11:30 am on a Sunday Morning: Making meanings with Mary

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Abstract:

Marginalisation of the visual arts resulting from the marketisation of education impacts young people's access to and interaction with culture on a global stage. In England this educational disruption is characterised by inconsistent access to arts-based curricula and democratic pedagogies, where those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are at risk of neglect. Influenced by this political malaise I conducted micro- ethnographic research examining how artist workshops shape cultural interactions of children aged 11 and 12. The research aimed to provide new opportunities for participants living and studying in an area of deprivation in a South of England city with uneven access to broad cultural experiences. Situated in a contemporary art gallery over a two week period the study interrogates how environmental factors affect children's development from a sociocultural perspective. By analysing conversations and art production, children's meaning-making formations are revealed. Findings indicate that values underpinning the research partnership and performed by the artist are paramount in shaping development. In turn participants perceive themselves as becoming artists where the reproduction of social practices generates new knowledge and identities. Environmental factors disrupt participants' experiences of pedagogy exposing power and control at the heart of the English education system. However, with new found agency emerges a redistribution of power performed through dialogue between participants and the cultural environment.

Introduction

Market-driven forces shape education, eroding access to democratic practices globally (Adams and Owens 2016). The English education system is embroiled in resulting inequality where opportunity to study the visual arts is dependent on the school one attends (NSEAD 2016). Whilst the arts and culture are visible in education policy, the British government supports a narrow agenda that distances young people from interacting with contemporary culture (Addison and Burgess 2012). As a result children's experiences of the world and their position as cultural participants are not encouraged, limiting their ability to address complex issues facing twenty-first century societies (Alexander 2008). This is particularly pertinent for children from low socio-economic backgrounds as they are less likely to engage with diverse culture than children from more affluent homes (DCMS 2016), a disparity which curtails many young people's cultural rights.

One antidote in this challenging landscape is collaborations between educators and cultural partners which can facilitate inclusive practices for young people most at risk of marginalisation (Whitehead 2012). Working within this premise, I examine how a collaborative art education event shapes participation for children with limited cultural experiences. To begin, I contextualise the research project, discuss meaning-making, and justify the design. Pedagogical strategies employed by the artist when working alongside participants are considered, together with environmental factors which influence children's meaning-making formations. Data findings indicate how the research context fosters young artists' agency and expose 'deeper currents of social change' (Adams and Owens 2016:2). Subsequently I interrogate how sociocultural structures and agents influence children's development and argue for the benefits of widening cultural participation.

Culturalcollaborations

This article outlines the central tenet of my doctoral thesis. The project comprised six artist workshops delivered in a contemporary art gallery with 99 Year 7 pupils (aged 11 and 12) across a two week period. Baseline data indicate that 26 per cent of participants had visited the gallery prior to the event and had worked with the artist during their primary schooling (aged five to 11). Over three-quarters of participants had never met or worked with an artist before or visited a gallery. The children lived in an area of deprivation in a South of England city where, according to UK 2011 Census data, nought to 15 year-olds rank amongst the five per cent most deprived for education, skills and training in England. They attended a sponsored academy[1] - a type of school where visual arts access is more limited than other school types (NSEAD 2016) - and where the most recent Ofsted[2] report exposed high potential for pupil disaffection.

Considering these complex conditions I explored how environmental factors - the artist (Mary), workshop content and structure, contemporary art (by Shazad Dawood), and gallery space - influence children's sociocultural participation and the meanings they formulate as a result. This was achieved by capturing children making art in response to the question: *What are you doing at 11.30am on a Sunday morning?* Participants were given A3 sugar paper, coloured gels, pens and blank postcards, and were asked to record three memories of their Sunday mornings by manipulating media into collaged compositions (Fig.1). Through experiencing Dawood's exhibition and debating with Mary the children responded to environmental, experiential and biographical material, subsequently *re-presenting* their social worlds visually. As such, my research examines relationships between artist's pedagogy and

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[1] Academies are 'public-funded, independent schools' (New Schools Network 2015: 3), accountable to the British government. Sponsored academies tend to be underperforming schools with one or several external partners.

[2] The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills [Ofsted] is the English national schools' inspectorate.

pupils' meaning formations through a sociocultural lens. Capturing interactions between the macro/environmental and micro/developmental - considered theoretically underdeveloped in sociocultural research (Hasan 2012) - reveals unexpected findings and champions the value of more holistic sociocultural research approaches.

Figure 1: Image of artworks here

Figure 1: contact sheet of nine artworks

Meaning-making

Vygotsky (1986) differentiates between sense- and meaning-making where *sense* is a personal, immediate experience and *meaning* the development of conceptual understanding which arises from it. From a sociocultural education perspective pupils make personal sense of public meaning and 'propel themselves forward' (Edwards 2014: 49). This indicates movement from concrete everyday experience to broader abstract concepts and back to everyday experience (Edwards 2014). In contrast, art educators often implement the term *meaning-making* to differentiate between pedagogic approaches: those that foster pupils' articulation of purpose through art production, in comparison to pedagogy more concerned with skill acquisition and learning outcomes (Sakr, Connelly and Wild 2016). It refers to children's intentionality when making art, not simply replicating images or regurgitating processes demonstrated by the teacher (Malin 2013).

Pringle (2009) argues there are many ways of *doing* or *making* meaning through art dependent on the pedagogic structures implemented. For example, meaning-based art pedagogies often refer to experimentation with media properties and the meanings they embody (Pringle 2009, Malin 2013, Sakr et al. 2016). This involves developing aesthetic intentions through an intertextual dialogue between maker and media (Atkinson 2010),

focusing on creation through reflection (Pringle 2009) and formulating imaginative, inventive responses (Malin 2013, Sakr et al. 2016). Therefore, meaning-making in art education involves making visual and conceptual connections. This includes challenging assumptions and posing questions as a result of learning a new visual language (Gude 2013). Whilst it infers pupils make sense of social and cultural (public) meanings, this is not exclusively so. Pringle (2009: 175), for example, defines meaning in this context as 'both knowledge and understanding' where practical knowledge – or 'knowing how' – is developed experientially. Theoretical knowledge – or 'knowing that' - plays a part in the development of practical knowledge, but only when it is fully integrated into the maker's practice. So, whilst children may reproduce – and make sense of - public knowledge, they also generate new knowledge through personal meaning-making.

Researchers who examine meaning formation in art education from a sociocultural perspective (for example, Wilson and Wilson 1982) indicate that children frequently draw on their cultural environment, reconstructing new meanings in the making process. Where pedagogies support personal meaning generation, social and cultural factors are important. Children appropriate visual culture to assist meaningful interaction with art media to construct images with purpose (Sakr et al 2016). This helps the art educator researcher conceive of art production as rooted in the experience of the maker (Malin 2013). Researchers examining this phenomenon tend to focus on adult perceptions of children's intentionality in art production, rather than on the child's experience of their meaning-making intentions (Malin 2013). I address this gap by facilitating cultural interaction to generate a democratic sharing of ideas, cultural forms and means of communication between the artist, Mary, and the pupils. This creates the conditions from which to capture children's experiences and how they formulate meanings in response to environment.

Researchdesign

To comprehend relationships between environments and learning it is important to first describe the social practices that occur within them (Daniels 2004). As sociocultural meanings are mediated by Mary's pedagogic performance and the environment, methodological tools are organised to capture these negotiations. Situating the study within micro-ethnography enabled me to capture evidence of children interacting with Mary without committing to a long-term immersive study (Hammersley 2006). Ethnographic fieldwork facilitates the scrutiny of social interactions, meanings and behaviours, and micro-ethnography enables the same activity in a dense but concentrated time-frame. From a sociocultural perspective cultural participation gives rise to cognitive development, not necessarily allowing or inhibiting development, but by defining cognition. Cognitive development relies heavily on social interaction (speech) and implementing cultural tools collaboratively (activity) (Edwards 2014). Working with this premise I needed to examine both speech and action to capture meaning-making negotiations. I achieved this by collecting three datasets: unsolicited conversations between Mary and the children whilst they made art; documenting 99 resulting artworks and focus group interviews I conducted with 30 children towards the end of the workshops. Interviewees were divided into two groups of self-selecting participants: those who had worked with Mary before, and those who had not. This afforded me opportunity to study response difference between the two datasets.

As a novice ethnographer I found the large quantities of qualitative data generated daunting but through employing constructionist interviewing coding processes (Holstein and Gubrium 2011) I learnt how to think with data, maintained through reflexive systematic memo and analytic note-taking. This enabled me to address relationships between *content* (what is said/ made) and *form* (how it is said/ made), facilitating my interpretation of how responses are

constructed through negotiated spoken and visual language. What meanings are produced, the circumstances which enable the meaning-making process, and how language relate to participants' lives can be extrapolated. By adapting this coding process to interpret artworks I look for exposure of symbolic communication, not just what can be seen in each image. This gave me licence to apply an imaginative and unorthodox coding process. Whilst visual data is not scrutinised here, a cross-comparison of datasets reveal findings which are exciting and unexpected.

The remainder of this article is dedicated to discussing two interrelated findings. 1) How an artist's pedagogy facilitates participants' meaning formations, and 2) how environmental factors shape children's learning experiences. The case is made for how, when empowered, children willingly enter into dialogue with cultural spaces instead of feeling excluded from them.

Pedagogy

The importance of Mary's pedagogic choices in shaping pupils' meaning-making negotiations materialise as a dominant category throughout coding. Data reveal two prevailing factors: the importance of shared values underpinning the partnership and how Mary performs these values through the organisation and facilitation of each workshop. The first highlights the significance of collaborators who value children's experiences as central (Hooper-Greenhill 2000). Communication and planning are essential if the event is to be meaningful, however, more crucially are shared educational intentions. How a child accesses a gallery is predicated on which pedagogic models they encounter during their visit. School educators play a central role in initiating and sustaining partnerships with galleries and artists, and in return, gallery educators must commit to pedagogy which engenders meaningful learning experiences (Whitehead 2012). In my context it became clear at the planning stage

that meaning-based pedagogical practices (Pringle 2009) facilitated by gallery staff aligned with Mary's. This ensured workshop content was designed by professionals well-versed in democratic pedagogies (Adams and Owens 2016) and with a strong commitment to educating with contemporary art. Where the emphasis is placed on pupils' personal meaning-making, fluid interpretation and experience in the gallery, experimentation and risk taking is privileged over performance (Hein 1998; Whitehead 2012). Findings indicate the partnership's motives are paramount in opening up cultural access because the institutional rules one engages with regulate action and are shaped by what is deemed relevant by agents and participants in that space (Gelman, Massey and McManus1996). Considering participants represent a group at risk of marginalisation, this collaboration achieved a rich intervention that mitigated cultural obstacles. How this was achieved relates directly to how Mary performs pedagogy.

Whilst the open-ended making activity outlined above affords participants more autonomy over art production, how Mary presents pedagogy supports a transition from inhibiting to augmenting meaning negotiations. A key feature of her delivery is supporting participants to make personalised judgements rather than right or wrong responses. For example, she communicates tacit knowledge during conversations with children, such as the importance of making mistakes, copying from others and sharing materials when creating art. This is packaged in biographical detail and structured as a narrative through personal-social talk. For example, Mary recounts:

> Once, once I was having a cup of tea – and I knocked over my tea onto my painting and then […] I was kind of thinking – 'Oh, I've ruined my painting' and then I made it into something else […]

Knowledge acquisition for an artist is an experimental and fluid process (Harding 2005, Pringle 2008), which may account for why Mary shares her understanding of art construction through reference to experience. Drawing on this source of knowledge infers artists'

historical, cultural and social positions (Harding 2005). In response, how tacit knowledge is shared influences emotional connections to the practice of making art, motivation and agency. These types of exchange between Mary and the children shapes their own narrative content by opening up new ways of presenting the self, mediates how experiences can be represented in and as art, and provokes participants to seek permission to behave differently. This results in children's experiences being subjectively shaped by Mary's pedagogy: what may serve as an inhibitor for one is an enabler for another.

Most inhibitors are demonstrated by participants seeking affirmation that their artworks are appropriate, or attempting to fulfil Mary's expectations by inferring prior pedagogical experiences which cause misunderstandings. For example, participants articulate experiences of a hidden curriculum where Mary's pedagogy stimulates behaviours discouraged in the formal classroom. I exemplify this in the following analytic notes extract:

> The pupils in this group identify a range of different identities that they performed in the workshop; these differ according to the person they interact with:
>
> - Peers: social and friendship.
> - Jane [teacher]: to identify if they are doing 'the right thing'. A focus on performing 'correctly' according to institutional expectations.
> - Mary [artist]: given permission to utilise their imagination and to feel valued in their visual responses. To become artists.

Young people's identity narratives are often located in spheres not of their making: home, school, society (Higgins, Nairn and Sligo 2009). Formalised pedagogical structures serve to reinforce imposed narratives: how to behave when learning, how to make art, and how to define art. Outcomes are fixed and measured. In a time of marginalisation in arts education a focus on quantifiable outcomes increases tensions as art, a qualitative act, sits uncomfortably into education defined by economic drivers (Author and Hall 2017). The above extract indicates that children are aware of these distinctions in their identities. They draw on prior understandings to negotiate the workshop event, where classroom experiences are the

dominant approach children adopt when making sense of Mary's brief. Here children articulate performativity shaped by the education system they function within. This acts as an inhibitor for some, since the rules of engagement have changed and it takes time to adopt new expectations (Edwards 2014).

Data indicate that positive enhancers far out-weigh impediments as children are more frequently inspired by surprising opportunities presented during the workshops. How children are constantly engaged in implicit moral education when conforming to formalised structures is subsequently exposed. Considering this it is notable that some research participants perceive themselves as 'becoming artists'; for example, in a focus group interview Pupil 7 exclaimed: 'I want to be – like – an artist when I'm older!' The self-identifying process of inhabiting a new future identity indicates the power that Mary's approach has on some. Through repetition, pedagogies engender 'habits of mind' (Thomson et al. 2012:10) but artists' pedagogies challenge dominant fixed positions by communicating alternative values and practices (Burgess and Addison 2007, Harding 2005). My research suggests this is predicated on the difference in social roles played by artists and teachers. Artists construct environments that engender freedoms not afforded to teachers in a bid to maintain their artist identities, whereas teachers operate completely within systems of symbolic control (Author and Hall 2017). By fostering positive relationships and the resulting affective responses children become wedded to new pedagogical practices, which impact self-confidence. Mary is complicit in how children perform different identities, because crucial to the artist-as-educator role is the central intention of meaning construction and empowering identities (Pringle 2008). She accepts their imagined selves, desires and intentions, often reinforcing them as appropriate subject matter for art production. In the process, Mary demonstrates how to perform as an artist. She places children centrally within the social environment where they are encouraged to enact a pedagogic sense of self.

Moments of meaning formation and consciousness are communicated through the multiple identities participants construct, and therefore, it is no surprise that some perceive themselves as becoming artists. The reproduction of social practices serves to enable the production of new knowledge and new identities.

An examination of relationships between macro-level society and micro-level consciousness is an under-developed element of sociocultural theory (Hasan 2012). Pedagogy, power and control of social structures regulate children's development which subsequently enhances or inhibits cultural participation. How participants shape their experiences within the gallery is dependent on what Mary – communicated through her pedagogic performance – deems relevant, which in turn is influenced by how Mary performs as an artist. However, discourse constructed by the gallery is also salient. How learning spaces are controlled and movement regulated within them speaks of broader sociological factors communicated through that space.

Environment

By organising the workshop in a gallery I explicitly wanted the children to experience contemporary art practices *in situ*, cultural products commonly perceived as élitist high art (Hooper-Greenhill 2000). My aim was to challenge this orthodoxy by providing participants with opportunities they had limited access to at home or in school. The first experience the pupils had was entering the main gallery to watch Dawood's film *Trailer* (Fig.2). To access the seated arena they had to put on special shoe covers. This simple act included the children in a site for performance; by participating they entered an altered and imaginative space, another world not dissimilar to their own. The film narrative was non-linear. It spoke of working class lives, youth identity, alienation from and assimilation into communities, representing how contemporary galleries place alternative discourses into the public domain.

Figure 2: Photograph here

Figure 2: *Trailer* by Shazad Dawood[3]

These spaces support artists' dialogues about the other which engender surprise and debate. For example, children who had not visited the gallery before were delighted by Dawood's artworks. This is exemplified by the following focus group extract:

> INT: Why have you had fun? What have you enjoyed the most?
>
> Pupil 5 (male): Well, it was a <u>unique</u> experience!
>
> INT: Was it? Haven't you experienced anything like this before?
>
> Pupil 6 (female): Mary was the one with blond hair wasn't she?
>
> INT: Yep.
>
> Pupil 6: <u>Yes!</u>
>
> Pupil 7 (male): <u>Well,</u> I – um- liked the movie […] cos like – it was interesting – and <u>surprising</u> - and we weren't expecting <u>that!</u> And we were, like, expecting to come here and like – look at famous paintings not to watch <u>films</u>!
>
> INT: Okay, so did you – did you think that - have you ever thought that film can be artwork before?
>
> Pupil 7: No - not really […]
>
> Pupil 6: Miss […] I came here to - like - I thought that we were being asked questions and not look at art […]
>
> INT: Okay, so has this been better than you thought?
>
> *Lots of giggles*
>
> Pupil 6: <u>Yeah!</u>

Here environment plays a primary part in the children's meaning-making as experience is shaped by their preconceived ideas being challenged, both of what art is and what to expect from a gallery visit. Unsurprisingly, this indicates that participants' understanding of art is significantly influenced by their classroom experience. Vygotsky (1994) specifies that when considering environment in a learning context we must begin with the child. The setting is

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[3] *Trailer*, 2011, Super 16mm film & RED Digital transferred to HD, 15 minute loop. Courtesy of UBIK Productions Ltd and LUX, London. Installation view, *Piercing Brightness: Shezad Dawood*, Gallery, Date. Photography by Photographer

fluid not fixed, where environmental factors play differing roles depending on the child's age and biography. Emotional experiences arising from environmental factors influence the impact a site has on the child, and so it is not the factors themselves, but how they are viewed through 'the prism of the child's emotional experience' (Vygotsky 1994: 340) that is important. By locating how the child responds emotionally, one can ascertain how they interpret the experience. The extract above exposes how surprise and excitement are the primary emotional responses expressed by participants, and serve to cement new, altered perceptions of cultural experience (Kroflič 2012).

There are differences in data between those children who had visited the gallery before, and those who had not. For example, where relationships pre-exist participants shift their object of focus from the physical site onto interpretations of art. This indicates how prior experience shapes a negotiation of current learning opportunities and can be particularly profound in altering perceptions of meaning when prior learning is predicated on artist pedagogies. For example, in the following extract four pupils who had visited the gallery previously discuss visual interpretation and draw out differences between art experienced in the gallery and curriculum content in school.

> Pupil 3 (male): I liked it because of the film - she [Mary] showed us lots of different things. And we went into that dark room with the screen and film.
>
> INT: And what did you like about it? Was that the kind of artwork that you experience at school?
>
> Pupil 4 (male): No […] usually we look at like, _really_, _really_ detailed stuff that's not as free as this […]
>
> INT: So this is not what you thought art would be?
>
> Pupil 2: Yeah […] sort of (_reluctantly agrees)_.
>
> INT: Yes, because you've been here [the gallery] before haven't you?
>
> Pupils: _Yes!_
>
> Pupil 1: Because there's graffiti on the wall! (_Excited)_
>
> INT: Ah well, all sorts of things can be art, can't they?

Pupil 1: Yeah! Like this […] (*points to the café table*)
INT: Yes indeed, this was designed by an artist.

The participants are not surprised by Dawood's exhibition, instead demonstrating openness in their definitions of what art can be. This is confirmed by Pupil 1's reference to the table being art, a valuable point as the café furniture was designed by a prominent artist. Here the child draws on prior exposure to contemporary art, the gallery and working with Mary to inform his current interpretation. He demonstrates richer understandings of art than his peers who visited the gallery for the first time. As outlined in the previous extract, these participants are more preoccupied with the unexpected and stimulating environment than the content and process of learning.

Edwards (2005: 172) argues that to understand relationships between environment and development we need to examine the cultural tools which enhance action; these are 'loaded with intelligence'. Cultural tools refer to the mediating forms that enable meaning-making and in this context relate to: the pedagogic structures underpinning learning in the gallery, Mary, environmental structures such as the architecture and art exhibits, making art, and different forms of language used to negotiate experiences. Learning occurs by first interpreting the world through the resources available and then responding. Individual learning is represented by the transformation of object, here demonstrated by a shift in focus from the gallery to definitions and interpretations of art. The focus becomes more penetrating and fosters a deeper engagement with the object. The more people involved in this process the more conceptual possibilities or resources can be employed. Edwards (2005) calls this *relational agency*, which represents the value of collaboration within the learning process. So the variance in participant response outlined above indicates that performing relational agency within the gallery environment deepens learning about art. Whilst this is to

be expected the impact of prior exposure is salient. For example, when asked what part Pupil

10 thought talking played in his experience of the workshop, he responded:

> INT: Okay, so Mary explains more, does she? Yeah? And, you already know
> Mary – and you've already worked with her – haven't you? Does that change the
> way that you talk to her, do you think?
>
> Pupil 9: Yeah. Probably […]
>
> INT: Probably? You're not sure?
>
> *Laughter*
>
> Pupil 10: Well I would say <u>yes</u>, cos – you understand what she's going to […]
> not what she's going to <u>say</u> but what she's talking <u>about</u> […]
>
> INT: Okay.
>
> Pupil 10: I mean it could be a year – or whatever – since you worked with her last
> but it doesn't matter cos you know what she means […]

This is startling when considering the limited prior opportunity children had to work with

Mary during primary school, indicating that even minimal exposure to cultural institutions,

objects and agents can engender powerful and lasting meaning-making negotiations.

Vygotsky (1994: 345) reminds us that a child interprets environmental factors and events

differently to adults. Children consider meanings mediated through cultural tools constructed

in a particular environment in a 'ready-made state, fixed to ready-made things'. They

assimilate cultural tools and the meanings they embody in that environment at that time. As a

child grows and understands more, events and environments are interpreted differently; this is

because the meanings that specific factors hold change as the child's relationship to these

factors alters (Edwards 2014). Cognitive development determines new experiences that can

exist between the environment and different developmental processes (Vygotsky 1994).

Therefore, thinking is shaped by the way the environment influences the child and cognitive

development determines new relationships and experiences that can exist between the

environment and different developmental processes. Edwards (2014: 49) calls these

environmental influences 'the web of relations' that connects children to their lived

experience of the world. As new relationships are formed obsolete ones are removed 'so that children become repositioned as agents within the practices they inhabit' (Edwards 2014: 49).

Mary repositions the object of development from creating a visual outcome to constructing personal meanings using art as a mediating form, and so environmental factors disrupt participants' experiences of pedagogy (Burgess and Addison 2007). This is represented by participants expressing surprise at what they perceive as subversive art practices where emotional and intellectual hooks sanctioned through pedagogy foster positive and unexpected associations between participants and environment (Hein 1998). Once these associations have been formed, however, children reposition their intentionality by forming new relationships to the environment (Edwards 2014). This translates into a deeper interrogation of Dawood's artwork, more sophisticated interpretations of what art can be, as well as being more comfortable in accepting alternative approaches to art education. It is clear that interactions with the gallery environment differ for participants with prior experience in comparison to those without. Those less confident compare how they are asked to learn in school with the gallery context, whereas those more proficient engage in deeper thinking about their experiences and interpretations of environment. This is exemplified in analytic notes where I contemplate participants' prior experiences of the gallery environment and how this influences focus group responses: 'These memories stay with the pupils long after the event and colour how they compare school and gallery learning opportunities'. Participant responses are generated from emotional impulses, which foster different meanings and responses. This positions development as psychological mediated by, but not situated within, activity (González Rey and Martinez 2016). Meanings are formed through emotional connections to dramatic events in the gallery.

By planning the event in the gallery I hoped to democratise access to contemporary art, and facilitate new stories and interpretations with participants. This was achieved in part by making workshop content relevant to children's lives and presenting it in unexpected ways. Mary intentionally linked Dawood's narrative content in *Trailer* (fig.2) with the participants' brief to reconstruct 11.30am on a Sunday morning by valuing their sociocultural contexts. She helped participants connect to these themes by drawing on biographical experience in their art making after discussing Dawood's exhibits. In so doing they re-imagine their cultural positions through talking, making and interpreting, articulating what is important to them not the educator. The social component of a child's development is perceived as a '*dramatic* interaction between people' (Veresov and Fleer 2016: 3, authors' emphasis), interpreted socially and experienced internally by the child. It is the tension caused by social drama internalised that results in personal development. Conclusively it is important to place pupils in alternative environments – such as contemporary galleries – as this increases opportunity to access dramatic interactions. Novel experiences are facilitated through interacting with contemporary art, both interpreting others' artworks and creating one's own. These activities can stimulate new ways of experiencing, and in my research, privilege children's knowledge not teachers'.

From this I surmise that even minimal contact with contemporary galleries and artists' pedagogies can have implications for pupils' development, contrary to some academic commentary (for example, Hooper-Greenhill 2000). Each point of change during the child's relationship with the gallery indicates a moment of development where the web of relations has the power to inhibit or expand possibilities when children act (Edwards 2014). Where this is empowering, cultural barriers can be broken down (Daniels 2004). Restrictions constructed in school and wider communities are renegotiated by pupils, altering their own social practices through socio-political acts (Atkinson 2012). The gallery becomes socially

accessible – an exciting, nurturing environment - rather than an expensive, irrelevant and intellectually impenetrable space (Whitehead 2012).

Concludingthoughts

Multiple factors influence the ways participants' meanings are formed through engagement in the gallery workshops with Mary. I focus my discussion around two interlocking components in response: pedagogy and environment, where both facilitate meaning-acts and develop children's consciousness. Children's experience of formal pedagogy stands in contrast to Mary's practices. She places participants centrally within the social environment where they are encouraged to enact a pedagogic sense of self. Moments of meaning formation are communicated through the identities participants construct in response. Children experience cultural forms first externally and then apply them internally, facilitated by biographical narratives. These help them to actively make connections between internal and external worlds, an emotionally stimulating and generative experience (Atkinson 2012). Children internalise artists' social roles in the process which privilege identity formation and preservation through agentic practices. My analysis reveals participants performing artist pedagogies and becoming artists in the process.

By supporting participants to speak for themselves and capturing oral data children relayed lived experiences that were pertinent in the gallery context. Unsolicited discussions provide evidence of fluid meaning-making negotiations which capture their experiences of competing pedagogical structures. As such, participants expose shared practices, experiences and beliefs, as well as dissonance and surprise. By cross-referencing data with broader social structures the meanings participants reveal provides admittance to these constructs, such as power and control at the heart of children's experiences of pedagogy. In the process participants enact their democratic right, willingly entering into a dialogue with dominant

ideology, redistributing power relationships through empowered social interactions with environment and agents (Adams and Owens 2016). In turn this communicates belonging. Children's meanings and worlds are valued by Mary, and so they are changed.

Arts and cultural learning has multiple values, none more fundamental than to enrich that which makes us human. Through cultural activity we shape society and in turn it shapes us. In the digital age of connectivity and multimedia this cycle of sociocultural development is increasingly enacted in a global arena. I consider it an infringement of our human rights and a wilful negligence that in the face of market forces these riches are considered expendable additions in education, not just in England, but around the world. Wider participation cannot occur through a separation of classroom and culturally-based learning experiences and environments, nor can it occur through a divisive separation of the arts from the full range of curriculum subjects. Opportunity to engage in arts and cultural activity is increasingly dismissed by stakeholders whose agenda is to quantify educational standards (Author and Hall 2017). Global measures and resulting policy regulate how pedagogy is structured in our classrooms; however, as Adams and Owens (2016: 2) clarify: 'Change is determined by agency on the ground'. Educators, as cultural gatekeepers, hold the power to reclaim pedagogies that celebrate children's social worlds and forge partnerships with those who champion democratic values for young people beyond the classroom walls. My research demonstrates that even modest cultural interventions foster important shifts in participants' cultural experiences. Children embrace change when empowered to act meaningfully.

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Captions

Figure 1: contact sheet of nine artworks

Figure 2: *Trailer* by Shazad Dawood*

Trailer, 2011, Super 16mm film & RED Digital transferred to HD, 15 minute loop. Courtesy of UBIK Productions Ltd and LUX, London. Installation view, *Piercing Brightness: Shezad Dawood*, Modern Art Oxford, 5 April – 10 June 2012. Photography by Stuart Whipps

*I have intentionally not mentioned the name of the gallery in the article to maintain confidentiality for research participants.

Permission from Modern Art Oxford to reproduce the photograph of *Trailer* obtained on 30 May 2018. Jonathon Weston from the gallery located the photo and the credit line (see below), together with sending me a wetransfer download link for the hi-res tiff file. Permission granted by the photographer Stuart Whipps on 31 May 2018.

Figure 1: contact sheet of nine artworks

54x46mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 2: Trailer by Shazad Dawood

465x310mm (300 x 300 DPI)