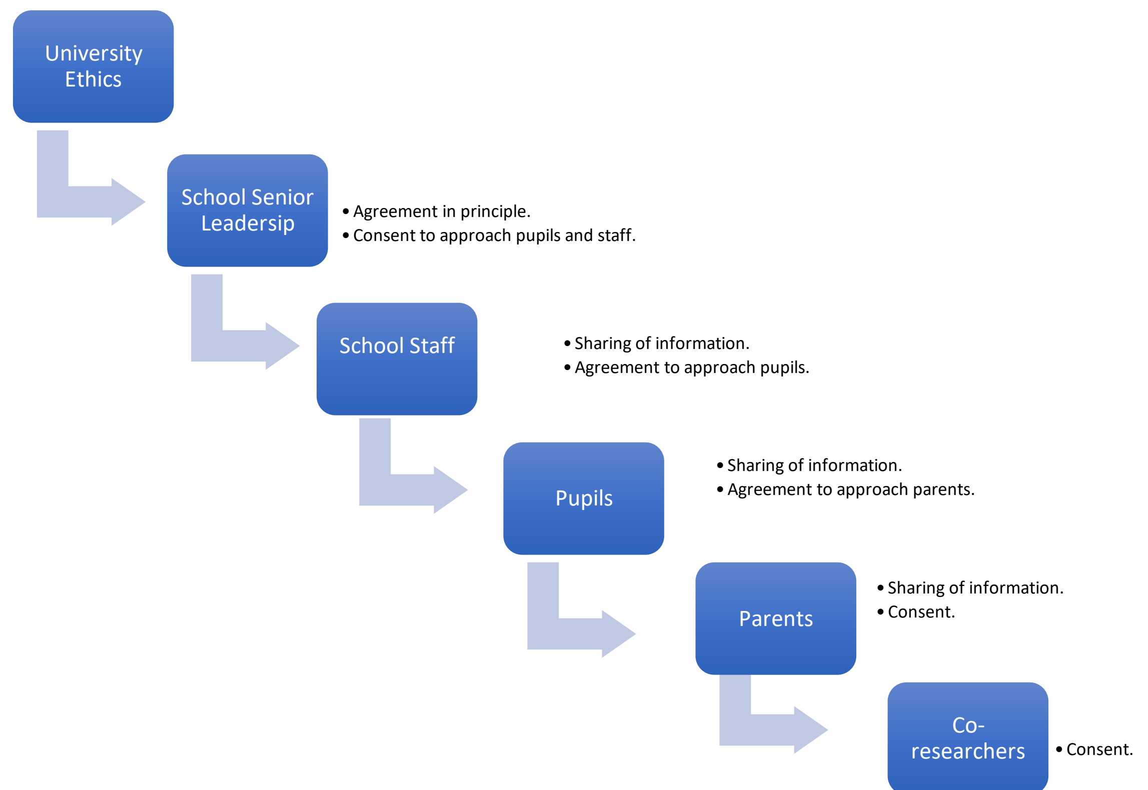
Witnessed by the deputy, this interaction with the Year Six pupils smoothed the way to approach the headteacher with my research

[25] Key Stage 2 (KS2) is the key stage taught in Years 3 to 6 of primary school, when children are between 7 and 11 years old.

proposal. Once I secured permission to work with the Year Six class in school, I used stratified purposeful sampling to combine an initial sampling method (homogenous, age-related, and previous mediation experience) with the addition other subgroups of later interest.

Figure 19 shows the 'layers' of consent I anticipated and factored into my schedule.

Figure 19. **Peace PAR project - layers of consent**[26]



To prevent adults from deciding who should or should not be involved, I invited the entire Year Six Class to participate. I shared information with the class via a presentation (Appendix A), choosing visual methods to communicate complex information in the most child-friendly way

[26] See appendix for copies of information sheets, participant consent forms and presentation materials.

possible. Part of the presentation involved discussing potential selection criteria with the children and adults in the class to decide which might be best. Various criteria were then negotiated, such as having a balance between boys and girls, and some class members suggested that only the 'best behaved' children should participate. Finding this problematic, I explored other criteria with them, such as being interested in drama or wanting to work as part of a team – not to dismiss their contribution, but based on concerns about where the criteria for *good* behaviour may have originated. I made it clear that participation was entirely voluntary and applied the following additional criteria:

- Parental/guardian consent was obtainable
- They had previously participated in peer mediation training

A basic form of stratified purposeful sampling then followed, with self-referral based on:

- An interest in research
- Being comfortable with/ interested in drama

Twelve children expressed an interest and returned consent forms (Appendix D). Tables 3 and 4 detail the characteristics of the child co-researchers and adult participants (as provided from existing school data by the headteacher).

Table 3. **Ethnicity and gender of co-researchers**

Ethnicity	**Female**	**Male**
Black Caribbean	4	1
Black European		1
White and Black Caribbean	1	
Black Nigerian		1
Other black African		2
Any other black background		1

Mirpuri Pakistani		1

Table 4. **Ethnicity and gender of adult participants**

Ethnicity	Female	Male
White British	3	
Black Caribbean	1	

I was initially reluctant to ask for and include this data, concerned about an individualising discourse that can classify young people of colour, working-class youth and other marginalised youth or their families and cultures (Wright, 2020). From the outset, my priority was to examine youth practices within the contexts of a school's structural, pedagogical, curricular, discursive, and institutional practices.

My early 'colour-blind' attitude was naïve; I have since concluded that information on ethnicity is vital for clarifying the differences between my ethnicity and the co-researchers and participants' (Valandra, 2020) from the outset. Recognising my own (white British) and others' ethnicity held me accountable for my assumptions about the study's process and results.

Racial and ethnocultural responsiveness is still a developing area for me. When it came to race and ethnicity, my narrow interest in pedagogical approaches supporting creativity, subjectivity, decision-making, questioning, power, agency and knowledge production (Wright, 2020) inhibited early examination of my positionality and biases (Holoien and Shelton, 2012), as further discussed in section 5.6.3 and validated in sections 6.7.15 and 6.7.23.

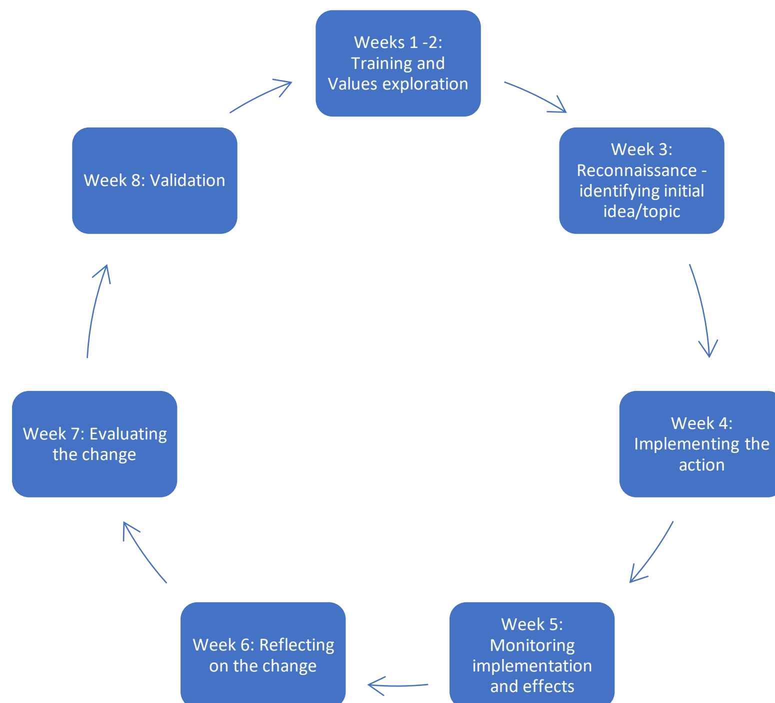
4.3 PAR framework

We chose a period of eight sessions (each lasting around two hours) to work within the school term and enable development and evolution over time. Rather than reporting on a one-off encounter, I wanted to work in relationship with people to more effectively co-create meaning over a

longer period. This schedule also gave sufficient time and space for reflection between sessions, ultimately generating more action. I displayed a timeline during each session so that we might see progress and an endpoint.

The sessions were initially numbered and assigned a basic research activity corresponding to a typical, Lewinian-style, procedural, action-research cycle:

Figure 20. **Planned Peace PAR Cycle**

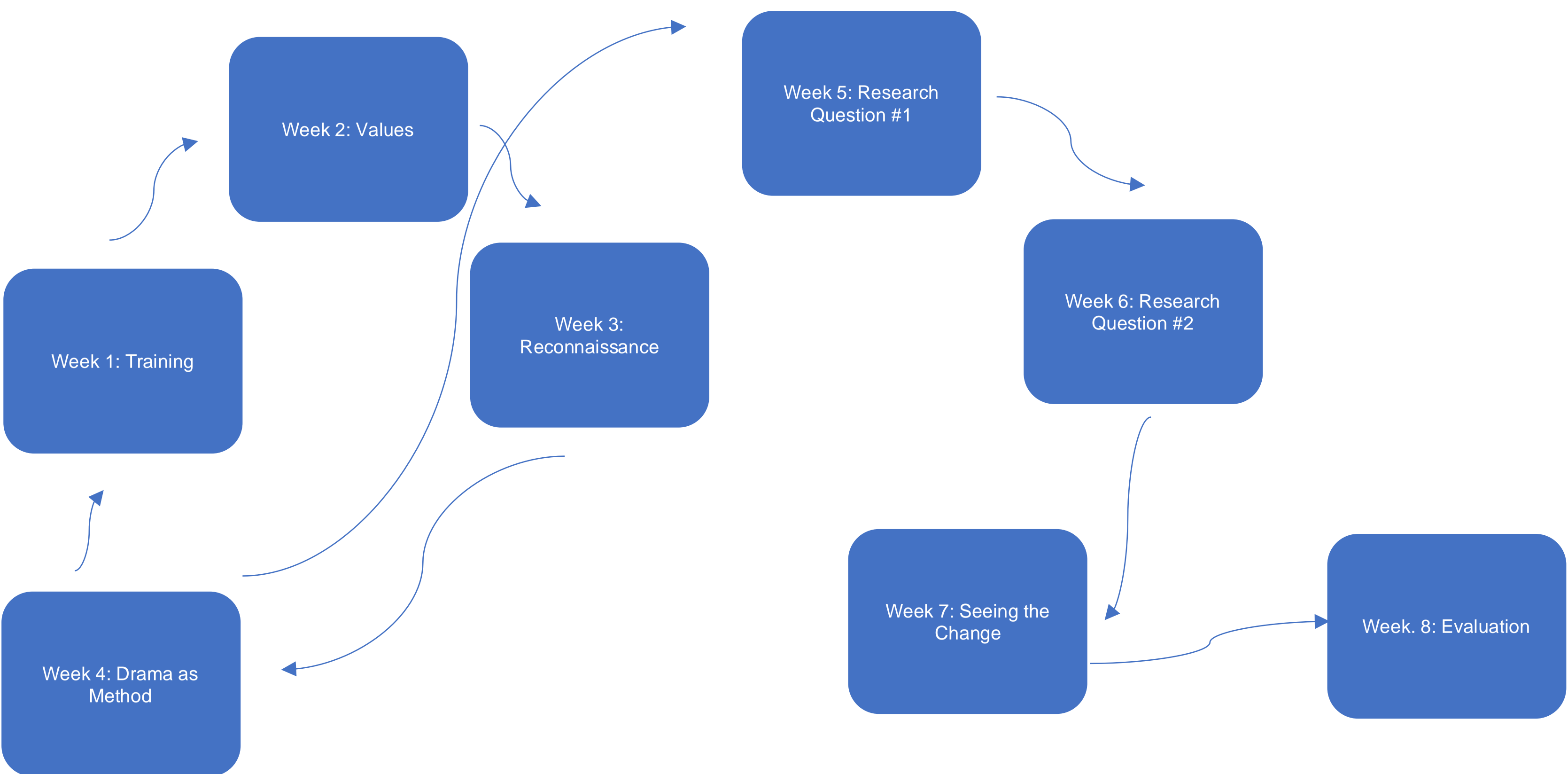


Of course, things did not proceed this smoothly in practice; instead, I constantly responded to information (from the literature and the sessions) that informed my next step (Haseman and Mafe, 2009).

Concerning the formation of a theory of change, Tuck (2008) describes (somewhat reassuringly for me) the "confusing and bewildering moments" (p. 49) a PAR collective experiences. Figure 21 more accurately represents the shape of the sessions. The changes to session

titles (as agreed by the group), doubling back on cycles, and my interwoven development demonstrate the organic nature of the process.

Figure 21. **Actual Peace PAR cycle**



The changes to session titles (as seen from week four in Figures 20 and 21) demonstrate my early commitment to the Northern tradition of action research. From session three onwards, my stance became more emancipatory and responsive. By session four, the titles emerged week-by-week (not set by me in advance). By session seven, the group had agreed on a focus (talents).

I will briefly revisit the *planned* cycles and identify each session's overarching aims, accounting for how I moved from engaging with a living educational theory (based on 'I' questions) to a living educational praxis (based on 'we' questions). This engagement evolved as I participated with the co-researchers. As more information and insights emerged and were contested and clarified as part of a group process, we created a living form of educational research. I will describe this process and detail the methods used.

As part of my personal world (McNiff and Whitehead, 2005), I considered a typical action-research cycle (plan, act, observe, reflect, repeat) to begin with, alongside Whitehead's (1989, 1993) principles of action research:

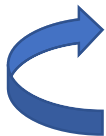
Table 5. **Whitehead's principles of action research** (1989, 1993)

- I experience problems when my educational values are negated in my practice
- I imagine ways of overcoming my problems
- I act on a chosen solution
- I evaluate the outcomes of my actions
- I modify my problems, ideas, and actions in the light of my evaluations ... (and the cycle continues)

As part of a first-person research cycle, I had grown curious to see how a group might respond to Whitehead's principles via TO methodology and methods within a joint inquiry into peace and restorative practice.

This curiosity inspired me to investigate how a counter-value might lead to a study of oppression and conflict. During the second cycle (now in relationship with the co-researchers), I needed to re-order Whitehead's principles so that imagining a solution (or, in this inquiry's case, naming a value) came *before* naming an oppression/problem.

Table 6. **A re-ordering of Whitehead's principles of action research specific to the Peace PAR project: cycles 2–3**



- We explore and identify our values
- We explore ways in which our values are negated (we experience oppression)
- We imagine ways of overcoming our oppressions and enact them using drama
- We evaluate the outcomes of our actions through dialogic circles and reviewing live and recorded images
- We modify our problems and decide to change our research question

This reordering was due to the conceptual complexity of 'oppression'[27]. I was concerned with how I might explain the concept to younger children. For example, how relevant was it to a formal education setting, and how useful would it be when I could use other words, such as 'problem', 'harshness', or 'force'? I was also concerned with how the word might migrate home and be reinterpreted by parents.

Nervous about using the word 'desire' (Boal, 1995) and unable to control its translation once we left the room, I chose not to use it. Instead, I used 'value' to express something meaningful, important, positive and desirable.

My emerging theory was that if we explored our *values* (a solution) first, we might be better able to explore the experience of having these values

[27] See the 'reluctant' Literature Review, chapter two, for a definition of oppression.

negated (a problem/oppression). For example, if someone values fun (as co-researcher Tyonna did), there is potential for experiencing and naming its *negation*. Tyonna called this negation 'boredom', but another person may have called it 'conformity', 'calm' or 'turmoil'.

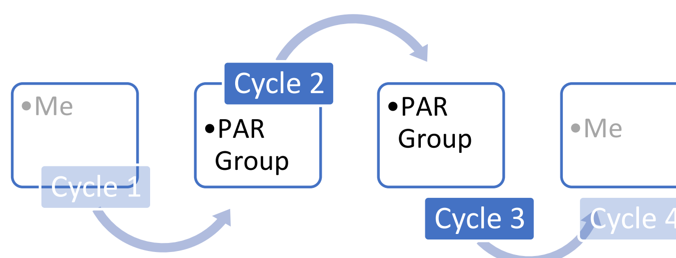
Naming something positive that we value in life can offer clarity and motivation towards something we already have a sense of. Working towards something, rather than away from something, is a chance to change circumstances. Once we have named what we value, we can more clearly see and name our counter-values (oppressions).

4.4 PAR sessions

This research design synthesises Whitehead's (1989) living educational theory (my explanation of educational influences in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understanding) (Whitehead, 2019) with TO and PAR methodology and methods, providing a unique research contribution.

I present here a reduced audit trail of session plans[28] with the aims and activities included as evidence of my considerable engagement with the setting. What follows is an account of cycles two and three (cycle one – the solo, self-reflection cycle – was covered in chapter one).

Figure 22. **Peace PAR group cycles**



[28] Full session plans are available on request.

Table 7 lists each session's practical outcomes, demonstrating the research design's robust planning, preparation and training. Table 7 also outlines each session's overarching theoretical foci. Although these plans existed in advance of the sessions, I want to draw attention to their lack of *specific* outcomes. I deliberately kept the outcomes open, working on the assumption that all researchers involved were coming to the research process with knowledge and experience to share (Maguire, 1987). I could not have predetermined this. Indeed, part of the hoped-for transformation and conscientisation was for us to collaborate on producing knowledge. Therefore, Tables 7 to 12 are only provided as evidence of a framework.

Table 7. **Session outcomes and overarching project foci**

Session Number	**Session Title**	**Outcomes**	**Overarching Foci**
N/A	Preparatory Meeting	Whole class orientated into the inquiry through presentations. Co-researchers recruited and inducted into the inquiry process.	**Cycle 2 (Sessions 1-4):** *We explore and identify our values.* *We explore ways in which our values are negated (we experience oppression).* *We imagine ways of overcoming our oppressions and enact them using drama.* *We evaluate the outcomes of our actions through dialogic circles and reviewing images both live and recorded.* *We modify our problems and decide to change our research question*
1	'Training'	Training for the co-researchers designed to: - reiterate/retrain the group of co-researchers in circle work and games - develop knowledge and understanding of key research terms and usage - introduce co-researchers to methods of information capture: circles, Learner Journals, Image Theatre, and smartphones	
2	'Values'	Action research activities designed to: - share with and model for the co-researchers a values-led inquiry	

		- identify values as a stepping-stone toward exploring oppression	
3	'Reconnaissance'	Action research activities designed to: - identify initial idea/ topic (reconnaissance) - explore group working and collaborative inquiry through drama	
4	'Drama as method'	Action research and TO activities designed to: - introduce key TO techniques - clarify a PAR framework - agree on a research question - name our 'oppressions' (an extension from values work in session 2)	
5	'Research Question #1' (map on the floor)	Action research activities designed to: - share co-researcher and lead-researcher reflections on how sessions are going and how we are working together - explore image work as a coding mechanism (this did not happen)	**Cycle 3 (sessions 5-8)** *We explore and identify our talents.* *We explore how our talents are lived and enact them using drama.* *We evaluate the outcomes of our actions through dialogic circles and reviewing images both live and recorded.* *We modify our actions and decide to create a performance.*
6	'Research Question #2 – Talents'	Action research activities designed to: - find out how we can use our talents to find out more about ourselves and each other - engage peacefully in action research - remind ourselves that our research is values-led	
7	'Action (Making things happen)'	Action research activities designed to:	

		- move towards making a change/ making things happen as a result of our research - create a short performance[29] - discuss how to share our research	
8	'Evaluation (Seeing the change)'	Action research activities designed to: - evaluate the PAR process collectively - celebrate our work	

Tables 8 to 12 tabulate my research agenda for each session, as informed by the combination of theoretical principles of TO, Freirean pedagogy and living theory (Whitehead, 1989, 2008, 2018).

Table 8. **Research Strategy for sessions 1 (Training), 2 (Values) and 3 (Reconnaissance)**

Whitehead principle: *I imagine a solution*	**Theatre of the Oppressed principle: *Desire***	**Research agenda**
We name our values - what gives us meaning in life[30]. Images are made that convey these values.	We conceive of a value as a form of potential liberation. By recognising a value (a desire) and naming it (through images) we assist in unlearning our oppressed ways. From this point of consciousness, we begin the process of humanisation.	I explore how working first with values (and naming them as desirable) might be a liberatory act. By naming our world (our value) and entering into physical, relational communication with each other, we enter into anti-oppressive practice.

[29] A short film of session 7 can be made available on request. The full transcript is appended to this document (Appendix N).

[30] Pictures of these images and the accompanying narrative will follow.

Table 9. **Research strategy for session 4 (Drama as method)**

<table>
<tr><th>Whitehead principle: I experience a problem</th><th>Theatre of the Oppressed principle: Oppression</th><th>Research agenda</th></tr>
<tr><td>A living contradiction is the experience of two mutually exclusive opposites: of holding specific values and having them negated (Whitehead, 1989).</td><td rowspan="3">We analyse and name our inner oppressions (our counter values). Once named, we are inspired to act, take control, and make changes. Part of the change process is the reproduction of our thoughts and emotions (rather than those of a character). We say, 'I want…' and so are more able to move to action. We make our desires observable to ourselves and others. We manifest our full potential, our humanity.

We work in the affective dimension; we project our experiences onto the aesthetic space. We transform this reality into images. We explore 'real' and 'ideal' versions of our realities and so transform images into reality.</td><td rowspan="3">I work towards naming and identifying oppressions (Freire, 1996 [1970]), endeavouring not to put words in people's mouths.

I aim to convey the notion of a 'counter value' as something oppressive: a problem I am experiencing.

I explore with the group the sense that if two people value fun, they both know the experience of fun and what it feels like to be bored. We create images of the opposite of our values and call them counter values.</td></tr>
<tr><th>Freirean principle: Naming</th></tr>
<tr><td>I name my world as part of an encounter with others. This makes it an act of creation. It is not an act of dominance of one person over another – of you naming the world on my behalf. I am not putting words in other people's mouths (Freire, 1996).</td></tr>
</table>

Table 10. **Research Strategy for sessions 5 (Research Question 1) and 6 (Research Question 2)**

Whitehead principle: *I act in the direction of the solution*	**Theatre of the Oppressed principle: *Rehearse for reality***	**Research agenda: *Change/ transformation***
Now conscious of the problem and the contradiction of my values, I choose to do something about it. I imagine a way forward and try out my ideas. I change my world.	We make our images and then respond to them. I practice it (the value) as part of my research. My 'problem' no longer resides in my mind but can be framed as something social and active; something I can work towards with support from others. I can change the way people respond to me based on how I communicate my value (desire) and counter-value (oppression).	As we act out (through drama) here and in real life, we have a radically new self-perception. The group demand the right to be treated well by each other and by the adults in school. We are no longer seen as naughty or incapable but as the people/ person who values their faith or joy. We move from a deficit to an appreciative model, beginning to see other group members differently as they practice their values.

Table 11. **Research Strategy for session 7 (Action)**

Whitehead principle: *I evaluate the actions*	**Theatre of the Oppressed principle: *Image Theatre***	**Research agenda**
We produce evidence (in the form of images) to show our initial concerns and the actions we have taken. We evaluate the influence of our actions within our dialogic circles. I reflect on my new world as I see it.	The 'vocabulary' used within the TO canon is Image Theatre, whereby still images are used to explore abstract concepts. We move from being a protagonist in the action of theatre to become a protagonist in our own life. We 'rehearse for reality'.	Information is gathered and analysed. Knowledge is constructed as part of the vicarious experience of drama (made up of face-to-face exchange, dialogic circles, image work and improvisations).

Table 12. **Research strategy for session 8 (Evaluation)**

Whitehead principle: *I change my ideas based on my evaluations*	**Theatre of the Oppressed principle: *Images are 'dynamised' or brought to life through movement or sound.***	**Research agenda: Sharing the work**
We modify our ideas based on our evaluations. Some of us are moved to act. We can change and improve our ideas in light of our actions. I also change and modify my ideas in light of the actions of the co-researchers: I change the focus of the research project.	We create a shared language for the group, "a technique that privileges physical expression over the spoken word" (Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, 1993 p.3). We 'rehearse for reality'. We take part in exercises to de-mechanise our bodies. This helps us notice and evade the censorship our thoughts and habits have on our actions.	We share and make public the learning (poster, drama, talking, presentation, thesis).

The results of these plans (described as 'what we did' and 'what we found') are discussed in section 5.6.2.

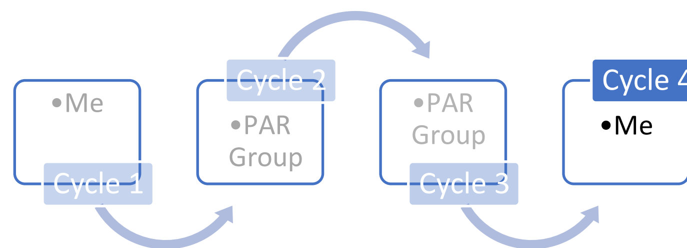
Although session 7 was entitled 'Action', the action was not limited exclusively to the end of the project; indeed, action occurred early and often via Image Theatre and dialogic circles. Each session consisted of several 'cycles' of observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating and planning, blurring the lines between method and action (Tuck and Guishard, 2013). Furthermore, I recognise and defend my own 'action' in initiating this inquiry. There was no ready-made community of child researchers waiting to instigate an exploration of peace education; therefore, I considered it appropriate as an academic researcher to initiate this participatory endeavour (Maguire, 1987).

Such neat reporting of the agendas underpinning this synthesis bears little relation to what happened once the Peace PAR project community

met and the project came to life. Action research is an organic, labyrinthine and (due to its responsive, critical nature) contestable research approach (Convery and Townsend, 2018), not a definitive framework or approved checklist of strategies and methods to work through. Nevertheless, a discussion of methods is necessary and will follow shortly.

I, too, have had experiences that created change for me. I experienced a negation of values as I engaged with the academy's expectations and rituals. This conflict prompted a further cycle (see Figure 23), ultimately inspiring me to extend my master's to a doctorate, the bulk of which was formed by cycle four.

Figure 23. **Solo Cycle Four: Observe – Reflect – Act – Evaluate**



I document cycle four's results in chapters six and seven (specifically sections 6.7.14 and 7.3). For now, I focus on the Whitehead-inspired questions that guided much of the final cycle.

Table 13. **A reordering of Whitehead's principles of action research specific to the Peace PAR project: cycle 4**

▪ *I experience problems when my educational values are negated in my relationship with the academy* ▪ *I imagine ways of overcoming my problems, which include challenging the dominant paradigm in social science research* ▪ *I act on a chosen solution by engaging in PAR as fully as I can and applying arts-based practice to an educational research setting* ▪ *I evaluate the outcomes of my actions; I review the literature and develop a living theory*

- *I modify my problems, ideas, and actions in the light of my evaluations and submit my thesis*

4.5 Methods used in the inquiry

To help democratise the group, I incorporated circles and play into each session (Boal, 2002). I would sit in the circle and play games with the children, with the accompanying adult in the room usually joining in. Just as forum theatre relieves the audience from the obligation to be passive (Jackson, 1995), I reduced the passive compulsion in a learning context through active, shared engagement, predominantly using games played in a circle (Pointer et al., 2020).

For Boal, games and exercises allow us the opportunity to realise how 'stuck' our life movements, responses and attitudes have become. Through theatre techniques, we discover individually and collectively "how people move and speak, and their degree of freedom or inhibition" (Babbage, 2004 p. 111). In this inquiry's case, we came to discover how our *life* and *learning* habits affected our bodies (ibid). We used games and exercises in the sessions to encourage people to attend to their relationship with their body and help them to move out of habitual behaviour by realising their body's full range. Boal called this 'de-mechanisation'.

In carrying out activities designed to de-mechanise our bodies, we developed an awareness that liberated us from thinking and acting repetitively, thus realising freedom and creativity. Ironically, how effectively I 'liberated' myself from the self-imposed confines of my research agenda remains to be seen.

Lastly, the games helped us have fun together and build and strengthen relationships, although we did not enforce adherence to the games' rules.

Indeed, rule-breaking was encouraged as part of the process. Just as in society, rules must initially be followed for the game to function. However, games can be changed, encouraging creativity. The instant a creative change to the game occurs and is celebrated, the players are liberated from 'servile obedience' (Boal, 2006). I encouraged the co-research group to improvise and remake games and ensured different people could facilitate a favourite game, directing its play in the style they wanted.

Figure 24. **The room in which sessions took place**.

Before each session, I cleared the desks, arranged a circle of chairs, and positioned the flip chart with the session details nearby. When the children entered the room, they 'read' the circle and found a chair to sit on. Sometimes they went to the flipchart and checked the title or number of the session. I also brought a bag of resources for each session, containing the co-researchers' journals, pens, extra paper, and my phone as a camera[31].

[31] I undertook all necessary data protection and safeguarding procedures for using my phone as a camera. In agreement with the Deputy, I transferred all photos/film to my

All but one of the sessions started with all participants sitting on chairs in a circle. A basic structure would follow:

- Checking in
- Games to de-mechanise the body
- A main activity
- Dialogic circles to reflect and/or writing in journals
- Checking out

These activities became rituals the team treated with a degree of reverence. The co-researchers often entered the room in high spirits, but the energy would quickly change once we were all seated in the circle; people would settle, the talking piece[32] would be looked for, and the check-in question anticipated. The teaching assistant commented on the change in dynamic precipitated by the circle's formation:

> "They actively sat and they listened to each other. That was amazing."
>
> Teaching assistant, 2018

The circle was significant in several ways. It helped build relationships between the research team and the adults supporting them. People also shared personal stories in the circle, and I observed co-researchers consciously applying what Bird-Naytowhow et al. (2017) define as 'spiritual' qualities and attitudes, such as compassion, respect, humility, kindness, and trustworthiness.

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laptop each afternoon and saved them securely before leaving the school premises. I deleted all data from my personal device. This project took place before the 2018 General Data Processing Regulation (GDPR) came into force. Since then, all data has been stored and processed according to GDPR.

[32] Talking pieces are used in circles to indicate whose turn it is to speak (the person holding it) and to represent expectations of respect and focussed listening by all present. These techniques reference Indigenous traditions, including First Nations people in Canada.

Moreover, PAR itself became a form of ritual in which intentions were set and stories and knowledge emerged. I learned, over time, to approach this research inquiry with a sense of sacredness and reverence, honouring the power and significance of such knowledge-generating encounters.

This is not to say that either the group's sessions or my writing processes were 'quiet'. On the contrary, my intention was to create a pedagogy contingent on fun, excitement and presence (hooks, 1994). An acknowledgement of presence must be demonstrated and enacted, not just stated. Our check-in/out process achieved this well. In chapter five, where I present and discuss selected material in more detail, I share the co-researchers' thoughts about the circle and whether it lived up to sacred space I had envisaged.

Although a session's focus often deviated from my initial plan (usually in response to a co-researcher's point or suggestion), the co-researchers became used to returning to the circle to discuss and clarify information. I perceived these circles as enhancing the traditional observation-and-interview format favoured by social researchers (Frey and Fontana, 1991). The circle process helped me move beyond relying on a definitive statement from a single respondent and allowed participants (including myself as a co-respondent-researcher) to elaborate on statements, unpack subtext and realise the human element of the information. The circles triangulated the opinions bouncing back and forth that were subject to indefinite group modification (Frey and Fontana, 1991). Methods such as question repetition and a talking piece (allowing all who wanted to speak to do so) ensured multiple subjects' voices were heard and could be cross-referenced. Filming circle discussions helped me stay mindful of group dynamics and how these may have impacted the group's interaction and response patterns (Frey and Fontana, 1991; Wilson et al., 2007).

Image Theatre was another method used to instigate and reflect on action[33], creating images in conversation with each other. I also used gamesercises,[34] dialogue, photographs and films, lead-researcher and co-researcher journaling, drawings and semi-structured interviews.

In his Rainbow of Desires work (1995), Boal aspired for people to be directors in their therapeutic process. Using creative methodology in this inquiry helped the group reject my initial research question (about how people co-create knowledge around and potentially resolve their conflicts) and explore their own and other's talents.

People began directing their own processes during session 3 ('Reconnaissance'). We framed our final 'check out' discussion by the question "what do we want to focus on for next week?", which met with the following responses:

- "Opinions: how everyone has the right to have an opinion"
- "Watch the films to come up with more ideas"
- "We should do creative stuff like a poster for our research"
- "Go on the computers - research stuff about our countries and read them out"
- "How can we use each other's talents to find out more about each other?"

Co-researchers, 2017

It was only by reflecting on the session and writing up my notes that I was able to see the final question above as a near-perfect action-research question. This was a key moment for me, marking my transition from

[33] Image Theatre methods focus on creating still and moving images, the creation and analysis of which was a source of data. I photographed some images and filmed some of their live creation.

[34] Gamesercises are Augusto Boal's amalgamation of games (featuring a fair proportion of exercise) and exercises (featuring a fair proportion of gaming) (Boal, 2002).

respecting the co-researchers' agenda to *responding* to it, as discussed further in section 5.6.1.

In terms of accountability, I reviewed information between sessions and reported back to the group with the emerging themes and ideas I initially saw. These ideas were then subject to group review and scrutiny before moving forwards.

> "I liked how you put everything together. It tells what we've been doing."
>
> Co-researcher Natori, 2017

> "It summed up as it was. It was a good piece. It had the things to show what we're doing."
>
> Co-researcher Ladonya, 2017

4.5.1 Learner Journals

I sought out multiple ways for people to respond to the inquiry, including a structured workbook designed to record the session's features with reflective commentary and consideration of the issues raised (Moon, 2006 p. 13).

The Learner Journal (Appendix F) also provided room for responding to key questions in my inquiry (*what is research? What is a researcher?*) and space for drawing, personal reflection, and a word search. Chapter five provides an analysis of some of these written and drawn responses. For now, I present some example journal entries.

Figure 25. **Sample Learner Journal entry 1**

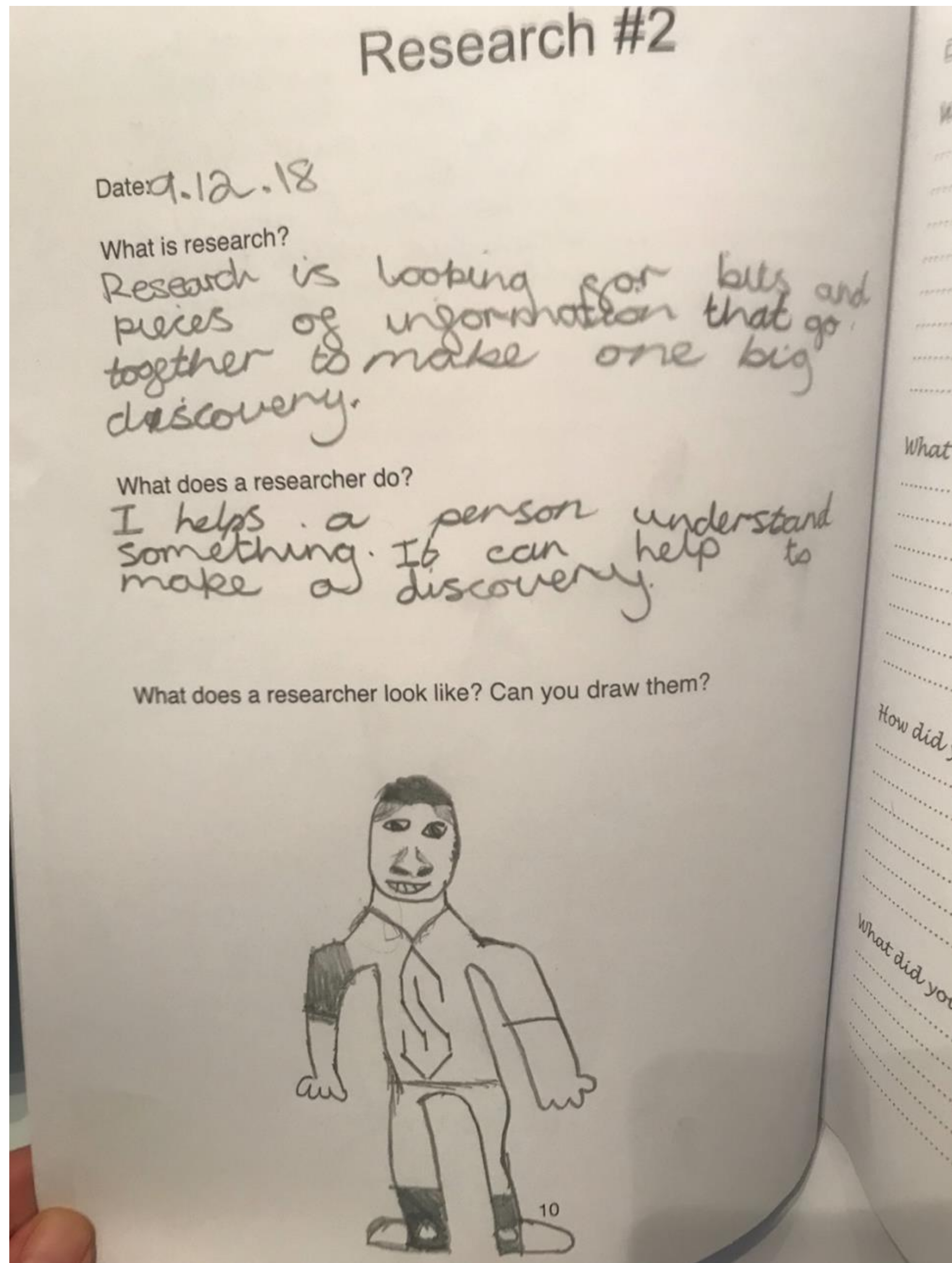
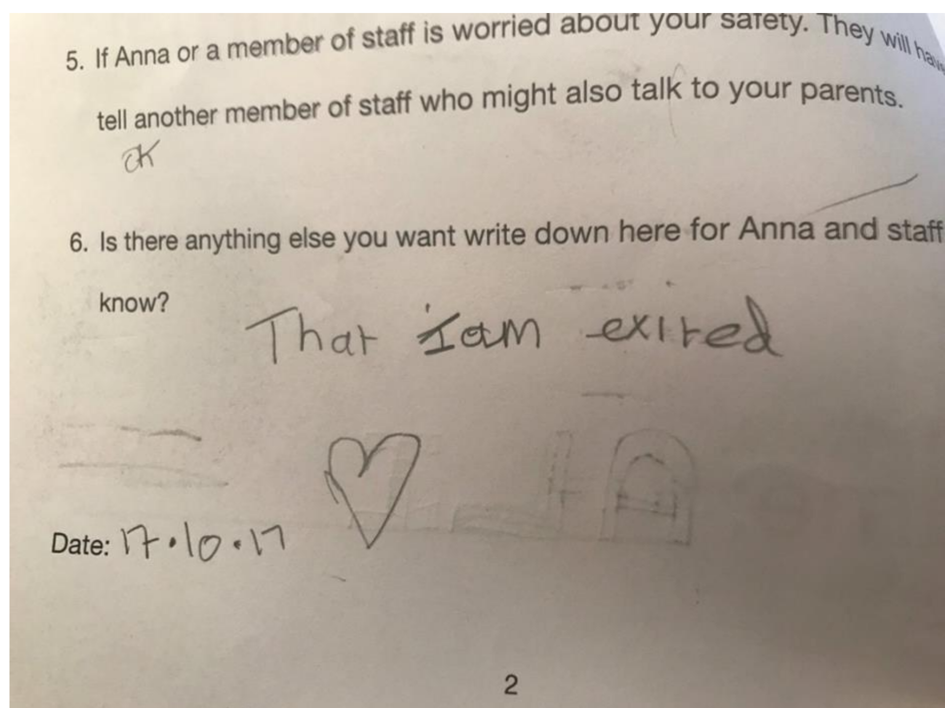


Figure 26. **Sample Learner Journal entry 2**



5. If Anna or a member of staff is worried about your safety. They will ha

tell another member of staff who might also talk to your parents.

ok

6. Is there anything else you want write down here for Anna and staff

know? That I am exited

Date: 17.10.17

2

I invested in colour printing and binding these journals and gave each researcher their own pen, wanting to show that I valued the researchers and their contributions. At the end of the project, I sought permission to photograph the journals before returning them to the co-researchers.

4.5.2 Reflexive Journal

I also engaged in rigorous journalling to process, unpack and understand unexpected research encounters, looking back on experiences to make sense of the past (reflection) and identifying how I was shaping the creation of future knowledge and findings (Meyer and Willis, 2019). Journalling helped develop my reflexivity, providing a space to constructively contemplate the social or intersubjective processes I was instigating and involved in. Intentional prospective and retrospective reflexivity (Attia and Edge, 2017) also helped improve my awareness of researcher positionality to better understand a session, journal entry or interview insight. This helped contextualise findings, supporting my ongoing development as a researcher. I also called supervisors to talk

through ideas and encounters, demonstrating the need to be in participation with others: solo refection was not enough.

4.5.3 Interviews

Following the eight PAR sessions, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the four members of staff involved in the project. I had initially only identified the class teacher as a potential interviewee. By the end of the project, however, I had committed to interviewing the class teacher, the teaching assistant, the deputy headteacher, and the pastoral manager – another example of the emergent, responsive research design with action arising from cycles of learning and reflection. (The rationale to include additional interviewees is discussed more in section 5.5.2, 'How I engaged with others: staff').

I carried out four semi-structured interviews, defined by the following characteristics:

1) The participant and I scheduled a time to sit and speak with each other, jointly acknowledging this meeting as an interview, and I sought their consent to record the conversation.
2) I had a clear interview focus and plan in mind to guide the discussion.
3) I did not use a structured interview guide. Instead, I built rapport with participants, encouraging them to open up and express themselves in their own way.
4) I generally kept questions open-ended, exerting minimal control over participants' responses.

The above characteristics demonstrate how I reconsidered the researcher's role, moving away from one of 'otherness' towards a personal, political and relational role that created a space for shared dialogue. I sought an 'I/We' relationship where we talked and asked each other questions as part of a conversation (Oakley, 1981).

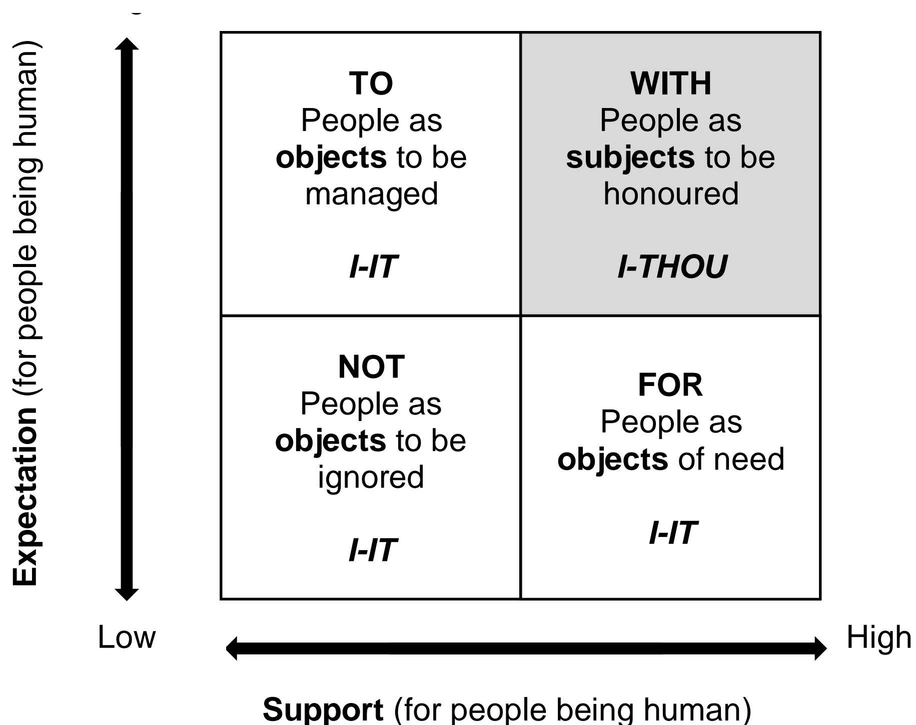
Before describing the interview guides, I will briefly describe how the *I-Thou* conception (Buber, 1958) informed my language and terminology

choices – an important part of honouring my belief that PAR is a philosophy, not just a methodology.

For Buber, humans have two fundamentally different ways of viewing other people and things: *I-It* and *I-Thou.* On the one hand, we can relate to another person as a living, fellow subject (a 'thou') who cannot be reduced, objectified, or appropriated – in which case we use *I-thou*. On the other hand, we can see the other person as an object (an 'it'), changing our experience to *I-It*; the 'I' has objectified the other person, separating itself from the Other.

It's worth reprising Vaandering's (2013) relational window here, restating that "as humans we strive for relationships amongst each other where *I* am understood in relation to *You* and vice versa. *I-It* involves distancing, where we separate ourselves from the other" (Vaandering, 2013 p. 234).

Figure 27. **An I-Thou/I-It Relationship Window (subject-object relationship),** adapted from Vaandering (2013) and Buber (1958)



Buber's (1958) dialogic 'thou' and Vaandering's notion of high support/ high expectations for being human helped me as an interviewer to see the participant as a fellow person, conscious, affective and sharing the same space as me. This concept of 'thou-ness' was mutual, with the participant experiencing me as an interviewer and fellow human being, conscious and alive in front of them (Seidman, 2006). As a *sentipensantes*, a thinking-feeling person, I also shared in the interview experience (Fals Borda, 2006b p.30). When we relate *with* each other, we meet as humans (Vaandering, 2013), whether as part of a restorative process or an interview within a research inquiry.

Therefore, I refer to an interview *guide*[35] rather than a *protocol (*which implies strict adherence to procedural rules) to underline that the participant and I were co-creators of an organically evolving interview process. Although I undoubtedly approached the interviews with *some* sense of an agenda, I remained open to the participant's perceptions, interpretations and questions. For example, both Jo and Kaleisha asked me questions during their interviews:

Jo: "Was there any breakdown in that respect that caused any hitches? Or was it a useful learning curve if it did break down?"

And:

Kaleisha: "Within the girls, there was definitely a hierarchy. One hundred percent, right? Could you sense that or…"

Anna: "Umm…"

Kaleisha: "Not sure I should be interviewing you 'cos you're interviewing me but …"

[35] See Appendix J for sample interview guide.

My interview guides (appendix J) were informed by Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework and Tomlinson's (1989) hierarchical-focusing method. To strengthen the reliability of my interview guides and improve the quality of information gained from interviews, I undertook elements of the IPR four-phase process for systematic guide development and refinement:

1. Aligning interview/focus group questions with research questions (see Appendix I for question alignment)
2. Constructing an inquiry-based conversation (see Appendix K for sample interview script)
3. Requesting feedback on interview guides
4. Piloting interview guides (which I did not do[36])

Combined with IPR, Tomlinson's hierarchical-focusing methods helped me 'have it both ways', solving the dilemma of the researcher's agenda versus the interviewee's perspective and construal. I responded to Tomlinson's call for a clear conception of the knowledge area by explicitly clarifying how *I* construed the topic and initial analysis. I hoped to avoid reducing this inquiry to semantics, which I recognised as a potential pitfall for an inquiry touching on abstract topics such as peace, conflict and behaviour. Combined with a degree of reflexive clarity, a preliminary analysis of potential topics helped minimise the risk of reducing the interview to discussing one person's conception of a topic compared to another's (Tomlinson, 1989).

I mapped out the range of content areas to clarify where topics related to each other. In line with Tomlinson's approach, this map was hierarchical and involved concepts and terms portrayed at various levels.

[36] This is a qualitative study. I am not testing tools and instruments. Each encounter was unique and, therefore, cannot be extended or replicated. In addition, the target population was small and resources were limited.

Figure 28. **The visual portrayal of domain analysis**

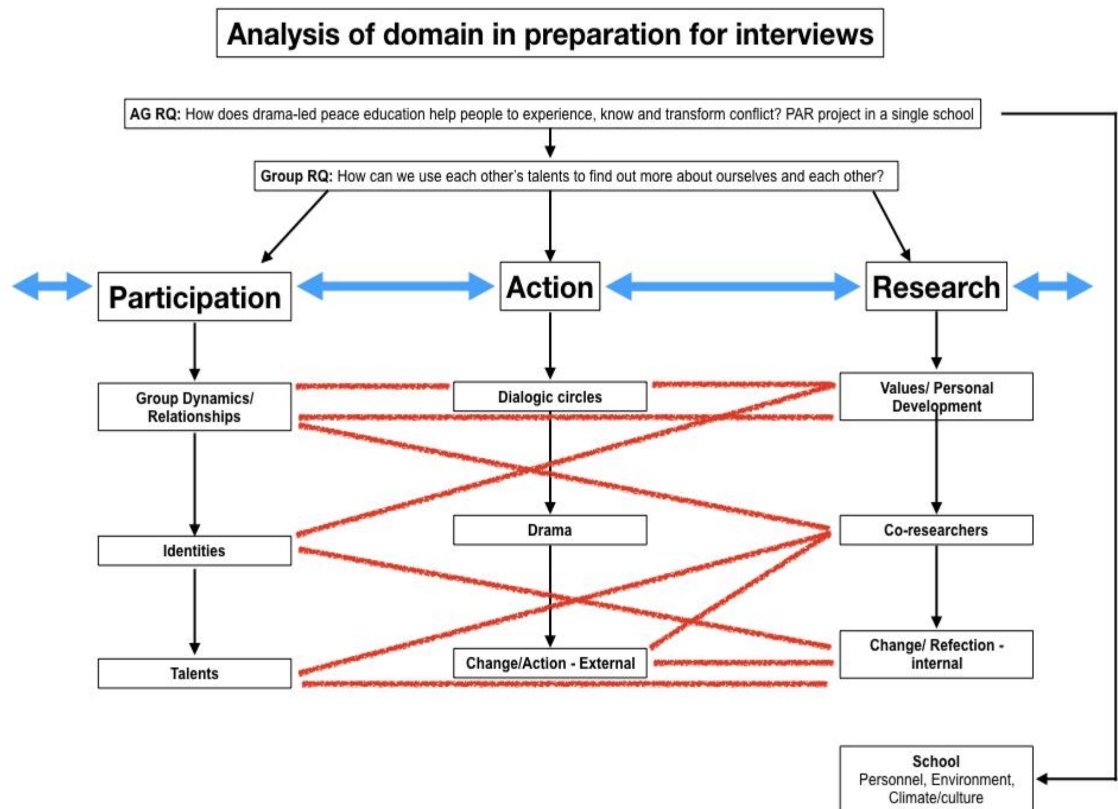


Figure 28 portrays the main areas of interest that emerged from the:

- researcher's initial research question
- research group's research question
- experience of PAR
- knowledge generated from/through PAR

For reference, the research questions that came to guide this study are tabulated here (see Table 14):

Table 14. **Research Questions**

1	Researcher's initial research question.	*How does drama-led peace education help people experience, know and transform conflict? A PAR project in a single school.*
2	Research group's research question.	*How can we use each other's talents to learn more about ourselves and each other?*
3	Experience of and knowledge generated from/through PAR. [37]	*What factors influence participation and building, maintenance, and repair of relationships within the PAR group?*

As Figure 28 shows, the areas of interest are value relevant (Tomlinson, 1989) and portrayed hierarchically, with the researcher's question connecting to the research group's question and directly to the 'school' area. The research group's question leads to the participation, action, and research subdomains, which feed subsequent subdomains. These smaller subdomains represent areas of interest/inquiry arising from the PAR experience, exploration of the researcher's question *and* the nested research group's question.

From this domain analysis, I explored the next points in Tomlinson's strategy:

- To decide on focus areas – aspects/elements I aimed to explore and co-create knowledge about with participants
- To visually portray a hierarchical question agenda designed to uncover these aspects/elements

[37] I discuss the lived experience that generated the third research question in chapters five (Presentation and Discussion of Material) and six (Reflections on Findings), limiting this section to a description of the research design.

I struggled to visually portray these agendas in a way Tomlinson might recognise, as his constructivist focus did not leave much room for a participatory dimension. Language is the quickest way to identify this tension. Tomlinson used the word 'elicit' to describe the gathering of information from interviewees, promoting the constructivist view that information lies dormant in an interviewee and only an expert researcher has the skills to extract it. In contrast, I deliberately used active, participatory terms such as 'knowledge generation', to describe the material and insights gleaned from the interview and express the *collaborative* knowledge-production process that emerged from the interview experience (Heron and Reason, 1997).

As an example of generated knowledge, I recall a moment interviewing the deputy headteacher (Jo) when I was able to further my understanding of embodied action's relationship to knowledge. Jo described many pupils as 'kinaesthetic learners'[38], which was important to her because much of the curriculum (in her view) over-valued auditory learning.

> "Which is often seen to be a higher-order learning style. I'm not convinced about that, let me say personally."
>
> Jo Pindar, 2018

She went on to challenge the inferred hierarchy of learning styles that track up through the Key Stages:

> "It's almost seen as hierarchical by some people. You do your practical work first, so that's the sort of play and foundational stage. Then you move on, where you might have a few visual posters. You move on to visual learning but ultimately we're moving on to auditory learning. As an educationalist, I've not found that's a true hierarchy."
>
> Jo Pindar, 2018

---

[38] Kinaesthetic learning is learning by doing, often involving the body, such as learning to ride a bike.

Jo wanted to support this project as it would give space for pupils to engage in drama and kinaesthetic learning as a complement to auditory learning. This excerpt encouraged me to read more widely, leading to Heron and Reason's (1997) radical epistemology where individuals come to know beyond the boundaries of abstracted, intellectual thought alone (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014).

> "You can't really produce written work unless you've got that within your own mind through speaking and listening activities."
>
> Jo Pindar, 2018

Jo's theory of knowledge developed my epistemological understanding. It helped me value knowing through experience, artful means, and practical 'doing', not just conceptually.

Returning to the research design, my domain analysis (which arose from the PAR cycles conducted with the research group) enabled me to devise relevant interview questions. To check the alignment of interview questions, I mapped them alongside my initial research question and the research group's (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). This exercise enabled me to:

- increase the utility of the interview questions and research question/ confirm their purpose
- eliminate unnecessary questions
- ensure paradigmatic, epistemic, and methodological congruence
- ensure my interview questions were intentional and necessary

Further critical inquiry of the interview questions occurred as I sought to 'ground' them within the literature.

Beyond establishing rapport and sensing when another question might move things forward, I exercised 'spontaneity exhaustion' (Tomlinson, 1989) to guide the flow of interviews. Thus, I only introduced new

questions once the respondent seemed to have fully exhausted a topic, tested using simple prompts and cues to check whether the person had anything more to add. I recorded all interviews but only made brief notes during them, preferring to engage with the participant. I transcribed all interviews within 24 hours and shared them with the participant if requested. Later, I used the transcriptions (see Appendix M) to write memos and note emerging themes.

4.5.4 Film and photos

I had ethical approval from Nottingham University to use film and photographs and consent from the young people involved and their parents. I captured some still images and managed to film segments of the sessions. However, the nature of group work made moving from facilitator to photographer problematic. Using personal recording equipment also meant I was solely responsible for capturing images, film and accounts to partially record sessions.

I recorded images for the group's benefit; we did not see them as data units or evidence of our work. Capturing images (as information) allowed us to revisit them later and discuss the material together. Analysis of these images gave us a solid foundation for moving into the more action-based phase of our project (Zeller-Berkman, 2007 p. 320).

The team had access to all the images and indicated if they wanted them included in the study report or not. We reviewed this regularly, with young people putting a coloured sticker on photos they wanted removed from the archive. Regarding filming, I recorded the names of those who did not want their identity revealed on film and blurred out their faces.

Informed by the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines for educational research (2018), I aimed to treat people fairly (including those either directly or indirectly involved in the research) and with ethical consideration and respect for:

- the person
- knowledge
- democratic values
- the quality of educational research
- academic freedom

4.6 Ethical considerations

Chapter one introduced my early commitment to an ethical strategy encompassing researcher subjectivity and scrutiny of practice (Canosa et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2013). Building on this, I now demonstrate how I incorporated ethical principles prioritising participation, commitment, accountability and social justice into my research activities with care and integrity.

This research received ethical approval from the University of Nottingham and met the requirements of the British Educational Research Association's (2018) guidelines for ethical research. Ethical clearance from the University involved a commitment to the Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics, committing me to conduct my work with integrity, rigour, and excellence according to the appropriate ethical, legal, and professional frameworks and standards. Throughout the project – from planning through conduct to reporting – I consulted with university supervisors, work colleagues and school staff to identify relevant ethical issues. These included but were not limited to my responsibilities:

- to participants (consent, transparency, right to withdraw, harm arising from participation, privacy and data storage and disclosure)
- to the stakeholders involved (the school, my workplace, the University of Nottingham)
- to the wider community of educational researchers
- for publication and dissemination (authorship, scope, and format)
- for my own wellbeing and development

(British Educational Research Association, 2018)

My ethical decision-making was a deliberative, ongoing, and iterative process of assessing and reassessing situations and issues as they arose. As a values-led researcher, I wanted to conduct the project with respect for people's experiences. One of this inquiry's ethical aims was to elicit a positive change in or for people and accept that knowledge's purpose is not just to understand the world but also to change it for the better. Such change might manifest in several ways:

- A change in our life circumstances
- A change in people's perceptions of us as a group of people (our reputation)
- A change in the way we think and feel about ourselves

I prepared myself for the possibility that the research could be deemed unethical if the co-researchers did not perceive it to have generated a positive, tangible change for them. Additionally, and in line with a relational worldview, I recognised I was not the only person entitled to or capable of discerning risk (Tuck and Guishard, 2013). I will expand on this discussion in chapter six (section 6.6.2) and describe how this project challenged my initial 'rights-based' ethical principles, including avoiding harm.

4.6.1 Informed consent

As much as possible, I ensured that research participants took part voluntarily, free from coercion. I sought informed written consent to obtain, hold and use their personal information from the headteacher (for the project to take place in the school), the co-researchers (adults and children), and the children's parents/guardians before any work took place. I communicated information via an information sheets (Appendix B; Appendix C), letters, presentations (Appendix A), and consent forms (Appendix D; Appendix E) requiring a signature, ensuring as far as possible that all materials were in clear English and age-appropriate. I also checked with school staff whether any materials needed translating and was assured that most Year Six students had a good level of English.

4.6.2 Safeguarding

Being trained in school safeguarding practices, I knew where to access safeguarding policies relevant to the school and how to identify the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). As per school policy, I ensured an adult was always in the room with me. Regarding the initial research area (conflict), I was aware that concerns might arise and tried to clarify that the research was about how we *understand* conflict, not about specific instances of conflict. I anticipated that bullying could come up (though it did not) and was prepared to signpost children to the school's appropriate adult and/or DSL. One reason I wanted to work in a school I already knew was because the staff had existing experience and knowledge of the concerns and disclosures that can arise as part of circle time and/or mediation and/or restorative practices. Indeed, a school familiar with these practices is more likely to see disclosure positively, enabling them to act in a timely and considered manner. I made it clear to the co-researchers what I would do if I heard (or saw, via drama) information that caused concern. I clarified the difference between 'anonymity' and 'confidentiality', explaining that I would anonymise their personal stories but could not guarantee confidentiality as I had a duty to pass on information of concern to the DSL. I also secured an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) certificate from the University of Nottingham.

4.6.3 Responsibility

In the inquiry's early cycles, I reflected critically on my own experiences and positionality as a researcher, reflexively acknowledging my cultural story, ethical responsibility and obligation to participants. As an active and engaged drama-based research form, PAR runs some risk of children (and adults) sharing ideas 'in the moment' that they might be uncomfortable with later. However, my previous experience as a theatre-in-education practitioner gave me the confidence and ability to employ various activities to 'de-role' and/or 'close' a session safely. In addition, I fostered a research environment where people were clear that our task was to research shared meaning and messages, not to analyse or judge

one another. I was aware that our research sessions felt quite different from the co-researchers' everyday lesson experiences and wanted to cultivate a degree of 'difference' to help them engage more creatively with the research topic. Aware that the children were returning to the business of 'normal' lessons after a session, however, I also incorporated activities that helped them distance themselves from the research-mode intensity and prepare for their next space, lesson, or activity.

Regarding the participants' physical safety, I conducted the research in a suitable working environment with appropriate equipment and facilities according to the school's health-and-safety policies and legislative requirements.

I recognised the risks associated with being known to (but not employed by) the school and the potential confusion about my insider/outsider role. I discussed how best to avoid the research's potential harm and minimise adverse effects on participants with supervisors and school staff. Although the co-researchers did not necessarily see me as a teacher, they would have seen me as an instructing adult, limiting the democratic extent of their educative experience. I explore this further in chapter six.

I am satisfied that the recruitment process was robust enough to ensure potential participants were informed about the process, methods, and impact. Much of the initial recruitment phases (three sessions in total) ensured that those interested were self-selecting. Outlining the project and its goals, these extended sessions ensured that comprehensive information was shared and that questions were asked and answered. Not all the class wanted to participate in the project, stating that drama 'wasn't for them', for example, or that they preferred to focus on their classwork.

For two of the interested children, their parents declined to give consent. One parent was concerned that the project might distract their child's focus from their academic studies. The other parent declined consent

based on the use of film, which may have created tension at home between the child and parent. Though not a party to this, I was nonetheless mindful of it.

Additionally, some children expressed an interest but, for unknown reasons, did not supply parental consent. It was unclear whether their parents chose not to sign the forms or never received the forms, which possibly stayed forgotten in the children's bags. Providing parental consent depended on numerous successful steps: the child delivering the letter home, remembering to give it to a parent/guardian, discussing it with them, receiving the signed copy back, delivering it back to school, and presenting it to the right teacher. I accept that these presented a barrier to easy participation. However, I honoured and respected the personal, professional, and ethical guidelines that made these steps necessary.

4.6.4 Accountability

I appreciate that any publication must appropriately reference the contributions all participants made to the research. As such, I designed activities to check whether group members were happy with what I reported. These included questions helping me reflect my interpretations back to the group for their comments, giving the work more than one perspective.

In undertaking this research, I owed a duty of accountability to my profession, to the University of Nottingham, to society, and to all participants in the inquiry. I hold dear that I was a guest in other people's professional and personal worlds. I made it clear to participants that if they felt their involvement had harmed them in any way, they could contact the University of Nottingham for further advice and information, sharing the contact details of my supervisors and the university's ethics committee.

4.6.5 Data storage and usage

Per the Data Protection Act 1998[39], all recorded data (words and images) were stored securely (on a laptop) in a password-protected file. Any hard copies of data (e.g. paper, photos) were kept in a secure place. Identifiable data (such as names and addresses) were kept separate from other data (e.g. interview transcripts or recordings). Acknowledging the risk that the data might be lost or stolen, I always kept my laptop secure (not left unaccompanied in a car/office) and password-protected. All text data was anonymised to ensure participants could not be identified from what they said, and I gave the school a pseudonym. No student can be identified by name from the photo data, and I have tried to ensure school-uniform logos were covered up. Naturally, I have not used images that might cause embarrassment or distress. I also gave all children the opportunity to see and hear the recordings and choose whether or not to allow them to be shared. Children who did not want their faces seen (distinct from not being identified) have had their faces blurred in photos and film.

4.7 Conclusion

The following chapter presents selected material emergent from the research design: how people engaged with the research, how values-led it was, and what we learnt. I present the material based on a redeployment of the domains I identified via the hierarchical-focussing and IRP methods previously described, aiming to narrate the findings rather than classify or analyse them. My work became increasingly reflexive from this point, a constant process in which I asked myself, 'is this a true account? Has my voice overshadowed others? Has the process of reflexivity shifted the focus away from the original study?' (Finlay, 2002). As these questions whirled in my mind, I recognised that I was leaving the circle – the ground I knew and felt safe on – and entering a new phase: the labyrinth.

[39] The project pre-dated the 2018 GDPR requirements.

5. Presentations and discussion of material

This extended chapter presents and discusses selected material that emerged in response to the PAR framework and research design detailed in chapter four (section 4.3), including a detailed picture of events during and after the Peace PAR project. I justify these comprehensive practice accounts using arts-related thematic and narrative analyses, as discussed shortly.

First, I summarise the chapter elements I believe are unique and significant contributions to knowledge. I then discuss the analytical framework I employed to help make sense of the material, concluding by acknowledging the failure to proceed with the planned synthesis of TO and action research to explore conflict in the abstract. Prompting a process to understand the co-researchers' present reality, this failure refocused our inquiry on the topic of 'talents'. Our new focus initiated a move to action and a truer democratic inquiry, defining the research topic from the ground up.

Original contributions to knowledge covered in this chapter include cultivating an educational environment that fostered critical consciousness and created new knowledge (talents), developing a radically new group perception and sense of self.

I suggest that the Peace PAR group came to experience, know, and transform conflict through reflexive, collaborative and democratic inquiry toward transformative solutions to complex relational and systemic problems. Our deliberate engagement with difference created the space to confront and examine diversity, peace and conflict (Parker, 2016a). From here, we were able to create a more inclusive, just, and peaceful research experience.

I uphold that drama-led peace education can open new communicative and creative spaces in schools, enabling people to co-create knowledge.

Furthermore, I claim a difference in children's experience and perception of methods (circle, talking piece, etc.) and evidence these differences.

Throughout this chapter, I account for how I transformed my embodied knowledge as a peace educator into public knowledge. I describe the intentional development of my educational praxis and how I aligned social justice, liberatory education, creativity and action through the Peace PAR project experience.

I also continue reporting on how I came to understand the impact of action in a research process and repositioned the latter as an object of study. I present and articulate this process using a unique, labyrinthine analytical framework – one I propose can also support PAR theorisation.

5.1 Housekeeping

I have refrained from opining about the *issues* experienced by young people in conflict or inserting my explanation of why they engage with and are affected by conflict, violence, and peace. I was, and still am, interested in understanding the *experiences* of the young people with whom I engaged.

I will restate the research questions below, given they evolved from presenting and discussing this chapter's material:

1. How does drama and peace education help people experience, know and transform conflict?
2. How can we use each other's talents to find out more about each other and ourselves?

5.2 How I structured my analysis

Since it impacts the chapter's structure (non-linear/non-chronological) and offers a framework for the field, I describe my analysis method before presenting the selected material.

As is typical of qualitative research, I accumulated vast amounts of information in multiple forms from different sources. After developing key concepts, I inductively raised them to higher abstraction levels, enabling me to highlight their interconnections (in relationship with others). Although able to generalise about the phenomena we encountered and created, we moved to a method of *particularisation* (Butler-Kisber, 2010) once we had critiqued our generalisations together. This rich, granularising process included identifying how phenomena resonated with each other, helping us understand each other (via our talents and the countries we identified with) and our realities better. This chapter highlights some particularisations that may go unnoticed and unreported in positivist approaches (Bajaj, 2009; Yin, 2003).

For academic purposes, I outline the key stages of the iterative analysis model used (Barbour, 2008; Gibbs 2007) below:

- Setting up
- Gathering data
- Handling and transforming data
- Reporting

However, our analysis process moved from a linear pathway toward a process whereby the group *collectively* gathered, handled, and transformed the information, leading to a more concurrently ordered analysis.

Figure 29. **The Peace PAR Project: inductive analysis pathway**

We predominantly used Image Theatre to gather and analyse information and instigate action. In this way, we constantly created images in 'conversation' with each other, collectively building our knowledge.

Although most of the material was collected, analysed, and commented on *during* group sessions, I also reviewed material later in the week, (downloading, viewing, transcribing, and journalling it). I read and reread the transcripts, made notes, and categorised words, topics, and image titles, noting emerging themes and adding them to the following week's session plan for the group's review (either through discussion and/or Image Theatre).

The group review was an essential safeguard to prevent me from projecting my coding system onto participants' life experiences and classifying them using a personal lens. I was fearful of any bias that might

lead me to dissect and filter information to create 'evidence-based' knowledge (Van Katwyk and Seko, 2017). Despite these reservations, I adopted loose themes (as discussed shortly).

I was also nervous about unmooring the product from its original form, concerned that we were not accurately capturing our affective, relational, and aesthetic experiences in sessions. The transcription process felt like clinical systematisation, draining the life out of the material and commodifying stories, conversations and enactments for research purposes – an experience that left me questioning how best to speak/write in a way that complements the affective, embodied work of others (Haseman and Mafe, 2009 p.216).

I initially wanted to include a copy of the film and more multimedia material in this thesis to offer an alternative presentational form. I have not done so for two reasons. Firstly, I could not guarantee participants' anonymity. Although I endeavoured to blur the faces of co-researchers who took part in the final performance but did not want their image shared, some faces are occasionally visible due to the fast-moving action in the final filmed performance.

Secondly, beyond the discomfort some participants disclosed at seeing their images and hearing their voices, I believe some of the film's content risks causing later embarrassment for participants. Fully immersed in the creative flow of positive group work and drama-making, we can act in ways we would not choose to be recorded and analysed by other audiences. I was thus sensitive to the "substantive emotional load and risks" (Stapleton, 2018) associated with PAR projects, recognising that some participants' identities might need safeguarding against future publication[40].

[40] A full transcript of the final performance is appended. A copy of the film can be provided on request.

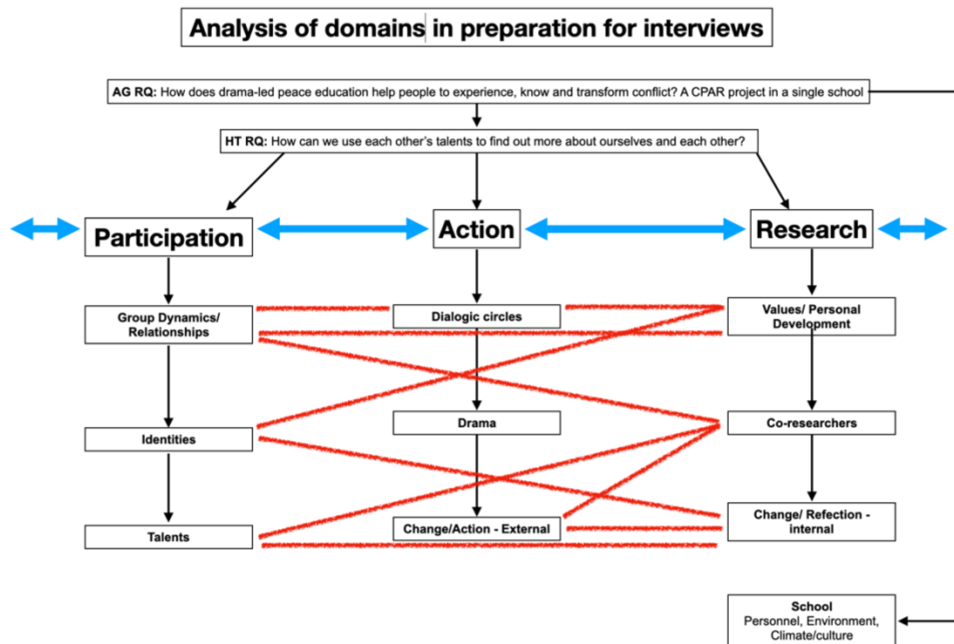
I experienced some dissatisfaction with analysis methods that were either hierarchical (Tomlinson, 1989), networked (Attride-Stirling, 2001) or took other inorganic forms such as charting, frame-working or indexing (Pope et al., 2000). Instead, I used Butler-Kisber's (2010) three qualitative-analysis types (thematic, narrative and artistic) to inform this study. These classifications are convenient as they are not mutually exclusive; used in combination, they offered me a more nuanced understanding of the material (Butler-Kisber, 2014).

To summarise, this chapter starts with a 'thematic-lite' approach to meaning-making, loosely coding the material before reconstructing it as part of a broader conceptual theme: the labyrinth. I then use a narrative approach to help give context, make connections, and reveal the research process's twists and turns, including artistic approaches to contextualise the methods used. As well as providing an analysis framework, the labyrinth metaphor opens peripheral spaces for new understandings and symbolises the circuitous thought processes characterising a PAR inquiry committed to social justice.

5.3 Thematic-lite

As discussed earlier, the study domains ('participation', 'action' and 'research') and their related subdomains (see section 4.5.3 for more detail) arose from exploring the researcher's and research group's respective research questions, and the lived experience of and knowledge generated via PAR (as previously identified in chapter four).

Figure 30. **Visual portrayal of the domain analysis**



Tomlinson's (1989) method of hierarchical focusing helped me to 'have it both ways': to meet my agenda while allowing space for a participant's emerging perspective and understanding of the topic. This activity helped clarify my own conception of the topic that informed this analysis cycle.

I revisited the domains and subdomains identified previously (see Figure 30). Taking an inductive approach, I organised the subdomain material (having trawled multiple sources, including interview and session transcripts, pictures, films, titles, co-researchers' learner journals and my own reflective journal) to abstract and synthesise three key themes: engagement, values and learning. These themes formed my conceptual framework (see Table 15), becoming this chapter's section headings.

Table 15. **List of themes and sub-domains**

Theme 1	**Sub-domains**	**Theme 2**	**Sub-domains**	**Theme 3**	**Sub-domains**
Engagement	Change/ reflection – internal	Values	Personal development	Learning	Personal development
	Circles		Change/ reflection – external		Change/ reflection – internal
	Drama		Identities		Identities
	Identities		Co-researchers		Drama
			Group dynamics		Group dynamics/relationships
			Change/ reflection – internal		Circles
			Circles		Group dynamics
			Group dynamics/ relationships		Co-researchers
					Change/ reflection – external
					Talents

I initially saw these themes as key milestones signposting the research journey:

1. How people **engaged** with the research
2. How **values** led the research
3. What we **learnt** as a result

However, this list implies a clear, linear path, which was certainly not the case:

> "I have come to see action research as a spontaneous, self-recreating system of enquiry. I like the notion of a systematic process of observe, describe, plan, act, reflect, evaluate, modify, but I do not see the process as sequential or necessarily rational. It is possible to begin at one place and end up somewhere unexpected"
>
> (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002 p. 56)

Still committed to engagement, values, and learning, I thus sought a metaphor to represent the complicated, irregular network of routes I was navigating – a circuitous journey rather than a single, clear path. I searched for a person-centred representational form that recognised the project participants' values, symbolising diversity within wholeness and combining a circular image with a meandering but purposeful path.

5.4 The labyrinth

The labyrinth image shapes this chapter and represents the transformational journey into my centre of learning and back into the world again. Unlike a maze's multicursal puzzle of directional choices and multiple entrances, exits and dead ends, a labyrinth is unicursal, with only one entrance/exit and a single, non-branching path leading to the centre and back out the same way. Although its twists and turns are equally fascinating, a maze aims to entertain and baffle, which is contrary to my intention. However, a labyrinth encourages a search for deeper meaning. Often incorporating a three-fold path, the form allows the mind to be quiet while the body does the work. Upon entering, the symbolic path of releasing and letting go begins, and the centre represents 'illumination'. The return path symbolises union, where we incorporate the journey's learning into our lives.

Figure 31. **The labyrinth**

The first path describes and explains how I engaged with PAR, while the second details my engagement with the project as a values-committed researcher. The final path represents my sense-making journey, documenting selected learnings and findings. In summary:

- **Path One** – Entering the labyrinth – Engagement
- **Path Two** – A period of reflection – Values
- **Path Three** – Emerging transformed – Learning

Although each labyrinth journey is personal, one rarely travels it alone. For example, I followed in the footsteps of Fals Borda, Whitehead and Freire in this PAR labyrinth. I also had fellow journeyers: the twelve school co-researchers and adults, whose stories accompany my presentation and discussion of the work.

5.5 Path One - Entering the labyrinth - Engagement

As evidenced in this thesis's 'reluctant' literature review, I began releasing and letting go of my academic hang-ups upon entering the labyrinth. This release helped me engage better with the project's active elements: interacting with parents, school staff, the co-researchers and the methods central to this inquiry. In line with the Ubuntu philosophy that *a person is a person through other people*, and as part of 'letting go', I thus present a dialogue revealing significant project examples and

insights, drawing from interactions I participated in, overheard, or pieced together from others' accounts (Narayan, 2012 p. 390).

5.5.1 How I engaged with others: parents

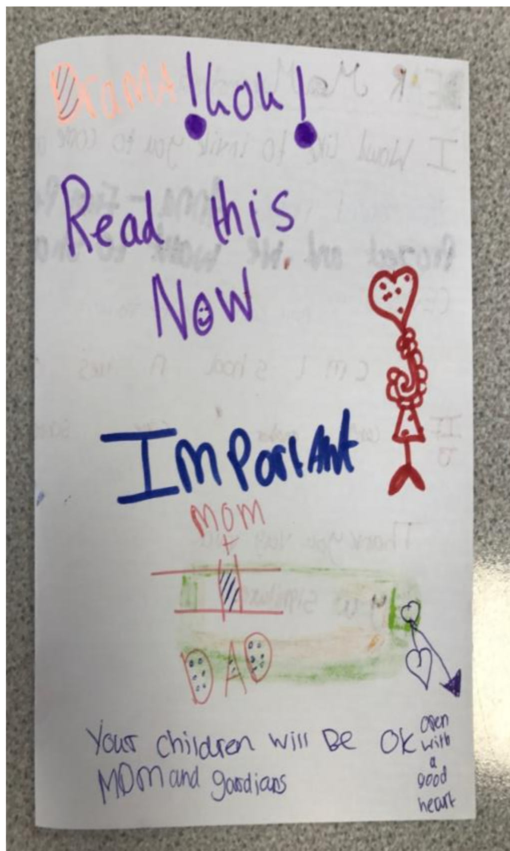
Gaining parental consent was an intense and protracted process that raised numerous strategic, ethical, and personal issues for the children, their parents and me. When I presented the project to a group of parents, they responded to my request to use film with polite but firm resistance: they were happy for the children to participate but not to be filmed. I found this difficult to understand. Despite reassurances about my methodological stance – emphasising that all filming would be participatory, that children could say 'no' at any point, and that image capture was central to the work – they remained concerned about the content being online as their children grew up. I had not thought to explicitly assure them in this age of YouTube that the material would *never* go online. By the time I realised this was a concern, it was too late.

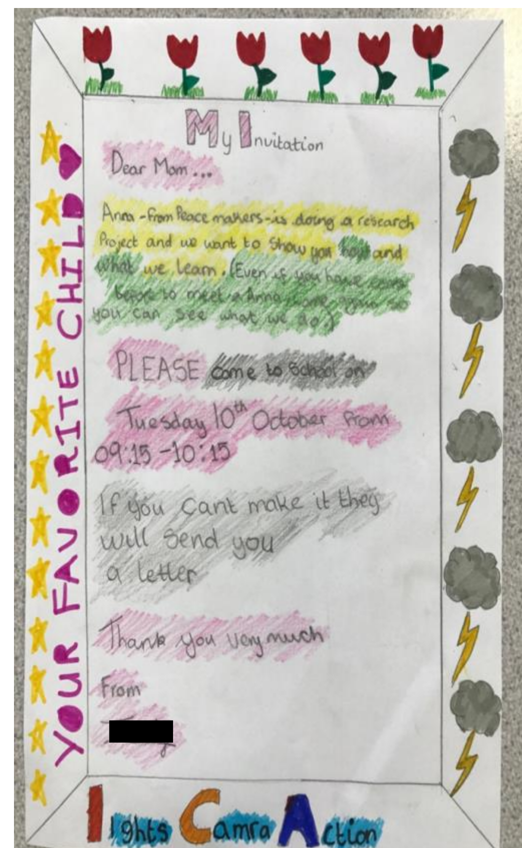
A father then explained that the local housing association he worked for was recently approached by 'a very nice lady researcher' from Channel Four (2014) wanting to film on a local estate. Although she assured the housing association employees and residents that they would have a say in what was filmed and aired, they did not. Titled '*Benefits Street*', the programme aired to considerable media furore, sparking complaints to Channel Four and the broadcasting watchdog about people's unfair portrayal. In addition, the West Midlands Police made enquiries following viewer complaints about the alleged criminal activity on the programme. Here, then, was these parents' reality: they had let someone in before to document their community, and it had gone badly. Given this information, my self-perception as an open, self-aware researcher who valued reciprocity and collaboration crumbled as I realised who stood in front of these parents: a white, middle-class, educated university researcher with an agenda. I was perceived as another profit-making researcher parachuting in, taking samples and potentially embarrassing them and their young people (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Dickson and Green, 2001).

> "'Tell us your story' is a phrase we often hear from researchers who stay just long enough to mispronounce our names."
>
> (Abdi, 2020)

I reworked my strategy by repackaging material in additional media forms (text, pictures and film) to share with children, parents, and school staff. The children then designed personal invitations (see Figure 32) for those at home to see the project methods in action and films I had previously made. Through this more graduated approach, I aimed to lessen parents' anxiety about having their children involved in 'research' by enabling them to see the project's educative and creative possibilities first-hand.

Figure 32. **Photos of children's invitations to parents to meet me and find out more about the project**





Re-meeting the parents enabled me to dispel any myths around using film and photographs, clarify the discernible benefits of involvement and propose a spectrum of consent in which parents could review the material and give consent as they felt appropriate. I successfully gained initial consent to film[41], agreeing that parents could review the material should it ever be for public dissemination (which it is not).

Following this second presentation, some parents saw the advantage of their children's involvement in the project, appreciating its values and use of drama. Some parents also recognised that their child might benefit from a different learning method. However, five years on, I contend that the formal association with a university was likely an intimidating barrier to some parents, who might have felt more at ease had I been associated with a community group or a local church. Conversely, my university association was what appealed to the school's senior leaders (themselves university educated).

Given the significant stigma attached to research, I might have gained consent more quickly had I applied the same principles/attitude I embodied in sessions with the children to meeting their parents. The PAR process and its inherent values – including peace, freedom, inclusion, and fairness, in this case – needed to be pervasive and prevalent rather than particular to specific people or beginning/ending at a pre-defined point. I found it challenging to relate the research to parents, often learning from my mistakes. I hold myself accountable and aspire to share these lessons to illuminate the "reality of an alluring yet complex approach" (Dickson and Green, 2001 p.243) characterising participatory research.

5.5.2 How I engaged with others: staff

Becoming conscious of my position within educational research and social science, I experienced discomfort attempting to be a 'professional'

[41] I refer to using film as a method of reflection (helping prompt further action) and a work record.

and/or ‘scientific’ researcher at the start of this endeavour. I initially intended to clarify my values enough to prevent them from contaminating the research. I reasoned that if I was sufficiently aware of them, I could spot when they were activated or triggered and work to quell them, i.e., that by identifying and understanding my values, I could predict and control them. However, this reasoning kept me in a spectator role of observing myself and others, inhibiting my authentic participation.

In the beginning, I actively sought out one neutral, adult participant in the school as an ‘independent data source’ not yet affected by me and my goals. Over time, however, I came to see her less as a source of uncontaminated data and more as a contributor to knowledge in her own right.

An early sign that I needed to rethink my approach happened during my initial meeting with her in the school staffroom when I was trying to establish a professional relationship, meet on her terms and find accessible ways to describe the project. I remember mirroring her body language (opening my notebook as she opened hers, taking notes when she did, nodding) and presenting as a friendly, competent professional, qualities I felt would be important to her. However, a teaching assistant previously known to me entered the staff room and came up behind me, unexpectedly hugging me in the middle of this conversation. I found this uncomfortable, as I do not initiate physical contact in my job. It also prompted a reaction from the participant just as we were establishing our relationship:

> “Clearly someone knows you better than I do.”
>
> Adult participant, 2017

The above situation demonstrates a ‘boundary crisis’ (Kemmis, 2008) where the school’s social system (and my perception of a researcher’s role) collided with my lived world (an existing interpersonal relationship

with the teaching assistant). Mid-collision, I had to make quick decisions about outwardly acknowledging the teaching assistant and her display of affection, inwardly acknowledging my feelings about the hug, and outwardly communicating to the participant the continued importance of *our* conversation and relationship.

Recognising myself as a social being in relationship with other social beings, unable to separate myself from the research or participants, I embraced the hard work of examining my multiple identities (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011). The participant's comment, "clearly someone knows you better than I do", prompted my conscious examination of the possible assumptions she was making about the project and me, including:

- It was thrust upon her
- She was unsettled by my familiarity with people other than her
- She was concerned about the workload
- She was somewhat suspicious of me and the project

The situation evolved and our relationship changed over time, as evidenced by my journal notes. For example, while setting up a later session in the school hall, a humorous moment enabled us to cope with a pressured situation. An extract from my journal entry that day documents the exchange:

> "The teacher goes to log me on to the laptop and we find a post-it note with the generic login information. We joke as the login looks like the word 'hell' which would be a very odd login for a school, a CoE (Church of England) school at that. We agree it's unlikely to be 'hell' and type in 'hall' instead. That login does not work. We are puzzled. She types in 'hell'. The login *is* 'hell'. We both find this funny, and I can see a little development taking place between us. This is nice as I felt there is possibility for growth here".

Co-researcher Anna, journal entry, 2017

Despite this growth in our relationship, I still experienced a living contradiction when engaging with school staff and their expectations (Whitehead, 1989, 1993, 2008). For example, this adult participant raised 'behaviour management' twice during our preparatory meetings. I recall the feeling of evasion as I replied, "I'd like to negotiate things as they arise and use anything that happens as a moment for learning", quickly adding, "of course, your behaviour policy still stands, and you do whatever you need to do". I experienced a living contradiction in this last comment (Whitehead). On the one hand, I tried to acknowledge and contextualise her concerns about unruly behaviour and recognise that she and others valued a robust approach to behaviour management. On the other, I wanted to stand firm to my values (freedom, participation, creative expression, inclusion, and justice) and prepare her for the opposite – that I would *not* manage another person's behaviour.

To protect the study's integrity, I had wanted to balance my personal, pre-existing relationships with the deputy headteacher and pastoral manager. I was therefore attracted to what I perceived as an additional participant's 'neutrality', i.e., someone with less experience of *me*, *my worldview* and *my operating systems*. My intention to include her as the only interviewee stemmed from a naïve view that if the purpose of research is to generate *new* knowledge, she was an ideal source of fresh, relevant, and uninfluenced (by me) information. My logic was that this (seemingly) impartial teacher's input would help me better manage, negotiate and balance my research, ensuring its integrity and authenticity (O'Leary, 2004 p. 50). In hindsight, I was clearly influenced by a positivist paradigm and the idea that a *more* neutral information source (in the form of the teacher) might strengthen the validity of my research, i.e., since she does not know me, what she says will be *more* truthful, making my research *more* valid.

However, I needed to revisit my definition and understanding of truth and validity. Evaluating this situation through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1995), I realised that capturing a singular

truth was not congruent with this project's aims, values or methodology. Instead, self-reflection cycles, peer dialogue[42] and re-engagement with the literature helped me feel more comfortable using *authenticity* as an indicator of context-dependent truth(s). I realised this participant did not hold a singular truth that I needed to unearth; instead, we could construct an authentic truth from the ground up, representing the *majority* – the co-researchers (including adult participants).

My theatre experience helped me further conceptualise truth as consensus, an intersubjective agreement in which stories are told in the intimate space between one person speaking and others listening (Field, 2011). I asked myself, does this research design (and would-be findings) have the potential to tell an *authentic* story? Does it have the "power to elicit belief" in an audience (O'Leary, 2004 p. 56)? Might reliability be increased by expanding the conventional conception of a singular truth (O'Leary, 2004) and pursuing multiple perspectives (Mitra, 2005)? Within this context, I decided to engage in *several* social exchanges (including interviews) so that all involved might better understand one another and help me communicate our story with integrity.

Inherent tensions between a creative and democratic approach and conventional 'ground rules' presented another perceptual clash between the school staff and me. Once the project was underway, the deputy headteacher asked me how it was going. Feeling slightly stressed, I said something like, "oh, it was a bit boisterous today", prompting her to ask me about ground rules. I admitted that I had not covered 'rules' yet and, following her recommendation, consented to 'do' ground rules the following week. However, I began panicking on my way home, telling myself I was unprofessional, incompetent *('who in their right mind starts group work without covering ground rules first?'),* feeling guilty that I might not have boundaried my co-researchers' experience properly. I responded to these feelings by going back to the literature and

[42] Habermas (1974) warns against 'sophistic delusion' arising from solo self-reflection. Effective reflection benefits from being social and in dialogue with others.

scheduling an exercise to define how we wanted to work together for the next session.

Reading Vettraino's chapter in 'Youth and the Theatre of the Oppressed' (2010), I felt more justified in my decision not to establish ground rules per se but develop a PAR version. Vetrraino describes her TO work with 9-year-olds in Scotland:

> "Throughout the project we did not engage in any discussion around behaviour or behaviour management. Instead we worked with whatever the children brought to the table that related to our initial discussions about how their class community actually functioned."
>
> (Vettraino, 2010 p.74)

This description matched my instincts in previous peace and theatre-in-education work, emboldening me to design an activity to explore, negotiate and reframe behaviour while staying faithful to the work's core values. Table 16 lists the behaviours and attitudes the group identified (though it does not reflect the dialogic way the group constructed, deconstructed, and negotiated them).

Table 16. **Results from the 'how do we want to work together' activity**

- Listen to each other
- Have the right attitude
- Freedom to express emotions, feelings, and ideas
- Feel safe – physically and emotionally
- No laughing when someone gets it wrong
- Be relaxed
- Show respect
- Talk openly
- Be assertive
- Use eye contact

Figure 33. **Photos of the creative 'How do we want to work together?' activity**

Vettraino's experience matched mine:

> "the result was that the children implicitly and explicitly identified, explored and challenged a range of behaviours that they (and the teaching team) engaged in that were constructive or destructive for them as friends, learners, peers, and human beings in school."
>
> (Vettraino, 2010 p. 74)

Because the co-researchers explored how we wanted to work together, the results were more meaningful for them than if I had imposed a pre-conceived list of expected behaviours. Taking a constructionist position, I contend that hidden or private desires (Boal, 1995), such as wanting to express one's emotions, feelings and ideas freely, gained meaning through this participatory activity. In addition, the activity's physical nature and abstract props helped us transcend a purely cognitive approach, better appreciating that our world is shared, produced and understood through interchanges between people, objects and activities (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014 p. 49).

This activity illustrates my professional development towards an approach more typical of an arts-engaging pedagogy (using the art to engage a community). This arts-engaging practice's social setting created meaning from private phenomena (emotions and ideas), with signs and systems (props and our bodies) playing an important part in constructing reality and generating new representational forms (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014).

Validating this activity's success, one adult participant noted how differently co-researchers responded in PAR sessions compared to class sessions:

Participant: "Well, they didn't talk over each other. They sat and they actively listened to each other".

Anna: “And is that different…?”

Participant: “Oh! Very, very different. Very different”

Anna: “What do they normally do?”

Participant: “Ah, they just talk all over each other. Shout over each other. Even if one of them’s talking to an adult, they’ll come and butt in, you-know. But they actively sat, and they listened to each other. That was amazing”

Adult participant interview, 2018

This participant was not alone in noticing a method’s value (a talking piece in this case). Group members moved from considering methods as ‘amazing’ or ‘new’ to known, used, and desirable (discussed in section 5.5.4).

5.5.3 How I engage with others: co-researchers

I had several concerns about my ability to engage with young people in research. These included my capacity to (a) maintain a grassroots epistemology that challenged existing research methodologies, (b) recognise my own ‘performances of power’ (Fox, 2013), (c) maintain authentic participation, and (d) challenge my uncritical subjectivity and intersubjectivity. I discuss each issue in turn below.

As with my initial reaction to ground rules, I often found myself ascribing to (and therefore inscribing) dominant research methodologies and their underpinning power relations (Noffke, 2012). One of my journal extracts reveals my frustration about democratic activities ‘taking too much time’ and my resistance to a co-researcher taking the talking piece and suggesting *another* circle ‘go around’ for clarification. On reflection, I

believe he suggested another ‘go around’ in resistance to my authoritarian desire to ‘get on with things’. The latter was a manifestation of the living contradiction that compelled me to maintain a lesson with pace while respecting the co-researcher’s right to co-opt the method. In the end, I acknowledged his request and around the circle we went.

In hindsight, I recognise the moments co-researchers questioned one another and used the talking piece without guidance as significant power shifts when the method was no longer my responsibility or within my control. Responsibility had been negotiated and agreed upon, and the co-researchers now owned the method themselves (Call-Cummings, 2018). However, I did not *hand over* power, as an external person or agency cannot empower people (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014, Biesta, 2019). Rather, the co-researchers took control of a process and disrupted the original order of things (Biesta, 2019), displacing the existing power structure I represented.

It required constant vigilance to maintain authentic participation where the wider team (including the adult participants) and I genuinely considered and respected our co-researchers’ needs. Such clarity was challenging to achieve for two reasons. Firstly, co-researchers’ ideas and perspectives often shifted, destabilising my attempts to maintain consensus while building knowledge. Secondly, the very nature of participation meant a constant reframing of identities, positions, and processes.

For example, one co-researcher initially discussed the value of ‘generosity’, later changing it to ‘laziness’ once engaged in image work. I recall asking whether he really meant that he valued laziness, which he did. He then created his counter-value, labelling it ‘hard work’. Thus, this co-researcher’s ideas about what he valued and how he wanted to comment on his world changed after engaging with Image Theatre. I had to consider and respect his need to change position, even when (in my eyes) it disrupted my session flow.

Figure 34. **Co-researcher's image of his value – 'laziness'**

In Figure 34, the co-researcher is looking and smiling directly at the camera (me). He appeared to relish performing a potentially controversial value in a school ('laziness'). This leads me to the second issue: by questioning his intention (did he *really* mean 'laziness' as a value?), I demonstrated pre-defined views about what constituted a suitable value and what did not. By questioning his value, I questioned him. I have since reflected on how I would feel in that position, concluding that I would feel affronted, offended, and shamed. These thoughts are uncomfortable, as is writing them into sentences – particularly as a central tenet of Image Theatre is that any reading of an image or story is subjective. It is up to the protagonist (the co-researcher) to understand it. The subject holds the meaning, and an external 'expert' is unnecessary. When I look back at the photo of the image, at his direct gaze and smile, I see that I stumbled in my goal to create a democratic space that maintained authentic participation.

I also had to challenge my uncritical subjectivity and intersubjectivity (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). The co-researchers engaged in intersubjective exchanges I was aware of but not explicitly involved in, including references, words, images, gestures and sounds. For example, other participants fully understood a suck of the teeth or thrown-back head as a gesture meant to insult or belittle, while I could not be sure of its intention or perceived meaning. Thus, although I saw the 'text' of these interactions, I could not necessarily *read* that text.

The co-researchers and I thus operated on different communication planes related to age and culture. This difference included references to music and television I was unfamiliar with, e.g. suddenly leaving their seats to start 'flossing'[43] as a way of celebrating (which happened frequently). Since the participants assumed I could not read their 'text', they were dismissive if I enquired further, implying it was not my role to know about these things or have them explained. They saw me as too far removed from their reality to include in their intertextual, intersubjective exchanges. Furthermore, I did not see it as my role to 'correct' something I did not fully understand, nor was I called upon to correct or reprimand on behalf of the co-researchers. Over time, I became aware that the relationships between the co-researchers, school staff and I were hierarchical and intersectional rather than simplistically reciprocal (Kill, 2021).

I was not always aware of my power and made occasional, spectacular blunders. During one session, I used the phrase 'let your hair down' to encourage a sense of abandon – an ill-chosen metaphor for an older, white woman among a group of younger people, most of whom had braided hair. They did not understand the metaphor nor question it at the time. In this instance, the dominant power's knowledge (mine) appeared to be valued above another knowledge (theirs). It took me some time

[43] After a young man joined the pop star Katy Perry on stage and demonstrated the 'floss' to the world just a few days before, many co-researchers were eager to show off their flossing technique at any opportunity.

(and support from the pastoral manager) to return to this moment and invite the students to question it. As a result, I now understand these silences as an act of resistance to participation more than a passive acceptance of superior knowledge. This resistance (Fox, 2013) raised serious methodological questions for me, particularly about the inherent tension in inviting students to question the system they are part of whilst recognising that I am part of that system. I argue (in sections 5.6.3 and 6.7.23) that complex lived experiences of race, class, gender, and age simultaneously enabled and constrained the researchers' positions within the collective.

Examining participatory methods in youth research, Fox (2013) infers that adults can find it hard to resist 'performances of power' associated with conventional research positions. Fox posits that young people might use silence as an act of resistance to challenge such problematic practices (e.g. interviews). As much as I resisted elements associated with traditional research methods, I found certain conventional assumptions difficult to avoid. For example, the longer interviews and questioning sessions were less interesting for younger participants, primarily benefiting my research (and thus me); they knew it and I knew it, hence they successfully resisted such problematic practices. For them, it was far more interesting to throw a shoe than talk endlessly about how an activity made them feel. Alternatively, one co-researcher used silence to resist work that did not resonate with her, shrugging her shoulders in response to a question until she got to talk about what interested her. However, I did not perceive these silences as oppositional or socially deviant (Bajaj, 2009). Along with re-reading hooks (1994), this experience helped me abandon the belief that I could – through sheer will alone – form a learning community where all felt equal to contribute.

Such resistance to and ownership of methods was vital in shifting the research process's power balance. However, though excited to witness the decentralisation of power, I also experienced feelings of destabilisation and anxiety; it was sometimes overwhelming to explore

the challenges not addressed through conventional educational approaches from such an open (and thus vulnerable) position. This vulnerability led me back to Freire to remind myself of his work's courage and optimism, intended not to console or patronise but to promote collective perseverance and engender ongoing critique (Giroux, 1985), rooted in respect for life. I learned to attend to these feelings with gentle, hopeful curiosity, helping me work through my doubts and focus part of the inquiry on the perception of methods.

5.5.4 How we engaged with methods

Aspiring to a community of inquiry where participants took an active, informed part, I used games and circle work to create democratic physical and relational spaces for this to happen. The circle formed a peace-practice architecture (Kemmis et al., 2014), representing a space different from the classroom (where the children had fixed spaces, chairs and desks). David Diamond (1994) describes the importance of the circle:

> "A circle is a sacred thing and we ask people to be respectful of it in a number of ways. Being in a circle means being able to see every other person in the circle. Once the circle begins it is important that no one leaves until all those who want to speak have spoken. It is not a place for dialogue. It is a place to speak and be heard. It is a place to say what you have to say but not to be indulgent. If everyone is going to stay until the end people must not monopolize the time, but no one is required to speak."
>
> (Diamond, 1994 p. 40)

While this circle description resonated with me, I needed to investigate how the co-researchers interpreted it (and other methods). I was interested in how these compared with my own and other adult participants' experiences. Upon inquiry, it turned out that the co-researchers perceived the circle very differently.

The group initially described the circle as symbolising a sense of *fairness* and *organisation*, important to them as researchers. However, they understood *fairness* and *organisation* as ways we could 'see' each other and, more specifically, I could 'see' them. Unpicking this, I was surprised to learn that being 'seen' by me relieved them of a sense of vigilance to watch and report on each other.

> "You can see what we're up to."
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

For another participant, the circle represented a space for creating and monitoring a sense of safety:

> "And sometimes you can't keep an eye on them see if they're talking if they're round the corner then you won't know if they're talking or not. So, we're in a circle so you can see all of them and see if they're safe and you can see if they're doing the right thing."
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

I observed this need for adult surveillance outside the project sessions, too. Early for my session one day, the teacher warned me that the class were 'climbing the walls' after a wet playtime. She asked me to wait ten minutes before collecting the research group, allowing them a period of 'silent reading to help them calm down'. This strategy raised questions for me, so I used the time to devise a physical activity that might help ground us in our bodies at the start of the session.

> "In education we have taught, as we have believed, that the body must be overcome."
>
> (Shapiro, 2002 p. 146)

At the allotted time, I arrived outside the classroom and was waved in by the teaching assistant. The following journal extract details my subsequent experience:

> "As I walk into the room, I am aware that the children are getting a telling-off. The teacher is at the front with two bits of paper in her hand. She is standing by a large, laminated ladder with three sections on it and all the children's names blu-tacked to it. She reads out a name from a list she has in her hand and then addresses the child, 'X why is your name on the list?' The child then either explains, 'I was running in the corridor Miss' or claims not to know why their name is on the list. In the first instance (the confession) the teacher says 'thank you for admitting what you have done. You have moved down on the ladder today which is a shame', or words thereabout. The teacher then moves the child's name down on the ladder. If the child claims not to know why their name is on the list, then hands go up all around the room. The teacher says, 'Perhaps Y can remind you why your name is on the list. Can you Y?' Child Y then says something to the effect of 'she was shouting in the dinner queue Miss'. The teacher then returns to child X and says, 'has your memory been jogged?' to which the child nods, seemingly to accept their public shaming and their blu-tacked name is moved down the ladder. This carries on for two or three children. I look around the room and can see that the whole class is absorbed by this drama. I can see that the TA is engaged and bright-eyed. There is energy in the room. No one is distracted. This is clearly very interesting to them: who did what, what will happen. I have not seen this class so focused and engaged."

Co-researcher Anna, journal entry, 2017

The above example mirrors Parker's (2016b) early research describing a startlingly similar classroom experience of an adult controlling the

students' relationships. Attempting to minimise pupil conflict, the teacher makes them responsible for each other's behaviour:

> "Like a game of Survivor, students could vote a peer out of their group if the peer did not meet behaviour expectations, such as not completing homework or talking out of turn. That student would then have to go and find another group that would take him or her in."
>
> (Llewellyn and Parker, 2018 p. 404)

It was clear from the Behaviour Ladder that reporting on each other was not only a norm but actively encouraged by the adults. I was struck by how knowledgeable and complicit the pupils were in the hegemonic control system and how easily the teacher could control them via the visual ladder display. This example highlighted the relational, dynamic power system, with young people choosing to inform on each other rather than have power imposed from the top down (Foucault, 1980). The teacher did not simply impose her will on the class; instead, power operated through ongoing systems (such as the behaviour ladder) "mediated by well-intentioned people acting, usually unconsciously, as agents of oppression by merely going about their daily lives" (Adams and Bell, 2016 p. xxxii). It was no wonder the circle resembled a panoptical structure from which I could observe all goings-on, directly contrasting my perception of the circle as a sacred structure representing equality and self-regulation where we could manage our own behaviours.

One could argue that an eleven-year-old's natural predisposition in school is to supply adults with the answers they assume are correct (or at least acceptable). Describing the circle as a behaviour-surveillance space might be their attempt to provide the 'correct answer' they believe the adult (me) wants to hear, i.e. *that their behaviour needs monitoring*. Perceiving the circle as a monitoring mechanism reflects the store of internalised rules from other contexts, especially the classroom (Angell,

2004). The dominant hegemonic schooling narrative promotes rule-following and public identification of non-compliers, which may have complicated and obscured the circle's meaning.

Revisiting the school's Behaviour Policy in 2019, I found a description charging staff with promoting acceptable behaviour and discouraging unacceptable behaviour among pupils:

Figure 35. **Extract from the school's behaviour policy**

> Throughout the year, pupils and parents will be reminded about the school rules. Failure to meet the school rules will lead to sanctions; these sanctions are hierarchical and are designed as a positive step towards more socially acceptable behaviour. Each classroom has a Behaviour Ladder. Every day all children start at the middle of the Behaviour Ladder. They can move up the rungs of the ladder when they display behaviour that is above 'the norm'. However, if they cause low-level disruption they will move down the ladder.
>
> Moved down to the 1st rung of the ladder - Warning
> 2nd rung of the ladder - Thinking Space (within the classroom)
> 3rd rung of the ladder - Time out

Given that the school formalised the Behaviour Ladder into policy, is it any wonder the pupils interpreted the circle as another structure requiring them to conform to pre-determined external norms? This case exemplifies how adults are expected to dominate pupils and demonstrate power (hooks, 1994 p. 5), first through policy and then by enacting a 'ritual of control'. Thus, the young people partly interpreted my attempts to differentiate the space from a classroom and create a peace-practice architecture (including removing fixed furniture, negotiating working practices and explicitly valuing personal and group reflection) as another form of adult control.

Finally, we must critically consider the different circle experiences through a racial lens. Had young people of colour come to frame their education (and thus their circle participation) as part of their lived experience of their Black and Brown bodies being under surveillance? Was this separation in circle-work experiences something I contributed to as I 'role modelled' white culture and circle experiences as an ideal?

As previously mentioned, the circle also provided organisational cohesion for the co-researchers. Games were played 'better' (perhaps because we could all see each other) and people had more chance of participating. This was important to one of the co-researchers for whom English was not his first language, and who struggled to find a place in the group at times:

> "We made the circle because it's not just organisation but its better so you can play games in it. And you can stand in the middle and say something."
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

The circle also added a sense of fairness for co-researchers who found it hard to express themselves in other settings.

> "I can be seen and heard in the circle."
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

To engage them in knowledge production, I would periodically ask how they felt about their learning at the start/end of sessions. Examples of their responses include:

> "I feel really excited and pumped up. I feel really good about this map because we're going to find out where all the countries in the world is and where we come from and our traditions."

Co-researcher, 2017

"I feel fine and I want to discover new things."

Co-researcher, 2017

"I feel excited because we might learn new things."

Co-researcher, 2017

I also attempted to value the knowledge produced during particular activities, such as the 'handshake greeting'[44] (used to introduce Image Theatre). I asked them, "How does it feel to work this way?"

- "Good. It helps you work with other people who are not your friends"
- "We are not working with all our friends"
- "Weird. I don't like touching people"
- "I think it helps to communicate with other people"
- "It's like building friendships"
- "It helps me talk and have the freedom to express"
- "I'm not going to be bored"

Co-researchers, 2017

The co-researchers learned they were starting to feel differently about themselves and each other. I submit that, over time, the methods used (circle and drama techniques) became associated with the way we thought about and of each other. Although referring to specific, evocative

[44] The 'Handshake Greeting' is an established Image Theatre activity whereby two people walk across a space and greet each other. The facilitator shouts "freeze" and encourages the audience of spect-actors to look more closely and describe what they see. Often stories arise that involve relationships based on the physical evidence before them (eye contact, body positioning, proximity, etc.). The facilitators can then delve into the characters' inner world and ask, "what might he be thinking?". The facilitator might then encourage the actors to 'shift and re-examine' the pose. They might do this by asking one of them to change the story by changing their pose (one of them might kneel in front of the other, for example) or by asking a different spect-actor to take the place of another.

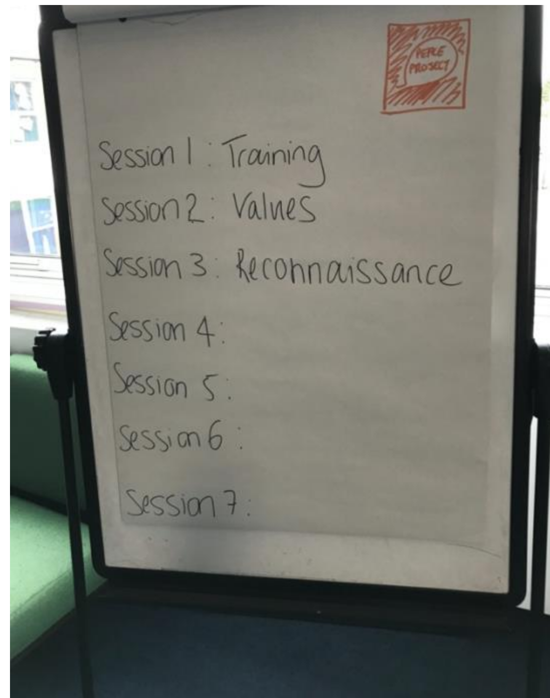
objects, Turkle's (2011) premise that we think with the things we become attached to and become attached to the things we think with can be applied to the circle and circle methods. For the co-researchers, the circle (and accompanying methods) became concomitant with the values of fairness, organisation, safety (by being watched) and knowledge production. In turn, those values became associated with the circle.

Surprised by how much my co-researchers' conceptions of the circle differed from mine, their ideas helped me reformulate my thoughts. The circle helped secure authentic collaboration (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014), supporting the feedback of ideas. Co-researchers (myself included) could express, be heard and influence others if they chose to. The co-researchers internalised methods such as the talking piece to the extent that they held each other – and me – to account when authentic collaboration was *not* taking place (for example, when the talking piece was disrespected). Furthermore, the circle came to be a political space, where those with some experience of marginalisation (from education, from adults, from each other) found collective meaning and began to organise themselves (through PAR) in response to conflicts in their relationships (Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 2015).

An example of a group member 'claiming' a method (authentic collaboration) happened during a game the group were familiar with, called 'the sun shines on'[45]. During week five, two co-researchers began adopting the method of a game to assess their own and others' knowledge development. Figure 36 provides a photo of the flipchart stand present for each session to contextualise this.

[45] The 'sun shines on' is an established group game. One person stands in the middle and says a sentence starting with, 'the sun shines on…'. The sentence must be true about them and is designed to help develop and build relationships and mix up the group.

Figure 36. **Flipchart stand detailing sessions (filled in weekly)**



Co-Researcher Aapo: "The sun shines on anyone who likes doing their booklet for the research project?"

Co-Researcher Kaari: "The sun shines on anyone who likes…. anyone who still has more questions about the research?"

Co-Researcher Aapo: "The sun shines on whoever, whoever doesn't know about that (points to flipchart stand)."

Here, the co-researchers begin to think critically about the subject matter and learning process. I see this when co-researcher Aapo instigates a move in the game relating to his enjoyment of the Learner journal, and co-researcher Kaari initiates a round to discover who else still has questions about the research project.

Once the game has finished, I return to co-researcher Aapo's observation about the flipchart stand:

Co-researcher Anna:	"Something that came up was that somebody said the sun shines on whoever doesn't know what that, the board, is. Does anyone want to have a go... at explaining it? Like, even if there's no right or wrong but you wanted to have a go at explaining it?"
Co-researcher Tashelle:	"I was gonna say like is it what we've been doing like what we're gonna do each week..."
Co-researcher Anna:	"Take us through it then, so what gives you that idea?"
Co-researcher Tashelle:	(turns to board) "Like session one, like week one we do like training. Week two values and week three we do re, re" (attempts word, others in group attempt the word)
Co-researcher Anna:	"Such a long word. Reconnaissance" (several children repeat the word)
Co-researcher Anna:	"Keep your idea going".
Co-researcher Tashelle:	"And then week four, like session four is what we're doing next week"
Co-researcher Anna:	"But it's blank?"
Co-researcher Tashelle:	"What are we doing then?"
Co-researcher Tashelle:	"We get to decide?"

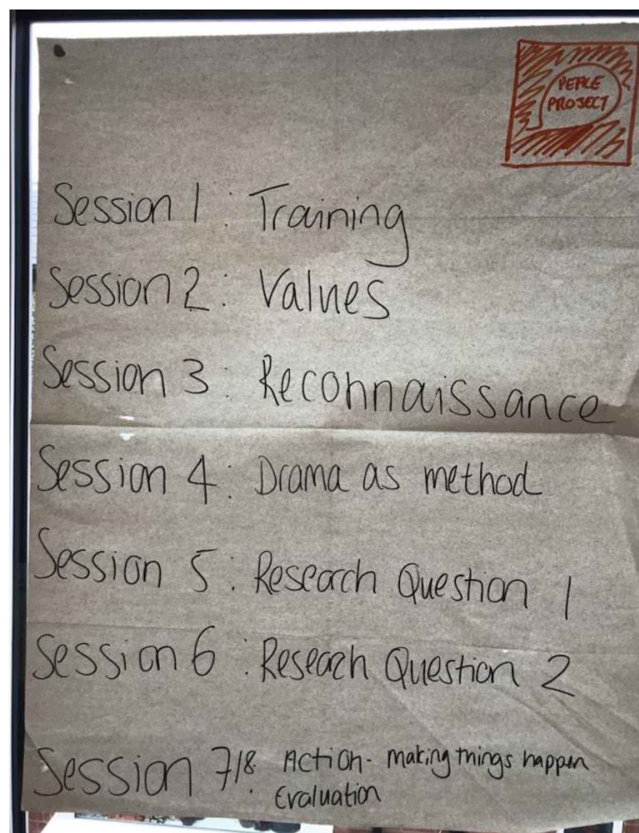
Co-researcher Anna: "What do you think?"

Co-researcher Tashelle: "Cos we get to decide"

Transcription of session 2 'Values', October 2017

Here, the co-researchers claimed their power as they gained control of these processes and practices (Call-Cummings, 2018), developing a critical consciousness of the social constructions influencing their realities (knowledge determined as useful and valuable). Furthermore, PAR's praxis enabled them to re-evaluate the human manoeuvrings behind these constructions. Co-researcher Tashelle understands that she can help decide what happens in future sessions to tailor them better to her needs and interests (Cammarota and Fine, 2008b, p. 7).

Figure 37. **Flipchart detailing all session titles (Week 8)**



This inclusive ontology-in-action shifted my practice away from a dependence on concepts and theories toward practical, enacted, shared and embodied realms of action. The Peace PAR project centred local knowledge by involving young people as full collaborators who had addressed power and were developing our relationships and trust of each other over time (Caxaj, 2015).

5.5.5 What does a researcher look like?

We spent a large part of session one (‘Training’) exploring ideas about research and the role of a researcher. Since I was also learning and contributing to others’ learning, I asked the co-researchers the broad questions arising for me, such as “what *is* research?” I provided prompt cards such as “research is a problem-solving activity” (Newby, 2010 p. 21) to small groups for discussion and then invited the co-researchers to respond in the circle, thus collectively building knowledge. Following these discussions, one co-researcher gave their definition of research:

> “Researchers are always organised, and they’re always prepared when they go places. And they always have like a method, like a system that they do it in. They wouldn’t just go somewhere, and they’re not prepared or anything. They have a system, and they know what they’re doing.”
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

This co-researcher’s definition conceptualised research as a disciplined enquiry that generates knowledge. However, they did not explicitly characterise research as something high-end or technical. Instead, participants understood research at this stage as a listening-based, problem-solving activity that could help with friendships:

> “It solves activities. It’s solving activities like things that can happen between friends.”
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

> "Research is a problem-solving activity that, like, if you want to find out new stuff that you don't understand, just look it up, yeah?"
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

These responses support Appadurai's (2006) description of research as a "specialised name for a generalised capacity to make disciplined inquiries into those things we need to know, but do not know yet" (p. 167). Appadurai asserts that research is a 'right' afforded to us all: as democratic citizens, we have the right to gain strategic knowledge. For both Appadurai and the co-researchers, "all human beings are, in this sense, researchers, since all human beings make decisions that require them to make systematic forays beyond their current knowledge horizons." (Appadurai, 2006 p.167).

> "When you are researching something… If you don't know about it, you research it, and it gives you a better understanding of it."
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

> "Research is basically about listening to other people's opinions."
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

I then asked the co-researchers to think about what a researcher *does*, this time without providing prompt materials or allowing them to work in groups but independently completing a section of their Learner Journals instead. Table 17 details some responses to the same question recorded on the project's first week and again at the end. Each line corresponds to a single participant, showing how their thoughts changed over time.

Table 17. **Co-researcher responses to "What does a researcher do?" activity carried out in project weeks 1 and 8**

What does a researcher do? - Start of project (Week 1)	**What does a researcher do? - End of project (Week 8)**
"Search things"	"Discover things"
"They research about fossils"	"Helps you learn"
"A researcher looks online or uses a lab to find the answer of something"	"A researcher asks questions to other people"
"Finds out about things that people may not know about and gives for public use"	"It helps a person understand something. It can help a discovery"
"A researcher goes around the world and learns about anything you can think of. For example, Charles Darwin is a researcher and Mary Anning is also a researcher"	"They go and discover new things in different ways e.g., on stage, writing"

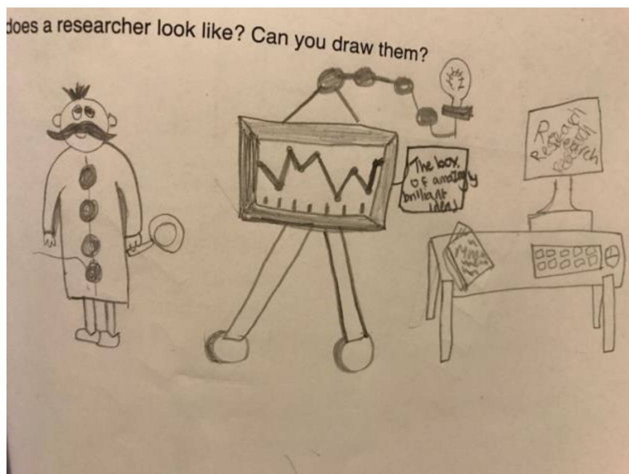
The first week's responses include references to a laboratory, fossils and Charles Darwin. In contrast, session eight's responses are less scientific. Moreover, three participants independently used the word 'discovery' in their final response, suggesting that the PAR *process* expanded their perception of research to include discovering *new* knowledge in connection with others.

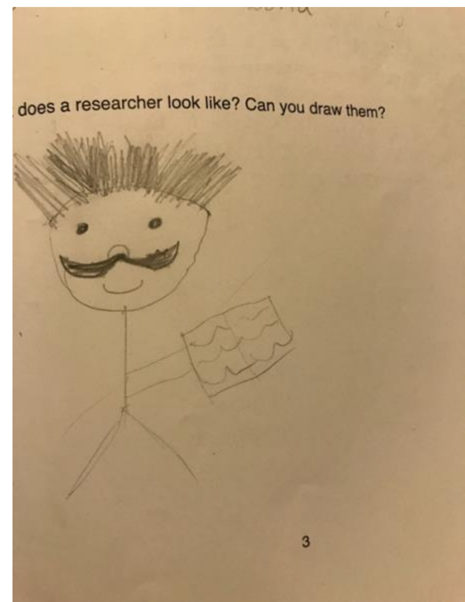
As the co-researchers learned about research and researchers' roles, my perceptions of what PAR and PAR researchers might be and do also began changing. My reality was transforming. As exciting as this was, I was still plagued by imposter syndrome: was I really a researcher? Were they?

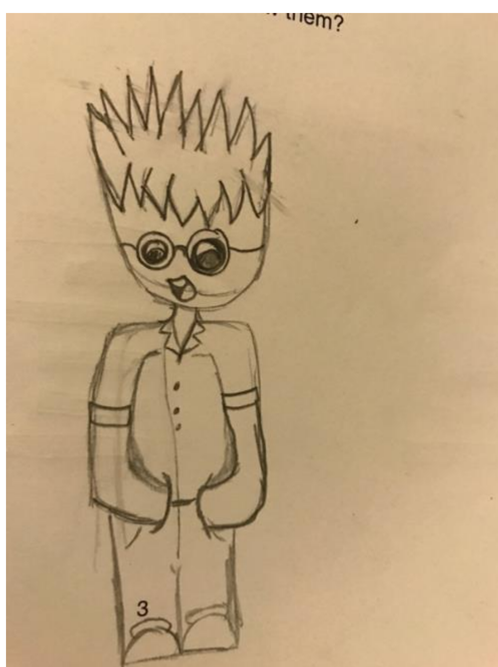
Inspired by Call-Cummings' (2018) 'Who can do research?' activity, I took our investigation of research a stage further: if the co-researchers' reality and conceptions informed mine (and mine theirs), it might be illuminating to ask the group what a researcher looked like. I thus reproduced a version of Call-Cummings' activity conducted on week one of the project and repeated at the end.

Week one's drawings were variations on a theme: an ostensibly older, described as a "crazy-haired" male scientist wearing a white coat.

Figure 38. **"What does a researcher look like?" Selected drawings from the participants' Learner Journals – Week 1**

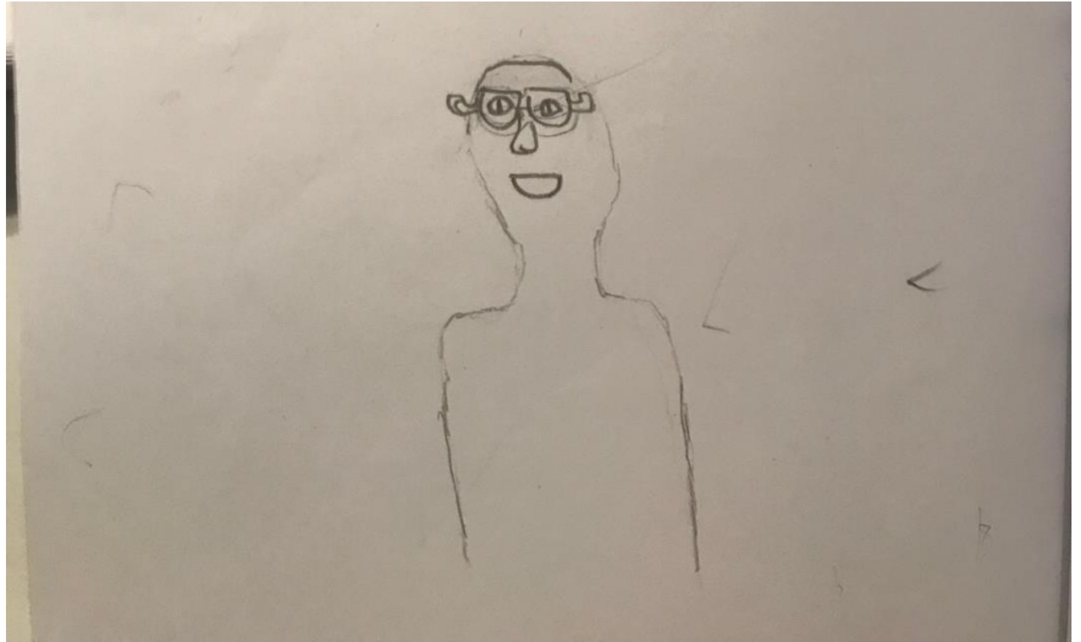






Week eight's drawings looked quite different. For the boys, the concept of a researcher started to take on more personal qualities.

Figure 39. **Male co-researcher's drawing of a researcher – Week 8**

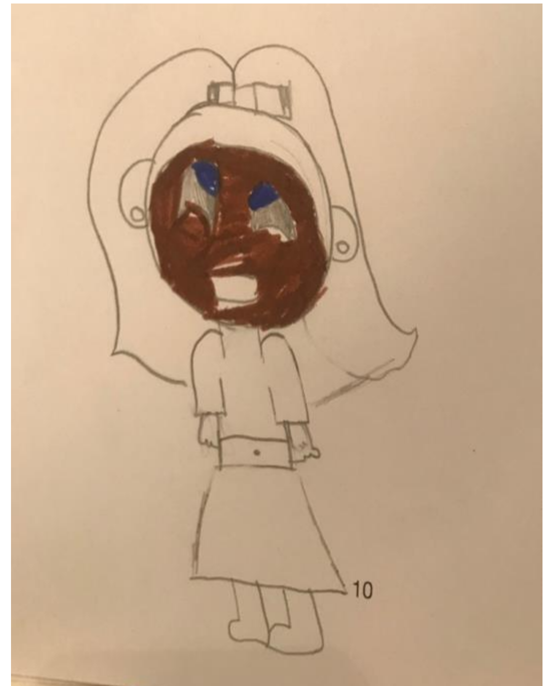


Although unfinished, the picture drawn in Figure 39 is beginning to look like a self-portrait, as is the one in Figure 40 (even if this self-portrait slightly resembles a superhero).

Figure 40. **Male co-researcher's drawing of a researcher – Week 8**

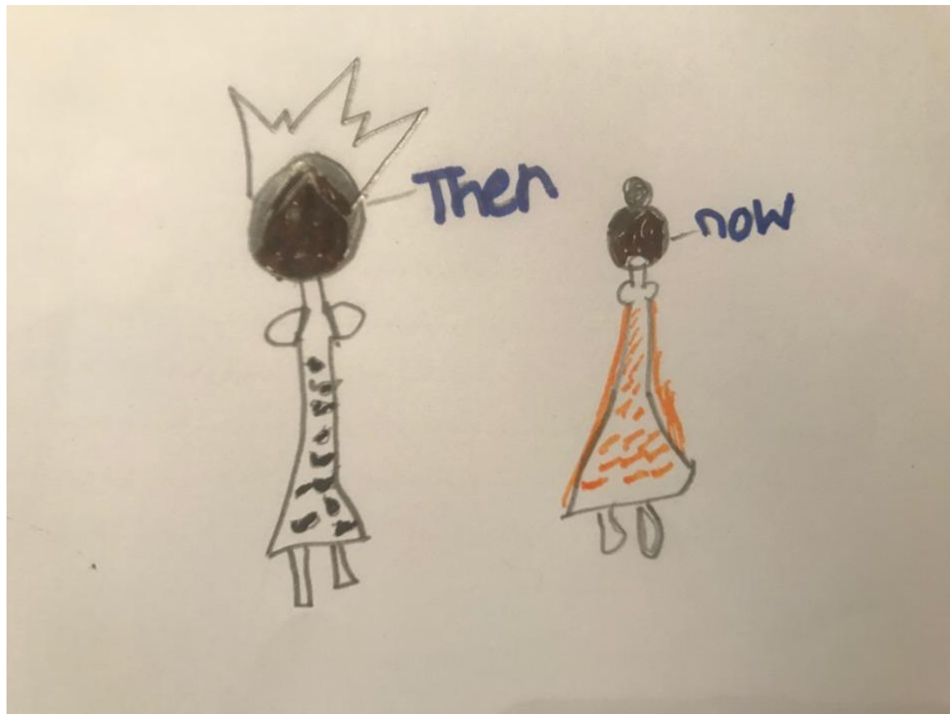
From observation of multiple Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) projects, Cammarota and Fine (2008a) suggest a pattern where young people learn about complex power relations through the research process. Co-researcher's Tashelle and Tyonna have begun to dismantle their conception of what a researcher looks like and rebuild it in their own image.

Figure 41. **Female co-researchers Tashelle and Tyonna's drawings of a researcher – Week 8**



Co-researcher Kaari's before-and-after drawings (see Figure 42) still portray a researcher as wearing a dress and being Black. However, as described by Kaari, the 'mad scientist' hair changes to a topknot or bun, and the dress becomes orange.

Figure 42. **'What does a researcher look like?' Before-and-after drawing by co-researcher Kaari**



Interestingly, co-researcher Kaari is a competitive ballroom and Latin dancer and often wears her own hair in this style. This change in her reality was thus an experience in first, second and third-person research as she engaged with self-reflection and collective knowledge construction and then shared her drawing as part of the research project. Over the course of the project and in participation with others, participant Kaari came to self-identify as a researcher.

To authenticate the material above, I asked participants in the final project session (January 2018) whether their opinion of how a researcher was or looked had changed during the project. Answers included:

- "I used to think it was a man on his own. Now I think they bring people with them"
- "I thought they looked crazy and search for stuff to do. Now I think they discover something and they're not crazy"
- "Before I thought it was a scientist - like they get blown up and

their hair sticks up – now I think it's pretty good to do research because there's things I don't know now and things I do know now"

- "Nothing has changed. Some people go on the Internet, and they call themselves a researcher. They're still regular people in this school"
- "Researchers? Before they were confused. Now they're not"
- "Yes, I thought a researcher was a person asking other people opinions. Now, a researcher is a person who discovers new things every day"
- "Even if you don't have cloaks[46] or anything. As long as, like, you do something you're a researcher. Just because you don't have cloaks, doesn't mean you can't be a researcher"
- "Researchers are men going around with a microphone asking people opinions"

Co-researchers, 2018

These examples demonstrate my commitment to creating research practices that are "rational and reasonable, more productive and sustainable and more just and inclusive" (Kemmis et al., 2014 p. 3). In reporting these activities and associated evidence, I hope to substantiate a research practice and researcher role defined and conceived through the participants' exploration and negotiation. The latter was a necessary foundational activity to identify and define the relationally acquired knowledge derived from our experiences, knowledge, and contributions (Boyes-Watson and Pranis, 2012), laying the foundations for understanding and mastering our unfolding research processes and outcomes. Furthermore, we recognised our evolving social and research identities and their influence on our research process participation (Parker, 2016b).

[46] The co-researcher later clarified that he meant 'coats', i.e., white laboratory coats.

5.6 Path Two - A period of reflection - Values

While the first labyrinthine path described my journey of engagement with parents, staff, co-researchers and the methods, the second path reflects my values-based navigational orientation through the research landscape. As this path was one of illumination, I will go beyond a description of professional practice (what I did) to explore the values underlying my reasons and motivations (why I did it).

5.6.1 Illumination

Though deeply enthused about learning in participation with others, I experienced a paradox when working within a democratic framework and discovering via praxis that I was not as democratic as I thought. Over time, I became conscious of a rigidity within me regarding the research process (ultimately stemming from a desire to do it 'right') and a struggle to consistently and authentically include others. In short, this contradictory experience combined the learning process of conducting PAR at a level deemed appropriate to reach a doctoral level with a subsequent 'de-learning' process (Datta, 2018) in participation with others within a lived PAR experience.

At the beginning of this project, I wrestled with clarifying a specific research question or hypothesis related to the investigation's focus. Initially lacking a clear question or hypothesis, I had only Tomlinson's (1989) sense of a 'double agenda'. This ambiguity made me nervous (when reporting to supervisors) and excited (when creatively engaged). However, while I trusted the creative process – confident that an area of mutual interest would arise – I was unsure how this attitude translated to a research agenda. Feeling consciously incompetent as a researcher, I compensated by tightening the research agenda. Early session titles (such as 'Training' and 'Reconnaissance') reveal a utilisation-focused form of action research geared towards system improvement – an early theoretical and instrumental emphasis with an applied social science feel. Beginning to find my way, I later shifted toward a 'southern', more openly emancipatory version of PAR that challenged certain traditional

practices. Subsequent session titles and plans (such as Research Question #1 and #2, Drama as Method) demonstrate a more open and flexible research inquiry stressing the transformational importance of experiential knowledge and children's involvement in knowledge and research-question production.

> "In my experience, a PAR facilitator comes into a project with intentions and then things change."
>
> (Zeller-Berkman, 2007 p. 326)

Week Three's session, where I nearly missed what was happening in front of me by ploughing on with my planned activity, demonstrates my early dedication to methods and frameworks (and the influence of Northern PAR practices). During this session, I was determined to name generative themes to nail down a research question (Freire, 1996 [1970]), especially as my scheduled research cycle was already out of sync. I had thus chosen three guiding themes beforehand: two that seemed to have resonated with the group ('judgement' and 'respect'), and a third I felt had been running throughout ('creativity'). I also felt I needed to positively counter participants' potential interpretations of the other two themes.

However, exploring these themes went nowhere, failing to resonate with anyone in the group other than me (who chose them), and the group lost focus. As the group's behaviour deteriorated, I became distressed, starting to see the name-calling and physical challenges I had witnessed before.

In hindsight, my implicitly-assumed right to decide on these themes without consulting the group is uncomfortably apparent. Moreover, I fixated on a false assumption implicit in the guiding (Northern) theory of action research. Namely, that following the cycle format, each stage will naturally reveal itself. Conflict arose as I prioritised practical action-

research tools and processes above an emancipatory and participatory research philosophy.

I then experienced a moment of clarity: these relationships and responses to the material and each other *were* the reality*;* this was what we could research. It had been there all the time; a lack of cohesion (group-working issues, comments behind each other backs, laughing at others, cultural disrespect and behaviour-management difficulties). The issues were right there under my nose, but I had been too preoccupied with methods, plans and theories to see them. It took a moment of emotional distress (a quickening of the heart rate and confused thoughts) for me to come to my senses and revert to a philosophy I knew and understood.

Moon's (2008) discussion of the role of emotion in critical thinking helped me reflect on the influence of my emotions at that moment. My experience of mindfulness and restorative meetings promoting affective communication and presence also helped me respond more constructively (chapter six discusses emotion and affective impact in more depth – see section 6.7.19). Experience and intuition helped us pinpoint, name and present issues to the group to find a way forward. By naming our observed group-dynamic issues, underlying relationship 'truths' were revealed:

> "I don't think we should work in groups because some people don't like each other."
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

> "Um, I think that we should try to understand where everyone has come from because that could reduce the conflict between people."
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

Hearing and witnessing these reactions renewed my confidence in embodying my philosophical research values rather than enforcing meaningless plans, developing my ability to see and act on issues as they arose instead of imposing techniques of limited relevance to participants.

Following a lengthy and challenging circle discussion where members called out mistreatment due to cultural-heritage differences, one co-researcher directly acknowledged the issue by suggesting a way forward:

> "I think how we should work with our differences is (…) you know when we're in the circle? Let's have a look at that game we did last week to find where we're from and maybe we could find more about other people".

Co-researcher, 2017

This moment crystallised who we were as a group and what we were about, nullifying the usefulness or validity of my session plan. I had no relevant themes, no idea where I was in a supposed action-research cycle and no guiding research question. All I had was what was in the room:

- A hunch that some group members were experiencing cultural violence (Galtung)
- Methods the co-researchers and I felt safe with
- Previous experience
- Existing knowledge
- The group's evolved listening skills
- The group's evolved attitudes and values of compassion and resonance

From this point, the research project took a dramatic turn, and I sensed we were coming to a critical consciousness through interactive analysis and discussion of our situation (Bartlett, 2008). New analysis emerged from our explicit identification of what was happening, enabling us to negotiate new meanings (Lather, 1986). This led me to design the ‘map on the floor’ exercise, precipitating even more significant relationship shifts.

With our cultural differences writ large upon a giant floor-map of the world in this session, we began seeing each other differently. By providing a pedagogical metaphor, the map allowed us to share what we knew about countries and cultures and learn from each other, transforming our group dynamics.

Figure 43. **The ‘map on the floor’ exercise**

During this activity, two quieter students who had joined the school in years four and five (and for whom English was not their first language) became more vocal. After inviting the group to stand ‘on’ a country and share their knowledge about it, these two quieter researchers made noteworthy contributions with a significant knowledge-transfer impact.

Co-researcher Maceo told the group about rice being grown in Ethiopia and "the richness of diamonds and gold that were stolen" in South Africa, and I confirmed that people from Europe had visited countries worldwide and taken precious stones and minerals for their own use. Co-researcher Abdu took the mantel from co-researcher Maceo, speaking about England and France's colonisation of parts of Africa. Someone asked co-researcher Maceo if that is why French is spoken in some African countries. Conversely, co-researcher 'Jaqweisha' became the 'go to' person for regarding Jamaica, sharing Jamaica's national motto ('Out of Many One People') and one of its famous natural treasures, Dunn's River Falls.

This democratic environment also allowed misconceptions to be shared, such as one co-researcher's description of the equator:

> "If you go that way around the world, time goes faster and if your side of the world, time goes slower".
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

I accept that this approach can lead to confusion and misinformation if not corrected. However, this happens in regular curriculums, too, where mistakes and biases can generate false information.

Moving from pre-defining an agenda to responding to an emerging one, I remarked to the group:

> "You seem to be very interested in countries and where you're from and your identity and if that relates to your talents - what you're good at. I've seen lots of talents (in this room). I've seen talents in communicating. I've seen knowledge of countries and facts. I've seen acting talents. I've seen cooperation and deep thinking. All around this room".
>
> Co-researcher Anna, 2017

By identifying and articulating the group's generative subjects (Shor, 1993), such as familiar words, experiences, situations, and experiences, I laid the foundations for critical reflection and action. This sense of group attunement kick-started the action-research process. With new, co-created (rather than predetermined) generative themes and subjects that the group identified with, we rallied to action, taking the first steps toward defining a second research question:

> "I think, like, we should act. Because some people who say that they don't have talents when they enjoy something, so we could ask them what they enjoy or if they have talents and we can put them into groups and see what they can accomplish all together".
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

> "(…) Saying like if you're Jamaican and you've got a talent then you can put all the talents together and then make a piece of, like a role play?"
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

> "Could we say it then act it? So, you know which talent you're doing."
>
> Co-researcher, 2017

I noticed palpable changes in the group's dynamics as they suggested various actions, alongside my exhilaration that the research cycles were back on track and emerging in a textbook fashion.

A robust commitment to integrity, social justice, freedom, and participation still allowed for a reasonable change to the focus of the inquiry. As I could not engage the co-researchers on values/counter-values (and what now felt like a veiled investigation into restorative encounters), I had to become more responsive to the group's needs and

interests. The floor-map activity in Session Five was the turning point that triggered this ethical commitment and accelerated the inquiry.

My acceptance of this disruption and consequent change of research focus is a lived example of becoming conscious of a northern research stance and beginning to recognise an alternative. This awareness arose as a tension between my initial desire to study a social issue (how a restorative encounter might be improved) and the lived concerns of a research group struggling to cooperate. I moved from imposing education (Freire, 1996) to acting in the interests of the whole, enabling a shared experience of transformation: the mutual development of our shared knowledge about countries, our relationship with these countries and ourselves.

Despite my early theoretical commitments to include others meaningfully and redistribute power in the research process, I continued falling at certain hurdles and resorting to power performances (Fox 2013). For example, I did not involve adults (including myself) in all the activities. While we contributed to circle discussions, the adult participants did not have a Learner Journal or an explicit invitation to share their talents. Each session's 'action' seemed to go faster than I could process; it was when writing up my thoughts and reflections that I saw how I sanctioned the exclusion of adults:

> "I'm gutted as I realise I didn't ask Mrs █ about her talents and have these included on the list. This would have really strengthened her involvement and helped to emphasise so much of what I am working towards: inclusive, equal creative space. She's good at drawing and has actively contributed to other elements of the 2 sessions she has been part of (talking about her Irish heritage etc.). I'm annoyed I unconsciously separated her … and me…? from the creative part of the action".

Co-researcher Anna, Journal entry, 2017

Simultaneously occupying facilitator, participant, researcher and colleague roles also created tensions for me. In hindsight, each role and related function might have been performed better via a mix of individuals instead of one. A broader team would have made the project more manageable (Maguire, 1993 - cited in Dickson, 2001) and mitigated my risk of pseudo-participation. Even a brief thought such as*, 'ooh, I must make a note of that comment, that'll be useful later... for my research',* prevented my equal participation; my mind was extrapolating elsewhere, which I fear led to some pathologising.

5.6.2 Conscientisation

There is a move within critical peace education toward a more activist approach to exploring power relations, structural forms of oppression and the importance of learners' agency (Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2011; Bajaj, 2015, 2018). In particular, Brantmeier (2011, 2013) urges members of this movement to critically analyse power to transform the inherent dynamics of structural and cultural violence. He invites peace educators and researchers to critically explore our orientations to cultural diversity to challenge the reproduction of the status quo.

I believe this project helped raise co-researchers' consciousness about their relationships and friendships, prompting a realisation that some of the relationship-construction systems they experienced in school relied on segregation and separation. I assert that this project went some way toward creating an educational space that respected students' rights and raised their awareness (consciousness) of their relationship experiences.

My initial hypothesis that exploring values and counter-values might lead to a study of oppression did not go to plan; the group dynamics took over. However, the methodology and groundwork we covered in exploring our values paved the way for a more satisfying, meaningful, and 'local' study of talents. Though the inquiry deviated from its initial path, a new study emerged.

I now account for my systematic approach to identifying the study's findings. Firstly, I have ordered the tables according to the chronological sequence of our seven[47] inquiry-focussed sessions ('Values', 'Reconnaissance', 'Drama as method', 'Research Question 1', 'Research Question 2', 'Action and Evaluation'). I have identified my research agenda in each table to differentiate my (inward-facing) research agenda from the (outward-facing) session outcomes identified as part of the plans for each session, which focused more on facilitating activities. However, the research agenda references the objectives outlined in the overall strategy (as identified in chapter four, section 4.3). Each table outlines what we did (the action we took) and what we found (knowledge) from those actions. However, these tabulated, ordered, and elevated descriptions do not accurately portray the messy research process that engendered them.

Table 18. **Research Design: Values and Reconnaissance**

Session titles	'Values' and 'Reconnaissance'
Session number	2 and 3
My research agenda	• Explore how working with values (and naming them as desirable) might be a liberatory act. • Discover whether we can enter into anti-oppressive practice by naming our world (our value) and engaging in physical, relational communication with others.
What we did (action)	• Imagined solutions (Whitehead). • Discovered our values. • Embodied and titled our values.

[47] Entitled 'Training', session one acted as an inquiry-orientating and relationship-building session.

- Reviewed the images (live and photographed) and used drama to respond to them.
- Imagined nonviolent alternatives (mainly social/relational and connected to inner peace).
- Undertook specific modes of emancipatory practice that included developing conflict resolution skills, critical thinking, participation, meditative techniques for inner peace and naming our values and talents (Brantmeier, 2011 p. 374).

What we found (knowledge)

We recognised a 'value' as a form of potential liberation. By recognising and naming it as something we desired, we helped un-learn our oppressed ways. We became conscious and embarked on humanisation. Our values included:

Table 19. **List of values**

Co-researcher	Title of image (Value)
Aapo	Joyful
Kaari	Peace
Tashelle	Privacy
Zidane	Relaxation
Maceo	Respect your religion
Abdu	Faith
'Jaqweisha'	Left the session (headache)
Ladonya	Calm
Tyonna	Fun

Anthony	Laziness
Ihan	Good listening
Natori	Eye contact

Rehearsing realities and exploring our values later enabled us to identify our talents, which became how we were known to one another (Brantmeier, 2011 p. 374).

Figure 44. **Image of the value 'privacy'**

Figure 45. **Image of the value ‘joyful’**

Figure 46. **Image of the value 'having faith'**

Figure 47. **Group Image: 'Our values'**

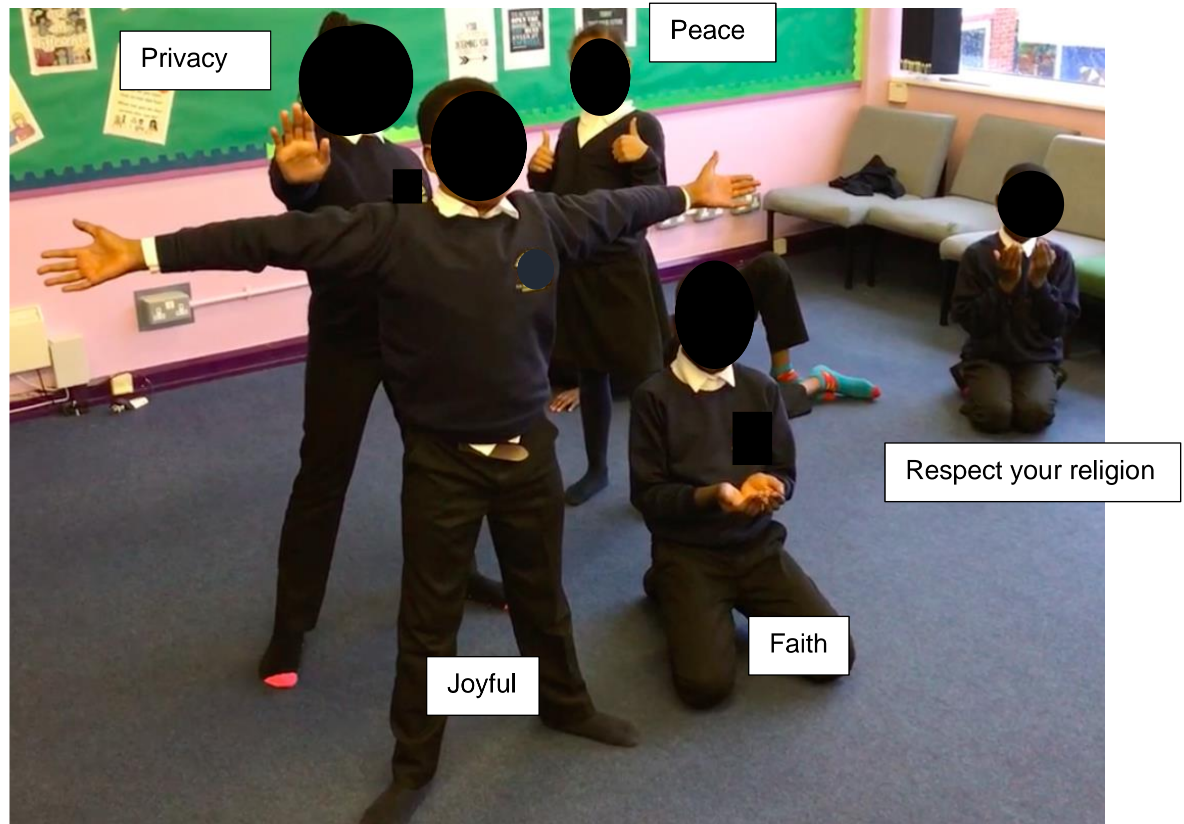


Table 20. **Research Design: drama as method**

Session title	Drama as method
Session number	4
My research agenda	• Explore the concept of a counter-value; apprised of what we value (desire), we experience the problem of its absence (Whitehead). • Convey the notion of a counter-value as something oppressive. • Name our world as part of an encounter with others, making it an act of creation (Boal).
What we did (action)	• Experienced two mutually exclusive opposites: a value and a counter value (if

we value fun, we can know and experience boredom).

- Created images of the opposite of our values and called them counter-values.

What we found (knowledge)	We can experience and know what we value and how that value's negation feels. We can transform our counter-values into values. We can move from our real to ideal versions of our images (Boal, 2002). We understand that naming someone else's world for them – the dominance of one person over another – is not a creative act. We do not put words in people's mouths but allow them to name their own worlds via image theatre. Our counter-values included:

Table 21. **List of values and counter-values**

Co-researcher	Title of image (Value)	Title of counter-image (Oppression)
Aapo	Joyful	Angry/sad
Kaari	Peace	Sad
Tashelle	Privacy	Attitude
Zidane	Relaxation	I can't relax
Maceo	Respect your religion	Too lazy to pray
Abdu	Faith	Too lazy to pray

Jaqweisha	Left the session (headache)	
Ladonya	Calm	Frustrated
Tyonna	Fun	Bored
Anthony	Laziness	Hard work
Ihan	Good listening	Not listening
Natori	Eye contact	(Did not record)

Figure 48. **Group Image: 'Our counter-values'**

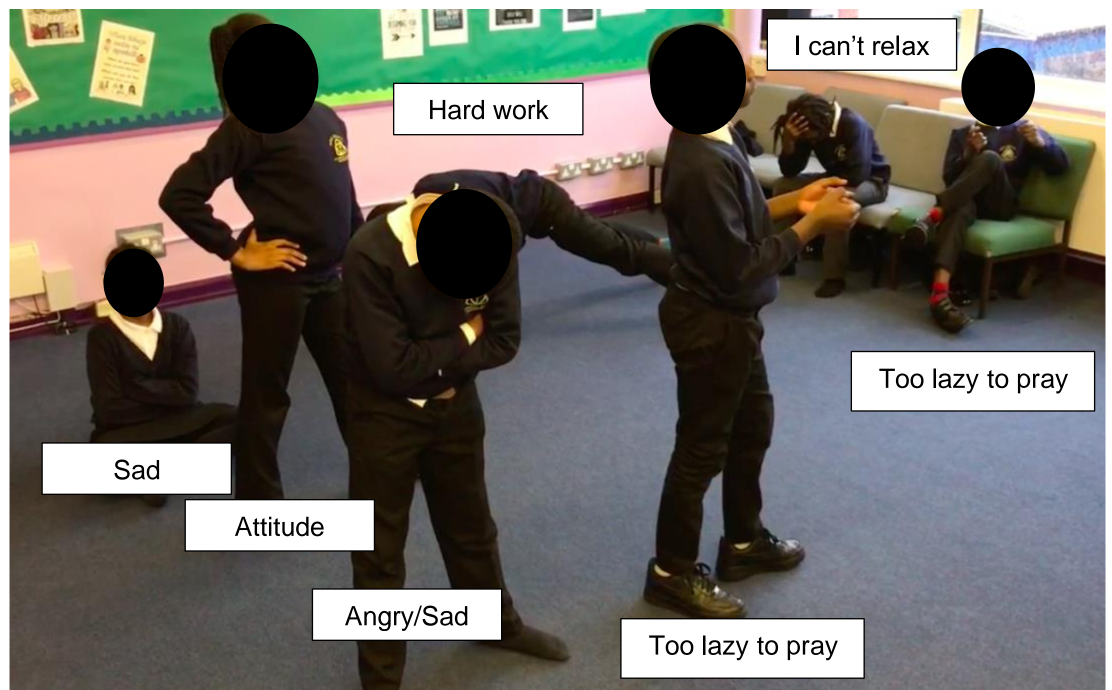


Table 22. **Research Design: 'Drama as method', 'Research Question 1', 'Research Question 2', 'Action – making things happen', 'Evaluation – seeing the change'**

Session titles	'Drama as Method', 'Research Question 1', 'Research Question 2', 'Action – making things happen', 'Evaluation – seeing the change'.
Session numbers	4,5,6,7 and 8
My research agenda	• Move towards the solution (Whitehead). • Gather information and construct knowledge via the vicarious experience of drama (Cahill, 2006), including face-to-face exchanges, dialogic circles, image work and improvisation. • Analyse this knowledge via the experience of drama (images in conversation with one another). • Review and potentially change our ideas based on our evaluations. • Share and publicise our learning via posters and a performance. • Submit a thesis (exclusively my responsibility).
What we did (action)	• Made images and responded to them. • Reflected and re-engaged through introspection, regrouping, reframing, continued reflective engagement, and situational analysis (Brantmeier, 2011 p. 374).

- Produced evidential images to illustrate our initial concerns and actions.
- Practised some of our values in our research, framing our problem as something social and active we can work towards with others' support rather than something remaining solely in our minds.
- Rehearsed for reality.
- Discussed our ideas as part of a group circle.
- Drew and wrote down our ideas.
- Shared our stories.
- Evaluated the influence of our actions within our dialogic circles.
- Modified some of our ideas in the light of our evaluations and created images of our talents.
- Moved from a deficit model to an appreciative one, recognising others changing as they practised their values.
- Changed the research question.
- Revised and improved our ideas in light of our actions. More personally, I changed and modified my ideas in response to my experiences in the group.

What we found (knowledge)	Once conscious of the 'problem' (the contradiction of our values), we acted on it.

We imagined a way forward and tried out our ideas. We changed our world.

As we acted out our ideas inside and outside of the sessions, we experienced a radically new sense of self-perception. Our group demanded the right to be treated better by others. Instead of 'naughty' or incapable, we were recognised as people valuing joy or faith in life.

How we communicated our values (desire) and our counter-value (oppression) changed the way people communicated with us.

Our participation in explicit peace education resulted in transformative action toward social and educational justice. As we modelled reflective practice in the classroom and school, we helped shape educational policy and practice (Brantmeier, 2011 p. 374).

Although this neat, tabulated summary of the grounding activities underlying this synthesis suggests that all went to plan, this could not be further from the truth: my initial plans went out the window, and new and unchartered collaborative plans emerged. Through arts-engaging activities, the co-researchers began exploring and affirming their values base and discussing oppressive forms (Wright, 2020). However, our very real relationship and group-functioning challenges impeded our ability to proceed with a TO/action-research synthesis. We were in conflict, presenting an infinitely more meaningful reality to investigate. Equipped with the methods, the group analysed these injustices' conditions and

root causes and began channelling their frustration and indignation into collective theatre-making. Before discussing the results (see section 5.7.1, 'Talents'), however, it is important to capture the factors that led to new knowledge.

5.6.3 School system

> "It is simple to exercise and perform white privilege on a daily basis without interrogation."
>
> (Lampert, 2003 p. 3)

As previously evidenced in the literature review and methodology chapters, values formed a significant part of this inquiry, particularly those of freedom and transformation. Although I have confined this discussion to experiences in the Peace PAR sessions so far, I now broaden the discussion to explore the challenges of having my values tested and staying true to a values-led inquiry that was, at times, oppositional to the school's structural values.

The educational approach I used (Freire) challenged and disrupted the school's hegemony. My general impression from my experience of schools is that they operate from a curriculum implicitly promoting standardisation, conflict avoidance and a degree of hierarchical deference (Bickmore, 2012). Conversely, a problem-posing education encourages creative power and a "constant unveiling of consciousness" (Freire, 1996 [1970] p. 62), the opposite of a banking-style education that "anesthetizes and inhibits" (ibid) creative power and submerges consciousness. A problem-posing education creates the conditions where *Logos* knowledge (true knowledge) supersedes *Doxa* knowledge (popular opinion or accepted knowledge) (Freire, 1996 [1970]). This project has gone some way toward creating an environment that fostered critical consciousness, surfaced meaning, and enabled young people's participation in *logos*-knowledge creation: our talents and how we truly relate to each other.

As previously mentioned, I noticed national and cultural tensions within the group, particularly between children with Jamaican or Caribbean heritage and those with African heritage. This observation led me to disclose where I grew up (Botswana), hoping to challenge people's perceptions of me (and, therefore, of each other). However, my revelation elicited only mild interest, failing to create the seismic shift in mutual acceptance I had anticipated. After one session, I approached two adult participants to ask whether what I was sensing was something they, too, were aware of. It transpired that they – along with all staff – very much were, suggesting it was common knowledge. As one adult participant later explained in her interview:

> "It's what we notice on the playground. Even in PE and things, they want to go in certain groups and I'm like 'no, no, we're all mixing up again'. There is a bit of a cultural thing anyway. There are cultural, um, like historically and like, socially, I'm told, problems between the two groups sometimes. Apparently, it's a stereotype between them. Apparently, it's an age-old thing."
>
> Adult participant, 2018

Another staff member confirmed the cliques and tensions I had observed between African and Caribbean children. However, when I asked whether the school was acknowledging the issue, they said not. I was baffled; this appeared to be a significant reason the children struggled with their relationships that considerably impacted the classroom's social dynamic, undoubtedly affecting the learning environment and impeding academic progress (Angell, 2004 p. 98).

The staff seemed embarrassed that I had brought it up, and the situation felt quite uncomfortable; I was immediately conscious of my whiteness and position within the school. The following week, a participant I had previously spoken with suggested that she/we had been wrong and that the students had no issues around cultural differences. Since this

conversation was whispered in a hallway, I felt she was trying to shut the topic down and so I gently persisted. She eventually confirmed some tensions stemming from ingrained cultural perceptions and noted the division of the lunchtime football teams along country lines: African versus Caribbean countries.

This indirect, 'masked' structural violence (Cremin and Guilherme, 2016) exemplified a form of systemic violence where the staff's silence impaired a group's progression. The non-acceptance of children who identified as African by children who identified as Caribbean was a culturally ingrained prejudice with profound effects, supporting the school and community's inbuilt structural *Doxa* (how things are done or not done). In this case, structural violence was condoned and enabled by *not* addressing issues of injustice and the mistreatment of one group over another (Cremin and Guilherme, 2016).

Returning to ask the teacher whether she had ever raised the issue with the class, she acknowledged they had indirectly discussed it under the guise of 'manners', i.e. *'what we do and don't do in school to be polite'.* This prescriptive approach to conflict mirrored the school's dominant norms and behaviours, based on adults dictating a 'how to' behavioural guide that left minimal space for participants' diverse experiences and perspectives (Lederach, 1995; Parker, 2016b). It also highlighted the difference between education as a practice in freedom and education that reinforces domination (hooks, 1994 p. 4). I propose that teaching manners enacted domination in this context "as a way of responding and reacting to white folks" (hooks, 1994 p. 4).

Acknowledging how far the situation had deteriorated, the teacher revealed she was considering separating the tables into rows to prevent the children from touching or whispering to each other. This alarmed me. Physically separating children exemplifies a negative peace response (Galtung, 1969), averting conflict or removing the threat of direct violence via physical intervention while the structural, indirect cultural violence

remains. This form of peacekeeping only temporarily addresses safety and security, maintaining the status quo rather than offering new possibilities (Galtung, 1976, Bickmore, 2005).

In contrast, a positive peace response encourages the conditions that alleviate the causes of violence, whether direct or indirect, requiring democratic relationships and structures to address conflict in a constructive and just manner (Cremin et al., 2012, p. 430). A truly 'peace-making' response helps conflicting parties deal with past violence and foster the right conditions for constructive dialogue.

Seeking a positive peace response and knowing I did not want to be authoritarian, I felt compelled to suggest an alternative to the teacher's plan. Reassuring her that I would own my observation, I asked if I could bring the issue up at the next session, to which she agreed.

Over the following week, I wrestled with conflicting emotions and thoughts: '*who the hell do I think I am raising this issue in a school? How dare a white woman explore race and culture with people of colour? Just do the research and get out, Anna! You've got a thesis to write and a professional relationship to maintain!'* Feelings of awkwardness and embarrassment – believing I had put my foot in it, made staff uncomfortable, or hurt people's feelings – helped move me towards cultural humility (Ross, 2012). This dynamic, intentional process went beyond appreciating diversity to actively developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to engage in cross-cultural work, requiring a commitment to ongoing self-reflection and self-critique. Indeed, I am still identifying and examining my patterns of unintentional and intentional racism (Ross, 2012, p. 316). Chapter seven will briefly revisit the implications of such intersectionality between PAR and critical race theory, which are significant.

> "All conflicts bring the potential for constructive change. Still, most people shy away from conflict because it has so often led to

destruction, pain, and suffering. The simple key to transformation is to see the positive possibilities that can exist within such divisive moments."

(Parker, 2016a p. 2).

Ultimately, I considered it improbable that another adult would address the issue in a way that allowed all voices to be heard. I had seen enough of the school's strategies and attitudes to suspect a school-led approach would be an authoritarian one, potentially perpetuating negative peace. I also felt an ethical imperative to undertake socially innovative work (Conrad, 2015) – not because it was my role to 'correct' racism but because I was relating with the group and affected by what was happening. Preparing for the session, I drafted a 'script' to clarify what I wanted to say and checked it with the staff team, who gave me the go-ahead.

On the day, I settled the group after some warm-up activities and said:

> "I'm confused because I hear that you want to work together but sometimes in your group, I don't know that there is an acceptance … of each other. And I'm picking up that that might be because people are from different countries or different cultures? I don't pick up anything different about boys and girls working together… That's my sense of it… And if we do think that people are not as good as us or we don't want to work with them we have got a problem working as a group… I might have this completely wrong but what I need is to understand how we can get past that if we can so we can work together as group".

Co-researcher Anna, extract from transcription of session 5 'Research Question', November 2017

The room went very quiet in response, with many heads dropping onto chests. Two co-researchers stared resolutely ahead another started to

cry. I sensed a slow, uncomfortable understanding permeating the room: that we had been complicit in many forms of violence towards one another over the years. My observation seemed to resonate with one of the co-researchers:

> "I think um… people might um... be rude to some people because they're new to another country or they don't really know how to speak that much English".

Co-researcher Abdu, 2017

In response to Lather's (1986) request that researchers "consciously use our research to help participants understand and change their situations" (p. 263), it was necessary to study and name the violence. Only by discussing and naming the issue were we able to settle on 'talents' as a suggested focus for the inquiry.

> "I think we should give people a chance to say what they think.
> We shouldn't judge people by what they look like."

Co-researcher Anthony, 2017

Despite the tears and discomfort, I hope I conducted this conversation with an attitude of kindness, combining a high expectation with high support (Vaandering, 2013). Nevertheless, my position on cultural politics and my confidence in my expertise to facilitate this conversation wavered.

This naming could not have happened unless the group had established intimacy. Without intimacy, there would also have been no reciprocity (Oakley, 1981) – the natural give and take and mutual negotiation of meaning and power.

Here is an exchange between three co-researchers in response to the question: *“How do we want to **be** when we meet as a group like this?”* that demonstrates the cultivation of intimacy and reciprocity within the group.

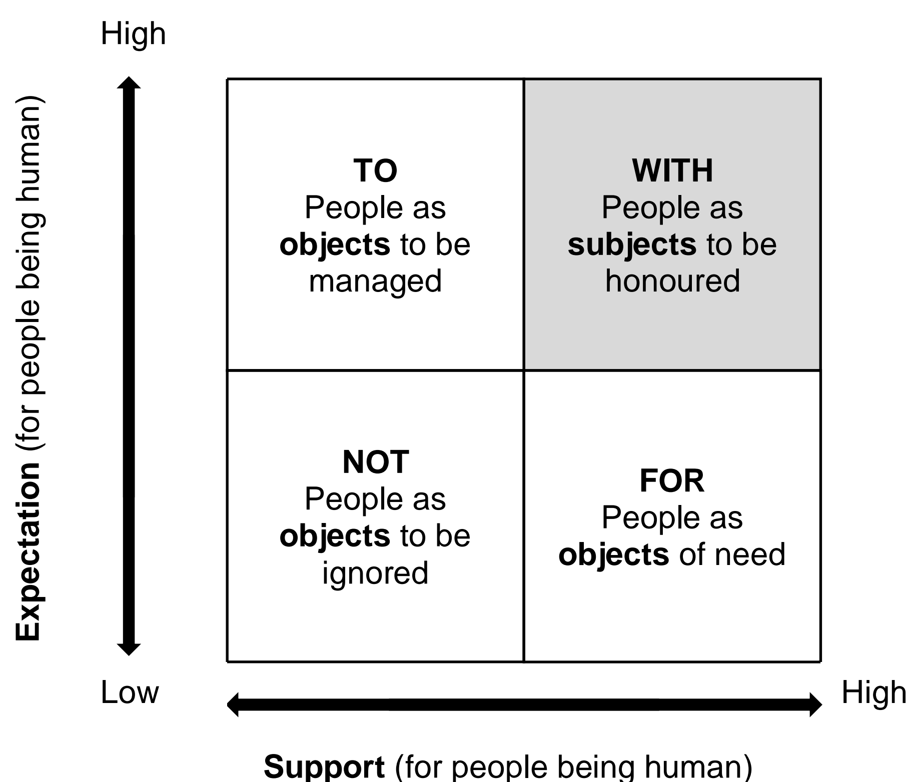
Co-researcher Maceo:	(Can’t hear start of sentence) “And not to laugh when someone has done something wrong cos you don’t like someone to do it to you.”
Co-researcher Anna:	“Ok. So, you said two things there. To respect people’s views and not to laugh when we get it wrong cos we all get it wrong sometimes. (Pause. Looks at Maceo:) Is that quite important to you?”
Co-researcher Maceo:	“Yes”
Co-researcher Anna:	(To group) “So, we need to listen to that. When somebody’s expressing something that’s important to them, we have to listen extra carefully to that. Does what Maceo said about not laughing…do you agree with that?”
Group:	“Yeah”
Co-researcher Anna:	“Cos I saw some nodding when he was speaking which sort of showed me that you agreed. Is that something that’s quite important to your class?
Co-researcher Zidane:	Some people laugh when he’s talking about when people laugh at his accent cos he comes from a different county.”
Co-researcher Maceo:	“Some people are laughing now”
Co-researcher Zidane:	“And some people laugh at him”
Co-researcher Anna:	(to Maceo) “So what would you like to happen?”
Co-researcher Maceo:	“To respect everybody”

Co-researcher Anna: “Ok”

Transcription of session 2 ‘Values’, October 2017

Exploring and expressing my values system helped me engage with research strategies that served to either nurture or diminish life (Vaandering, 2013).

Figure 49. ***Relationship (subject-object relationship) window*** *(Vaandering, 2013)*



Through this relational lens, I learned that reciprocity is a valuable component of emancipatory research and operates at two intersections: between the researcher and the researched and between data and theory (Lather, 1986). As co-researchers, we could discuss such issues within the Peace PAR project because we had previously demonstrated mutual care. I was also in a reciprocal dialogue with the conceptual theories influencing my research (Boal, 1979; Freire, 1996, 2005, 2014; Vaandering, 2013, 2014; Whitehead, 1989, 1993, 2004, 2018), recognising in praxis what I was reading in theory. Importantly, however,

the interactivity of our theory-building meant it was dialectical, mitigating against potential reification and theory imposition (Lather, 1986).
There is an argument that young children cannot (and should not) negotiate meanings, critically analyse their histories or engage in dialogue around conflictual issues such as race, culture, and treatment of others. This perspective stems from the notion of 'childhood innocence', which can permeate people's perceptions of young people and prevent educators from raising conflictual issues with young children (Parker, 2016b). However, along with others (Angell, 2004; Beck, 2003; Bickmore, 2012; Parker, 2016b), I assert that children are no different from adults in this respect: under particular conditions and supported with preparative lessons and scaffolded content/process, they are equally capable of engaging in sustained complex dialogue around conflict and peace (Bickmore, 2005; Parker, 2010, 2011).

However, the staff remained visibly uncomfortable about the issue. I believe this was because I did not extend the same offer of reciprocal care to adults when openly addressing my concerns. The embarrassment is revisited in a later interview:

Participant: "Did you pick up or is it I, that there is a Jamaican, African…"

Anna: "Yeah… I started to sense that"

Participant: "Yeah, I've noticed that"

Anna: "I was curious about it, and it seemed to be something to explore. That's what prompted me to get the map really and then my observations of that was that after that activity, it went…"

Participant: "…Yes!"

Anna: "The tension…whether I'd perceived it as tension or not. It felt like it, it, it physically all got out in the. open?"

Participant: "Yeah, because Natori and I didn't realise that even on the playground our children from Africa were not included in the games be it tig or basketball or football. Or if they were

included, to make the numbers up. It was always Africa against Jamaica, India, Pakistan. You-know?"

Anna: "Yeah"

Participant: "But, um, our two little African boys … they seemed to be much more integrated now. They're forming their own little friendship groups".

Interview with adult participant, 2018

In another interview, a participant later intimated she had also picked up on division between the groups and was concerned the issue might be brought to the Peace PAR sessions:

> "We had a bit of a problem around the same time, a bit of a problem with; they were playing football in, um, African versus Jamaican groups, things like that. And that caused a few problems in the class. And I think they then brought a bit of that in here at some point and then came back to class talking about it. I was thinking 'where is this coming from? Please don't take this to Anna's sessions' That wasn't very comfortable that".

Interview with adult participant, 2018

In other words, I had challenged the *Doxa*: the unquestioned perpetuation of cultural and structural violence (Galtung). In contrast, the interviewee sought to avoid the conflict and complexity such challenge brought to the classroom. Parker (2016b) argues that this avoidance can perpetuate defensive teaching, describing it as managing classroom behaviour by controlling students' access to information, thus reinforcing standardised hegemonic school knowledge (Parker, 2016b).

I propose that the co-researchers experienced conscientisation as a result of this project, gradually seeing each other (and being seen by adults) differently over time. I believe we used liberatory-based peace

education as a tool for personal and social transformation rather than cultural reproduction. Although the school's staff were uncomfortable with what emerged, it led to significant changes for the children, their relationships, and how staff members saw them. As evidenced, dialogue and critical thinking helped engage them in this social transformation. However, socially constructed norms around power and hegemony had to be explicitly addressed for the dialogue to be democratic and transformative (Davies, 2003, Parker, 2016b).

Recognising negative peace presented challenges, however. Once I was aware of the masked violence, I had three options:

- Completely ignore it (and thus be complicit in it)
- Partially ignore it, not raising the issue/intervening but still writing about it (and thus be complicit *and* duplicitous)
- Raise the issue and face the consequences

As already described, I chose the third: to embody conflicting viewpoints as a learning opportunity (Bickmore and Parker, 2014), leading to a peace-making response. By recognising the relationship tensions (partly stemming from the diverse cultural identities) and choosing to "thoughtfully name this dissonance" (Bickmore, 2005) rather than ignore it, I facilitated inclusion and democratic development (Parker, 2016b). Having already acknowledged that education will continue legitimising violence if pedagogy does not deal with it, I now accept that excluding the study of violence because of pedagogical preferences may be an example of cultural violence (Cabezudo and Haavelsrud, 2013 p. 3). By *not* talking about it, I would have knowingly perpetuated cultural violence. For the Peace PAR group, the inquiry became the living example of a problem-posing education (Freire, 1996 [1970]).

A positive peace process followed as we built and repaired relationships, creating a more inclusive and democratic social system (in our research group) that met the group's needs (Bickmore, 2005). The experience of

dialogic decision-making within an explicit social justice initiative helped develop critical awareness and judgement (Cremin and Guilhereme, 2016).

Via arts-engaging activities, the young people began a process of peace-in-action by:

a) affirming their value-base as a co-researcher
b) sharing and discussing oppressions they directly experienced due to their intersecting identities and relationships (Wright, 2020)
c) identifying and affirming their talents, and
d) rebuilding and repairing relationships.

My awareness of using restorative practice to identify and navigate harm began developing from this point onwards. Chapter six explores my early failings to acknowledge and address racial injustice and my (now recognised) responsibilities as a white person doing this work (Davies, 2019).

5.7 Path Three - Emerging transformed - Learning

On the labyrinth's return path, the 'traveller' integrates the journey's learning back into the world. My transformation began as I started investigating my practice in connection with others, as evidenced by the evolution of my research orientation. From a token AR researcher (whose initial exposure to research was via a western social-science paradigm that reinforced empirical notions of truth, testing and validity) I became a lived PAR researcher (whose view of research became increasingly people-orientated, justice-based, authentic, ethical, and human-rights focused. I began trusting my embodied knowledge and implicit theories about research methodologies and information sources (Whitehead, 2018). The next chapter explores this personal transformation further, accounting for the research process itself (and its impact on me) as an object of study.

I discuss the changes we made to enact more satisfying, sensible and sustainable ways of building, maintaining, and repairing relationships. I also show that we looked for, found and enacted methods of achieving this that were less irrational or unreasonable than before and less unproductive, wasteful, unsustainable, unjust or exclusionary (Kemmis et al., 2014). I maintain that we chose to share our collective story (talents) in the hope that others might learn something from them in the same way we learned from others' stories. Finally, we produced new knowledge and practices about how peace education and creative methods might contribute to school life.

First, I present three short examples of transformation: talents, action, and individual impact. Although these vignettes provide 'evidence', they also highlight the creation of "sustainable social orders" (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006 p. 7), e.g. the research group's realigned relationships. As I describe the dialogic processes that took place, I hope to stimulate a system of cultural renewal as you read about them and feel involved in creating something new. Continuing in the same vein, I include a candid account of selected learnings from my participation with others.

5.7.1 Talents

As group dynamics took over and cultural differences were identified and celebrated, our explorations of values and counter-values (in understanding oppression) were derailed. This derailment allowed for a new research question to emerge as the co-researchers began aligning their values with actions. Since these actions made them feel good about themselves, they became synonymous with 'talents'. For example, co-researcher Ladonya's value was 'calm', which she experienced when performing the action 'drawing'. Co-researcher Ladonya thus embodied her value and named it her talent.

There was also a sense that *knowledge* was a talent. For example, participants considered knowledge about countries valuable, regarding co-researcher Anthony's knowledge of Japan, its food and language very

highly. Similarly, the group valued one adult participant's knowledge of Ireland, giving her description of the river Liffey and boiled bacon and cabbage a round of applause. Having knowledge about a country was thus perceived as a unique capacity. Suddenly, children who had been quiet enjoyed having their 'gift' of knowledge about Uganda, Jamaica or Spain celebrated. This knowledge assertion changed perceptions and relationships, prompting participants to re-evaluate their perception of one another. Talents were also a way of defining something they were good at and enjoyed, thus claiming – and publicly asserting – a positive identity for themselves. These talents included gymnastics, singing and football, among others.

Although I was still keen to explore the notion of values (and my hypothesis that an exploration of a counter-value might lead to a study of oppression), the group were resistant. After the milestone discussion about our differences, things felt too 'tender' to continue investigating oppression. If I could paraphrase the sentiment in the room, it might have said*: 'I don't want to be known for/as my counter-values or what oppresses me, thank you Anna. I experience it enough! I want the people in this room, some of whom are my oppressors, to see me for my talents. Can we focus on that, please?'*

The map session also had an impact on an adult participant, who hinted at a reconfiguration of relationships from that point:

> "I loved the one with big map. I thought that was brilliant. Because they were talking about where they were from and I could see the others… like, Tashelle for example, when Maceo was talking, Tashelle was saying 'really? Is that in your country? Did you see that? Is that what you… do you eat that?' And I think that children that have come to us late on, you know, maybe joined us in Year four or Year five from war-torn countries, and children that have been born here in England get to hear what their lives have been like. And I think it makes them appreciate just how easy life's been

> for them. Even though they think it's been difficult, and they've had their own set of difficulties. I think it's made them realise that 'hang on a minute', he's had it far more difficult than I have. You know, when you hear a child talking about seeing somebody killed or a member of their family going out and never coming back because of the conflict in their country or countries that they've travelled through to get here… it's humbling."
>
> Interview with adult participant, 2018

The session enabled the group members to rethink and renegotiate their relationships. I posit that there was a (re) connection after the map activity – an opportunity to be known for something different. Old stigmas and labels were shaken off, and new, self-selected ones articulated: '*This is where I am from. This is my talent, my expertise. This is what I want to be known for from now on'*. This focus on strengths also extended outwards. Co-researcher Ladonya suggested that other people are sometimes more able to see and name our talents than we are:

> "Some people who say they don't have talents when they enjoy something, so we could ask them what they enjoy or if they have talents, and we can put them into groups and see what they can accomplish all together."
>
> Co-researcher Ladonya, 2017

I explored the notion of talents with the adults. One participant's reaction is particularly critical:

> "What interests me is where that whole idea of basing a research project on our talents, what motivated that? What stance was that coming from? Because that raises huge concerns for me as someone who is actively involved in promoting the current curriculum."

Adult participant, 2018

I asked her what concerns this raised for her. She lamented the fact that these children needed to base a research project on the fact that they have talents:

> "It's almost like, 'we've got talents you know? Anybody bloody noticed?' 'Excuse me'?"
>
> Adult participant, 2018

Her frustration at the curriculum's lack of provision for a meaningful exploration of identity points to a gap in citizenship and/or SMSC[48] education. More importantly, her comment is a powerful illustration of the tension between teachers as instruments of policy and people whose values may diverge from these policies.

I posit that identifying talents as a research focus was the co-researchers' way of questioning and resisting the (deficit) conflict-resolution model I presented (Parker, 2016a). Researching counter-values (oppressions) was too much for them when relationships were unstable, so they resisted it. Their oppressions included boredom, inability to relax, frustration, feeling unheard, sadness, situations preventing prayer, and having an 'attitude'. To investigate these within the group was too uncomfortable. In a world where their deficits are publicly examined and displayed on behaviour ladders and charts, is it any wonder they contested the line of inquiry? As a result, the group asserted control over a narrative they wanted to be retold (Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 2015).

Furthermore, I posit that this research focus was deficit-orientated and socially unjust given the ethnic make-up of the group. Reacting to this injustice, the co-researchers decentred the paradigm and re-centred it around their realities, knowledge and values. However, the group still

[48] Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural.

valued democratisation, and we were able to voice and examine diverse experiences (the talents and countries they associated themselves with). The group also chose to retain the Image Theatre methodology as it gave meaning to their experiences.

5.7.2 ‘Action’ research

Some of the most productive sessions involved physical engagement via drama and games. These required monitoring, however, as dramas often became fight scenes. Exploring this, I discovered that one interpretation of action research had ‘action’ (as in ‘action movie’) at its core, hence all the slow-motion fighting and karate moves, a recurring theme that I needed to understand and address. As much as I strove to engender an ethos of freedom and democratic collaboration, this goal conflicted with some of the co-researcher’s social agendas. I appreciated that I was working alongside twelve young adolescents with group and social-development issues. Wilson and colleagues’ 2007 description of engaging adolescents in social action through photovoice struck a particular chord:

> “a preoccupation with peer approval, establishing dominance, ostracism, clowning, and putdowns were often in the foreground of group dynamics. Thus, people might refuse to work with each other, sometimes resulting in denigration of each other’s ideas during discussion and in verbal sparring or silencing of some voices.”

(Wilson et al., 2007 p. 256)

Some group members’ physical nature was not limited to the Peace PAR sessions. During her interview, one adult participant mentioned co-researcher Aapo sticking up for himself on the playground, attributing this action to being part of the Peace PAR project:

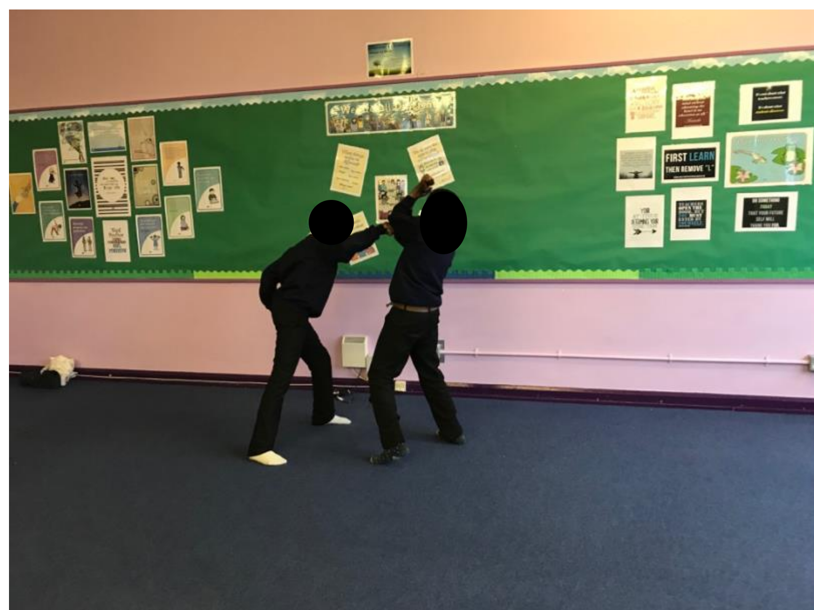
“I watched him actually standing up for himself because he gets pushed around a lot. But he physically went hammer and tongs for ‘Y’. ‘Y’ pushes him around an awful lot and it was like (clicks her fingers) something had snapped and he ‘woah’ (mimes punching) really pounded in to ‘Y’. So much so that █ and I had to run out and intervene. I said to him afterwards ‘what made you do that? He said ‘Enough Miss. Had. Enough’. I said ‘how d’you feel now?’ He said, ‘I’m sorry that I did it’ he said, ‘cos I know it wasn’t right, but I feel better’. I think ‘Y’’s backed off now.”

Adult participant, 2018

This story is one of direct violence. However, the adult’s investigation suggests that the young person experienced a sense of justice as he finally asserted himself against his oppressor.

I return to the still images, recalling how physical they were. Co-researcher Aapo claimed his talents were football and boxing, making the image seen in Figure 50 in reference to his boxing talent.

Figure 50. **Co-researcher’s image of his talent (boxing)**



I am struck now by Aapo's defensive pose; arms up and head turned away. Given the story of him getting 'pushed around a lot', I wonder if he was playing out real-life experiences to some extent?
Despite the occasional thump or thrown shoe, some embodied encounters were significant enough to name. The group's response to the floor-map activity was particularly interesting. The exercise incorporated a beautiful 3-metre x 3-metre painted canvas map I had taped to the floor over lunchtime, ready for the session. The group's response to seeing the map for the first time was remarkable, almost as if they went swimming on it: they ran, dived and rolled on it, all talking at once and moving around to point out things to each other. Although encouraging them to sit down with me took a long time, this was excitement rather than defiance.

Several elements combined to form this response. Firstly, cues such as removing chairs from the space and asking them to remove their shoes provided an invitation to move. Secondly, the invitation to move was part of an embodied activity, inviting them to stand on the part of the world that resonated with them. Lastly, the floor map provided a physical metaphor. As such, the map session was a critical turning point increasing participation and creating a more collegiate, respectful atmosphere, contributing positively to students' critical and intellectual development (Channon et al., 2018). From here, we were able to begin forming the research question: *How can we use each other's talents to find out more about ourselves and each other?*

This activity exemplified knowledge gained through the senses rather than reason. We saw, heard and felt, and then we understood. In addition to activities such as writing or drawing, drama enabled the co-researchers to extend their affective learning, concerned with "the emotions, feelings or passions that motivate, constrain or shape human action" (Best, 2003 p. 14).

5.7.3 Impact on individuals

I have minimised individual-level reporting in this section, as this project's unit of analysis is the evolving and dynamic interplay of co-researchers in the Peace PAR project's environment rather than an individual child (Fleer and Quinones, 2009).

However, adults saw the children transform. According to staff, the children who entered the labyrinthine Peace PAR project were not the same children who walked out. One adult participant remarked:

> "It was interesting seeing who came out of their shells. The sort of thing you see when you take them on residential and things. It's interesting to see them, just, not being given that much instruction, just doing it for themselves. And who comes out as a leader in the group and who kind-of doesn't? And usually, it's the ones who surprise you, do come out of their shells a bit more."
>
> Adult participant, 2018

For example, fellow co-researchers noticed changes in co-researcher Jaqweisha's confidence and self-esteem. As part of the final performance, co-researcher Kaari portrays co-researcher Jaqweisha's newfound confidence in action research. In their section, Jaqweisha (who is very shy) walks with Kaari through a 'doorway' created by two other people. Once through the doorway, Kaari says, "action research is people who are not confident… and now they're confident!". Co-researchers Kaari and Jaqweisha then raise their arms and shout "yay!". Their combined movements and statements depict Kaari (a seemingly confident person) taking Jaqweisha by the hand and walking through a symbolic doorway on an action-research path with her, revealing new confidence on the other side (celebrated by their shared "yay!").

Figure 51. **Photo from the Peace PAR film of the final performance**

Kaari: “Action research is someone who is not confident”
(leads Jaqweisha through the ‘doorway’)

Kaari: “And now they’re confident”

Kaari and Jaqweisha: “Yay!”

Co-researchers Kaari and Jaqweisha, extract from transcript of sessions 7 and 8, Action and Evaluation, 2018

Co-researcher Maceo also changed noticeably. One adult participant noted her early concerns about him during her interview:

> “To be honest, when I came to the very early session, I didn’t really think he was going to be turning up”.
>
> Adult participant, 2018

She then reflected on the change she saw in him when she watched the final performance:

> "He was just out there! And so confident. It was an absolute joy to see. And that has undoubtedly impacted on all other areas of his learning in class. And there is evidence; I have evidence on my tracking to data to show that. So, in terms of confidence-building, I think that is very secure evidence."
>
> Adult participant, 2018

This adult participant's concern about co-researcher Maceo's commitment to the project is interesting when I reflect on the retention of participants. Apart from one student missing the final session due to a dentist appointment and another leaving partway through another session due to a headache, all children attended all the sessions. While school staff commented on the significance of this retention, I chose not to compare their project attendance with school-based attendance figures, which would only play into a narrative counter to this work's underlying philosophy. Instead, I regularly emphasised the voluntariness of participation throughout the project for the children's *and* adults' benefit. I felt it was important that the children could choose, continue to choose and be seen choosing to take part in the project.

A different adult participant noticed the change in relationships and how the children were integrating more outside of the Peace PAR sessions:

> "Well, I noticed more on the playground. Yeah. Um, Anthony and Maceo were being included in a lot more of the group activities of the basketball and the football. And the others would call them and say to them 'come and join in', 'come be on my team'. Which wouldn't happen previous to that. And I've a heard a few of the children talking to Anthony about Japan".
>
> Adult participant, 2018

The project also appeared to impact the school's adults and their peace practices. After the project's completion, I discovered during a return visit to the school that an adult participant had held a 'compliments' session with the wider class. Recognising negative talk between pupils, the teachers encouraged them to share positive thoughts about each other.

> "It has given them the ability to offer positive responses without that having to be put down. So, it's built personal confidence, I think, in relationships. Which, actually, if for no other reason at all Anna, that will help with transition to secondary school. Which is important for that cohort. Because they could have been going to secondary school with quite an insular feeling and apprehension, where I feel they will be able to go in with greater confidence now".
>
> Adult participant, 2018

It is clear from these comments that the participant felt the Peace PAR experience had positively benefitted pupils, engendering a process that boosted the children's confidence. Although heart-warming, these positive 'end-goal' outcomes could play into a paternalistic narrative that research has the power to bestow positive outcomes on the subjects (Call-Cummings, 2018). I posit that the Peace PAR project encouraged empowerment by opening up the process of knowledge production, re-allocating the power to decide what knowledge was valuable and what was not and changing how that knowledge was produced and by whom.

The same participant also perceived benefits to the staff involved:

> "She could see the benefits, particularly speaking and listening benefits and language development – which actually happened through those sessions quite naturally. I think that it possibly has had the impact of making █ less reluctant for future research-type projects and maybe drama as a general vehicle"

Adult participant, 2018

Contrary to this colleague's analysis, I posit from my interactions with the adult participant under discussion that she may have found the project disempowering. I do not think she experienced a process of gaining control over knowledge production, nor was she able to see her knowledge (of behaviour management and the curriculum) as useful. Indeed, the emancipatory and liberatory approaches likely challenged her knowledge significantly.

5.8 Conclusion

During the eight Peace PAR sessions, group inductive analysis took place, exploring the information we created through drama and discussions to build knowledge about ourselves in the project's 'real time'. However, this inductive process was not always clear (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). Separate from the group experience, I thus engaged in a creative, intentional process between sessions and post-project to produce new knowledge (through the writing praxis), based on research evidence that surprised me (see sections 6.7.19 and 6.7.25 for more on this). The surprises, which felt more like discomfort or astonishment at the time, informed my next steps. Noting the surprise as an embodied sensation helped me recognise it as a moment of insight, enabling me to reason and act more intentionally in a given situation (Brinkmann, 2014).

This inquiry arrived at a situation of relationship breakdown and group functioning difficulties where we could not synthesise action research and Theatre of the Oppressed to better understand and experience conflict as an abstract concept. We were *in* conflict, and it was more meaningful to investigate that reality. The inquiry then became a process of understanding the situation by making sense of the 'surprises' (Brinkman, 2014), including explicitly recognising the inherent cultural violence enacted. After naming the situation, the group tested it to see if it resonated. From here, we attempted to resolve the situation by

refocusing the inquiry on our talents, with multiple interrelated benefits. These included moving to action, enacting a truer form of democratic inquiry into a research topic created from the ground up, and developing an appreciative model of inquiry recognising people for their assets (talents and heritage) rather than deficits (oppressions).

Engaging with the literature while writing up this inquiry stage, I also employed abductive analysis to explain the puzzling phenomena I encountered (summarised in the next chapter). Though I came to the notion of abduction late in my research journey, I acknowledge this delay as defendable. As Brinkmann put it, “the goal of the abductive process is not to arrive at fixed and universal knowledge through the collection of data” (Brinkmann, 2014 p. 722). Instead, an abductive analysis is ongoing, with no “hard and fast line between life, research, theory, and methods” (Brinkmann, 2014 p. 722). I sensed this personal shift as I enacted research, inquiry, and analysis for lived purposes.

The last surprise was the discovery of another circular form – a spiral – that gave shape to my experience writing this thesis, described in the next chapter.

6. Reflections on findings

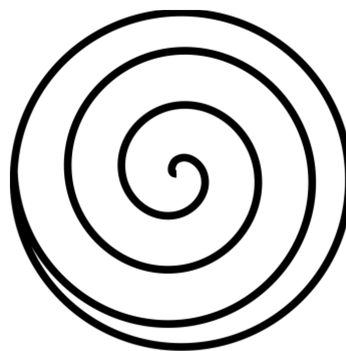
Throughout this thesis, I have used shapes to give form to propositional knowledge. In chapters one to four, I used a circle to define the groundwork's shape: me, the literature, and the emerging research design. In chapter five, I extended and flattened the combination of Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement and Tomlinson's (1989) hierarchical focussing to form a labyrinthine framework for analysis. I evidenced our unique findings and living educational-praxis development.

This penultimate chapter articulates findings from the Peace PAR project's cycles and my final solo cycle. During this last, more self-reflexive phase, I developed the notion of a spiral to give form to experience and new theorising.

6.1 The spiral

Geometry describes a spiral as a curve generated from a fixed point while constantly receding from or approaching it. In my world, the spiral is simply a shape giving form to experience and knowledge formation.

Figure 52. **The spiral**



The Peace PAR spiral kept curving me back on myself, facilitating an ongoing reflection and iteration of my path that enabled me to see and integrate new perspectives. Although my thinking changed while writing this thesis, I remained connected to my founding concept: the circle. As

I reached the new levels of understanding, I often looked back to see my starting point, but from a constantly changing vantage point (Tatum, 1992).

Rather than representing the Action Research's sequenced cycle phrases, the spiral depicts the emergence of new behavioural choices from a progressive learning experience (McTaggart, 1994). Instead of an ascension 'into the light', I thus see this journey as a penetrative, downward twist through research's difficult, shadowy mines. The spiral became a metaphor for how PAR's principles and ideals operate differently from existing research models.

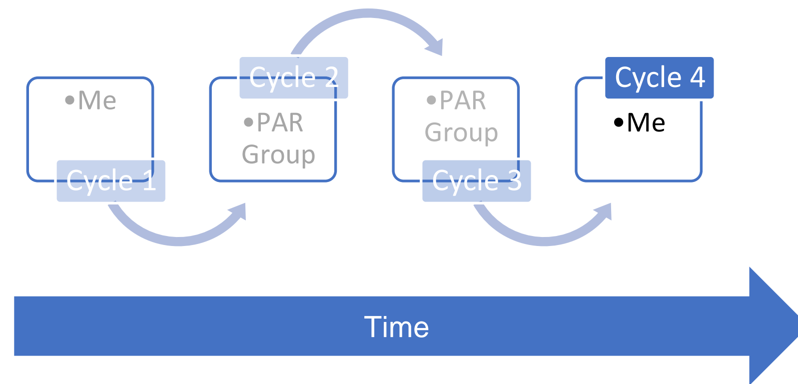
Though presented early in the chapter, the spiral shape did not occur to me until I had some distance between completing the project and writing the final chapters of the thesis. I will describe its conception shortly.

Although more self-reflective, this chapter emerged in dialogue with previous chapters' cycles. As part of this closing consideration, I draw informed conclusions and present actionable recommendations for future studies (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019). I also deliberately shift my style as I dive deeper into the spiral and identify more challenging material, drawing firmer conclusions as my authority about the project's insights increases.

6.2 Final cycle

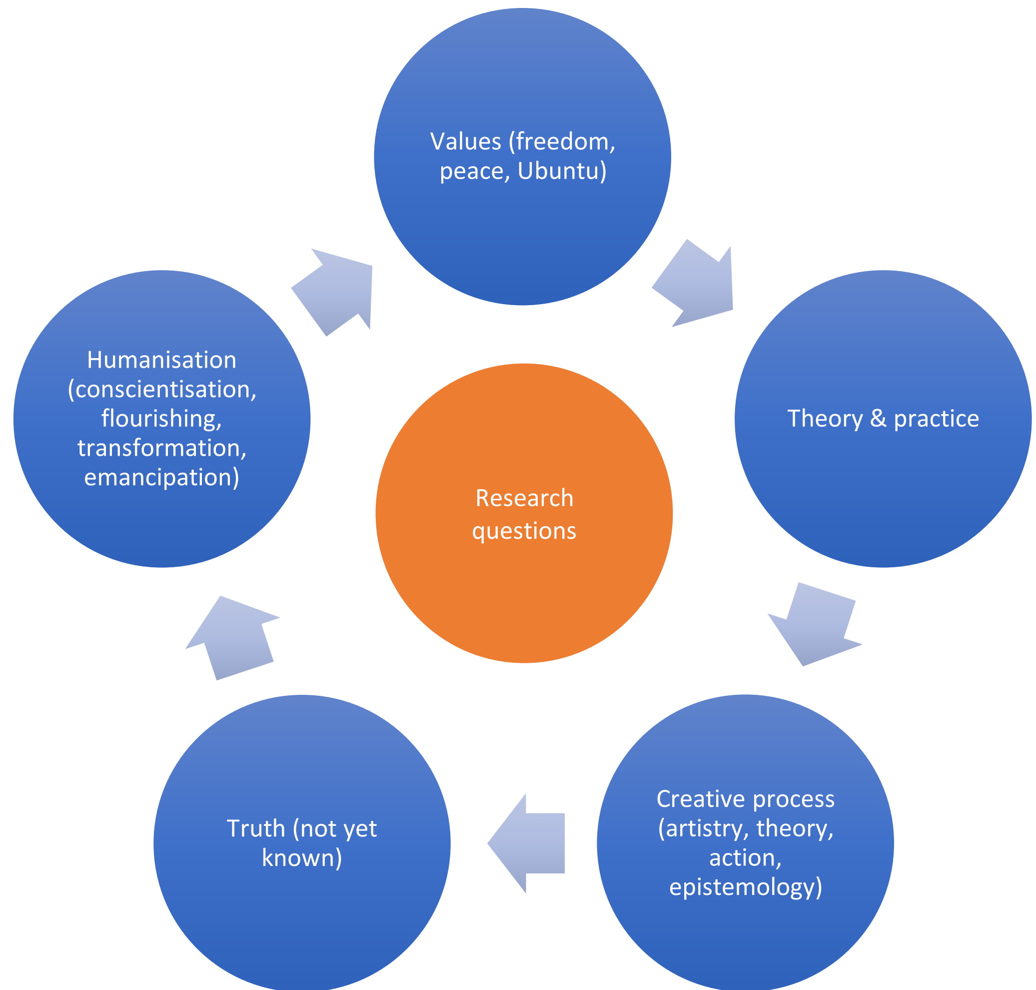
Returning to a first-person inquiry, the final research cycle involved intentional shifts in reflection, perception and conception and changes to my reality prompted by reading the literature and engaging with the academic community and this project's co-researchers.

Figure 53. **Cycle 4 of PAR**



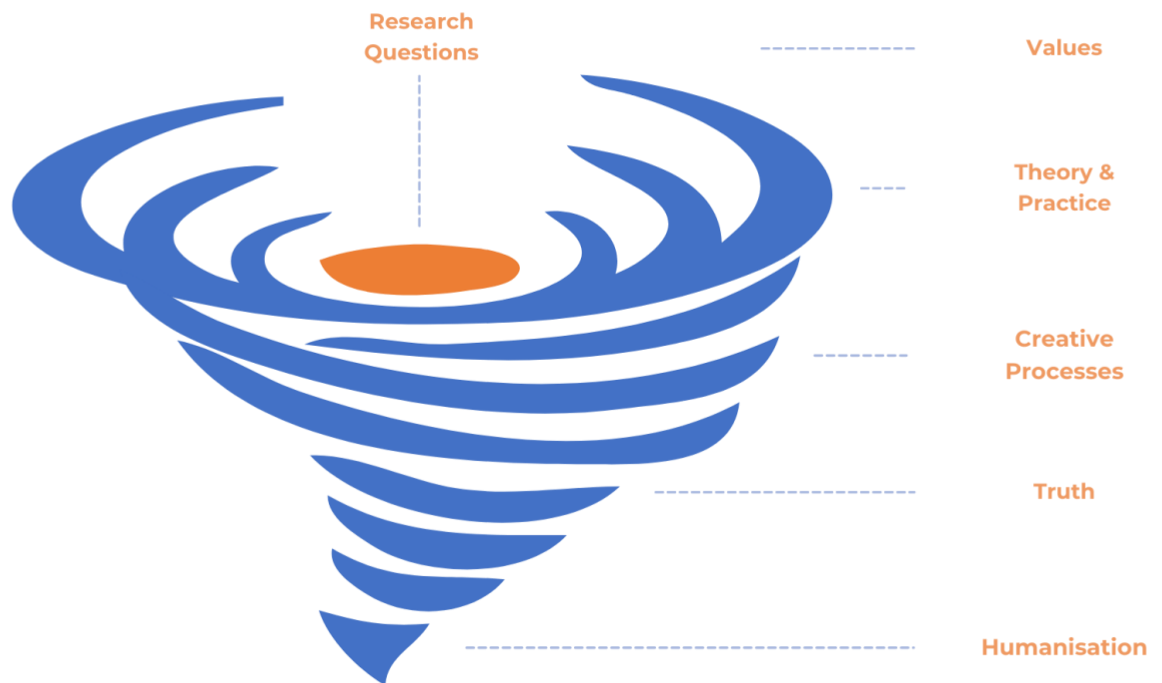
At the start of this inquiry, I hypothesised that a process of exploring and naming values would identify living contradictions (see section 3.5) that we could creatively respond to once named. I postulated that creative knowledge production with others might help us discover truth(s) and experience humanisation, rendering us better able to re-explore and renegotiate our values and perspectives on the world, continuing the cycle. As Figure 54 illustrates, I initially conceived this original claim to knowledge (see section 3.5) as a circular theory.

Figure 54. **My Living Theory: a values-led process leads to humanisation**



However, experiencing this theory and its empirical results *in action* changed how I perceive it. Therefore, I present the three-dimensional metaphor of a spiral to better depict my living theory *and its enactment*.

Figure 55. **My Living Theory: a values-led SPIRAL process leads to humanisation**

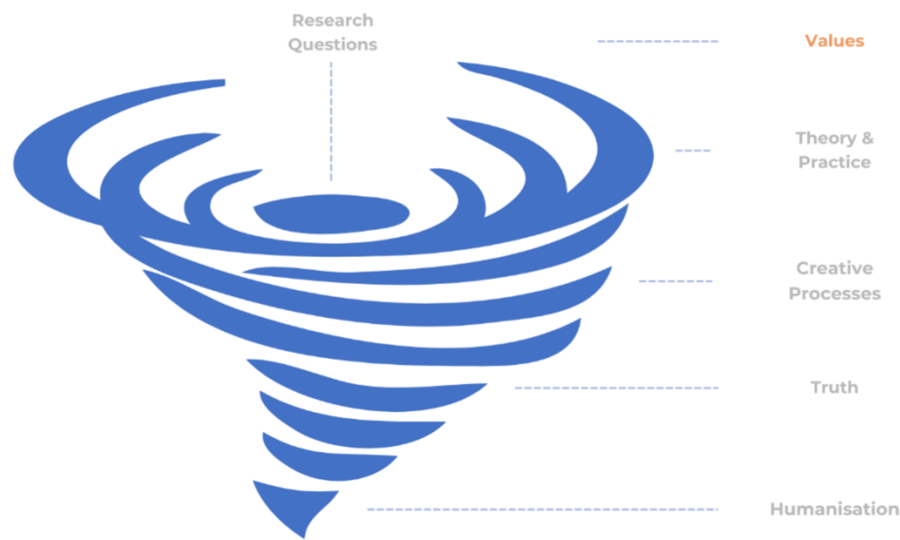


This ‘drilling down’ spiral provided a visual metaphor to describe the learning/action-centred pedagogy that unfolded. To honour that learning, I responded to Ross and Call-Cummings’ (2019) call to incorporate ‘failure’ into research-and-inquiry discourses and processes (as highlighted in section 5.6.1 for example). The spiral helped me continue delving downward to identify tension points, discomforts and failures – challenges I came to see as gifts of knowledge and opportunities for more action (Dickson and Green, 2001). Like the revolutions of a circle, the spiral is self-generating, an organically evolving form in which the material is re-evaluated and regenerated by the shifting energies contributing to humanisation. In this chapter, I recognise and name these failures and learning points to document the entirety of my experiences without ‘curation' or second-guessing, offering them to academics, researchers and myself as a learning record for future reflexive considerations.

I invite the reader into this downward inquiry process as I discuss each phase of Figure 55, defining its findings, discussing my interpretations and drawing conclusions. I reflect on the project's research questions at the end of the chapter, directly informing my final recommendations.

6.3 Values

Figure 56. **My Living Theory: Values**



By investigating and committing to my values (see chapter one), I experienced a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989, 2008) arising from the dissonance between my peace-education values, beliefs, and actions and my experiences enacting them in English primary schools. This contradiction led to the formation of a living theory: that the creative co-production of knowledge around conflict can help us discover truth and experience humanisation.

The TO philosophy provided a rationale for this living theory. Explicitly naming a value implied its desirability as something to work towards or enhance, while naming a desire helped rehearse for a reality (Boal). For all the researchers involved, exploring our values helped us identify our talents and, from there, our possible new realities.

As a research group, we identified and explored our values and shared them with our voices and bodies. Recognising that we are all unique but connected, we then moved the project into social action and created a performance.

Combining this project's hypothesis, rationale and lived experience as evidence, I claim that:

1. prioritising values (and naming them as desirable) is a liberatory act
2. naming our world (our value) and engaging in physical and relational communication with others helps us enter anti-oppressive practice
3. we thereby assert the concept of Ubuntu, recognising everyone's value

6.3.1 Finding: A commitment to values in research

I also experienced dissonance between my values and practice in my postgraduate research experience. On the one hand, I tried to develop working methods founded on anti-oppressive ideology and honouring people's lived realities. On the other, this conflicted with my perceptions of the external world's expectations of me as a researcher, against which I felt too qualitative, subjective and 'artsy' for academic study.

Whitehead (1989, 1993, 2008) proposes that a living theory can be cultivated by acknowledging and investigating living contradictions (problems) in education. By triggering imagined alternatives, this process stimulates a cycle of action, evaluation and more action. In response, I created statements to guide the final action research:

- I experience problems when my relationship with the academy negates my educational values
- I imagine ways of overcoming my problems, including challenging the dominant paradigm in social science research
- I act on a chosen solution by engaging in PAR as fully as

possible and applying arts-based practices to an educational research setting

- I evaluate the outcomes of my actions, review the literature and develop a living theory
- I modify my problems, ideas, and actions in light of my evaluations and submit my thesis

My transition from an MPhil to a PhD enacts an exploration of the educational influences on my and others' learning and how the social formations in which I live and work influence my view of research (Hymer, et al., 2009).

6.3.2 Finding: Values as ethical practice

For two reasons, I identified and enacted my personal, professional, educational, and social values (see section 1.6.3) in advance of my relationship with the co-researchers. Firstly, I wanted to test the activity's working viability. Secondly, I wanted to instigate only those research activities I was comfortable with and found useful (i.e. potentially transformational).

To deepen my ethical practice (Brydon-Miller and Coghlan, 2019), I later explored how these values related to the Ubuntu philosophy (see Table 23).

Table 23. **End-of-inquiry value reflection to deepen ethical and peaceful practice**

Researcher Values (Brydon-Miller and Coghlan, 2019)	**Ubuntu** (as I understand it)	**My personal Values**	**My professional Values**	**My educational Values**	**My social Values**
Adaptability	Cooperation	Engagement	Adaptability/ flexibility	Creativity	Opportunity
Care/ love	Openness / Reciprocity	Growth	Trust	Trust	Care
Empathy	Compassion		Inclusion	Adaptability	Compassion
Integrity	Dignity	Work/life balance	Teamwork / trust	Growth	
Democratic practice	Harmony / Cooperation	Hosting	Teamwork / humility		
Community spirit	Humanity	Warm social relationships / generosity		Engagement	
Fairness/ justice		Fairness	Inclusion	Inclusion	Fairness/ inclusion
Freedom/ self-determination	Openness	Autonomy/ freedom	Autonomy/ freedom	Autonomy/ freedom	Freedom
Humility	Humility	Self-reflection	Humility	Growth	
Inclusiveness		Fairness	Inclusion	Inclusion	
Playfulness	Warmth	Fun	Creativity	Fun	
Responsibility	Reciprocity	Self-reflection	Inclusion	Inclusion	Responsibility
Collegiality	Participation	Participation	Participation	Participation	Participation
Common sense			Competence	Competence	
Authenticity/ candour		Authenticity	Communication/ feedback	Authenticity	
Safety				Safety	Safety

Values of care, humanity, safety and participation helped unite approaches to ethics, methodology, research design and analysis. Ubuntu became a lived philosophy enabling group members to achieve higher results through collective efforts (Mbeki, 2007). Personally, my continued value investigation generated the criteria I wanted to be judged by (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010).

6.3.3 Finding: Values form judgement criteria[49]

The Peace PAR project and its exegesis – this thesis – demonstrate how, through my educational inquiry as an arts-based practitioner-researcher, I clarified the embodied ontological values to which I hold myself accountable. For example, I considered it worthwhile to prepare my session plans and resources in advance, evidencing 'competence' as one of my professional values and 'thorough preparation' as the assessment criterion (judged by how well I prepared my work). I demonstrated this comprehensively in chapter four (research design).

In contrast, social action became the assessment criterion when exploring 'justice' as a research value (judged by the social action taken). The group asserted control over the narrative they wanted to be retold (Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 2015) and changed the research focus. As a result, the meaningful action that took place included:

- Enhanced dialogue between co-researchers (myself included) and adult participants
- Improved relationships
- Increased social proximity and connection between members
- Amplified marginalised voices
- Increased justice

I considered it worthwhile to explore the values of 'creativity' and 'growth' through an embodied experience, judging them by how open and creative I was to participate fully in an embodied experience. However, this is challenging to demonstrate; although the group portrayed their values through

[49] This judgement-criteria sample relates to a more comprehensive inquiry I undertook but, for brevity, have not included.

Image Theatre, I did not. Indeed, I struggled throughout this process to find my voice and tell my story how I wanted to, including via face-to-face encounters, improvisation, and using my body, voice and props (Savigny, 2014 p. 798). I consider this a personal failure since I cannot claim to have fully entered into physical communication with others as part of my own anti-oppressive practices. I would seek to rectify this in further research by personally presenting and performing elements of this thesis as a story.

6.4 Theory and practice

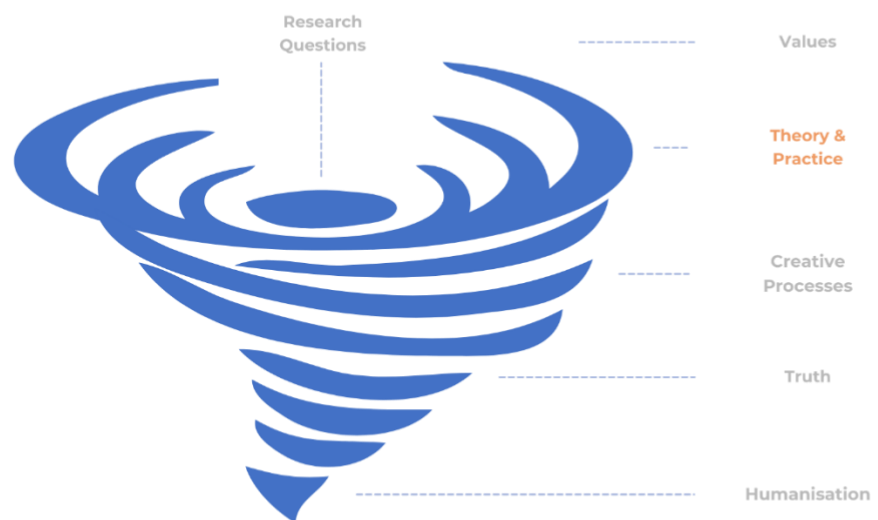


Figure 57. **My Living Theory: Theory and Practice**

My living theory was not solely reliant on concepts and abstractions but informed by values as expressions of a living energy (Whitehead, 2018). This embodied ontology first embraced practical and enacted realms of ideas and action in motion (Grande, 2014) that then went on to inform explanations (theory). This project considered PAR as bodymind work that challenges Western rationalist associations with a specific discipline of knowledge, viewed in a singular way (Smith et al., 2016).

6.4.1 Finding: Peace architecture

As evidenced by the Peace PAR project's final performance, our peace

pedagogy and embodied circle-based peace architecture assisted our group and individual intentional reflection toward self-sufficiency. Our peace architecture developed over time to incorporate peace values enhancing

negative peace (an absence of direct violence) and affirming positive peace (including social justice, participation and cultural diversity). Specific features (such as the use of a talking piece) enabled constructive interactions, discouraging alternative exchanges (Cabezudo and Haavelsrud, 2013).

Exploring our preferred behaviours and attitudes was critical to developing a peace architecture (see Table 16 in section 5.5.2 'How do we want to work together' activity). We purposefully explored these ways of working through dialogue and abstract props so that we might institute our Peace PAR project attitudes and behaviours. This democratic exploration of individual and group values, behaviours and attitudes cemented some "fundamental rights and guarantees" for each other (Cabezudo and Haavelsrud, 2013 p. 3), including intentionally creating conditions promoting dialogic learning that encouraged everyone's voices.

Choosing to participate, speak and listen to others is a conscious act, defining the Peace PAR project as an act of cognition rather than the mere transfer of information. We *chose* to participate rather than passively receive – an enrichment of the peace architecture made possible via the pedagogy and politics associated with PAR.

As our peace values, behaviours, attitudes and *skills* developed and our peace architecture became established, the peaceful research process unfolded. Intentionally creating these democratic conditions was necessary for action, bringing the research project to life and affecting our choices about the research form, process and content.

Our values-explicit, conscious, dialogic and humanising peace architecture enabled us to surface conflict. By deliberately engaging with conflict, we came to thoughtfully name the dissonances in our relationships (Bickmore, 2005). I

contend that it was only through this architecture that we could bring the Peace PAR project into being.

The circumstances and context that helped us develop our peace architecture (described in section 4.5 ‘Methods used in the inquiry’) allowed for several factors that, in turn, helped with problem definition. In summary:

- A peace architecture allowed articulated feelings and hunches about research problems to become topics for investigation. As evidenced in section 5.6.1, we analysed our situation interactively through an intentional circle discussion (Bartlett, 2008), reaching a critical consciousness about our relationships through dialogue.

- Our peace architecture allowed individuals with painful experiences to discover their shared experiences, hear them and amplify their collective voice. This is evident in section 5.6.3’s example of co-researcher Maceo naming the violence he had experienced in the group.

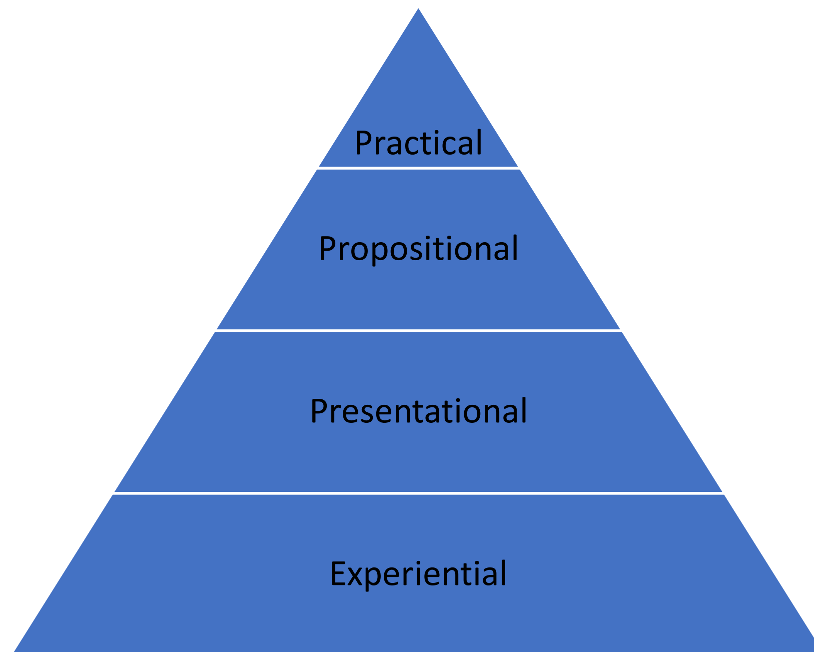
Our peace architecture also enabled the transfer of project control (Maguire, 1987) from the lead researcher to the co-researchers. This can be seen in section 5.6.1, which described the palpable change in the group’s dynamic as they suggested various actions following the intentional circle discussion.

6.4.2 Finding: Ways of knowing

Four types of knowledge emerged from the unique combination of a Freirean pedagogy encompassing peace education, a restorative research approach and TO/PAR methods and methodology. Heron (1996) describes this fourfold knowing as:

> “a pyramid of upward support in which experiential knowing at the base upholds presentational knowing, which supports propositional or conceptual knowing, which upholds practical knowing, the exercise of skill.”
>
> (Heron, 1996 p. 52)

Figure 58. **The pyramid of fourfold knowing** (Heron, 1996)



Building on Heron's early work presenting this fourfold 'knowing' as a systemic whole (Heron, 1996), I share how the Peace PAR group's experiential, presentational and propositional knowing came to inform its practical knowledge.

Our experiential knowledge lay in identifying and embodying our values, counter values and – later – our talents, imagining and feeling their presence within us. Image Theatre methods allowed us to intuitively grasp the significance of our values, counter values and talents while embodying our thoughts and feelings through expressive imagery (presentational knowledge) helped us develop knowledge about ourselves and each other. Moving between experiential knowing via direct encounter to presentational knowing (often via images) helped us name ideas, from which propositional knowing developed via the dialogic circle and/or writing in our journals. We also presented this knowledge as drama, sharing our developed understanding of our talents with an audience. This skilled action led to a more profound sense of encounter (Heron and Reason, 2008) and more notional modes of knowing,

informing more developed practice (Heron and Reason, 2008). Practical knowing came via the demonstration of competence in our evolving interrelationships. The co-researchers began aligning their values with their actions – ones that helped them feel good about themselves and thus became synonymous with ‘talents’.

I claim that dialogic circles, learner journals, photographs and Image Theatre encouraged multiple ways of knowing beyond propositional knowledge. By not accentuating any singular form of knowing, we developed a more grounded knowledge (Heron and Reason, 2001). Furthermore, I contend that the PAR *process* expanded the co-researchers' perceptions of research to an activity that helps discover *new* knowledge and can happen in participation with others (see 5.5.5 ‘What does a research look like?’ activity). As a collective, we claimed interest in and control over the ways in which knowledge is deemed authentic, valuable and useful to society (Call-Cummings, 2018).

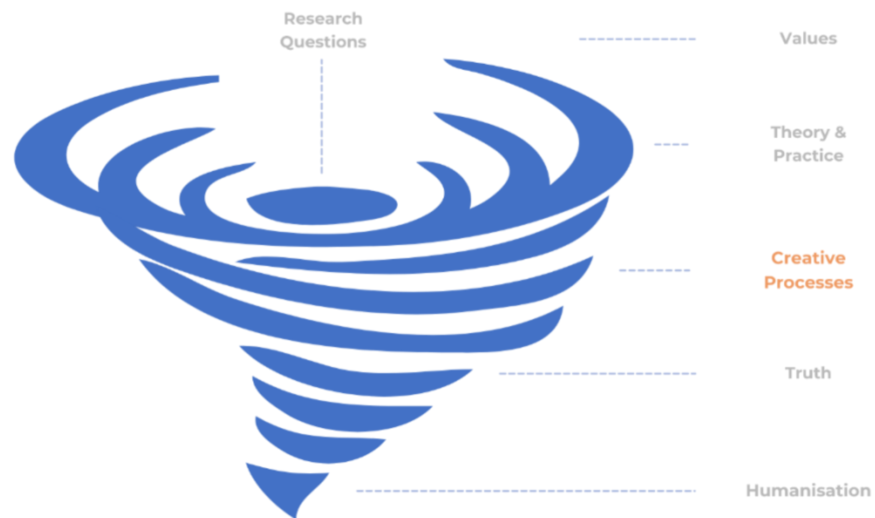
6.4.3 Finding: Image Theatre as an extended epistemology

Not just a *method* for stimulating reflection and action, Image Theatre also provided a *means* for reflecting and acting. Tuck's (2008) concept of ‘blended method-actions’ neatly describes this interrelatedness. Specific to the Peace PAR project, the blended method-actions included co-researchers embodying a value via Image Theatre that inspired action, i.e. creating a counter-value. Once created, co-researchers again used Image Theatre to reflect on the counter-value, with subsequent action inspiring the embodiment of a value as a talent. Thus, Image Theatre ‘conversations’ provided a rhythmic framework to balance reflection and action, followed by more reflection and action.

In extending the epistemology to prioritise blended method-actions (Heron and Reason 1997, 2008), I counter the abstract propositional knowledge and narrow empiricism often favoured in positivist-oriented academia (Heron and Reason, 2008).

6.5 Creative processes

Figure 59. **My Living Theory: The creative process**



6.5.1 Finding: Creative reunification

I posit that a drama-led peace education reunites space, roles, minds, bodies, feelings, thoughts, and actions. At first glance, the theatre auditorium and classroom might seem similarly orientated toward separation; both spaces feature those who 'know' facing those who do not (Boal, 2010). This distinction separates people's roles into acting versus observing and moving versus sitting.

The Image Theatre method encouraged dialogue between the body and the senses (Page, 2008; Shapiro, 2002), ensuring the inquiry was less reliant on cognition and more concerned with embodied, contemplative, emotional and visual processes valuing inner and outer peace. Using drama facilitated the reunification of body, mind, thoughts, and feelings, leading to several actions:

- Jointly identifying and analysing complex problems to generate solutions, influence others in beneficial ways and create environments prioritising problem-solving (Vine, 2013)
- Sharing ownership of the research process, including problem identification, systemic analysis/questioning through artistic means (Wright, 2020), and action
- Experimenting with new ways of thinking about normalised encounters, intersectional identities, and shared experiences (Wright, 2020), leading to altered perceptions of our relationships with ourselves and others
- Developing artistic skills for achieving newfound lightness and perspective around shared injustices that had caused pain, shame or disempowerment (Wright, 2020)
- Generating insights into young peoples' issues also faced by co-researchers and identifying resources that might help address them
- Sharing our story (talents) in the hope that others might learn something the same way we learned from others' stories
- Experimenting with new ways of presenting and being seen by the people who make up social systems (including peers, adults and family members) and enacting ways to resist and subvert the oppressive social conditions experienced (Wright, 2020)
- Enabling safer reflections on our shared and divergent experiences
- Helping repair relationships by acknowledging others' assets (talents)
- Furthering social justice; as we modelled reflective practice in the classroom and school, we helped shape Fosseway's educational practice (Brantmeier, 2011 p. 374)

6.5.2 Finding: Image Theatre begets peace

No single 'truth' defines a universal meaning for the word 'peace'. While words help us share and understand ideas, we cannot know if our understanding of a particular word matches another's. In contrast, Image Theatre provided us with a common language for exploring peace and developing it beyond a set of abstract ideas (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013). Once we recognised and named our desires, we could enact and manifest them. This creative, dialogic method became a valuable and meaningful way to envision and elicit peace.

In transcending a dualistic separation of mind and body, Image Theatre provided a pedagogical tool enabling embodied learning. The Peace PAR project thus offers a physical, visual method for children to represent and communicate peace. Beyond peace education, Image Theatre offers another way for children to develop a language for evaluating their world.

6.5.3 Finding: PAR supported conflict dialogue

Teachers tend to avoid controversial topics for several reasons. For example, they might be unaware of or indifferent to social justice/political issues or have an actual or perceived lack of expertise in facilitating such conversations. Teachers can also feel constrained by curriculum and assessment demands, which may impede space for constructive dialogue. Finally, teachers may be subject to real or perceived risks about parents' reactions to engaging with controversial topics (Parker, 2016b).

While I accept that it can be risky for people to participate in dialogue around conflict, the issues are already 'in the room' and present in each interaction. Therefore, there is potentially more harm in *not* talking about them than engaging in well-supported, structured democratic dialogue. These discussions are arguably *necessary*, as "ignoring differences *within* groups frequently contributes to tension *among* groups" (Crenshaw, 2016 p. 1) and avoiding conflict and complexity reinforces the dominant hegemony in schools.

The Peace PAR group disrupted the status quo by positioning conflict as a learning opportunity. Through PAR, we safely engaged in the "thoughtful naming provoked by dissonance" (Bickmore, 2005 p. 164), facilitated by our peace architecture. We employed PAR as an explicit framing device for peaceful (restorative) research to address systemic and systematic forms of power imbalance, racism, and epistemic oppression (Bennett, 2004).

6.5.4 Finding: A peace architecture supported conflict dialogue

Building our peace architecture involved identifying our talents and learning fundamental deliberation, conflict-dialogue and resolution skills contributing to peace (Angell, 2004 p. 99). Once we established our peace architecture, we could thoughtfully acknowledge and name the dissonance in our relationships (Bickmore, 2005). Only then were democratic learning and research progress possible (Parker, 2016a).

Using our peace architecture, we recognised, explicitly addressed and reframed the named issues of power and discrimination that arose in our research process. As such, the research group collectively redefined the research question as: *How can we use each other's talents to learn more about ourselves and each other*?

6.5.5 Finding: Engaging with difference can promote peace

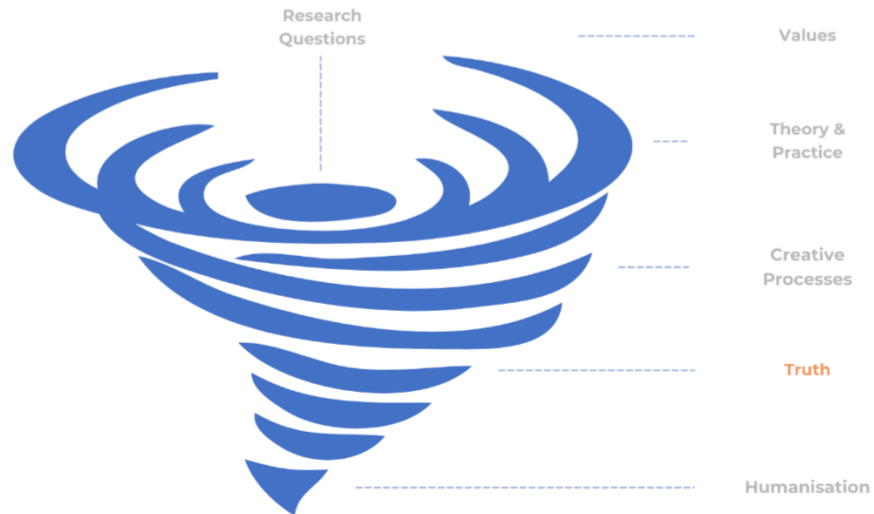
In young people's complex and diverse worlds, their experiences construct and influence peace processes and practices. In recognising 'everyday' and local knowledge (our talents), we thus identified different versions of peace (Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 2015), with the co-researchers reframing and redefining their understanding and ways of being in the world and changing their relationships by making the implicit explicit. Enhancing young people's capacity for creative thought and action through a peace-based research inquiry meant developing a normative culture engendering mutual understanding and respect for different cultural values (Best, 2003). This made for a critical, creative, and locally relevant peace-building experience.

6.5.6 Finding: Methods and methodology must be locally relevant

I claim that this drama-led research experience incorporating Image Theatre and improvisation engendered deeper involvement, engagement and understanding of ourselves and each other and an appreciation of qualities (talents). However, this collaborative, liberatory and creative inquiry into talents was only possible once the group generated methodological relevance (see section 5.5.4), ultimately altering attitudes, behaviours (Kester, 2008) and, as I later posit, truths.

6.6 Truth

Figure 60. **My Living Theory: Truth**



This creative PAR process provided opportunities to reflect on the human condition, a process of conscientisation that exposed an altered conception of (a) peace and (b) ethics, as discussed below.

6.6.1 Finding: An altered conception of peace

This study demonstrated how deliberately engaging with difference generated an altered conception of peace. The Peace PAR group recognised flaws in a monologic version of peace, where monologues oppress by preventing the other from speaking (Boal, 1979). Instead, we created our peace through dialogue, elevating respect for differences over their tolerance. Instead of seeking to change others or dismiss them as incapable of being 'like us', our dialogue respected the "otherness of others" (Dietrich, 2002 p. 50), a bonding and humanising process.

By acknowledging our differences, we worked towards harmony, i.e. 'my peace depends on (y)our peace'. Respecting 'otherness' helped us appreciate one another's heritage and identify our talents, thereby engendering peace.

Ultimately, we achieved peace by engaging in dialogue about our differences (Dietrich, 2002). Therefore, the Peace PAR process was an act of dialogic humanisation rather than monologic assimilation.

6.6.2 Finding: An altered ethical conception

Axiologically, this project challenged rights-based ethical principles of avoiding harm as a primary focus alongside treating people with dignity and respect. Through the research *process*, I encountered an ethical approach centred more on relationships (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1996; Cahill, 2007) and social justice (Tuck and Guishard, 2013; Van der Meiden et al., 2018).

I argue that PAR's participative and democratic nature uncovered social arrangements that were, to some extent, institutionalising inequality and injustice (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013, p. 199). Not naming these injustices would have enabled their interpersonal or institutional continuation – the ethical dilemma I explored in section 5.6.3.

Relational ethics recognise that justice strongly connects with – if not depends on – human well-being, including relationship restoration (where possible) and enhancement. In line with a positive peace (Galtung, 1969, 1976, 1990, 1996, 2008) philosophy, the conditions for creating genuine respect and relational-ethics consideration include reciprocal care and responsibility (Buber, 1958) Our innate tendency to care for each other forms the fundamental basis of human relationships (Van der Meiden et al., 2018). I reinterpreted these concepts as ethical principles: someone needing care is ethically entitled to receive it. This unified worldview of connectedness complemented a restorative approach. In essence, my respect and care for my co-researchers enabled me to move beyond *avoiding* harm toward acknowledging and naming the harm, enabling us to better care for one another.

6.6.3 Finding: Peace as foundational, ethical work

In naming the harm (the problems we were experiencing in our relationships), I relied heavily on the foundational work of earlier sessions to build a peace structure (Cabezudo and Haavelsrud, 2013); see section 5.5.4 for evidence of how we engaged with methods as an example.

Our peace architecture allowed us to minimise the tendency to shame, blame, point the finger or over-simplify people, issues or structures when exploring our oppressions. Researcher Ihan's comment in the final improvised performance is a testament to the transformation of his reality:

> "During this project, I have learned that people in class that don't get along with each other can get along with each other in this project".
>
> Co-researcher Ihan, 2018

Co-researcher Ihan's example shows how we were able to address and redress inequalities experienced by the participants by developing knowledge in action and focusing on relational ethics. Many of these participants had been marginalised by adults and peers in the education process.

6.6.4 Finding: We can accommodate ethical divergence

Interestingly, our prevailing relational ethics regarding group dynamics and world-naming no longer sufficed when recording and analysing images. Instead, we collectively asserted a return to rights-based ethics, whereby co-participants could say/indicate (via a sticker) which images they were/were not happy for me to share. Thus, we accommodated an assertion of rights *in conjunction* with an ethics-of-care approach.

6.6.5 Finding: Relationships are our reality

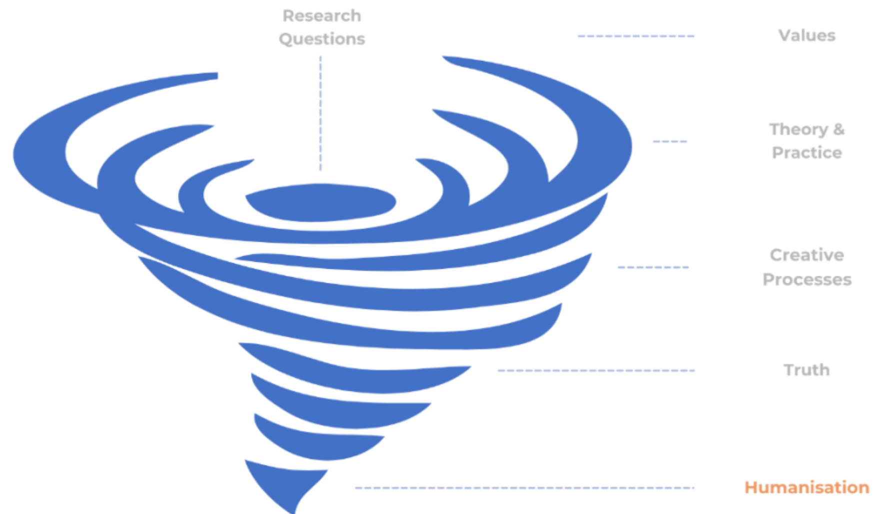
It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue to know and transform their reality (Freire); it also requires conscious, collective, context-specific action. Only by being *active* in this inquiry (i.e. in relationship as a co-researcher) was my original rights-based ethical view tested.

Therefore, I am aware of an ontological shift as I move from perceiving that relationships *shape* our realties to understanding that they *are* our realties (Wilson, 2008). This realisation raises questions for further research, e.g. can PAR instigate ontological shifts?

6.7 Humanisation

Figure 61. **My Living Theory: Humanisation**

The previous section discussed two findings arising from a values-explicit



process celebrating theory and practice and creative, arts-engaged practices: an altered conception of peace (section 6.6.1) and an altered conception of ethics (section 6.6.2). As much corporeal as they are intellectual, these truths engendered a transformation process for me and the co-researchers that I describe as a process of 'humanisation'.

To maximise this research's transparency and my authenticity as a researcher, I will account for how I transformed my embodied knowledge as a peace educator into public knowledge. This transformation took three forms:

- Theoretical transformation
- Methodological transformation
- Personal transformation

6.7.1 Finding: Theory needs enacting

I was aware that shifts in PAR's evolution in the 1970s included:

a) moving from relying on theory, models, and experts that displace the knowledge and experience of 'research subjects' toward models prioritising people at the centre of the process
b) shifting from 'project delivery' based on institutional control and supervision that displaces ownership toward recognising the validity of popular, local, and indigenous knowledge

Despite knowing this history, it only became 'true' for me through engagement with others. Although I advocated for recognising the relationship between the researcher and the researched, I was not truly aware of this complex coalition until we encountered each other. I thus contend that my early reliance on propositional and presentational knowledge (Heron and Reason, 1997, 2008; Reason and Torbert, 2001) temporarily stymied this inquiry.

As a community of researchers, we needed to be in the same space, breathe the same air and wrestle with the same experiences. Only in participation could we experience the full breadth and depth of an extended epistemology (Heron and Reason, 1997, 2008; Reason and Torbert, 2001). In the Peace PAR project's case, this extended epistemology included:

- experiential knowing (sensing, feeling, intuiting, becoming adept in practice)
- propositional knowing (developing ideas, theories and explanations)
- presentational knowing (presenting this knowledge via drama and dialogue), and
- transformational knowing (becoming competent, skilful PAR researchers communicating our practical knowledge to the field)

As such, the process was a chicken-and-egg conundrum. We could not acquire experiential or practical knowledge without *some* initial propositional and presentational PAR knowledge. However, the only way to acquire this was from the literature, using *others'* experiential or practical knowledge. Only through direct PAR experience in relationship with others could I establish first-hand propositional and practical knowledge.

This research project only took shape once it became subjective and lived. Though necessary, reading about PAR traditions kept the practice objective and distant. However, once the co-researchers began engaging and perceiving one another, a lived PAR experience emerged. Only through this praxis did my ontological, epistemological, and axiological beliefs authentically emerge (i.e. I could live, feel, and know them).

6.7.2 Finding: PAR is not a panacea

Fosseway's behaviour-management culture proved to be a challenging context for transformative inquiry. A lag in experiencing all four forms of knowing delayed identifying a pedagogical divergence between the staff and me. Based on a general understanding of restorative approaches and peace education (evidenced by circles in classes, restorative question posters and a well-established peer mediation scheme), I had initially perceived our approaches as aligned. However, a clear divergence emerged once I was active in the school, highlighting some radically different approaches to building and supporting relationships among young people (see section 5.6.3). This experience raises questions about the efficacy of school-based PAR research and peace education within an educational system embedded in a positivist tradition of assessment, tracking and standardisation.

Therefore, PAR is not a panacea for more egalitarian modes of research. Participation does not mean involving more people in the same problematic research approaches, and building participation into a project does not necessarily solve issues around data, voice, exploitation and power (Tuck and Guishard, 2013).

Furthermore, PAR alone cannot guarantee emancipatory research. Indeed, PAR research (particularly among children) can be considered somewhat

‘exotic’, with a risk that a protracted interest in the exceptional could strengthen the power of “those already in control” (Bennett, 2004 p. 15), leaving some voices unheard. As PAR and PAR researchers inevitably gain greater academic status and influence, there is a risk that the researchers’ institutions primarily reap the majority of the research’s benefits (Hall, 1981 p. 15) rather than the co-researcher communities creating it. For example, the six years it has taken to do this part-time doctoral study means I am no longer in contact with the co-researchers, who are now seventeen-year-olds. Additionally, three of the four original adult participants have since left the school. Therefore, aside from the benefits of experience and co-created knowledge, Nottingham University and I will primarily reap this work’s rewards.

Methodological transformation

6.7.3 Finding: Methods need enacting

PAR methods need enacting to be truly known. Much like my conceptual shift in understanding PAR theory (see 6.7.1), the typology of arts-related practice also shifted for me. Initially, I employed an arts-*inquiring* pedagogy (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014) to explore how people came to understand and take part in a restorative encounter using an artistic process (Image Theatre) to teach inquiry (Action Research) and enable learning (knowledge). This approach stemmed from my initial desire to explore how TO methods might help improve my/others’ understanding of a restorative process.

As the research group consolidated (i.e. relationships with other researchers and the research itself developed), the co-researchers rebuffed my initial inquiry focus. This rejection moved me to adopt an arts-*engaging* stance, using Image Theatre to explore issues pertinent to the group (talents). It was more meaningful to explore how we might represent particular concerns, such as how we might perceive our own and others’ talents as a way of (re)building relationships. We then used TO methods to mobilise, enable, and support action (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014).

6.7.4 Finding: An internalised methodology

As a piece of transformative research, this study sought social action more than ‘pure’ knowledge (Toews and Zehr, 2003). For the Peace PAR project,

this included building community, promoting dialogue, enhancing relationships, reducing social distance, amplifying marginalised voices and promoting justice.

As we internalised and modelled restorative and peaceful ways of being, we built the social skills needed for self-regulation and healthy communication. We discovered that when things go wrong, we can form a circle and discuss who was hurt, who was affected and what we needed to do to move things forward (NACRJ, 2017).

Our PAR/TO framework helped us collectively reflect on the context and circumstances of our behaviour (including mine), guiding us to self-reflect, self-evaluate and self-correct. This way of working fostered intrinsic motivation for us all: we wanted to act in ways benefitting ourselves *and* the group (NACRJ, 2017). We built group resilience as we navigated through the PAR experience, prioritising relationships (Vaandering, 2013, Goessling, 2019) to establish a climate conducive to peaceful conflict resolution (NACRJ, 2017).

6.7.5 Finding: PAR methods engendered transformation

As we experimented with dialogic circles and TO methods, we became increasingly flexible in experimenting with new behaviours from moment to moment. By slowing down and making our thinking processes and reactions explicit, we were less likely to jump to ineffective conclusions when relating with others. Participants helped each other reduce their defensiveness and increase their relationship mutuality. We no longer saw individuals as 'good' versus 'naughty' or 'incapable' versus 'bright', but as people with unique values and talents (see section 5.6.2 'Conscientisation').

6.7.6 Finding: Socially just methodologies build interconnectedness and peace

This holistic educational approach integrated social justice, theatre, and social and emotional learning (NACRJ, 2017). The methods prioritised relationships and promoted healing by acknowledging that emotional, physical, psychological, and social skills are essential for success, wellbeing, and peace-building.

This study combined visual, verbal, linear, non-linear, artistic, and scientific elicitation and presentation methods (Toews and Zehr, 2003), acknowledging multiple intelligences and ways of knowing (NACRJ, 2017). Using Image Theatre, circles, and an interactive map allowed students to explore multiple perspectives and learn multiple truths collectively. These methodological and material choices created a just, pedagogical environment for co-researchers to work together, valuing local knowledge in mutual respect. As a result, co-researchers valued the Peace PAR project's processes as much as its product.

6.7.7 Finding: Combined methods and approaches can work

There is merit in combining restorative methods with PAR/TO approaches. However, the combination is not without methodological consequences, which, in this case, included an unstable problem definition (Haseman and Mafe, 2009).

The difference between a 'good' AR question and a 'good' investigative TO topic exposed an interesting complication requiring further exploration. The characteristics needed for an effective AR question (as was required as part of my ethics approval and literature review) included being open-ended, hinting at improvement, or leading to action. As Pine put it, a rigorous action research question:

> "should be meaningful, compelling, and important to you as a teacher-researcher. It should engage your passion, energy, and commitment. It has to be important for your personal and professional growth; it should stretch you intellectually and affectively. You should love the question."
>
> (Pine, 2009 p. 239)

I did love the question; the problem was that the co-researchers did not.

Table 24. **Research Question One**

(My) Initial Research Question: How does drama-led peace education help people experience, know and transform conflict?

As already discussed, I persisted with the original question and formulaic action-research model for some time. Only when I returned to TO's conceptual roots and PAR's philosophical roots could I see the snags in the research design.

A restorative lens allowed me to use the language of needs (Rosenberg, 2003), helping me find clarity about the two research questions. The first arose from my need to place AR within a "context of discovery and invention as opposed to a context of verification" (Pine, 2009 p. 236). Although the question was abstract and open, it lacked definition and meaning for the group. Needing a question that was relevant to their context as well as definable and verifiable, the co-researchers thus created one focused on their own and each other's talents.

Table 25. **Research Question Two**

(Group) Later Research Question: How can we use each other's talents to find out more about each other and ourselves?

Investigating the role of the protagonist in Forum Theatre, Patterson refers to the notion of an anchor whereby the central character has the agency "to struggle mightily for what they need" (Patterson, 2011 p. 10). In contrast, my original question was 'anchorless', resulting in inquiry-drift. As our relationships developed and our methods became more refined, we 'anchored' our focus more satisfactorily and began identifying what we needed. More than just methodological, this process had real-world implications. Although the focus on talents was not oppression-related, it could be analysed objectively: a central principle for dialogue among or with the oppressed (in contrast to the abstract notion of conflict in the initial question).

Conscientisation took place as the co-researchers recognised and evaluated structures of power, including the research focus (conflict), the methods and

discourses used to study it, and the project's broader educational context (Burleson, 2003). The co-researchers' conscientisation process involved

interrupting and challenging power distributions (mine) and believing in their right to act (Boal), empowering them to change the question.

6.7.8 Finding: Research question changes were acts of humanisation

I claim that the co-researchers rejected my pre-determined, open AR-style question as an act of conscientisation. To speak and be heard is an act of humanisation, as:

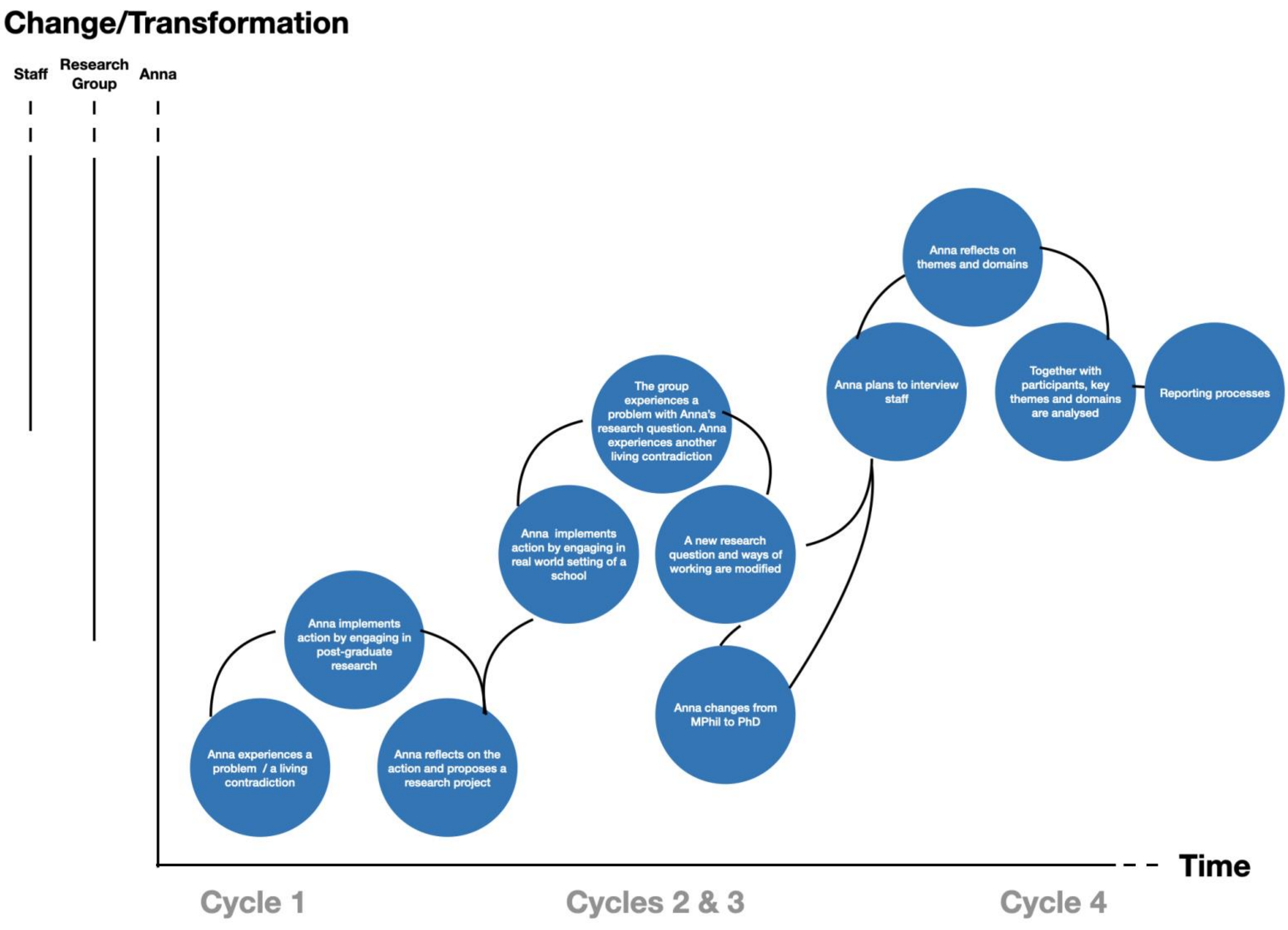
> "dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming – between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them"
>
> (Freire, 1996 [1970] p. 69).

Oppressed by my imposed, abstract question, the group resisted it alongside some of AR's more oppressive design functions. By resisting this oppression, the co-researchers initiated their and my mutual humanisation: rather than maintaining their oppression or assuming the oppressor's role, they restored both groups' humanity.

Personal transformation

With humanisation in mind, I now focus the interpretation of findings on the people involved – the co-researchers and me – to consider how the project contributed to the larger goal of preparing us for more agentic futures (Bajaj, 2018). I claim that, over time, the Peace PAR group came to experience, know, and transform conflict through collaborative, democratic and creative inquiry that sought transformative solutions to complex relational and systemic problems. Figure 62 synthesises that journey by mapping the concept of change and transformation alongside the PAR praxis.

Figure 62. **Transformation mapped against PAR cycles**



The dotted lines on the ‘y’ axis in Figure 62 indicate that change or transformation was a progressive process realised by the research inquiry itself (Cho and Trent, 2006). Additionally, transformation for me involved acknowledging a deeper, more self-reflective understanding of my researcher experience (evidenced in sections 6.7.12 – 6.7.26). Overall, my learning reached new depths in this section of the spiral.

6.7.9 Finding: Enhanced agency

Bajaj (2018) posits a conceptual model for agency described as transformative. A transformative agency develops the “ability of students to develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1996 [1970]) and respond to schooling in ways that express individual and collective action towards positive social change” (Bajaj, 2009 p. 552). Development of our individual and collective consciousness in the Peace PAR project (based on a critique of relational inequalities) enhanced our agency. The co-researchers came to describe new options for interaction that they were free to choose or reject without fear of punishment or hope for reward (Satir et al., 1991). These new options included transformations of:

- relationships
- talents
- what it means to be a researcher

A transformative agency comprises four components that, when experienced together, better equip learners to recognise, interrupt and transform unequal social conditions. These components include:

1. **Sustained Agency**: maintained across contexts and over time
2. **Relational Agency**: enacted in association with others
3. **Coalitional Agency**: related to shared connections based on cultures, contexts, and histories, and
4. **Strategic Agency**: related to intentional and directional goals concerning power, action and results

(Bajaj, 2018 p. 3)

I have applied Bajaj's (2018) four dimensions of transformative agency to the Peace PAR project to authenticate the notion of researcher transformation.

The Peace PAR project explored social and relational issues from a critical perspective **sustained** across contexts over time. Although designed to take place within a single term, the project lasted over five months. During this period, interactive pedagogy, critical inquiry and cultivation of a caring space developed a participatory and relational action inquiry in which the group celebrated newfound perceptions of relationships, achieved via praxis cycles in which theory stimulated reflection, action and further reflection (Freire, 1996 [1970]). Some participants reported that their newfound agency persisted even beyond the project's (classroom) setting, as evidenced by two co-researchers' comments:

> "Even when we are not doing the peace project, we are developing our talents."
>
> Co-researcher Maceo, 2017

> "When I'm bored, I learn different things by going around the house and looking at things to do."
>
> Co-researcher Natori, 2017

Additionally, I observed changes in how teachers perceived individuals and how individuals acted in the playground or class (as discussed in section 5.7.3).

The co-researchers enacted **relational** agency with others and took actions that were unimaginable outside of the project:

> "During this lesson... project, I have learned that people in class that don't get along with each other can get along with each other in this project."
>
> Co-researcher Ihan, 2017

> "I'm less getting into trouble now because I've been listening."
>
> Co-researcher Kaari, 2017

However, a relational agency within the Peace PAR inquiry may have generated relationship tensions *outside* the project, as participants' friends and/or family connections might not have approved of their new relational agency. This may not have been a peaceful experience for participants.

Agency was **coalitional** and based on connectedness. Our (Ubuntu) emphasis on participation, relationships and belonging provided a collective identity that helped transcend existing relationships barriers. As such, we created a coalitional space for asserting the right to be known on new terms (talents), sharing and strengthening connections between people regarding cultures, contexts, and histories:

> "In this project I have learnt that people's talents are not always shown"
>
> Co-researcher Jaqweisha, 2017

> "In this project, I have learnt that you shouldn't be unconfident about showing your talents and I've learnt that everyone has talents".
>
> Co-researcher Maceo, 2017

Strategic agency is the ability to consider applications, relevancies, goals and ambitions beyond the present moment. In this respect, the co-researchers still had a way to go, as demonstrated by this extract from my journal:

> "While the participants are drawing their posters and time is marching on towards the end of the session, I ask Mrs. Riley to think of a reflective check-out question. She comes up with a blinder: *"How do you think your talents help you at school with your relationships?*". The co-researchers answer in turn around the table as they are drawing. There

> are quite a few 'I don't knows'. Tashelle and Kaari don't think that their talents (gymnastics and dancing) help them with their school relationships as they aren't activities they do at school. Abdu, Anthony, and Zidane felt that their talent (football) does help them at school if they pass well or score a goal and help their team to win. Jaqweisha said that she felt her talent (singing) would help people if they wanted to learn to sing making Jaqweisha the only one who felt that her talent had potential outside of the current social and historical context setting"
>
> Co-researcher Anna, journal entry, 2017

Apart from co-researcher Jaqweisha, the participants could not see how their agency extended beyond the Peace PAR project, i.e. how their talents might influence others outside the project.

In conclusion: by the end of the project, the Peace PAR group demonstrated three of the four key components identified in Bajaj's 'transformative agency' model. The only exception was 'strategic agency', which was less evident among co-researchers.

6.7.10 Finding: We came to own a description of ourselves

Using applied theatre helped the group identify its problems and imagine/enact possible solutions or futures. At the same time, the creative and dialogic engagement methods engendered new knowledge and practices about how participatory peace education might contribute to school life. These insights inspired a reframing process, generating new self-knowledge that subsequently changed the research question.

This reframing of self was evident in the earlier example of co-researcher Kaari, whose drawing of a researcher became more like a self-portrait over time (see section 5.5.5 'What does a researcher look like?'). This change came about through engaging in research: her first-person inquiry (self-reflection) informed her second-person inquiry (engaging with others about what a researcher did and how they looked), and she enacted third-person research by sharing her drawing. Thus, co-researcher Kaari came to self-identify as a researcher over the project's course in participation with others.

The group's experience engaging with difference provides evidence of the same process at a collective level, creating space for confronting and examining diversity, peace, and conflict. As co-researcher Kaari and others began reframing their worldviews – including their views on research – we were all able to:

- make changes to our situations to enact more satisfying, sensible and sustainable ways of building, maintaining, and repairing relationships
- identify and enact more reasonable, inconclusive, just and constructive ways of building, maintaining, and repairing relationships than before (Kemmis et al., 2014 p. 68), e.g. reclaiming methods better suited to our needs, changing how we saw ourselves and how others saw us, and affirming our own and others' talents

As the researchers *and* the researched, our collective consciousness and subjective experience meant we could own our identities. We came to know ourselves better and were more satisfied with how others might come to know us.

6.7.11 Finding: Lead researcher role

I believe that my participation in the project as a facilitator, collaborator, and co-learner more than as a neutral expert helped reduce shame, stigma, punishment and blame, encouraging group cohesiveness and belonging (NACRJ, 2017). Furthermore, I believe that my positive belief in young people encouraged an optimistic view of the co-researchers' potential to become responsible members of the school and wider community. Despite my positive, optimistic outlook, I experienced internal tensions that affected the research (see findings 6.7.12 and 6.7.13).

6.7.12 Finding: Tightening the agenda

In hindsight, I recognise that I tightened the research agenda (particularly in sessions 1–3) to enhance 'professionalism' and combat my feelings of doubt and insecurity. These feelings stemmed from difficulties finding my place in the academy and managing fears about standards and requirements.

> "Some of the major challenges are that universities are not geared

for collaborative and emergent forms of research with participants (rather than subjects) as co-researchers and co-creators of knowledge. Traditional research, which is still dominant, is more standardised, pre-determined, and controlled by the researcher as an "objective" observer and analyst of data. Even if academics are open to a PALAR[50] approach to research and development, they often lack knowledge and experience in the new research paradigm and slide back into their old assumptions or try to comply with the requirements of traditional researchers and their standards, especially in peer review publications."

(Zuber-Skerritt, 2015 p .16)

Zuber-Skerrit's description of a 'slide back' into traditionally accepted assumptions mirrors Freire's notion of the oppressed internalising the oppressor's image: the radical researcher coming to accept, enact and advocate more traditional social-science conventions. I, too, experienced this 'slide' at times, which manifested as agenda-tightening to enhance perceived professionalism. Indeed, as this thesis progressed and I became more immersed in the particulars of academic writing and form, I fought less to 'do it my way'. Instead, I succumbed to standards, perceiving the risk of failure at this endpoint as too great to do otherwise and sliding back into certain traditional, technically-focused research assumptions and researcher-driven activities that potentially appropriated local knowledge (Wood et al., 2019).

6.7.13 Finding: Disconnection can signify oppression

As I realised the group's disconnection from the research question (see finding 6.7.7), I experienced a loss of control: the lack of a defined and agreed research question left the project temporarily adrift. I now recognise that a conventionally 'good' academic research question does not necessarily translate as such to the community charged with its investigation (see findings 6.7.7 and 6.7.8). My focus on keeping an 'open' research question did not align with the group's needs, while our second, co-created research question was less abstract and more relevant to their needs. In short, the co-research group were more successful in rejecting oppressive research practices and pursuing

[50] PALAR stands for Participatory Action Learning and Research.

academic freedom than I was. While it took them three weeks, it took me six years.

6.7.14 Finding: Research as oppressive or humanising

Self-deprecation is a characteristic of the oppressed (Freire, 1996 [1970]), evidencing their internalisation of the oppressor's opinion. Titles such as the 'reluctant' literature review in this thesis confirm my self-deprecating attitude to academic writing. My supervisors noticed and queried this attitude, continuing to encourage me despite my self-effacement.

Conscientisation is a disordered process that can reveal a fear of freedom, leading to a perception of collapse (Freire, 1996 [1970]). This fear is multidimensional, not just related to the specific distress inherent in breaking away from an oppressor. I can attest to my fears of judgement, confusion and creativity during this inquiry (linked to a more generalised fear of academia). My response was to put up the walls and surround myself with "circles of certainty" (Miller, 1998). I sought safety in the traditions and methods of an operational action-research model and often struggled to speak my truth to power and define my world. In short, I risked reneging on freedom.

Liberation from oppression comes from within. The oppressed must consciously remove the internalised oppressor to reclaim their humanity (Freire). As an act of liberation and a way of reclaiming my humanity as a researcher, I chose to write myself into this thesis and continue questioning who has the right to knowledge.

However, this awakening troubles me as I continue transforming my educational practice day-to-day, as my desire to 'name' issues has increased. Previously, perhaps because I perceived it was not my place to speak, I might have heard or seen something in a school that concerned me (often adult behaviour) without challenging it. However, my research and deepening commitment to social justice, liberatory education, creativity, and action is changing this.

Recently, I was troubled by some 'bantz' I heard between two young male teachers in a staffroom. Perceiving the communication as disrespectful (sexist,

misogynist, and racist), I felt moved to express my concerns quietly and directly to them, to which they responded with shock and defensiveness. I had challenged the hegemony that existed within this staffroom and thoughtfully named the dissonance I experienced (Bickmore, 2005 p. 164). However, this new confidence now presents a professional dilemma. Challenging the oppression I see in schools affects how people in the school perceive me and, by association, the organisation I represent.

This vignette shows that I am extending my critical-challenge practice to adults, not just keeping it in reserve for young people as part of a one-off research project.

My thoughts on oppression and humanisation have informed my intentional development of my educational practice and embodiment of everyday justice.

I summarise my conclusions about oppression as follows:

- If I am oppressed by the higher-education system (which I perceive as valuing reason over emotion), the oppression is dehumanising for me (the student) and the oppressor (the institution)
- As part of my oppression, I come to internalise the oppressor's image
- The act of research has humanising potential for the oppressed (the student) and the oppressor (the institution)

I summarise my conclusions about humanisation as follows:

- I give voice to my experience as a way for me to challenge existing power structures
- I use research processes that are congruent with peace education:
    - (a) Peacefully educative research methods
    - (b) Peaceful and just research processes
    - (c) Values exploration (a necessary starting point for assessing authenticity and legitimising the study)
- I posit that embodied research methods provide an enriching contribution to humanisation. This PAR study investigated how best to

apply embodied processes to reflect on the human condition, accepting that reflecting on the human condition is a process of conscientisation.

- I accept that I have been subject to forms of Western Enlightenment thinking that have successfully promoted universal conceptions of humanisation, peace, and social justice. I am only beginning to take account of these oppressive realities (Zembylas, 2017).

6.7.15 Finding: Homogeneity in peace education

To robustly critique the systems I encountered and contributed to, I needed to recognise underlying influences on my own thinking (Chilisa, 2012). Peace Educators in the west are a relatively homogenous group, primarily comprising white, middle-class women. Like others in this group, I like to believe in my ongoing commitment to social justice and demonstrate how I ally myself with those who are oppressed (Lampert, 2003). However, my white, educated privilege allows me to do this.

> "My academic qualifications are written on my white body – plain in the colour of my skin, which grants me authority before I open my mouth."
>
> (Lampert, 2003 p. 2)

As a community, we must recognise that a peace-educator's role risks cultural projection. Projecting my Whiteness, femaleness, and class onto peace education risks underrepresenting diverse or marginalised identities (Vandeyar and Esakov, 2007 p. 70) and barriers to accessing and understanding others' cultures.

6.7.16 Finding: Humanise the adults

Explicitly including adults in peace education allows a conscious "harmonic interaction" (Cabezudo and Haavelsrud, 2013 p. 9) between teachers and peace educators, sometimes precipitating shifts in adult behaviour.

I work hard to include adults in games, providing space for them to learn and laugh alongside children. Teachers have the right to see themselves as teacher-students and human beings and realise their agency (Freire). Some teachers notice and adopt techniques (raising a hand as a signal for collective

quiet is a favourite) and employ them in their practice outside the peace sessions. However, the conscientisation process comprises more than learning new habits or skills. For some, maintaining liberatory practices and processes within an authoritarian and punitive system is too stressful; I often observe a retreat back to existing safety zones and the reproduction of former practices (Thingstrup et al., 2018).

As well as recognising and understanding our power, peace educators must also support educators to in exploring the power structures underlying education's social relations. The system has abandoned teachers (TES Magazine, 2020), and it is unrealistic to think that they – through life experience and training alone – have adopted the skills to cope in a multiracial and cultural society that is often outside of their own life experiences (Vandeyar and Esakov, 2007).

This is not a call for immediate revolution but for a gradual, iterative conversation engaging educators in peacefully critiquing the current one-size-fits-all approach that furthers disparities within education (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013 p. 203). Peace educators must stand in solidarity with teachers by including them in education *for* and *by* peace. We must also extend to adults the methods and methodologies used to secure authentic collaboration with children (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014); we all need equitable opportunities for naming, speaking out about and being heard regarding conflictual issues (Bickmore, 2012).

6.7.17 Finding: Peace education can reproduce cultural violence

Peace educators risk re-enacting hegemonic violence by uncritically reproducing practices and power (Gur-Ze'ev, 2001). We enact structural violence when we fail to see our role and complicity in a socially unjust education system that excludes students who do not conform to the normative standards of dominant social groups. We fail when we do not offer peace education outside mainstream settings, reproducing inequality in and through peace education's absence. We contribute to cultural violence when we support structural violence by masking it, e.g. through indifference to or support of exclusions. We perform epistemic violence when we fail to recognise other forms of knowledge and/or suppress non-western ones.

To counter this violence and build positive peace, practitioners must attend to the social and cultural contexts they are operating in so that peace programmes make sense within the community they serve. Doing so requires practitioners to address the political, sociological, and historical consequences of the proposed peace education project's theoretical propositions (Gur-Ze'ev, 2001). For example, western practitioners such as myself must question promoting a 'civilising agenda' within peace education (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013).

6.7.18 Finding: Epistemic violence

The Peace PAR project itself enacted epistemic violence by appropriating methodologies untypical of Euro-western research settings. Using an emancipatory TO approach to PAR, I "reified Latin America as a heartland of radical innovation" (Pearce et al., 2010, p. 266). While I recognise that TO methods were already part of my practitioner 'kit bag' and thus part of my researcher identity, this alone does not absolve me. In keeping with Kester and Cremin's (2017) salutary warning of epistemic violence in peace work, I will name my acts of epistemic violence shortly.

Peace practitioners and scholars must stem the epistemic and hegemonic violence that risks polluting our peace work (Kester and Cremin, 2017). To do so requires developing an awareness of alternative methodologies, such as circle, TO, or symbol-based reflection methods (Lavallée, 2009) or storytelling (Delgado, 1989), and ensure their sensitive and appropriate incorporation. Furthermore, a collective, second-order reflexive effort is needed to combat the structural, cultural and epistemic violence enacted within, through, and by scholars in the field (Kester and Cremin, 2017 p. 1420).

6.7.19 Finding: Move beyond a first-order reflexivity

First-order reflexivity is an accepted element of qualitative research that traditionally concerns individual researchers engaging in an explicit self-aware

meta-analysis (Finlay, 2002). This is all well and good, but if we take the premise that peace is relational, then first-order reflexivity is incomplete, requiring greater field-based reflexivity. Informed by Finlay (2002, 2014,2017), I employed three reflexivity variants within the PAR process and this thesis.

These variants value introspective (discussed forthwith), experiential (see finding 6.7.21), and critical reflexive dimensions (see finding 6.7.22).

My introspective reflexivity comprised confessional accounts and an examination of my personal – possibly unconscious – reactions. Insights from personal introspection emerged from journal writing, which formed the basis of more generalised understandings and interpretations. Journalling provided me with the space to examine my experiences; alongside the sessions' events (as I interpreted them), I recorded the emotional and physical reactions that stood out for me (doubt, excitement or tension).

The qualitative methods involved meant that I was not just influenced by the answers given but also *how* they were given, e.g. hesitant, faltering, quickly, excitedly, or in-my-face. How the information emerged often triggered an emotional reaction for me; I felt frustrated, proud or confused, for example, or hot and dry-mouthed. As part of developing emotional criticality (Moon, 2008), I worked on cultivating an introspective awareness and acknowledgement of these responses.

My grounding in restorative practice[51] meant I could (sometimes) connect my thoughts and feelings, practising mindful restorative reflexivity that helped me accept and process my thoughts, feelings and needs at that moment. Recognising a feeling arising, I would ask myself:

- What is happening for me now in this moment?
- What was happening before?
- What am I thinking?
- What am I feeling?
- Who else is being affected by what is happening?
- What do I need?

[51] As an aside, applying a restorative philosophy to understanding my emotional reactions helped alleviate my frustration at not being able to explore how drama might aid better understanding of a restorative process.

Becoming conscious of what was affecting me in that moment included recognising the 'territories of experience' (Torbert and Taylor, 2008) influencing me. These included:

- The outside world (the adult shouting outside the classroom)
- My realm of thought (am I making a value judgment about the shouting? Am I trying to identify who it is? Am I thinking differently about that person, the school, the person being shouted at? Do I feel judgement as I see people observe my reaction to what is happening?)
- My own sensed behaviour and feeling (my quickened heart rate and shallow breathing, feelings of frustration at diverted attention), and
- My ability to focus on my intention (how do I simultaneously and continuously accept the stimulus and cultivate a non-judgemental awareness of how I act from this point?)

(Torbert and Taylor, 2008 p. 242)

My awareness that these territories of experience existed simultaneously and continuously (Torbert and Taylor, 2008) helped me move beyond acting/reacting toward critically investigating my intentions, listening more deeply to the world beyond me and focusing on my attunement with participants. Thus, I moved away from a conditioned state toward a "witnessing consciousness" (Sellman, 2020 p. 57), able to pause momentarily and see the educative possibility in the situation. The restorative questions guided me in these moments of uncertainty by providing a way to explain what was happening to me (Brinkmann, 2014). This process also led me to utilise my intersubjective reflexivity and explore the researcher–researched relationship dynamic. These were evidenced in the discussion of emotion's role in critical thinking (section 5.6.1) and my examination of how knowledge is constructed

triggered by the co-researcher's 'failure' (in my eyes) to perform a successful group activity (section 3.7).

6.7.20 Finding: Discomfort in reflexivity

Documenting my restorative reflexivity felt self-indulgent; I felt that a preoccupation with my emotions and experiences could distort the findings. It is not easy for qualitative researchers to "negotiate the 'swamp' of interminable self-analysis and self-disclosure" (Finlay, 2002 p. 212) and, at the same time, remain aware of their relative privilege and cultural values. A lack of self-knowledge restricts our ability to constructively oppose an existing order or embrace complexity and possibility in ways that impact our lived experiences (Kester and Cremin, 2017). In response to this discomfort, further reflexivity occurred within our social and participatory setting.

6.7.21 Finding: Reflexivity as mutual collaboration

I instigated reflexivity as a mutual collaboration or second-order reflexivity. Alongside the co-researchers, I explored meanings as they emerged as part of the research encounter and relationship. The following transcription details how we moved from discussion to action via mutual reflection and experience:

Co-researcher Anna:	"So, this sounds like that we need to go around and actually find out what each other's talents are. Do you feel comfortable to do that now or do you need to like…?"
Co-researcher Aapo:	"…could we act it?"
Co-researcher Anna:	"… you need to act it?"
Co-researcher Natori:	"Could we say it then act it? So, you know which talent you're doing like. We could say it… we could act it; no, we could say it like which talent you're doing before you act it out"
Co-researcher Anna:	"Ok. (Gets up) Well let's put some things together then. You are going to work in pairs, and you are going to … make a picture of your talent. Talent one. Talent two. And we're going to try and guess what they are?"
Co-researcher Aapo:	"Yeah"
Co-researcher Natori:	"So, two talents?"
Co-researcher Anna:	"Two talents. How is it going to be if somebody doesn't get your talent or says something that

	hurts your feelings? How are we going to react to that?”
Co-researcher Tashelle:	“Try and ignore them”.
Co-researcher Anna:	“Well… we could. I mean… I suppose, where does the responsibility lie when we’re talking about what we see. When we’re… If I see Tyonna doing something and I say, ‘oh she’s doing this’ and Tyonna’s like ‘I am not doing that!’”
Co-researcher Aapo:	“That wouldn’t be fair”.
Co-researcher Anna:	“I think we need to be just careful about, because this is quite personal isn’t it…?”
Co-researcher Natori:	“… be a critical friend!”
Co-researcher Anna:	[snapping fingers] “be a critical friend! What’s that mean?”
Co-researcher Natori:	“So, you don’t when you are like commenting about it, don’t just say ‘oh this is crap’, say something that will actually help them do something. Like say ‘oh it was good but maybe you could do this’”
Co-researcher Anna:	“Give them some feedback? Ok”

Transcription of session 6 ‘Research Question #2’, December 2017

This transcript demonstrates the co-researchers and me engaging in a dialogue about our research process; hearing multiple voices allowed members to move beyond their preconceived theories and subjective biases. Group working also moved a reflexive effort from an individual intellectual exercise into an activity of direct, practical use. Again, focusing on a social, participatory, co-constructed reflexive process disrupted traditional research dynamics.

A critique of collaborative reflexivity is the element of negotiated meaning and compromise that might ‘water down’ the insights of single researchers (Finlay, 2002). Additionally, this supposedly egalitarian rhetoric potentially disguises what are often unequal relationships.

6.7.22 Finding: Reflexivity as a critique of established meaning

In addition to a reflexive approach that saw the research as experiential, co-constituted and socially situated, I instigated a further variation in which a critique of established meanings took place. This grew out of concern about my ability to see and manage the power imbalance between myself and the participants.

Engaging with social constructionist and feminist literature during the study's writing-up phase offered me "the opportunity to utilise experiential accounts while situating these within a strong theoretical framework about the social construction of power" (Finlay, 2002 p. 222). This strengthened my commitment to working within a relationship-focused ethical framework focused on 'vital' research components, including reflexivity, expertise, dignity and action (Tuck and Guishard, 2013). As a result, my practice evolved and generated knowledge concerned with redistributing power and knowledge and dismantling colonialist research attitudes.

6.7.23 Finding: A failure to decolonise

As a white, middle-class woman leading the Peace PAR project, I deprived pupils and other staff of their respective cultural and linguistic heritage by failing to make space for languages other than English. I am dismayed by my uncritical choice, as there was ample scope and possibility for this to happen. However, I assumed and promoted the notion that sessions took place in English based on my unconscious privilege. Those for whom English was not their first language had to work harder to communicate successfully. This was unfair, perpetuating the daily oppression they experienced in the English education system. I am even more disheartened when I consider that the children chose to explore their Indigenous skills in our refocused inquiry, which may have included knowledge of an arterial language. I could argue that using Image Theatre helped mitigate this, but I have learnt a valuable lesson about identifying my cultural assumptions.

In addition, I often used clunky metaphors relevant to *my* culture, history and age that were not necessarily relevant or understood by the co-researchers. For example, one of the co-researchers had to interpret my use of the phrase 'let your hair down' (see section 5.5.3) for the group:

"It means you wanna go party"

Co-researcher, 2017

To rectify this error, I later approached an adult participant for guidance. She smiled and acknowledged that it was a 'moment'. Mortified that she had recognised the linguistic blunder, I asked what she would have said. She explained that even the Caribbean term 'brock out' would have been understood by some but not all of the children. Thus, even her 'translation' would have been lost on half the group, making the co-researcher's interpretation the best available at that moment.

The 'let your hair down' example highlights important translation, interpretation, and voice-mediation problems: mine, co-researchers' (individual and collective) and adult participants' (individual and collective). The group included a multiplicity of languages, cultures, and experiences. Combining them under 'child voice' or 'diversity' risked minimising the complexity.

This learning is personal, salutary, and necessary. If I am entering into dialogue with others to name oppressive language and practices, I, too, must be 'called out' for using power-related outdated language and actions. Only through others can I understand the part I play in my work, research, and the world.

Decolonisation is essential in socially-just research as it creates more empathetic, responsible educators and researchers (Datta, 2018). This responsibility extends from the individual researcher to include the structures research-and-education communities inform and uphold, including peace education.

6.7.24 Finding: Reflexivity in the field and on the field

My failure to respond to participants in an ethical and culturally appropriate manner (Ross and Call-Cummings, 2019) led to a form of second-order reflexivity. I took part in a collective reflection *in* the field (Kester and Cremin,

2017) and *on* the field through empirical and theoretical investigation (Kester and Cremin, 2017).

My collective reflection *in* the field was evidenced by the 'let your hair down' example. A participatory model meant I noticed passivity or undemocratic knowledge creation and pressed 'pause' to reflect and negotiate meanings. I could ask out loud, "Me saying 'let your hair down is an old-fashioned way of speaking and doesn't make sense. Can anyone help me out?". This resulted in one co-researcher's somewhat jaded response to the group: "it means you wanna go party".

Reflection in the field also occurred as the group explored what a researcher looked like (see section 5.5.5). In analysing our assumptions about research and the researcher's role, we performed collective, second-order reflexivity. This group reflection process revealed the limits of an individualistic approach to a conception of research and the role of the researcher. This second-order positioning of self in relation to the field helped us zoom out, collectively reconsidering our assumptions and sharing how these observations impacted our view of research (Kester and Cremin, 2017).

Collective reflection *on* the field took the form of a presentation of interim findings to my peer group as part of a PhD student conference in 2019. Here I explored with my peers what a researcher looked like to them,[52] designed as an intentional collective, critical, and empirical reflection for us to exercise reflexivity on the research field itself (Kester and Cremin, 2017). Whether the field is a suite of university academics or a classroom of children, we all have the right to research (Appadurai, 2006) – to consider ourselves researchers, to exercise reflexivity and enact social change.

In addition, this activity helped us move from an internalised epistemology (the objectification of self and others, valuing the individual mind over collective sensing) toward an externalised ontology that included others' minds and bodies (Kester, 2018). By stressing participation and embodied action

[52] The postgraduates' description of a researcher was very similar to the co-researchers': a man in a white coat.

(drawing), this experience moved some postgraduate researchers out of their intellectual-expert mode. This was interesting given the nature of the university setting: an environment geared towards celebrating the expert.

I end with a call for site-specific second-order reflexivity. In the Peace PAR project's case, the 'field' was a classroom of ten-year-olds and their teaching assistant. Children and classrooms are often reflected on from afar by a detached researcher at a later date. However, there is significant knowledge to be created in collective and embodied reflective practices *with* child researchers and *in their fields*.

6.7.25 Finding: The Action Research cycle contributes to reflexivity

The Action Research cycle promoted a tempo rhythm – a balanced movement between practice and reflection. The time between the weekly sessions provided opportunities to reflect on the information 'stumbled upon' (Brinkmann, 2014) in the moment and convert the chaos to order.

Brinkman's description of 'stumble data' highlights the surprise and momentary rebalancing involved. When we try and catch ourselves from a fall and regain composure, we typically miss opportunities for further investigation. Brinkman suggests staying unbalanced for a second longer than is comfortable; it is in this freefall moment that the learning happens. I noticed and reflected on these liminal moments in the Peace PAR project, gathering new understandings and bringing them back to the group (see section 6.7.24 for an example).

Writing this from the comfort of my desk and with the benefit of hindsight feels disingenuous; I worry I am glossing over the chaos and disorder I experienced each week as part of the PAR process. However, from this vantage point, I can see that these swings between practice and reflection helped me move between a subjective and objective reality with a sense of peace.

6.7.26 Finding: The coexistence of chaos and order in PAR

Informed by the restorative reflexivity outlined in section 6.7.19, my new mental mindset allowed chaos and order to co-exist (Coghlan, 2014). Each PAR session demanded a certain attitude to tolerate the inquiry and/or creative process when it was confusing and disorientating. Seeing chaos and order as

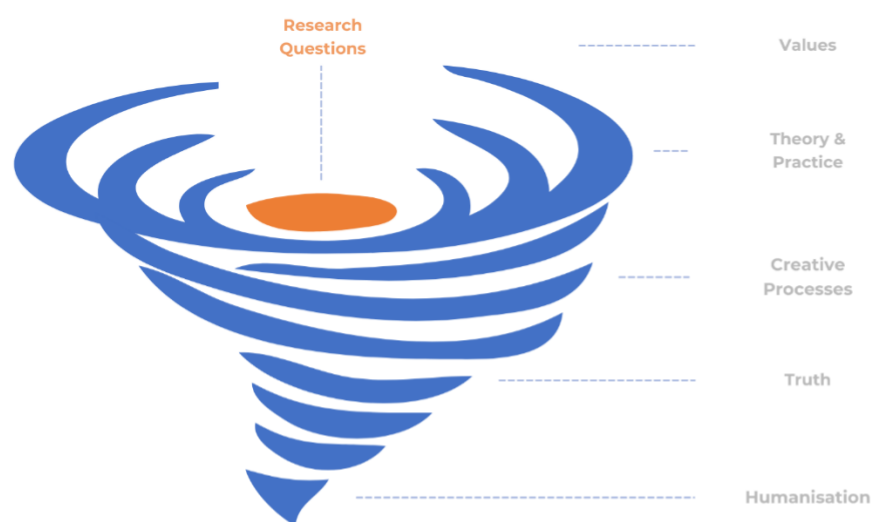
interdependent helped me hold my nerve; rather than closing things down too quickly when they became chaotic, I saw chaos as a phase that usually reverted to order (Peck, 1990). Using mindful restorative reflexivity to stay temporality off-balance, I was able to see chaos and complexity as foundational and constituting PAR elements operating at most levels of the research (Haseman and Mafe, 2009).

6.8 Answering the questions

In the final PAR cycle, I developed a third research question to help me understand the relational dynamics that significantly impacted this study. For reference, I present the first two research questions and introduce the third question that guided this stage:

1. **(My) Initial Research Question:** How does drama-led peace education help people experience, know and transform conflict?
2. **(Group) Later Research Question:** How can we use each other's talents to find out more about each other and ourselves?
3. **(My) Final Research Question:** What factors influence participation and building, maintaining, and repairing relationships within the PAR group?

Figure 63. **The Research Questions**



Each question emerged from the previous one. Together, they helped paint a picture of the Peace PAR project's evolving story. At the outset, I wanted to try and understand the nature and growth of academic knowledge about conflict and peace. However, I discovered through research participation with others that *how* we engage in knowledge production is as important as the knowledge produced. In creating and naming our talents, we brought them into being: a freeing and liberating experience in humanisation and critical consciousness for those involved.

To conclude, I briefly review the study's research questions and offer some rationalised answers.

1. **(My) Initial Research Question:** How does drama-led peace education help people experience, know and transform conflict?

The Peace PAR group came to experience, know and transform conflict through collaborative, democratic and creative inquiry that sought transformative solutions to complex relational and systemic problems. Furthermore, values-led, art-engaging practices allowed us to step outside dominant education-and-research discourses to deconstruct our personal and social worlds and offer transformative alternatives.

Using drama in peace education helped wake up our bodies and minds (Greene, 1988). Through drama, we developed an awareness of our habits and behaviours and the social injustices we had been subject to. Through TO methods, we developed attitudes and approaches that helped us pay more attention to life. We became conscious of alternatives and acted accordingly.

This drama-led peace education experience allowed adults and children alike to articulate the competencies and values we needed to build and maintain peace (Johnson and Johnson, 2005). We built a peace architecture in which we could raise the difficult issues involved in maintaining our peace.

A drama-led peace education allowed us to understand that a creative act does not involve one person's dominance over another, i.e. you naming my

world for me. Using drama, we opened new communicative and creative spaces. We did not put words in people's mouths but allowed them to name their worlds through Image Theatre.

Image Theatre provided a method for discovering what we valued and what the negation of that value was like for us. Image Theatre allowed us to transform our counter-values into values, moving from our real to our ideal (Boal, 2002).

In cultivating an educational environment fostering critical consciousness, we created new knowledge (talents) and developed a radically new sense of individual and group perception. Drama developed pedagogies and processes that encouraged awareness of how knowledge and understanding are socially constructed, negotiated, and used to legitimate unjust and unpeaceful realities. By its very nature, drama is interactive and collaborative, lending itself to the active 'doing' of peace and social justice.

Via arts-engaging activities the young people began a process of peace in action by:

a) affirming their values-base as a co-researcher
b) sharing and discussing oppressions they directly experienced due to their intersecting identities and relationships (Wright, 2020),
c) identifying and affirming their talents, and
d) rebuilding and repairing relationships

2. **Second (Group) Research Question:** How can we use each other's talents to find out more about each other and ourselves?

Naming our personal values was a form of liberation. In recognising a value (a talent) as something desirable, we began un-learning our oppressed ways (Wright, 2020). We experimented with new ways of thinking about normalised encounters, intersectional identities, and shared experiences (Wright, 2020). In trying out new ways of being, we experienced radically new senses of self-perception. This experimentation helped us view our relationships with

ourselves and others differently. We developed our artistic skills. We chose to share our story (talents) in the hope that others might learn something from our story the same way we learned from others' stories. We helped repair our relationships by acknowledging others' assets (talents). We demanded to be treated better by each other and by the staff. We became conscious, embarking on humanisation.

3. **(My) Final Research Question:** What factors influence participation and building, maintaining, and repairing relationships within the PAR group?

Our research means and methods used influenced the group's participation and relationships. Thus, research into peace education must be conducted peacefully, and research processes for inquiring about justice must embody those exact qualities.

As the lead researcher, my understanding and embodiment of PAR directly influenced relationships within the research community. As demonstrated by this chapter's recommendations, I now understand my practice better and know how to improve it. I have learned something about my practice and evolution as an arts-engaging researcher and peace educator. In sharing this account[53] and the values that informed it, and by reflecting on how I can improve, I am generating a living educational theory of professional and research practice (Whitehead, 1989).

6.9 Recommendations

Having analysed the factors that influenced participation and building, maintaining, and repairing relationships within the PAR group, I offer two sets of recommendations. The first set pertains to the inclusion of drama-led peace education in school, principally of interest to those intersecting critical arts pedagogies and peace education. The second set concerns the use of PAR and restorative approaches in research, which will interest those using (or hoping to use) socially-just research methods and approaches. Based on my research experience, these recommendations are both actionable and doable.

[53] Although written in the first person, I created this thesis in relationship with others.

6.9.1 Recommendations for including drama-led peace education in school

1. **Reflect on the version of peace education offered.**

Accept the different ways concepts such as peace, tolerance, justice, equality, and recognition might be culturally perceived in particular settings (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013).

Action:

- Identify local, traditional and non-Western beliefs and practices and explore how to promote them as knowledge forms within a peace-education framework

2. **Establish peace education as part of a holistic educative experience.**

Peace education can incorporate and inform social justice education, mindfulness, and social and emotional learning. These elements prioritise relationships and help develop the skills needed for human flourishing.

Action:

- Coordinate a holistic educative experience in which the goal is humanisation, not assimilation

3. **Cultivate institutional spaces for learning and practising habits for positive peace and conflict dialogue (Bickmore, 2012).**

Reframe conflict dialogue as a constructive discussion of conflictual or controversial issues in educating for and about peace, democracy, equity, and social justice. (Parker, 2016a, Parker, 2016b).

Actions:

- Create consistent, regular opportunities for peer-to-peer dialogue about difference, conflict and peace to help develop the possibility of acceptance by moving toward empathy and appreciation of diverse identities and perspectives (Parker, 2016a p. 110)
- Facilitate discussions around the “glut of rules stored in the collective memory” (Angell, 2004 p. 103-4) that can impede or compromise democratic spaces; name and explore these with children as co-researchers

4. **Create inclusive epistemologies to secure authentic collaboration (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014).**

All students need equitable opportunities to participate in naming, speaking out and being heard on conflictual issues (Bickmore, 2012 p. 122). These epistemologies benefit from being physical, shared, creative, practical, and embodied.

Action:

- Facilitate and fund training in using methods such as games, improvisations, Image Theatre and circle work
- Coordinate and formalise alternative ways of forming knowledge, such as circle dialogue and relationship-building activities

5. **Assess whether different emphases are inclusive or not.**

In promoting aesthetic forms such as drama, consider whom such activities welcome and whom they exclude or push out. Reflect on whose language is promoted and whether alternatives are being negated.

Action:

- Consult with those who have not had the experience or opportunity to connect their body with thoughts, feelings, actions, and knowledge production about how they might have their learning validated
- Determine the group's languages and how best to acknowledge and celebrate alternatives (including vernacular and patois)

6. **Create spaces whereby personal needs and desires (Boal, 1995) can gain meaning/significance through expression in a social setting.**

Physical activities, games and abstract props can help move beyond purely a cognitive appreciation that our world is shared and understood through interactions and relationships (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014 p. 49). Furthermore, using elicited techniques (e.g. props and/or symbols) helps make formerly implicit cultural knowledge explicit (Lederach, 1995).

Action:

- Create opportunities for dialogue using physical expression and abstract props

7. **Develop an awareness of the social and political factors that create relationship oppression.**

Analyse the patterns that sustain the oppression and the interests it serves (which in our case included the grouping and inclusion/exclusion of others and the ways we spoke to one another).

Action:

- Use the arts to engage communities/marginalised groups, considering methods such as Image Theatre, Newspaper Theatre, and Invisible Theatre that value the exploration of local problems, interaction and participation
- Work democratically with others to reimagine and remake the world in the interest of all (in our case, we named and brought into being our talents)

8. **Include adults as worthy participants in the peace education process.**

This often requires support, modelling and sometimes explicit sanctioning, as some adults need permission to leave their 'professional' hat off and enter the world of authentic participation.

Actions:

- Explicitly invite adults into the work
- Conduct further research into how educators who experience the struggle to realise consciousness and achieve their educational-values-based visions (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006) might maintain liberatory practices and processes within the dominant system of an English school

9. **Extend social justice and participation values to working with adults as well as young people.**

Create and invite adults into spaces of relational practice, e.g. circle work, restorative work and peace work.

Actions:

- Map and nurture the relational ecologies recognising individual children and adults as part of a web of social relations (Morrison and Vaandering, 2012)

- Create activities that help adults acknowledge and appreciate diverse identities in their classroom

10. Create and institute a peace architecture.

Find ways to elicit, envision and enact peace with a group. If peace does not yet exist (i.e. you cannot name it), it needs to be brought into existence. This is a creative act.

Actions:

- Regularly explore personal and group values
- Build as constructive and reciprocal a student/teacher relationship as possible, enabling mutual teaching and learning
- Accept people might find it difficult to think outside of their clear-cut, binary beliefs and recognise that there may be multiple and divergent truths
- Offer scaffolded and peer-modelled learning opportunities to support the development of critical thinking, self-reflection and deeper engagement with self and others

6.9.2 Recommendations for using PAR and restorative approaches in research

1. **Create extended epistemologies (multiple ways of knowing) to develop more grounded knowledge.**

Extending what is knowable and worth knowing enhances both understanding and practice.

Action:

- Identify research activities, such as Image Theatre, that value experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowledge
- Identify arts-engaging practices where the group can use art to explore issues pertinent to them. In the Peace PAR group's case, we also used Image Theatre to mobilise, enable, and support action (Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014)

2. **Acknowledge and assess the permeable nature of methods.**

Methods are permeable and soak up the values they are steeped in. Research methods affect how we think and feel about each other (Turkle, 2011). For example, the circle and talking piece become symbols for how we think, feel, and work together.

Actions:

- Seek out socially just, inclusive, rational, and reasonable methods
- Consider *for whom* these methods are considered socially just, inclusive, rational, and reasonable
- Create activities to explore the meanings associated with methods and tools with participants
- Conduct a values assessment with oneself and others at the start of the research to gain insight into the potency of personal, professional, educational, and social values

3. **Create the pedagogic space and intention for others to assume control of practices and processes.**

Create research environments where participants can assume control of the practices and processes by which knowledge is determined to be useful and valuable (Call-Cummings, 2018).

Actions:

- Look and listen for how the community finds relevance in the methodology
- Create activities to explore how the methodology resonates with them, how they identify with it and how they create meaning from it
- Establish a research culture that embodies the philosophical principles underpinning the study/research
- Cultivate a space in which researchers can develop ownership over all aspects of the process (problem identification, analysis, intervention, review, and feedback)
- Establish dialogic methods to slow things down and make thoughts, processes, and reactions explicit, minimising the risk of reactivity and jumping to ineffective conclusions
- Consider how Image Theatre can be used to cycle through four ways of knowing to develop a more fully grounded knowledge (Heron, 1996, Heron and Reason, 1997, Heron and Reason, 2008)

4. **Institute artistic methods to reflect on the human condition.**

Reflecting on the human condition is enriching, constituting an act of humanisation.

Actions:

- Collectively consider which aspects of the research process might benefit from artistic means
- Establish artistic methods and techniques to reunite space, roles, mind, body, feelings, thoughts and actions in research
- Fund training in TO methods
- Rehearse for new realities (Boal) using improvisation and Image Theatre to experiment with new ways of thinking and being in normalised encounters (Wright, 2020)

5. **Contribute to decolonisation in research.**

Consider ways to become more empathetic, self-aware, and responsible and question the structures that support oppressive research attitudes and practices.

Action:

- Facilitate research and peer learning to practice first and second-order reflexivity, particularly site-and-context-specific second-order reflexivity
- Notice the influence of internalised epistemologies and encourage externalised ontologies that engage the self and others' minds and bodies

6. **Ensure instruction is relational and restorative.**

Make teaching and learning collaborative, project-based and experiential.

Action:

- Provide multiple opportunities to "co-construct knowledge and actively participate in learning processes based on inquiry, discovery, construction of meaning, collaboration and application of their learning to become self-directed, open-minded thinkers and learners" (NACRJ, 2017, p. 6)
- Respect participants by promoting restorative values[54]

7. **Establish ways to model relationships characterised by the level of expectation 'for being human' and the support one gives for being human (Vaandering, 2013).**

See people as subjects to be honoured.

Actions:

- Create spaces where *expectation* and *support* can be given and received by anyone of any age, enabling humanisation for both parties
- Promote prolonged engagement with the inquiry group to privilege relationships
- Identify education and socialisation aspects the inquiry group might be missing out on during prolonged school engagement (e.g. the Peace PAR group missed their much-enjoyed PE lessons)

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[54] Including collaboration, participation, empowerment, accountability, confidentiality, acknowledgement of obligations to subjects, goal/method/motive/benefit transparency (Toews and Zehr, 2003).

8. **Critically investigate the role of a PAR researcher.**

Just as PAR seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it, so must the PAR researcher seek to understand their role by changing it.

Actions:

- Engage with the concept of relational ethics and study how ethics relate strongly to relationships, wellbeing, and care
- Expand the researcher role to include facilitator, co-learner, and collaborator
- Intentionally evaluate your own educational practice and how, as a PAR researcher, you might embody a sense of everyday justice and peace

9. **Engage in hopeful inquiry.**

The act of research within Higher Education has the potential to be humanising for both the oppressed (student) and the oppressor (institution).

Actions:

- Voice your experience to challenge existing power structures
- Use research processes that are congruent with the area of inquiry, e.g:
  - (d) Peacefully educative research methods
  - (e) Peaceful and just research processes
  - (f) A comprehensive values exploration that helps assess authenticity and legitimise the study

10. **Accept that PAR is not a panacea for more egalitarian research**

Beware of exceptionalism in research and the danger of exoticising PAR.

Actions:

- Create a research question that meets the needs of the group, not the needs of the institution, funder, or lead researcher, helping to anchor the group (who may value verification over discovery)
- Accept that the results will be complex and limited
- Accept that 'truths' are ambiguous, paradoxical, partial, contextual and susceptible to multiple interpretations (Toews and Zehr, 2003)
- Accept that you may have been subject to forms of Western Enlightenment thinking that have successfully promoted universal conceptions of humanisation, peace, and social justice (Zembylas, 2017)

6.10 Conclusion

I have maintained throughout this thesis that progress is not linear. I now realise it might not be as conveniently circular as I first thought. This chapter evidenced my transition from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional depiction of the process. The spiral allowed me to turn, notice and reflect on new knowledge, prompting a fourth action research cycle and, in turn, a series of recommendations for the field.

In the final chapter, I discuss the study's limitations and how I have modified my ideas and concerns considering this evaluation. I will state how, through this doctoral process, I am emerging[55] as a values-led, arts-engaging researcher specialising in peace education and restorative practice.

This process was not linear. The most appropriate form I can use to describe this journey is a downwardly excavatory spiral, unearthing new knowledge. For me, research is a means of digging into deeper and more satisfying levels of understanding and practice.

[55] I do not consider the process of becoming something or someone as a fixed point. We are always growing and changing. My research process and identity continue to emerge and unfold.

7. Concluding thoughts

This closing chapter highlights some of the Peace PAR project's study limitations alongside the new PAR, drama-led and restorative peace education research areas I am moving towards.

Figure 64. **Circle, Labyrinth and Spiral forms**

The circle, labyrinth and spiral gave form to my emerging and continuing research journey. Though reliant at the beginning on experiential knowledge gained in practice, I began seeing this knowledge as a circle as I engaged with the literature: two-dimensional, grounded, important, and linked. As I developed my critical thinking, I connected with a sense that a yet-unknown layered complexity would yield more understanding of how I worked in participation with others.

The labyrinth became a metaphor for complexity and a form for analysing data and narrating my findings: its twists and turns mirrored my research experience, while the three labyrinth paths mapped the cycles of action research. The first path initiated an exchange of ideas, with local action taken to confirm and observe these ideas. This was followed by a period of reflection (the centre) in which I sat with existing concepts and sought more significant ideas. Finally, the co-researchers and I travelled the return journey to emerge transformed.

Moving forward in this inquiry, I did not disconnect from the ground (the circle) or the subsequent research experience (the labyrinth) but pivoted down and around. The spiral shape allowed me to return to theory and evaluate new perspectives gained from praxis.

> "These steps and rhythms came to be carried out in an endless manner, as we shall see."
>
> (Fals Borda, 1979 p.39)

My findings corroborate much of what has previously been *said* in peace education. However, I have made several original contributions to what can be *done* in peace-education research.

Combining chapter six's findings and conclusions with the three research questions, I conclude that meaningful action resulted from this inquiry, namely:

- Community building within the Peace PAR group
- Promotion of dialogue between co-researchers (including myself) and adult participants
- Enhanced relationships
- Reduced social distance and enhanced connection between members
- Amplification of marginalised voices
- Promotion of justice

As such, this study demonstrates that radical change does not need to be violent. Meta-narratives about the nature of peace and violence can ignore local ideas, meanings, and histories unique to the community and relative struggles (Bajaj, 2008a p. 142), whereas we made our peace collaboratively and harmoniously, invoking radical, locally relevant change.

In communicating the findings publicly, I recognise their complex and limited nature. Truths are not easily generalisable. They are also often ambiguous, paradoxical, partial, contextual and susceptible to multiple interpretations (Toews and Zehr, 2003). To enhance research transparency and future studies, I discuss the Peace PAR project's limitations below.

7.1 Limitations

The sample size was small, involving only one group in one school: twelve children in Year Six. Nevertheless, the wealth of information revealed from this one setting indicates a rich potential for conducting similar Peace PAR projects across more schools. However, the context I worked in, situations that arose, and interactions I experienced cannot be replicated to any extent, nor can generalisations be made with any confidence to any context other than the one studied.

Due to the qualitative data's subjective nature and single-context origin, applying the 'conventional' standards of reliability and validity associated with more positivist research traditions is difficult. My presence in the group and relationships with the co-researchers profoundly affected the study, the participants and me. There is no possibility for measuring or replicating results via repeat studies.

Adult involvement was also limited due to time and capacity constraints. Though I had only wanted to interview one adult initially, I gradually realised others' investment and involvement in the project and increased the number of interviews to include four adult participants. However, I remain concerned about whether I authentically included adults (school staff and parents) as part of the project. In several instances, I did not extend the same values of social justice and participation to the adults as I did to the co-researchers, and I did not always explicitly invite adults into the work. I struggled to expand liberatory practices and processes to include parents and school staff.

I chose not to conduct individual co-researcher interviews as I felt individual interviews might negate the group's power and knowledge co-creation. Furthermore, it may have positioned the young people as a data source. While I am keen to create opportunities for researchers to interview each other and me in future research, this was beyond the current study's scope.

I resisted pathologising children and tried to develop as egalitarian as possible researcher relationships. However, I acknowledge that my positioning of young people as active agents involved in reactionary and progressive action inevitably provokes questions about my positionality (Jeffrey, 2012).

Swayed as I was by the power of group-working, I am unsure whether I heard from everyone in the group. I recognise that some pupils will have experienced an internal conflict I was unaware of, and I noticed politics at play regarding the talking piece that I could not always address, e.g. I observed co-researchers throwing it to friends and allies while excluding those whose voices they wanted to mute. I also accept that some co-researchers may have chosen not to speak; they may have felt embarrassed if they voiced an unpopular opinion, particularly in the early weeks. However, the evidence shows that co-researchers voiced their needs and concerns more over time. At around week five, once the project started to feel more democratic, there was more care, increased participation and a palpable sense of investment and seriousness with which co-researchers approached the co-created research question.

The eight-week project length balanced the prolonged engagement I sought with the practicality of aligning it with the school term and ensuring a reasonable ask of staff. However, the project could have continued longer – either as an educational offer or research inquiry – as I did not feel we reached saturation. However, as mentioned earlier, cycles were not always discernible or clear.

Alongside my need to start writing up this project, adult pressures on the group to return to class to prepare for exams meant we accepted the eight-week limit. Although I did not ask the young people about their perceptions of project length, co-researcher Tashelle asked if I would conduct the project with another class, suggesting that involving more children in a similar project would be a positive experience.

I remain concerned about assessing the setting's appropriateness and the project's alignment with the school culture given noticeable differences between the staff's behaviour-management styles and policies and the collaborative, democratic peace-education experience I was trying to create. One physical difference was my rearrangement of the classroom's furniture to create a circle, which contrasted starkly with the lines of pre-set desks characterising the classroom's day-to-day architecture. How fair was it on the

young people (and the peers and staff they were returning to) to have a short-lived experience of a democratic learning environment, only to return to more constrained arrangements of space, time, and bodies?

Furthermore, I later learned that by participating in the weekly Tuesday-afternoon Peace PAR sessions, the co-researchers were missing a favourite lesson: Physical Education (PE). This was unfortunate. Had I known sooner, I may have brought it up with staff. However, I am aware of the timetable stresses linked to assessment outcomes. At the staff's request, we held the Peace PAR sessions in the afternoon so that literacy and numeracy lessons could happen in the morning when the children were perceived to be more receptive. We chose Tuesdays so the children could still access core STEM subjects, perhaps indicating that the staff perceived PE as an inferior subject (Hardman, 2008).

Our ethical respect impacted our methods, especially our use of film to share our research more widely. For example, the co-researchers asked to have their faces blurred, which impacted the film's quality (due to my inexpertise in obscuring faces). In this sense, ethical concerns limited some of the methods.

Moreover, I made mistakes, choosing words that resonated with *my* socio-cultural context rather than the co-researchers'. This stymied the creation of new meanings and knowledge grounded in the young people's everyday experiences (Cammarota, 2017 p. 196). However, noticing these personal limitations ultimately helped me become more present and access a greater harmonic resonance with the group (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014).

I also acknowledge that the research focus was deficit-based in its orientation (early Northern PAR stance) and socially unjust (lacking cultural humility). In reaction to this injustice, the co-research group decentred the paradigm and re-centred it around their realities, knowledge and values. Identifying talents as a new research focus allowed the co-researchers to question and resist the research model (a pragmatic form of action research) and research focus (the deficit conflict-resolution model I was presenting).

While I acknowledge the educational impacts of modernity and coloniality, my research can only offer limited insights since it was conducted in England, arguably the birthplace of colonialism. Furthermore, I am a product of colonialism. My parent's education and life choices resulted in my birth and upbringing in southern Africa. How able am I to recognise the consequences of colonial and unequal socioeconomic processes on myself and offer a counter position? This makes my analysis 'thin' in theorisation. Galvanised by Zembylas's (2017) self-reflections on the convergences and divergences between postcolonial and critical peace education, I realise that I, too, have more to offer on how and why decolonising perspectives must be considered in critical peace education.

In a sense, I am the data: my subjective stance impacted the inquiry's social aspect and its exegesis. However, as is evident in this thesis's approach, I have owned my personal investment and embraced a subjective account. I believe my investment in the subjective experience of my transformation will help me carry this research forward. I hope to engage in further studies into creative peer-led peace education within neo-liberal formal education, furthering my understanding of how such pedagogies support social justice, peace, critical thinking, and creativity.

However, I did not always authentically include myself in the inquiry. This was starkly apparent as I uploaded pictures of the co-researchers performing their talents: where were mine? I later reflected that identifying talents as a research focus was a way for the co-researchers to question and resist the (deficit) conflict-resolution model I was presenting (Parker, 2016a). Section 5.7.1 details this further. A broader team might have made the project more manageable (Maguire, 1993) and helped mitigate my pseudo-participation.

As previously discussed (see section 6.3.3), I did not always fully embody my identified values of creativity and growth. Having not identified my talents as part of the Peace PAR project, for example, I cannot claim to have wholly entered into physical communication with others as part of my anti-oppressive practices. However, by engaging with the co-researchers, immersing myself in this thesis's deeply reflexive writing experience, and exploring my values (see

sections 1.6.3 and 6.3.3), I can now name my talents and bring them into being.

7.2 My talents

In articulating my talents, I am asking to be known by them (Brantmeier, 2011):

- **A circle keeper:** I work with others in a circle to invoke the qualities of fun, learning, patience, humility, deep listening, acceptance, a willingness to sit with uncertainty and an ability to share responsibility (Pranis, 2014)
- **A peace educator**: Through experiencing and better knowing Indigenous theories and practices of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, I extend a feminist ethic of care to wage peace (Isike and Uzodike, 2011) in education
- **A Theatre of the Oppressed practitioner**: My TO knowledge has increased my creative capacity as a peace educator; I am not a master of TO, but I see its crucial value in understanding conflict and eliciting peace
- **A teacher and learner:** I see the performative act of teaching as a provocation to learn, an invitation to a shared process of knowledge creation (hooks, 1994), and a reciprocal act: I teach and am taught by others
- **A sensor:** My hunches are sound; I sense that we learn better when we learn reciprocally; I sense that play is important; I sense that using the body is important; I sense that arts-engaged practice in research is important
- **My whole self:** I bring my experiences as a white, heterosexual, childless, middle-class woman to my research; I bring my values and try to identify them more clearly as they influence my life and, inevitably, my research choices
- **A political and participatory researcher:** I see practice as a form of theory-in-action; I consider inquiry to be “a rite of communion between thinking and acting human beings” (Fals Borda, 1997 p.108); My radical, extended epistemology draws attention to and legitimates the many ways in which individuals come to know; I instigate creative

> research activities that value experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowledge

As I name and act out these talents, I, too, begin to experience a radically new sense of self-perception.

> "Life is expansive, it expands inside our own body, growing and developing, and it also expands in territory, physical and psychological, discovering spaces, forms, ideas, meanings, sensations – this should be done as dialogue: receiving from others what others have created, giving them the best of our creation."
>
> (Boal, 2002 p.2)

7.3 New perspectives: me

Having shared my talents, I now discuss how I have modified my concerns, ideas, and practices.

In undertaking a doctoral-level study and conducting a PAR project, I experienced a paradox. On the one hand, there was the expected intent to emerge as a professional researcher (Bennett, 2004) after producing an inquiry of demonstrable quality to meet peer-reviewed, publishable standards and contribute to (western, presentational) knowledge. On the other hand, I was engaged in a research method and methodology that arose precisely from the need to replace dominant research paradigms' exploitative elements with an alternative – one affirming people as experts whose knowledge is valuable to community development and research. This approach was based on the premise that ordinary people deserve to know more about their life conditions so that they might defend their interests, resources, techniques and power (Fals Borda, 2006b p.29).

I recognise that I am not alone in my experience of PAR's disadvantages as a research approach within an academic institution (Anderson, 2017, Klocker, 2012, Moore, 2004, Hall, 2003). However, I want to take this opportunity to recognise some advantages of centring my PhD PAR experience at the University of Nottingham.

Nottingham's School of Education includes the Centre for Human Flourishing, designed to "study the processes and outcomes of optimal functioning, with particular interests in well-being, human potential, agency and autonomy, mindfulness, character strengths, social behaviour and human systems" (University of Nottingham, 2021). Happily, my lead supervisor was based in this department and enthusiastically met my PAR suggestion. Furthermore, I was able to argue that TO was a good 'fit' for PAR as a critical art pedagogy. Moreover, as I engaged with more feminist literature and decolonising research practices, I was encouraged to identify, develop, and support processes that enable human flourishing.

On hearing of hooks' death, I returned to her 1994 work that expressed the dichotomy I experienced in education and the necessary pursuit of freedom:

> **"**The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom,"

(hooks, 1994 p. 207)

I found (and still find) writing about participatory research challenging. It is hard to capture its dynamism, moment-to-moment sensing/ responding and collaborative 'zip and zing' alongside its more reflective moments (Glassman and Erdem, 2014). Articulating this experience has required me to use propositional language (Heron and Reason, 1997). However, I have been conscious not to present the project as a polished product of a clean, linear process. Instead, I have described the messy research process and decisions informed by emotion and serendipity.

Inspired by Heron and Reason (1997), I also want to articulate the delight and connection I feel when researching with others. I experienced profound joy in

participation with others, especially children, and in using creative methods to learn more about each other. There was a vitality as we collectively participated in processes that built and strengthened relationships, democratised knowledge and analysed power (Cammarota and Fine, 2008).

Participatory working also encouraged me to recognise subtle but powerful indicators, such as shared laughter or a smile or blush, that suggested we had hit upon something important. These moments are hard to represent in a transcript. Using my whole body in physical, affective, cognitive, and emotive activities moved me to pursue more practical and skilful knowledge forms for the future. Joining with fellow humans to form a collective, creative inquiry gave me a strong sense of purpose, and the experience of being part of a whole group rather than separate from it has committed me further to develop my and others' research skills.

Despite my enthusiasm, I remain cautious. On the one hand, I am keen to communicate PAR's nourishing nature (Cammarota and Fine, 2008b). On the other, I acknowledge my position as a white circle keeper, and I counsel myself and others not to frame PAR and its associated interactions as life-enriching. This white-centric view assumes that my very engagement (as a white, middle-aged, middle-class woman, charity worker and student) benefits others (Goens-Bradley, 2020).

My conviction in an inclusive epistemology un-reliant on concepts and theories and able to embrace practical, enacted, and embodied realms of action is simultaneously emboldened and fragile. I take this learning back into my own practice and offer it to the research community. While this exposure generates anxiety as I anticipate scepticism from those more steeped in established modes of research, Kidd (2015) gives me confidence that even if I experience scorn, it will be worth it:

> "In resisting traditional modes of writing, of research, of teaching, we put ourselves out on a ledge - a precipice from which there is danger of failure and ridicule. But there is also a unique view and a heightened awareness of what is possible. It is a risk worth taking."

(Kidd, 2015 p. 19)

7.4 New perspectives: others

Having discussed how I modified my concerns, ideas, and practices, I now describe how am I moving into new research areas by encouraging others to show how they judge their work's quality based on *their* identified standards.

Further research is needed to understand and creatively explore divergent perspectives in the classroom (Parker, 2016a). As conflict is an inescapable part of social life, the question is *how* – not *whether* – schools address it (Bickmore, 2012) and the pedagogical implications. Further comparative studies in school settings with different demographics might provide greater insights into how young people can come to experience, know, and transform conflict. Such studies would help creatively reframe conflict dialogue, peace and social justice as a constructive and necessary part of school life (Parker, 2016a, Parker, 2016b).

The youth lens added relational ontological worth to this study. The peace-*practice* (affective, embodied, and shared) was what was fundamentally real. The thought and theory (of others) may have preceded the practice, but it was the shared consideration of and engagement in our world that reinforced our research experience. Further research is needed to better understand how more young people challenge, claim and experience research methods to interpret their reality. For example, I have reported on the moments of perceptual divergence between the adult researcher and the child co-researchers who came to question certain practices. More research that genuinely responds, adapts and records how young people disrupt and own narratives around research would be welcomed.

As a peace educator, I offer this study to the field with the hope of building my own and others' pedagogical resources and facilitation skills. I am grateful for the tutoring and mentorship offered to me over the years. Within the community of peace educators, restorative practitioners and agents of social justice, our pedagogy and practices are fortified via apprenticeship, mentorship, alliance and activism (Adams and Bell, 2016 p. 38).

7.5 Full circle

Experimenting with autoethnography, Cremin (2018) details her early experience as a peace educator and, later, as an academic. As part of a meditation on research, practice, and the field, Cremin describes a moment where she walks a labyrinth accompanied by an unnamed peace-education worker:

> "I am walking on a grass labyrinth cut into the lawns of a large Quaker house. I am walking slowly, meditatively, circling, thinking. A peace project worker follows me – two women who share the experience of working for the MPEP[56], her after me. We communicate, and yet this would not be apparent from looking at us. Our bodies speak in non-verbal ways. Each lost in our thoughts; our silence is deep and companionable. The sounds of the birds, the distant hum of traffic, and the smell of the Summer breeze remind us that we are in a city garden, but the labyrinth has its own logic of time and place. As we twist and turn, we catch glimpses of each other, of the old house, the lake, the ancient trees starting to change colour and bear fruit. Circling, winding, we loop towards the centre of the labyrinth before returning to the periphery and back again, near and yet far. The centre is a destination that the project worker and I have each given our own meaning to. For me it is a place where I hope to experience a turning point in my work as a peace educator and researcher. I am reflecting on my journey to this point as I gradually make my way towards the centre. I want to honour all that I have achieved, all the people whose hearts I have touched, and who have touched mine, over the years. I want to leave the labyrinth with clarity, ready for what is to come next."
>
> (Cremin, 2018 p. 5)

I am that project worker. Hilary and I walked that labyrinth in 2014, when I was deeply enmeshed in practice and not contemplating research or academia. I did not read Hilary's paper on that encounter until well into this study. It feels fitting that the story comes full circle, and that I record that moment here. I did

[56] Midlands Peace Education Project.

not know then the symbolism the labyrinth would come to offer for my PhD journey.

Nearly eight years have passed since Hilary and I walked that labyrinth. As I reach my sixth year of this part-time PhD, I now describe myself as a values-led researcher committed to arts-based practices. I contend that a feminist, relational ethic of care can be used to wage peace (Isike and Uzodike, 2011) in education. I claim to have created a unique model of arts-engaged peace education. I further claim that this participatory, relational, transformative, and emancipatory peace-building model can be utilised as an ideological rallying point to transform peace education and research approaches.

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APPENDICES

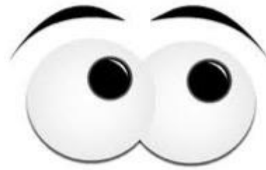
Appendix A - Presentation to potential co-researchers (copy of PowerPoint slides that accompanied a question-and-answer session)

Research Project

Anna Gregory

Research Project - how we learn about conflict and the ways to resolve conflict.

#conflict #falling out #argument #not getting on #fight #disagreement #dispute



10-12 children to be co-researchers

Co-researchers

- We design the research
- We decide what questions to ask of each other
- We decide how to share our findings
- We could use drama
- Our ideas and the way we do things might change as we go along!

What's involved?

- Working in a group of 8-12 children, a teacher and Anna.
- Working in a circle, doing some drama…?

- Meeting for 2 hours a week for about 8 weeks (2 months)
- Making sure our parents & families are ok with what we are doing

Stuff we might want to find out…

- What is a researcher?
- What are we interested in when it comes to conflict and the resolving of conflict?
- What's important for us to learn now and in the future?
- How do we want to find out more about this?
- How do we learn (about conflict) through being creative ?
- How might we share what we are talking about or show what we are learning through a performance?

IMPORTANT

- Anonymity – words ✓
- **Anonymity - photos or film** ✗
- No names or ages or school information ✓
- People in school will know you are involved

Where will your information go?

It's likely to go in to a document that Anna writes

Anna might present the research to other people

Other people might be interested in sharing our research more creatively

Nothing will be shared without your consent or the consent of your parents

Click to download

Need more information?

Speak to [redacted] or [redacted] who can help you with your questions

Appendix B - Participant Information Sheet: Children

Project Title: What insight does participatory action research combined with theatre in education glean about conflict resolution education in a single school?

Researchers Name: Anna Gregory

My name is Anna Gregory and I am carrying out some research to find out how children learn about conflict and ways to resolve conflict. This research is for an academic qualification at the University of Nottingham.

You might have seen me around school before. I work for [redacted] and I help with circle time and with the peer mediation training. [redacted] have been working together for over 7 years. As you have been trained in peer mediation, you already know quite a bit about resolving conflicts in school. I would like to work with a small group of children to be co-researchers with me to help me with a project.

Before you can take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what taking part in it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with the people at home and with [redacted] from the school if you want to. Please tell Mrs. [redacted] if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. They will tell me and I will get some more information to you. Take time to decide whether or not you would like to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Aims: The aims of the project are to collect and share children's views on how people learn about conflict in school. A group of up to 12 children will be trained up to be co-researchers for the project so we all will have a say over the questions we ask of each other, the design of the research and how we choose to share it. This is called Participatory Action Research. It is hoped the Participatory Action Research will inform ways of knowing more about how we can teach things like conflict resolution better in schools. The Participatory Action Research may include an element of drama so that you can show and act out what you mean rather than doing a lot of writing. An important part of working together as research group is that we all decide how the data (information) is collected and shared. I will listen to you and help you to make decisions about what information you want shared and how.

Requirements: The Participatory Action Research group will work together in sessions of around 90 minutes over a period of 8 weeks. The research group will be made up of up to twelve Y6 children. As a research group, we will use methods such as circle time, discussions and drama to help us to find out what we think and feel about conflict and peace in school.

Here is a list of the topics the people in the research group might ask of each other:

- What is a researcher?
- What are we interested in when it comes to conflict and the resolving of conflict?
- What's important for us to learn about conflict now and in the future?
- How do we want to find out more about this?
- How do we learn (about conflict) through being creative?
- How might we share what we are talking about or show what we are learning through a performance?

This project will take place during over a series of afternoons during the school day. Your Teacher and the Head Teacher are happy for this research project to go ahead.

Anonymity/Participation: As part of the presentation of results, your words may be used in text form. This will be anonymised. This means that you cannot be identified from what you say.

I would like the opportunity to take photos (still and video) to record some of the discussions we have and some of the short drama presentations. These recordings will help us to see, reflect on and remember the work we are creating. As a group, we might decide to make and share a short film of our work. We would then decide how and where to share this film. For example, we might choose to share it with the people in the school, with your family at home and with other researchers in other Universities. If I use images or recordings in my research, no child will be identified by name. The images may be used in presentations or training or to illustrate the research. No images that might cause embarrassment or distress would be used. You will be given the chance to see and hear the recordings and agree - or not - for them to be shared. I will also ask your parents or guardians if they are happy for the videos we make to be used or not.

An important part of Participatory Action Research is that the *group* decide how the data/information is collected and shared. This means that as a co-researcher on this project, you will be able to make decisions about your involvement and what information gets shared.

Please be aware that:

- You can decide to stop being part of this research project at any point

- You won't be made to answer any questions or made do anything you don't want to or makes you feel uncomfortable

- Your name will be removed from the information and anonymised. It should not be possible to identify anyone from my written reports on this study.

- All of the research data (words and images) will be stored in a secure place in a separate, password-protected file from any data supplied.

It is up to you and the people you live with at home to decide whether you take part or not. If you decide you want to take part, you are still free to withdraw your consent during the research project or at any time and without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study all data will be withdrawn and destroyed. If you decide to withdraw your data from the study, you will need to let me know before October 20th, 2017.

Personal data (anything that identifies you such as your name, your image etc.) and Research data (information that the research group collects, observes, or creates such as pictures, film, text) will be kept securely for seven years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

Once the report from this research is finished, a summary of the report can be made available to you if you would like it. It is also possible that the written results will be presented at academic conferences and journals in an anonymised format.

If you - and your parents or guardians - do decide you can take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep.

Contact for further information

Please speak to Mrs. [redacted] at school. They will contact me.

Appendix C - Information Sheet: Parents

Project Title: What insight does participatory action research combined with theatre in education glean about conflict resolution education in a single school?

Researcher's Name: Anna Gregory

My name is Anna Gregory, and I am carrying out some research to find out how children learn about conflict and ways to resolve conflict. This research is for an academic qualification at the University of Nottingham.

I am known to the school through an organisation called . and have been working together for over six years. will have trained your child to be a peer mediator at some point, so they already know quite a bit about resolving conflicts in school. Your child has been invited to be involved in this research and has indicated an interest in being part of this research study.

Before they can take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what their participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with your child and Mrs. or Mrs. from the school if you wish. Please contact me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you would like your child to take part.
Thank you for reading this.

Aims: The aims of the project are to collect and share children's views on how people learn about conflict in school. A group of up to 12 children will be trained up to be co-researchers for the project so they will have a say over the questions we ask of each other, the design of the research and how we choose to share it. This is called Participatory Action Research. It is hoped the Participatory Action Research will inform ways of knowing more about how we can teach things like conflict resolution better in schools. The Action Research may include an element of drama so that children can show and act out what they mean rather than doing a lot of writing.

Requirements: The Action Research group will work together in sessions of around 90 minutes over a period of 8 weeks. The research group will be made up of up to twelve Y5 children. As a research group, we will use methods such as circle time, discussions and drama to help us to find out what we think and feel about conflict and peace in school.
Here is a list of the topics the people in the research group might ask of each other:

- What is a researcher?
- What are we interested in when it comes to conflict and the resolving of conflict?
- What's important for us to learn about conflict now and in the future?
- How do we want to find out more about this?
- How do we learn (about conflict) through being creative?

- How might we share what we are talking about or show what we are learning through a performance?

This project will take place during over a series of afternoons during the school day. Your child's Teacher and the Head Teacher are happy for this research project to go ahead.

Anonymity/Participation: As part of the presentation of results, your child's words may be used in text form. This will be anonymised, so that they cannot be identified from what they said.

I would like to opportunity to take images (still and video) to record some of the discussions we have and some of the short drama presentations. These recordings will help the research group to see, reflect on and remember the work being created. As a group, we might decide to make and share a short film of our work. The group would decide how and where to share this film (this is likely to be with the school, with you, with other research community at other Universities). If I use images or recordings in my research, no student will be identified by name. The images may be used in presentations or training or to illustrate the research. Naturally, no images that might cause embarrassment or distress would be used. Your child will be given the opportunity to see and hear the recordings and agree - or not - for them to be shared.

While your child is working with me on this project, you will be updated about the progress of the project. This includes the use of any video of your child that I might share with an audience outside the school. I will not share any filmed material without your consent.

A key aspect of Participatory Action Research is that the *group* decide how the data is collected and shared. Therefore, I will be supporting the co-researchers to make decisions throughout the process regarding their involvement.

Please note that:

- You and/or your child can decide to stop your child being part of this research project at any point. If you/your child decide they can take part, you/your child are still free to withdraw consent during the research project or at any time and without giving a reason. If you/your child withdraw your child from the study all data will be withdrawn and destroyed. If you or your child decides to withdraw your child's data from the study, you/they will need to let me know before October 20th, 2017.
- Your child won't be made to answer any questions or made do anything they don't want to or makes them feel uncomfortable
- Your child's name will be removed from the information and anonymised. It should not be possible to identify anyone from my written reports on this study.
- Once the report from this research is finished, a summary of the report can be made available to you if you would like it. It is also possible that the written results will be presented at academic conferences and journals in an anonymised format.
- Personal data (anything that identifies your child such as their name, their image etc.) and Research data (information that the research group collects, observes, or creates such as pictures, film, text) will be kept securely for seven years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

All the research data will be stored in a secure place in a separate, password-protected file from any personal data supplied.

If you/your child do decide they can take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

Further information can be found here:

Contact for further information
Anna Gregory
Email: Anna.gregory@nottingham.ac.uk
Phone: 07980 765982

Supervisors Name: Dr. Edward Sellman. Email: Edward.sellman@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisors Name: Dr. Susan Jones. Email: Susan.jones@nottingham.ac.uk
Any ethical concerns can be expressed to: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix D - Group participant (child) consent form

Project Title: What insight does participatory action research combined with theatre in education glean about conflict resolution education in a single school?

Researcher's Name: Anna Gregory

Your Name:

Question	Tick for CONSENT (I agree)
1. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me.	
2. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions	
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. This will not affect my status now or in the future. If I choose to withdraw to withdraw my data from this study, I will do this before October 20th, 2017.	
4. I understand that some of the work I might do could take the form of a play or a piece of drama and that this may be recorded via photographs and/or video. This is for the purpose of presentations, demonstrations and/or training. I understand that I may be photographed.	
5. I understand that before any film/video of our work is shared, you will get consent from my parents or guardians.	
6. I understand that personal data (information which identifies me such as my name and my image) and research data (information that the research group collects, observes or creates) will be kept securely (on a password protected hard-drive) for seven years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.	
7. I agree to take part in this research project	

Signed ……………………………………………………………………………
(Child research participant)

Print name ………………………………………………………………………

Date ………………………………

Contact details

Researcher: Anna Gregory University of Nottingham.

Email: Anna.gregory@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Edward Sellman.

Email: Edward.sellman@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Susan Jones.

Email: Susan.jones@nottingham.ac.uk

The contact details of the Research Ethics Coordinator should participants wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds are: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix E - Parental consent form

Project Title: What insight does participatory action research combined with theatre in education glean about conflict resolution education in a single school?

Before your child can take part in this project, I need your permission. I also need your permission to record your child's voice and image (sound, photos and film recordings of the work). As the person responsible for your child, please answer the questions below, sign and date the form and return it to [redacted] who will pass the form on to me.

Researcher's Name: Anna Gregory
Your Name:
Child's Name:
Your relationship to child (parent, guardian):

Question	Tick for CONSENT (I agree)
1. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me.	
2. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions	
3. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary, and they are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. This will not affect my status or the status of my child now or in the future. If my child or I choose to withdraw my child's data from this study, I/we will do this before October 20th, 2017.	
4. I understand that some of the work my child does could take the form of a play or a piece of drama and that this may be recorded via photographs and/or video. This is for the purpose of presentations, demonstrations and/or training. I understand that my child may be video recorded.	
5. I understand that while my child is working with Anna on this project, I will be updated about the progress of the project. This includes the use of any video of my child that Anna will be sharing with an audience outside the school. I understand that Anna will not share any filmed material without my consent.	
6. I understand that personal data (information which identifies my child such as their name and image) and research data (information that the research group collects, observes or creates) will be kept securely (on a password protected hard-drive) for seven years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.	
7. I agree for my child to take part in this research project	

Signature of parent/guardian: .... Date:

Signature of Researcher: .... Date:

Contact details
Researcher: Anna Gregory University of Nottingham.
Email: Anna.gregory@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor's Name: Dr. Edward Sellman.
Email: Edward.sellman@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor's Name: Dr. Susan Jones.
Email: Susan.jones@nottingham.ac.uk

The contact details of the Research Ethics Coordinator should participants wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds are:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix F - Learner Journal

My Learning Journal

Name: _______________

1

My Needs

Sometimes we might not be feeling our best.
Sometimes we might be feeling great!

What might you need when things are not going so great for you:

1. Who will you let know if you are feeling unwell?

2. How will you let people know if you are feeling uncomfortable?

3. Where do you feel safe/comfortable in school?

4. Who do you feel safe/comfortable with in school?

5. If Anna or a member of staff is worried about your safety. They will have to tell another member of staff who might also talk to your parents.

6. Is there anything else you want write down here for Anna and staff to know?

Date:

Research #1

Date:

What is research?

What does a researcher do?

What does a researcher look like? Can you draw them?

3

Research Word Search

M E O J F Q J H E G A W D C A
W E O Q A R M A N L L X X O S
V J L V D E I I R D A Q F L B
S G P B L R M E E D I F Z L S
A K I I O R E H N H P C R E S
Z T Z H O R B F M D N E M C M
F C S F V N P O L O S T R T E
M S R H Y P O T H E S I S I T
T W B D U P F Q A G C D F O H
N P A G N C N R Q N E T D N O
T T X Q L A C I T I R C I F D
A O X R Z H O E B V K R R O G
D A Q S V C Z D H L N O J I N
P W Y F L F M C F O Q B C R P
A C T I O N Q B T S O G D Y X

ACTION	RESEARCH
CRITICAL	FRIEND
DATA	COLLECTION
PROBLEM	SOLVING
FORMING	METHOD
REFLECTION	HYPOTHESIS

Values

Achievement	Loyalty
Respect	Known as an expert
Independence	Fun
Good looks	Fame
Time	Freedom
Trust	Competition
Wealth	Enthusiasm
Power	Contribution
Predictability	Wisdom
Friendship	Health
Helpful	Fairness / Justice
Cooperation	Honesty
Safety	Love
Leadership	Pleasure
Excitement	Tidiness
Physical activity	Knowledge
Challenge	Faith
Change and variety	Truth
Privacy	Determination
Recognition	Compassion
Creativity	Peace
Ambition	Community
Artistry	Cheerfulness
Team Work	Politeness
	Generosity

Values

Which values do you work towards?

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What values would you like to see in a friend?

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What values would you like to see in someone who might help you in a conflict situation?

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Your thoughts about Action Research

What is positive about your experience of action research?

What is your concern or area of investigation for this research project?

What do you want to get better at or improve?

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What do you look for from a critical friend?

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Why is it important for the voices of children to be heard in research?

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Why is it important your point of view is taken in to account in this research?

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Research #2

Date:

What is research?

What does a researcher do?

What does a researcher look like? Can you draw them?

10

Learning Journal Entry

Date:

What did you do today?..

What are your thoughts on what happened today?................

How did you feel?..

What did you learn in the session today?...............................

What do you need for next time?..
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What is your plan?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What questions do you have?	*Who is the question for?*
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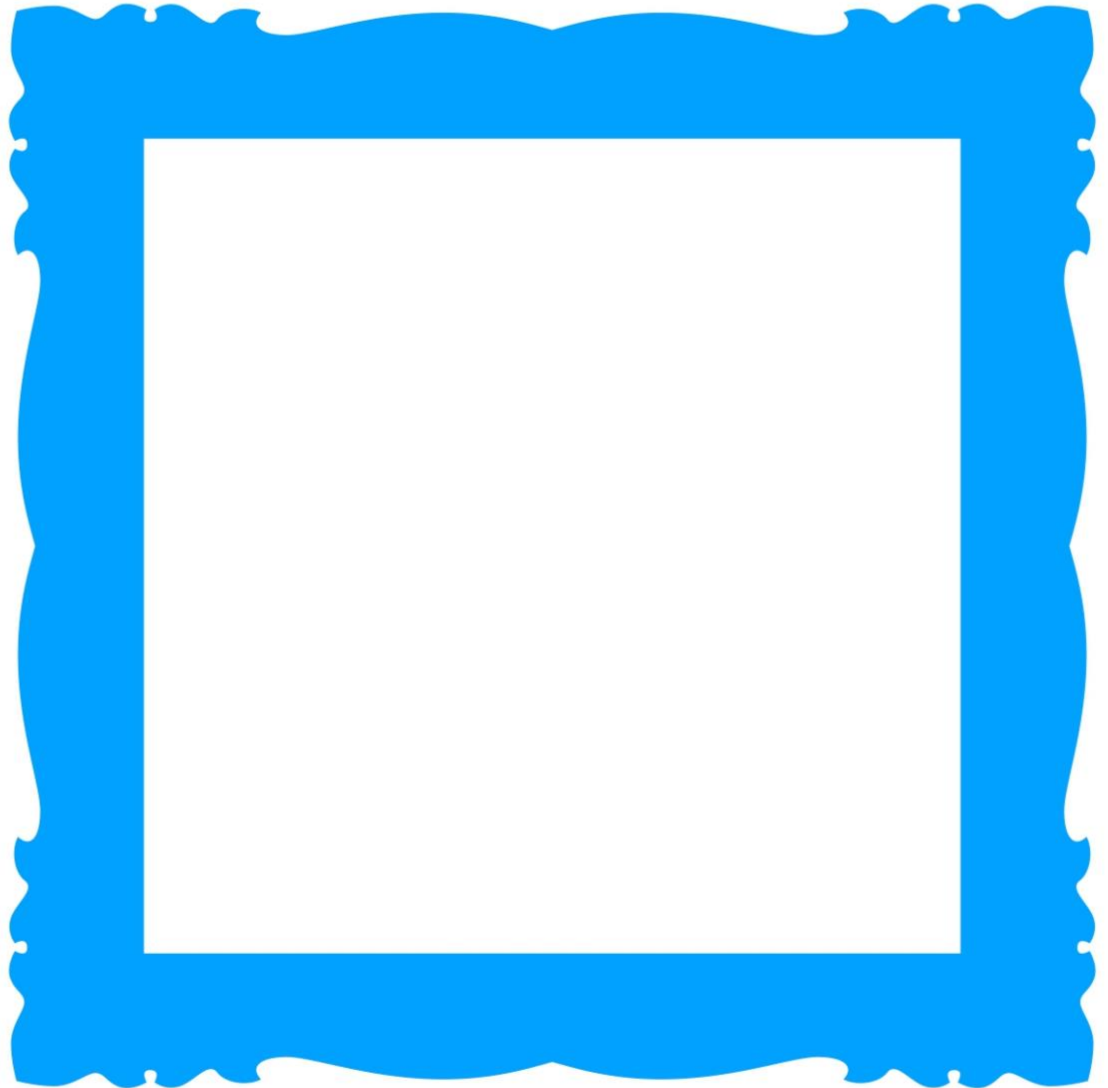
Drawing space.....



Description of your drawing....

Learning Journal Entry

Date:

What did you do today?..
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What are your thoughts on what happened today?...............
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How did you feel? ....
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What did you learn in the session today?...............................
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What do you need for next time?..
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What is your plan?

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What questions do you have?	*Who is the question for?*
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Learning Journal Entry

Date:

What did you do today?..
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What are your thoughts on what happened today?...............
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How did you feel? ....
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What did you learn in the session today?................................
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What do you need for next time?..
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What is your plan?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What questions do you have?	Who is the question for?
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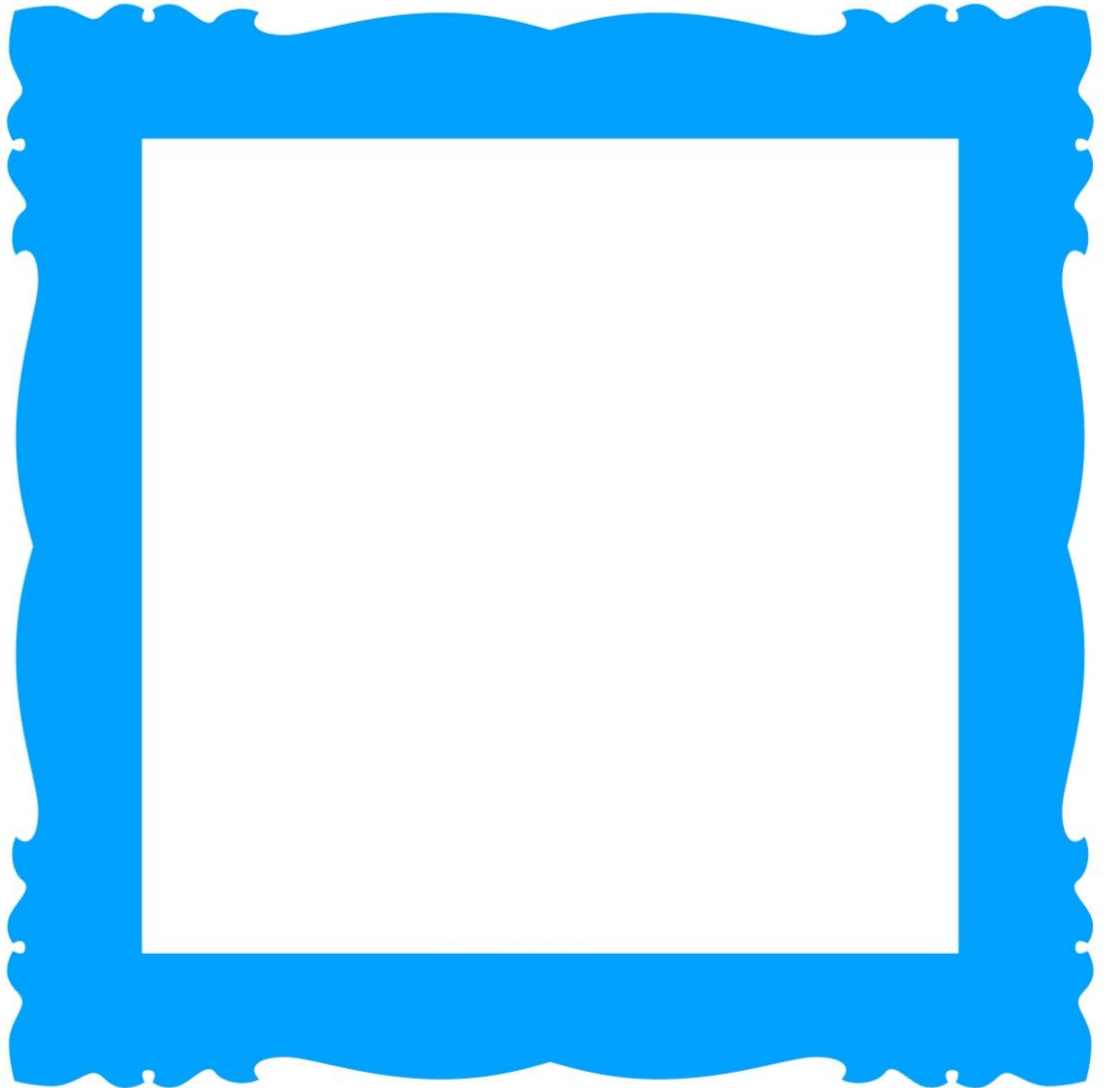
....	....

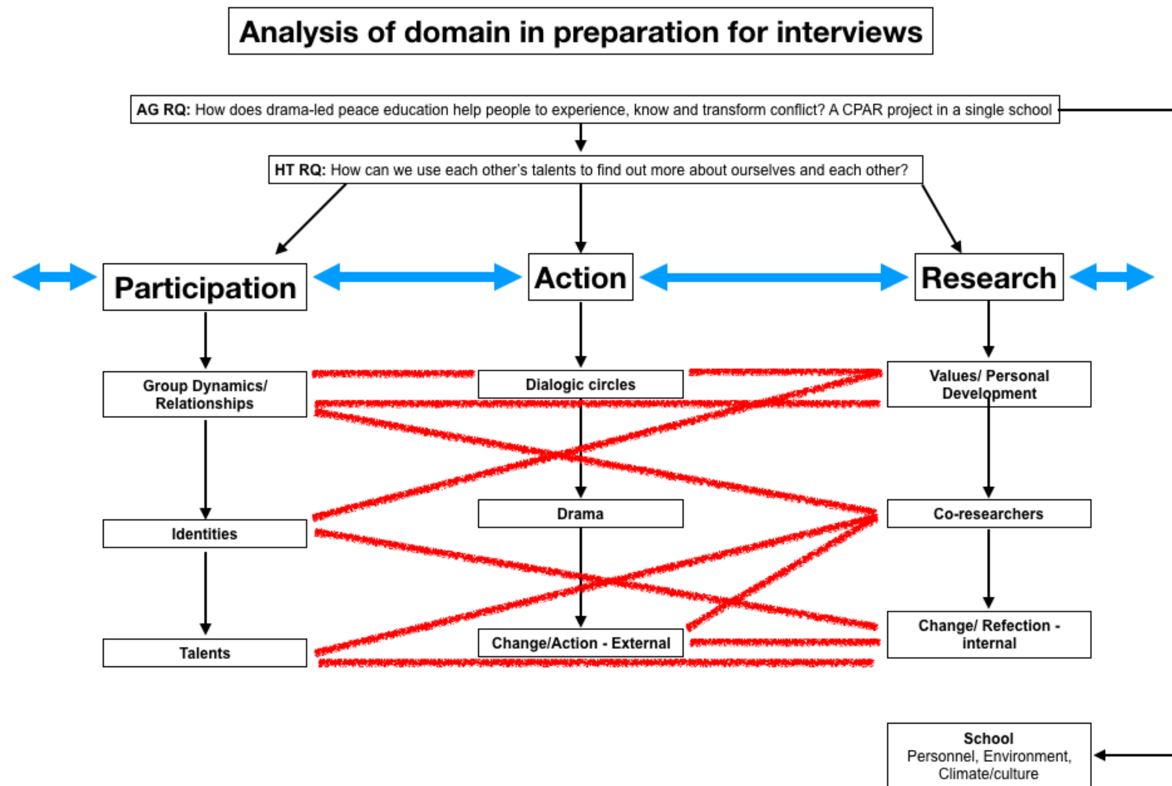
Drawing space.....



Description of your drawing....

18

Appendix G - Analysis of domain in preparation for interview: general



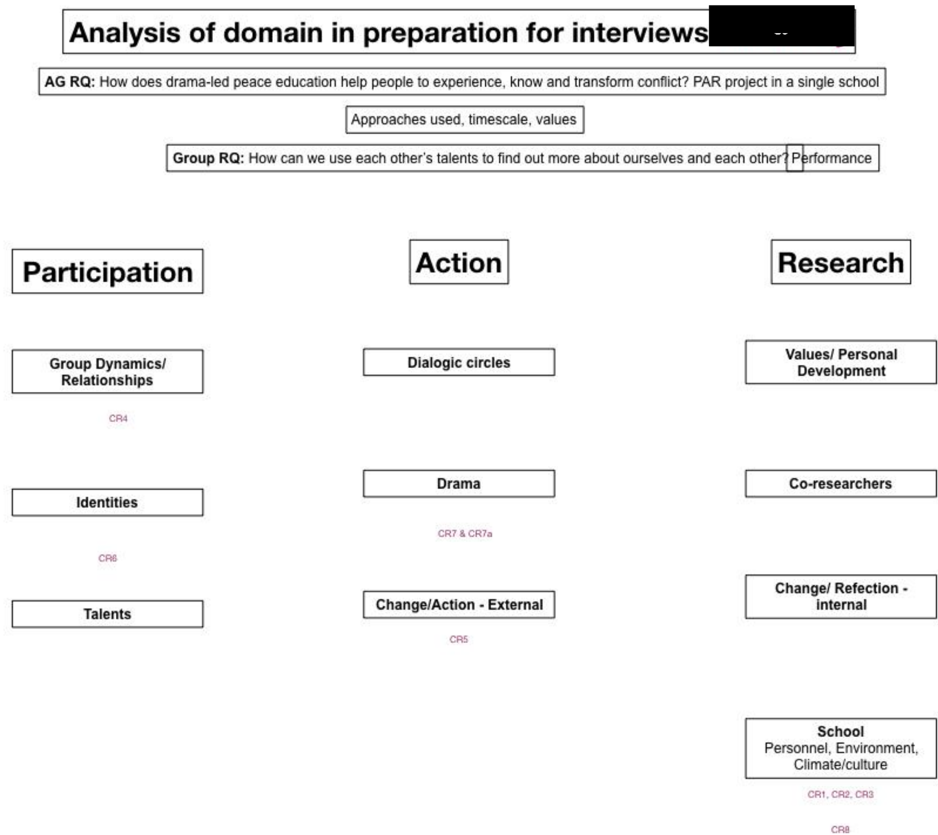
This diagram portrays the main areas of interest that emerged from:

- Initial researcher-posed research question
- Research group posed research question
- Experience of PAR
- Knowledge generated from/through PAR

From this explicit portrayal of analysis of content and hierarchical structure of the domain as I construe it, I then:

- Decided on research focus (which aspect/elements of topic domain I wish to elicit from participants and glean their construal)
- Visually portrayed a hierarchical agenda of questions designed to tap into the aspects/elements identified.

Appendix H - Analysis of domain in preparation for interview: specific (CR)



Aligning research questions with interview questions (using Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework)

Having previously conducted an analysis of the domain of interest (which arose from the PAR cycles conducted with the research group), I was then able to devise relevant interview questions. To check alignment of interview questions, I mapped them alongside both my initial research question and that of the research group. This exercise enabled me to:

- Increase the utility of the interview questions and research questions/confirm their purpose
- Eliminate unnecessary questions (these are indicated in yellow)
- Ensure paradigmatic, epistemic and methodological congruence
- Ensure my interview questions were Intentional and necessary

Appendix I - Alignment of research question with interview questions[57]

Research Questions	Interview Question	Awareness of using drama-led PE to transform (conflict)	Knowledge of how drama-led PE transforms/ end (conflict)	Act/ experience of drama-led PE to transform	How do the co-researchers describe themselves and their peers in relation to transformation (of conflict) in their everyday lives?
Research Question #1: How does drama-led peace education help people to experience, know and transform conflict?	(CR2, KE1, LC1, JP2) How long have you worked here for?				
	(JP1) Can we start with an overview of the school – where are we located, the journey the school has been on in recent years?				X
	(JP3) What drew you to the research project?	X	X		X
	(JP4) What were your hopes at the start of the project?	X	X	X	X
	(CR3, KE3, LC3, JP5) Perhaps you can start by giving me a brief description of the class and their journey through the school.				XXXX
	(CR4 KE4, LC4, JP7) I'm interested to hear about what you observed during the sessions.	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
	(CR5, KE5, LC5, JP8) What evidence have you seen that the work/project made an impact if any?	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
	(JP8a) Did it reveal any gaps for you?	X	X	X	X
	(CR7, KE7, LC7, JP10) What's important for us to learn about conflict and peace in schools now and for the future?	XXXX			
	(CR7a, KE7a, LC7a, JP10a) How might we learn (about conflict) through being creative?	XXXX	XXXX		
	(CR9, KE9, LC10, JP12) Before we conclude this interview, is there something about your experience in this project that we have not yet had a chance to discuss?	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
	(LC8, JP11) What challenges did the work present for you or the school?	XX			
	(LC8a, JP11a) Did it reveal any gaps for you?	XX	XX	XX	XX
Research Question #2: How can we use each other's talents to find out more about each other and ourselves?	(CR6, KE6, LC6, JP9) The researchers came up with a research question that explored their talents - What are your thoughts on why that was/is important?				XXXX
	(CR8, KE8, LC9, JP13) Finally, what are your hopes for those who were involved in the research project?				XXXX

Appendix J - Sample interview guide

[57] Please note that CR1, KE1, etc. refers to the interviewee and the relevant question number. So CR1 refers to the first question I proposed to ask of CR.

Participant: ██████
Role: Y6 Teaching Assistant
Date: 16th February 2018
Time: 1:15-2:15
Interview typology: Part-structured, informal, in-depth interview

Interview Guide - ██████

Question Order	Introductory questions	Transition questions	Key questions	Supplementary / Optional questions	Closing questions
1	What's your role?				
2	How long have you worked here for?				
3		Perhaps you can start by giving me a brief description of the class and their journey through the school.			
3a				Qualities? Challenges? Significant moments?	
4			I'm interested to hear about what you observed during the sessions.		
4a				• Relationships • Approaches used (talking piece, circle, drama • Impact (individuals, group, more widely? • **You?**	
5			What evidence have you seen that the work/project made an impact if any?		
5a				For example, ████ using Koosh to talk	
5b				Reflecting back, were there any other changes you observed that you observed or felt?	
6			The researchers came up with a research question that explored their talents - what are your thoughts on why that was/is important?		
7			What's important for us to learn about conflict and peace in		

			schools now and for the future?		
7b				How might we learn (about conflict) through being creative?	
8					Finally, what are your hopes for those who were involved in the research project?
9					Before we conclude this interview, is there something about your experience in this project that we have not yet had a chance to discuss?

Appendix K - Sample interview script - ██████████

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my study. As I have mentioned to you before, my study seeks to understand how drama-led peace education helps people to experience, know and transform conflict. A key aspect of this research has been the use of participatory action research. This has meant involving the children as co-researchers and trying to understand how they might direct their own learning about issues that are important to them. The aim of this research is to document the experience of participatory action research as applied to peace education. Our interview today will last approximately one hour during which I will be asking you about what your observed in the sessions, your thoughts as to what impact there may have been and ideas you might have for this type of work in the future

[review aspects of consent form]

You completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ___Yes ___No

If yes: *Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.*
If no: *Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.*

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]
If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

To begin this interview, I'd like to ask you some questions about you and your role here in school.
1. What is your role?

2. And how long have you worked here for?
3. I'd like to find out more about the children. Perhaps you can start by giving me a brief description of the class and their journey through the school.

- *Qualities?*
- *Challenges?*
- *Significant moments?*

4. Lets move to the sessions that formed part of the research project the 12 children were involved in. I'm interested to hear about what you observed during the sessions.

- *Relationships*
- *Approaches used (talking piece, circle, drama)*

- *Impact (individuals, group, more widely?)*
- ***You?***

5. What evidence have you seen that the work/project made an impact if any?

(For example - during one session you noticed, [redacted] using Koosh to talk….)

Reflecting back, were there any other changes you observed that you observed or felt?

6. The researchers came up with a research question that explored their talents - what are your thoughts on why that was/is important?

7. I'm interested in your opinion on Peace Education. What's important for us to learn about conflict and peace in schools now and for the future?

7.a How might we learn (about conflict) through being creative?

8. Finally, what are your hopes for those who were involved in the research project?

9. Before we conclude this interview, is there something about your experience in this project that we have not yet had a chance to discuss?

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this interview. If you would like, I can send you a transcript of this interview. Would you like that? ___Yes ___No

I plan to also meet with some more staff and again with the research group. After that, I hope to spend the Summer writing up and I will be in touch again (with the school) after that. Should you want to contact me in the meantime – you have my email address.

Appendix L - Handling and transforming interview data: transcription protocol

	Explanation	**Format**
Time	In minutes and seconds, indicated at a naturally occurring point of conversation at no more than 2-minute intervals. In parenthesis.	(02:45)
Person Speaking	Person speaking is indicated by their initials at the start of the sentence, in capitals and bold font, followed by a full stop and indent. A later review of the transcription may involve the **assignment of pseudonyms.** In this case, a name is chosen that approximates the original in terms of first letters of the name, ethnic identity, etc., and choose a last name, that is found near to the actual last name	**AG**. Anna Gregory
Overlapping speech	Both parts of speech will be indicated by square brackets at the point of overlap	[overlapping speech]
Emphases	Italicised. Parts of words as well as whole words. Used to indicate where a word has been stressed. Capitalised where greater volume is used.	*Italics* CAPITALS
Dubious Transcription	Used where transcriber cannot hear recording. Words are interpreted and underlined	Dubious transcription
Gaps in recording	Used where material has not been recorded (NR) or transcription not made (NT). Indicated by bracket with approx. length of time and reason.	(32:00 NR CR asked for recording device to be turn off) (12:14 NT)
Trailing speech	Used where person speaking trails off from train of thought or does not finish a sentence. Indicated by three dots	…
Extraneous noise or action of relevance	Used when something happens within the environment the interview is taking place to disturb the flow of through for the person speaking. Indicated by an asterisk at the start and end of the description.	* The bell rings*
Verbal fillers	Hyphenation used when person speaking uses a fixed expression/verbal filler/exclamation.	• and-everything • I-don't-know • and-stuff • and-stuff-like-that • you-know • or-whatever • and-things-like-that • type-of-thing

		• and-so-on • believe-it-or-not • fair-enough • from-then-on f • rom-then-on • I-don't-t-know • kind-of-thing • sort-of-thing • so-and-so • to-be-honest • to-cut-a-long-story-short • you-name-it
Gestures or significant facial expressions	Used to indicate, laughter, physical gestures, facial expressions, changes in body language that are of significance. Indicated by parenthesis.	(laughter)
Questions	Questions from designed interview guide. Indicated by a number.	1

Appendix M - Sample interview transcript

Transcript of Interview: AG with ██

Total Recording time: 52:16

Date: 16.02.18

Location: Conference Room, ████████████

Recorded on iPhone converted to MP4 format

(00:00) **AG** Just so I don't need to write everything down… Thank you for that. Um, if at any point you want me to turn that off, you let just let me know. Um. And you can say anything off the record if you want that turned off. And if that happens, I'll just take notes of our conversation. Whatever I write up get completely anonymised so your names not included at all. Um, have you got any questions [before we start?]

CR [No]

1. **AG** Alright. Um so what, just before we begin, I just want to get some information about you and your role. So, you are a teaching assistant…?

CR I'm employed here as a teaching assistant. [Yes]

AG [great] Do, do you do other stuff?

CR Well, I hold the HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant) status. I'm not employed as an HLTA here.

2. **AG** How long have you been here?

CR Um, two years next month.

AG So you've seen two cycles of the academic year?

CR [yeah]

3. **AG** Um, So I'd like to find out more about, um, the children. And we can think about the research group if that's helpful to you or just Year Six. Perhaps you can start by giving me a brief description of the class and maybe their journey through the school as you know it? How have they….

CR Ok. Um, I have to say last year I was warned by several members of staff about this class, this cohort. I believe they've had a troubled time

Appendix N – Transcription (full) of final performance
Performed for teacher, pastoral manager, deputy head and head teachers.

Length: 04:50

Date: 09.01.18

Location: Conference Room, [redacted]

Recorded on iPhone converted. Edited with sound and graphics added

Performed for teacher, pastoral manager, deputy head and head teachers

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(All co-researchers are asleep on the floor. Snoring loudly.
Kaari enters and tip toes around the bodies. She puts her finger to her lips):

Kaari: *Shh! We all have talents and qualities. Some are easier to see. Some we keep hidden like this person her* (points to Jaqweisha) *whose talent is singing in her sleep.*

(Jaqweisha has her hands to her face and sings behind her fingers. Kaari tiptoes to Jaqweisha and listens to her singing.)

(Tyonna jumps up from her sleep.)

Tyonna: *Wake up everyone! This is ACTION research!*

(All co-researchers 'wake up' and jump to their chosen images)

Aapo: *Action research is when you find something out and you act it out to understand it more*. (Aapo and Abdu perform their 'action' images)

Kaari: *Action research is someone who is not confident* (Kaari and Jaqweisha perform their 'doorway' images)

Kaari: *And now they're confident!*

Kaari and Jaqweisha: *yay*!

Natori: *Action research is when you discover things* (Tyonna does her 'detective' image) *Not just on electronics. But on stage so people have more depth in it. And be more entertained* (Tyonna and Natori perform their 'action images)

(Maceo enters and whistles)

Maceo: *Hold up!*

Co-researchers: *Huh*? (Snap out of their images).

Maceo: *But it doesn't have to be all action. Sometimes we are quiet and work on our own.*

(Co-researchers fall to the ground in a dreamy way. Maceo stays standing in the middle. Co-researchers on the floor perform their ‘reflective images’)

Maceo: *Even when we are not doing the peace project, we are developing our talents.*

(Co-researchers come up from the ground and perform their ‘talent’ images)

Aapo: *But everyone Maceo has talents, including you. Your talent is drawing and playing football.*

Maceo: *I know. Thank you. And you’re good at football too.*

Aapo: *Thank you. Natori – you’re good at football too.*

Natori: *Thanks. And Tashelle, I know you’re good at kickboxing.*

Tashelle: *Thanks. And Ladonya, I know you’re good at drawing.*

Ladonya: *Thanks. Tyonna, I know your good at gymnastics*.

Tyonna: *Thanks. Jaqweisha, I know that you’re good at singing in your sleep.*

Jaqweisha: *Thanks. Kaari, I know that you’re good at dancing.*

Kaari: *Anthony, I know that you’re good at … huh? sorry, what was it again?*

Co-researchers: *MUAY THAI BOXING!*

Kaari: *Ohhh!*

Anthony: *Thanks. And Ihan, I know that your good at goal keeping.*

Ihan: *Thanks. We all have talents!*

Co-researchers: *Yay!*

(All come to stand in a line at the front. Ladonya has the talking piece which gets passed down the line as each person speaks)

Ladonya: *I have learnt that other people have unique talents.*

Natori: *In this project, I have learnt that you don’t just have to wear odd things and have electronics to be a researcher. And that maybe acting is better than writing because its more entertaining.*

Tashelle: *In this project I’ve learnt more about my peers.*

Jaqweisha: *In this project I have learnt that people’s talents are not always shown.*

Kaari: *I have learnt that some people are scared to face that they’ve got talents and some people say, like, they haven’t and actually they have got a talent.*

Ihan: *During this lesson… project, I have learnt that people in class that don't get along with each other, can get along with each other in this project.*

Anthony: *During this project, I have learnt that tying your shoelaces angrily is too obvious in a game of charades.*

Maceo: *In this project, I have learnt that you shouldn't be unconfident about showing your talents. And I've learnt that everyone has talents.*

Abdu: *I have learnt a new talent… m..m..m.*

Anthony: (whispers) *Muay*

Abdu: *Muay Thai boxing.*

App: *I have learnt in this project to ask more questions. And I know everyone's got talents.*

Tyonna: (fast) *In this project I have learnt how to say Muay Thai boxing without hesitating.*

Co-researchers: *MUAY THAI BOXING!*