



**'I don't know *how* it helped me, but it *did!*'**

**A qualitative study investigating the plausible contribution of  
art therapy in schools as specialist support for  
children's mental health and well-being**

**Deirdre Simmen McConnell**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
School of English

2025

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PERMISSIONS</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.0 CHAPTER 1 Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 The aims	11
1.2 The research questions	12
1.3 How the questions are examined	12
1.4 Introduction to the real-world context of school art therapy in the UK	13
1.5 Policy on mental health, behaviour and school exclusions	15
1.6 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the research	18
1.7 A brief outline of the thesis, chapter by chapter	19
<b>2.0 CHAPTER 2 Art Passion: An autoethnographic account</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1 Childhood art-making	23
2.2 Studying art	27
2.3 Teaching art	30
2.4 Training and becoming an art psychotherapist	32
2.5 Art therapy in schools: First with refugee children	38
2.6 Time and space: Art-making during the COVID-19 pandemic	39
2.6.1 Meditations on ferns: Clock-time and <i>durée</i> during lockdowns	43
2.6.2 Breakfast mandalas in lockdown	45
2.7 The now and <i>durée's</i> multiplicity	47
2.7.1 The 'now', psychotherapy and the 'shared feeling voyage'	49
2.8 The focused art therapy hour	51
<b>3.0 CHAPTER 3 The context: Intercultural encounters</b>	<b>52</b>
3.1 An 'intercultural encounter' – art therapy and education	52
3.2 Art therapy research	54
3.2.1 Stern-inspired art therapy research	55
3.2.2 Art materials: Paint, paper, scissors and clay	57
3.2.3 Case studies	58
3.2.4 Systematic qualitative art therapy research in schools	60
3.2.5 Art therapy research in schools and quantitative methods	64
3.2.6 Systemic research on art therapy in schools	66
3.2.7 The triangular relationship	68
3.3 Art-based Education Research and the Four Purposes of Drawing	70
3.3.1 The first purpose of drawing: Perception	70
3.3.2 The second purpose of drawing: Communication	73
3.3.3 The third purpose of drawing: Invention	73

3.3.4	The fourth purpose of drawing: Action	74
3.4	Research in related disciplines that informs the current study	74
3.4.1	Psychotherapy and epistemic trust	75
3.4.2	Play is children's work	77
3.4.3	Potential space and transitional objects/phenomena	78
3.4.4	Child psychoanalysts speak on play, art and creativity	79
3.5	The phenomenon of school exclusions and the excluded child	81
3.5.1	Legal challenges to permanent exclusions	83
3.5.2	Social and health inequalities: Families and looked-after children	85
3.5.3	Children, mental health and diagnoses	89
3.5.4	School exclusion and youth justice systems	91
3.5.5	Financial and emotional costs of exclusion	94
3.6	School 'climates'	96
<b>4.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER 4 Philosophical underpinnings</b>	<b>99</b>
4.1	Bergson's influence on Foucault and Bakhtin	99
4.2	'Continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty'	100
4.2.1	The flock of sheep	102
4.2.1.1	Bergson's three images of <i>durée</i>	103
4.2.2	Bergson's method of intuition	105
4.2.3	Bergson, the arts and emotion	106
4.2.3	Creativity and silence	109
4.2.5	Bergson's distinction between 'clock time' and <i>durée</i>	110
4.3	The heterotopic art therapy space in school	112
4.3.1	A space that is 'simultaneously mythical and real'	113
4.3.2	Foucault's six principles of the heterotopia	114
4.3.3	A function in relation to the rest of the remaining space	117
4.3.4	Bakhtin's dialogism and theory of carnival	118
4.4	Situated knowledge(s) and researcher partiality	119
4.5	Disclosure through action	120
4.5.1	Speech and action in Arendt's 'Space of Appearances'	121
<b>5.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER 5 Methodology and Methods</b>	<b>123</b>
5.1	An interpretative qualitative methodology	123
5.1.1	An ethnographic stance, reflexivity and art-based approaches	124
5.1.2	Video microanalysis - a 'social microscope'	127
5.2	Designing the research project	132
5.2.1	The 'dialogic encounter': a collaborative approach	132
5.2.2	Ethics and logistics of 'dialogic encounter' research in schools	133
5.2.3	Child research participants	134
5.2.4	Research Praxis	135
5.2.5	Initial thoughts on narrative methodology	136
5.2.6	Sample size	137
5.2.7	Care for the participants and myself	140
5.2.8	Safeguarding	141
5.2.9	Confidentiality regarding research data	143
5.2.10	Participants' informed consent	143
5.2.11	Information for the potential senior teacher research participant	144
5.2.12	Possible disadvantages or risks of taking part	146

5.2.13	Possible benefits of taking part	147
5.2.14	Summary of research project design	148
5.3	Implementation of the research project	149
5.3.1	Recruiting potential participants	149
5.3.2	Primary and secondary data gathering	151
5.4	Data analysis (in four phases over seven years)	152
5.4.1	Table of datasets	127
5.4.2	Narrative of data analysis: First phase	164
5.4.3	Narrative of data analysis: Second phase	172
5.4.4	Narrative of data analysis: Third phase	172
5.4.5	Narrative of data analysis: Fourth phase	175
<b>6.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER 6 The Three Research Participants</b>	<b>180</b>
6.1	Deputy headteacher - 'Tina'	181
6.2	Art psychotherapist - 'Julia'	183
6.3	Child participant - 'Nathan'	184
6.3.1	Nathan's fixed-term exclusion: A breathing space	186
<b>7.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER 7 'Nathan' showed 'Tina' the 'feeling voyage' he and 'Julia' shared</b>	<b>189</b>
7.1	Chapter overview	189
7.2	Settling-in phase: Relaxation	192
7.2.1	Settling-in phase: Storytelling	197
7.2.2	Of horses and kamikazes: the excitement of 'safe danger'	200
7.2.3	Injury and protection	201
7.3	The central phase of the hour: Nathan engrossed in <i>durée</i>	202
7.3.1	Nathan's absorption in creative art	202
7.3.2	Nathan's favourite materials	203
7.3.3	Explosion and mirroring hands	205
7.3.4	Nathan's volcano metaphor	207
7.3.4.1	'I'll make a miniature model first'	208
7.3.4.2	The panic room	210
7.3.5	Images of self-defence	214
7.3.6	Response to collapse	214
7.3.7	Glimpsing each other through the volcano: The 'shared feeling voyage'	216
7.3.8	Nathan 'storied' his artwork	217
7.3.8.1	The evil one	219
7.3.8.2	On the edge	221
7.3.9	Volcano as metaphor	223
7.4	Ending phase: Coming out of <i>durée</i> /creative absorption	226
7.4.1	Management of time: Respecting Nathan's energy	226
7.4.2	Playing Jenga	228
7.4.3	Exploratory play with materials – just play?	228
7.4.4	The bubble gum ending game	229
7.4.5	Nathan's gift for Mum	231
7.4.6	Ending the Ending	232
7.5	What Nathan says about the fruits of art therapy in behavioural terms	234
7.5.1	Is art therapy 'hard' or 'fun'?	234
7.5.2	'The good, the bad and the ok'	235
7.5.3	Tina's caring responsiveness to Nathan: Rapport and reflection	237

7.5.4	Tina learns to see Nathan as Julia sees him	238
7.5.5	'Everyone listened and I won, - our team won!'	238
7.5.6	Management of resources	240
7.6	Collage of the 'research hour'	240
<b>8.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER 8 The Interviews with 'Tina' and 'Julia'</b>	<b>242</b>
8.1	Introduction	242
8.2	Reflective interview with Tina	242
8.3	Reflective interview with Julia	251
8.3.1	The mirrored 'shared feeling voyage'	256
8.3.2	Feeling comfortable	259
8.4	Tina and Julia put themselves in each other's shoes	262
<b>9.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER 9 Findings and Discussion</b>	<b>266</b>
9.1	Charting the video microanalysis results	266
9.2	Video microanalysis art responses and depiction of the schematic hour	271
9.3	Venn diagrams of the 'Flow of five phases'	273
9.3.1	First phase: Beginning	273
9.3.2	Second phase: Getting somewhere	274
9.3.3	Third phase: Engrossed (or Absorbed)	276
9.3.4	Fourth phase: Towards Ending	278
9.3.5	Fifth phase: Ending	280
9.4	How does school art therapy make a difference for children?	281
9.5	What can we learn from the child about their experiences with school-based art therapy?	284
9.6	What dynamics are involved when art therapy is provided in schools?	287
9.7	How can a Bergsonian-Foucauldian philosophical framework illuminate time and boundaries in a child's art therapy experience?	290
9.8	How can an art-based research approach offer insights through interrogating the dynamics of a child's art therapy experience?	293
<b>10.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER 10 Conclusion</b>	<b>302</b>
10.1	A new epistemology	302
10.2	Contributions this research makes to different stakeholders	303
10.2.1	The contribution of the thesis to practitioners	303
10.2.2	The contribution of the thesis to teachers	304
10.2.3	The contribution of the thesis to art therapists	307
10.2.4	The contribution of the thesis to researchers	309
10.2.5	The contribution of the thesis to policymakers	312
10.3	Limitations of the study	315
10.4	The power of an art-based approach	317
10.4	'Nathan' continues to teach	319
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>322</b>

## LIST OF AUTHOR'S ARTWORKS

<i>Hello</i>	Painting	23
<i>Orange</i>	Painting	24
<i>Hogweed or Queen Anne's Lace</i>	Drawing, charcoal	24
<i>Hands</i>	Drawing, ballpoint pen	25
<i>Portrait</i>	Drawing, ballpoint pen	26
<i>Village walk, Angle Lane, Shepreth</i>	Painting, oil on canvas	27
<i>The red seersucker kitchen tablecloth,</i>	Painting, oil on canvas	28
<i>Florentine cityscape</i>	Watercolour and pencil	29
<i>Il Mugnone, Florence</i>	Watercolour and pencil	29
<i>Portrait of a young woman</i>	Chalk pastel and conté	31
<i>Containment</i>	Sculpture, mixed media	32
<i>Bandages (detail)</i>	Sculpture, mixed media	36
<i>Looking back at twenty-eight years</i>	Installation	38
<i>Looking back at twenty-eight years (details)</i>	Installation	38
<i>Bright patterns seen behind closed eyes</i>	Painting	39
<i>Fraction of a moment in time</i>	Painting	40
<i>A broader picture</i>	Painting	41
<i>The whole session: Clock time and durée</i>	Painting	42
<i>The parts: Fern frond</i>	Photographs	43
<i>The whole and the parts</i>	Photographs	44
<i>Durée</i>	Photograph	44
<i>A good morning mandala</i>	Photograph	45
<i>Visible succession: Invisible durée</i>	Photos/digital graphics	46
<i>The present moment in durée's flow</i>	Painting	47
<i>The present moment in durée's flow (detail)</i>	Painting	48
<i>Forms of vitality (detail)</i>	Pastel drawing	50
<i>The Focused Hour (also on p. 171 and p. 296)</i>	Painting	51
<i>Word Pool</i>	Mixed media	166
<i>Word Pool (detail of central part)</i>	Mixed media	167
<i>Word Pool (detail side view)</i>	Mixed media	167
<i>Three thematic Word Pools</i>	Photocopies, felt pens	168
<i>Objects in Time (also on p. 241 and p. 295)</i>	Collage	170
<i>Tai Chi move – 'Stroking the horse's mane'</i>	Illustration, pen and ink	193
<i>The Whole and the Parts in Colour with Analytical Days</i>	Pastels/digital graphics	271

## LIST OF IMAGES (not produced by the author)

Nuffield Family Justice Observatory: <i>Children in the family justice system</i>	86
Still photograph from the film <i>Earth Mama</i>	88
Image from a Co-created animation on <i>Serious Youth Violence (SYV)</i>	93
Julia's reflexive drawing before her post-research interview (Coloured pencils)	255
Julia's Response Art 1 - after reading the draft thesis (Pencil)	265
Julia's Response Art 2 - after reading the draft thesis (Pastel)	321

## LIST OF TABLES (Produced by the author apart from Table 1)

1. <i>Wengrower's comparison and contrast of therapy and education cultures</i>	53
2. <i>Questions for the senior teacher to consider</i>	146
3. <i>Table of Datasets and related processes</i>	153
Data analysis – First phase: Familiarisation	153
Data analysis – Second phase: The whole and one small unit of time	157
Data analysis – Third phase: Systematic video microanalysis	158
Data analysis – Fourth phase: Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)	161
4. <i>Timeline of 'Nathan's school life, home life and art therapy sessions</i>	186

## LIST OF DIAGRAMS (Produced by the author apart from Diagram 1)

1. <i>Art therapy's triangular relationship: Joy Schaverien's basic triangle</i>	68
2. <i>Diagrammatic sketch for defining video microanalysis time units</i>	174
3. <i>Diagram for the implementation of video microanalysis</i>	174
4. <i>Reflexive Thematic Analysis example (photo): Noting the data items' analytical significance to the research questions and grouping data into initial themes</i>	177
5. <i>Reflexive Thematic Analysis example (photo): Semantic codes</i>	177
6. <i>Reflexive Thematic Analysis example (photo): Latent codes</i>	178
7. <i>Reflexive Thematic Analysis example (photo): Reviewing coding / themes</i>	178
8. <i>Reflexive Thematic Analysis example (photo): Reorganising themes</i>	179
9. <i>The site of the research project: The art therapy room</i>	189
10. <i>Bar chart: Quantification of silence/quietness in the dialogic encounter</i>	267
11. <i>Pie chart: Quantification of verbal communication and quiet in the encounter</i>	268
12. <i>Stacked column chart: Dynamics of conversation over time</i>	269
13. <i>The flow of the five phases of the schematic art therapy hour</i>	272
14. <i>Venn diagram: Conceptual map of phase 1 - Beginning</i>	273
15. <i>Venn diagram: Conceptual map of phase 2 - Getting somewhere</i>	275
16. <i>Venn diagram: Conceptual map of phase 3 - Engrossed/Absorbed Figures 3a -3c</i>	277
17. <i>Venn diagram: Conceptual map of phase 4 - Towards ending</i>	279
18. <i>Venn diagram: Conceptual map of phase 5 - Ending</i>	280
19. <i>'Nathan's' Mountain: The tripartite triangular relationship in systemic school-based art therapy research</i>	281

## APPENDIX 348

<b>Storying the analysis experience:</b> A Little Book of Fullness	349
--	-----

(Chapters 1 to 10 of the thesis: 101,462 words)

## ABSTRACT

The leading participant in this study was a child with 'complex and additional needs'. Due to his art therapy support, he was not permanently excluded from school. The research created a situation in which the child whom society might reject could speak thoughtfully to a significant person in authority, and that person is shown to engage with and receive the truth he speaks to her. The usual power balance in society is flipped. The thesis brings together a new art therapy research model, art therapy practice in schools and the child's experience. School art psychotherapy comprises multiple overlaps, including artistic, pedagogical and psychotherapeutic theory and practice. This transdisciplinary research shows how creative processes built trust, leading to a positive multiplier effect that rippled out from the art therapy room into the broader school sphere, interweaving with the school's flexible approach. A Bergsonian-Foucauldian theoretical framework was constructed to explain what is needed (and why) to build a comfortable enough space for a child to engage, discover more about themselves, and develop in new ways. Henri Bergson's concept of *durée* as the subjective experience of time, combined with Foucault's heterotopic theory, which defines the time-space boundaries of the art therapy room as a counterspace in the school, is central to the thesis. Video microanalysis of verbal, nonverbal, and artistic communication, and of Stern's 'present moments', revealed palimpsestic interactions in this counterspace. Art-based research approaches were used throughout the study and shaped its direction. Art therapy's interdisciplinary role in enabling this child and their school was revealed; the research shows individual and systemic transformative processes. Links are drawn between Winnicottian potential space and the broader socio-political realities of Hannah Arendt's 'space of appearances'. Research limitations are outlined, and the contributions the thesis makes to practitioners, teachers, art therapists, researchers and policymakers are discussed. (300 words)

**Keywords:** school art therapy; school exclusions; art-based research and methods; heterotopia; *durée*; transdisciplinary research; interdisciplinary practice; video microanalysis; present moments; Stern.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Conversations with many individuals and groups have contributed to this study. I am grateful for them all. I am indebted to the research participants, whom I cannot name, and thank them for their generous gift of time and energy. My fabulous supervisory team, interdisciplinary from the outset, ensured a breadth of reading and research experiences. Prof. Brendan Stone and Dr. Chris Wood from the Arts and Humanities faculty provided invaluable critiques and encouragement, in equal measure, throughout the entire process. Prof. Tom Billington and then Dr. Tony Williams from the School of Education in the Social Sciences faculty brought critical perspectives to the supervision table, enriching my understanding. Bridging the faculties was energising and exciting.

Additionally, on my academic journey, I am deeply grateful to my friend, Rev. Dr. Jan Berry, for inviting me to join a Manchester-based group on qualitative research methodologies in feminist theology, which supports doctoral students and postdoctoral research, despite my work not being in this field. I thank Jan, Anne Philips, Kim Wasey, Ann Peart (all Rev. Drs.), and especially Dr. Alison Woolley, a constant source of support from the proposal writing stage to now. The group helped 'hear me into speech' when I had no words, and bore with my effervescent joy at discovering new theories. They helped me maintain a playful attitude throughout the research process.

Dr. Allison Singer and the Northeast Arts Therapies (NEAT) professional community have also been a massive source of support and inspiration. I was privileged to present my emerging research ideas annually at the two-day, multi-modal (all the arts therapies) NEAT conferences. Searching questions posed by delegates stimulated new thinking at every stage of my research. I am also deeply grateful to art therapists Frances Prokofiev and Dr. Unnur Ottarsdottir for fascinating discussions on art therapy theory and practice in schools as exemplified in their published studies.

I thank my colleagues in the emotional trauma support team in the North West of the UK, some of whom I have known since its inception in 2002. Committed to serving children with 'complex and additional needs' and finding imaginative ways to work with children, their families and their schools, they have always been inspirational, supportive, and keen to discuss how newly discovered theories might be implemented in practice.

My educational psychologist friend and colleague, Sonia Hilton, patiently listened to my nascent thoughts in our very long conversations on Saturday afternoons at the North Star café. Her mind kept me grounded in the realities of real-life school contexts when my mind soared in philosophical flights. I thank her for her generosity. I also thank Cerys Jones and Cathy Ward, both friends and colleagues, for early discussions that shaped my proposal, and my friend Anne-Christine Charra-Faillettaz for help with a question about French translation.

Many friends and my family were a constant source of support. The numerous discussions I had with my father about the relationship between science and art/art therapy, and research concerns, animated my thinking in unexpected ways. If my mother, who loved the arts, had been alive, I know she would have been similarly enthusiastic about this study. Finally, I thank Kiruba, my husband. Without his love, encouragement, and confidence in me, I would never have embarked on this study.

## DECLARATION

I, Deirdre Simmen McConnell, the author, confirm that the Thesis is my own work.

I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means

([www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means)).

This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

### Publications arising from the thesis:

McConnell, D. (2019) 'Slices of time: Heterotopia and counter-space in art therapy'. *Track Changes, Postgraduate Journal for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. University of Sheffield*. Available at: <https://trackchangesjournal.wordpress.com/archive/issue-12-utopias-dystopias-and-heterotopias/slices-of-time-heterotopia-and-counter-space-in-art-therapy/> (Accessed: 2 July 2020).

McConnell, D. (2021) 'A quiet revolution: School-based art therapy transforms lives and unlocks creativity', in Huet and Kapitan (eds.) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The emerging picture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 304-311.

## PERMISSIONS

The table on p. 53 was published in: Wengrower, H. (2001) 'Arts Therapies in Educational Settings: An Intercultural Encounter'. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 28, pp. 109-115. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0197-4556\(00\)00091-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0197-4556(00)00091-5)

Dr Joy Schaverien's diagram of the basic triangular relationship in art therapy on p. 68 was published in: Schaverien (2000) 'The triangular relationship and the aesthetic countertransference in analytical art psychotherapy', in Gilroy, A. and McNeilly, G. (eds.) *The changing shape of art therapy: New developments in theory and practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley, pp. 55-83.

Permission was granted to reproduce the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory infographic diagram on Children in the Family Justice System, on p. 86.

Permission was granted to reproduce the still from the *Co-constructed Serious Youth Violence* animation on p. 93, by Dr Paul Grey, the author of the blog in which it appeared.

The art therapist participant kindly granted permission to reproduce her reflexive drawings on p. 255, p. 265 and p. 321.

The author of the thesis created all other images, diagrams and the Timeline table on p. 186.

© Deirdre Simmen McConnell

## 1.0

## CHAPTER 1 – Introduction

This transdisciplinary research is rooted in my practitioner experience as an art psychotherapist in schools. This chapter outlines the research aims and the problem it seeks to address. The central question that guides the study is introduced, along with the sub-questions, and how they are examined. I then explain the context, related policies, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the study. Finally, a brief outline of each chapter is given to guide the reader through the research.

### 1.1 The aims

Transdisciplinary research involves not only academics but also others in society to grasp and address complex real-life problems (Mylonakou-Keke, 2015, p. 1891). This research aimed to examine how art therapy contributes to improving children’s mental health in schools and to conceptualise the fine-grained details of relational and arts-based processes embedded in the ‘tacit knowledge’ of practice (Collins, 2000). The research aimed to synthesise knowledge from diverse areas to create a new understanding of how school art therapy operates and how it might address real-world problems. To date, the creation of a space where a child who might be rejected by society speaks thoughtfully with a person representing authority in their school life, and that person is shown to engage with and receive the truth they are speaking, has not been studied.

I expected school art therapy to be helpful, but sought to examine and provide a clear picture of the contributory factors, learning from the child, the expert on their own experience. Art and therapy, distinct fields with varied practices and extensive research bases, are brought together in the art therapy profession in diverse ways, contexts and cultures. School art therapy includes a blend of knowledge in both fields: the art therapy relationship is ‘a partnership between artistic and interpersonal phenomena’ (McNiff, 1998, p. 92). It challenges the binary notion of ‘creativity’ versus ‘psychologising’. An arts-based dialogue between a school leader and a child on how and why art therapy may be effective as a specialist service in schools has not been investigated thus far.

## **1.2 The research questions**

My overarching research question was:

- How does art therapy ‘make a difference’ to children in the school context, as a specialist intervention that can contribute to identifying and addressing the mental health and well-being needs of children?

Related to this, and embedded in the participatory nature of the research, I asked the sub-questions:

- What can we learn from children about their experiences with school-based art therapy? and
- What dynamics are involved when art therapy is provided in schools?

Aware of how time and space affect organisational structures and people within them, and thus bear crucial implications for school art therapy, I also asked:

- How can a Bergsonian-Foucauldian philosophical framework illuminate time and boundaries in a child’s art therapy experience?

Explorations of these questions required methods that incorporated imagination and art-making alongside other qualitative analytical methods, so I also asked:

- How can an arts-based research approach offer insights through interrogating the dynamics of a child’s art therapy experience?

## **1.3 How the questions are examined**

The research questions are examined in this thesis through a range of methods, including analyses of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a specially designed, video-recorded research project that prioritised a child’s agency and competencies, as well as through two interviews with adult participants. Secondary research data were collected from professional written records and multi-agency reports. A variety of art-based approaches and systematic methods (including video microanalysis and reflexive thematic analysis) were employed to analyse the data. Primary data included nonverbal creative processes, movement, silences, and verbal expressions within the relational space shared by the three research participants. Daniel Stern’s concepts of the ‘present moment’ and the ‘shared feeling voyage’ informed the analysis (Stern, 2004). Power dynamics were explored theoretically and practically through the application of Foucault’s

heterotopic theory and Bakhtin's dialogism. These were integrated with Henri Bergson's concept of *durée*, the movement of the creative process in the subjective inner world. These philosophical ideas were combined with recent psychotherapy research on epistemic trust, yielding a tangible understanding of the theoretical concepts. Relevant studies across several fields related to 'creativity' and 'psychologising', and sometimes both, were critically evaluated, providing the broader academic context for the research. Organisational, interdisciplinary, training, and personnel factors associated with school art therapy were also examined. Findings regarding each question are presented in the penultimate chapter of the thesis.

#### **1.4 Introduction to the real-world context of school art therapy in the UK**

In the first years of the millennium, public policy and finance in the UK supported the development of innovative interventions for children (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) and created a conducive environment for art therapists to work in schools. Many who began working in schools have continued to do so, despite the pressures of austerity and declining funding in recent years. Well-established art therapy services in schools provided an opportunity to conduct this research. Pivotal legislation in the late 1980s marked a significant shift, moving focus from the rights of adults and parents over children to the child's position and rights. It transformed the way we think about children and elevated the profile of their diverse needs. The *Children Act* (1989) incorporated the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) into British law, enshrining society's obligation to listen to children and provide the support they need to flourish in school. There are also obligations under international human rights law.<sup>1</sup> Currently, there is a crisis in children and young people's mental health, which affects schools (Department for Education, 2018a; NHS Confederation, 2021; Ellins *et al.*, 2023), and contributes to another crisis: school exclusions. Research has found that some excluded children in England linked their school behaviour to 'bereavement, violence and

---

<sup>1</sup> For instance, in his report (A/HRC/57/43) on children's rights, Sureya Devi, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, highlighted that UN Member States should ensure child-responsive mechanisms to promote and protect children's rights, including in schools (United Nations General Assembly, 2024).

abuse and living with family members with mental illnesses' (Apland *et al.*, 2017, p. 28). Such children need support at the first signs of difficulties, to prevent problems from escalating.

Working jointly, the Department of Health and the Department for Education (2017) set out a broad UK policy framework that allowed for service details to be devolved across the four nations. It established pilot mental health teams in schools across 25 areas of England. An evaluation of this work demonstrated that the support was primarily 'time-limited, low-intensity, cognitive behaviour therapy' and although this helped children with mild to moderate difficulties, those with 'more serious and complex needs' required specialist support (Ellins *et al.*, 2023, p. xxvii). Recognising the need to meet more complex needs, training on trauma-informed approaches was recommended for school staff (Department for Education, 2018b, p. 40). However, according to US psychiatrist Bruce Perry, trauma-informed practices have limitations. His critique is relevant to the UK situation:

While current policy efforts to create trauma-informed practices and programs are a welcome start, for children and youth, focusing on trauma alone is insufficient. Practice, program, and policy must become substance abuse, attachment, and neglect informed as well; we must become fully 'developmentally informed' to understand and address the range of problems related to maltreatment (Perry, 2009, p. 241).

Perry argues that children maltreated in infancy may have 'significant developmental problems', yet their needs may not be identified (Perry, 2009, p. 245). Poor anger management, a lack of resilience and difficulties with peer relationships and social skills may mask underlying emotional health issues and possibly early trauma resulting from childhood abuse (Van der Kolk, 2015). These factors can be at the root of some low-level disruption in schools and, if left unaddressed, escalate to exclusion. The question of why school exclusions occur and how to address their root causes has elicited sustained interest from the government, civil society, and academia. This present art therapy study contributes to the public discourse by building on research that highlights the complex background to children's exclusion from school: 'Exclusions can be the result of multiple, interrelated and layered vulnerabilities, which when present can have a multiplier effect' (Graham *et al.*, 2019, p. 25). I now briefly review advice to schools in three separate documents. One document concerns mental health and behaviour, one concerns behaviour, and one concerns exclusions.

## 1.5 Policy on mental health, behaviour and school exclusions

The first document we consider is the advice titled *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* (Department for Education, 2018a). This stipulates that schools should have an effective pastoral system to meet the needs of children who require support. This system should have at least one member of staff who knows each of these children well and has received training to spot where ‘bad or unusual’ behaviour may have a root cause that needs addressing (DfE, 2018a, p. 16). The advice states that this pastoral system ‘should also provide the opportunity for pupils to seek support in a confidential way’ (DfE, 2018a, p. 16). This is a crucial recognition that children need emotionally safe spaces to explore behaviours, thoughts, and feelings, especially when dealing with complicated emotions such as anxiety, fear, guilt and shame that may underpin behaviour. Some children may sometimes feel an extreme lack of safety, but without a visible reason apparent to others. Children who have suffered extreme harm in the past but currently live in a safe or safe enough environment may require specialist help, due to in-built stress responses and relational patterns in their inner life generated by early trauma (Perry, 2009; van der Kolk, 2015; Siegel, 2020a).

The second document, *Behaviour in Schools: Advice for headteachers and school staff*, suggests that when interventions delivered by trained school staff cannot successfully meet a pupil’s social and emotional needs, schools ‘can consider ... engaging with local partners and agencies to address specific challenges such as poor anger management, a lack of resilience and difficulties with peer relationships and social skills’ (Department for Education, 2024a, p. 27). The advice further states that when a school has ‘serious concerns about a pupil’s behaviour, it *should* consider whether a multi-agency assessment ... that goes beyond the pupil’s educational needs is required’ (2024a, p. 27, italics are mine). This advice is non-statutory, though ‘should’ and ‘must’ are differentiated: ‘Where the text uses the word ‘must’, the person in question is legally required to do something’ (2024a, p. 4). Since the word ‘should’ is used when referring to assessments beyond educational needs, schools are not obliged to provide specialist local support for children, nor to follow up with multi-agency consultation and action. However, these steps are recognised as good practice.

This *Behaviour* advice also encourages schools, when individual children misbehave, to consider ‘whether the misbehaviour gives cause to suspect that a pupil is suffering, or is likely to suffer, harm’ (2024a, p. 17). In this case, safeguarding protocols are followed. The staff member concerned consults the school’s designated safeguarding lead, who considers whether pastoral support, an early help intervention, or a referral to children’s social care is appropriate (2024a, p. 17). All school staff, whatever their role, receive mandatory safeguarding training (Department for Education, 2024b). Keeping children safe requires interdisciplinary cooperation, and the guidance on multi-agency collaboration, *Working together to safeguard children* (HM Government, 2023), applies to all agencies, statutory and non-statutory, that work with children. Both documents (*Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* and *Behaviour in Schools*) emphasise the need to consider the root causes of behaviour and to determine what is needed to best support the child.

The third document, *Advice on School Exclusions* (Department for Education, 2024c), was issued in the same month as the second document above, *Behaviour Advice* (2024a). Both documents were intended to be read together, yet there is a fundamental contradiction between them in light of the effects of early relational trauma discussed above. Children who misbehave, who have experienced maltreatment in the past, may respond to confidential and relationally sensitive pastoral support or therapy. However, they may be unable to respond to and adhere to behaviour management strategies and techniques; they require more in-depth, specialist emotional support. The *Exclusions* document (2024c) states that exhaustion of behaviour management strategies can be a reason for school exclusion. Unlike the first two documents, it does not mention root causes and the complexity of potential mental health issues, inequality, and other needs that may contribute to children’s inability to respond to behavioural management techniques. It emphasises strategies solely:

For the vast majority of pupils, suspensions and permanent exclusions may not be necessary, as other strategies can manage their behaviour. If these approaches towards behaviour management have been exhausted, then suspensions and permanent exclusions will sometimes be necessary as a last resort. This is to ensure that other pupils and teaching staff can work in safety and are respected (Department for Education, 2024c, p. 3).

The *Exclusions* document is, of course, correct to support schools in ensuring that everyone feels safe. However, this is not straightforward. Ensuring safety for all remains an unsettled territory due to divergent philosophical approaches to socio-political and economic realities and their effects on children's lives, as well as to different school practices and policies: schools, Trusts, and local authorities interpret 'last resort' differently. Children whose behaviour is rooted in an inner sense of insecurity, which prevents them from accessing behaviour management techniques, need support to recognise patterns associated with stress responses (Geddes, 2003, 2005). They may also need support with challenging life circumstances, such as family illness, bereavement, poverty, equality issues, substance abuse issues in the family, and stressors in the local community.

The relationship between school exclusions and children's real lives is complex and has attracted extensive research in recent years. Some researchers have concluded that there is a school exclusions crisis in England (Pirrie and Macleod, 2009; Hallett and Hallett, 2021; Joseph and Crenna-Jennings, 2024). The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) described the situation as a crisis of lost learning and analysed the varied outcomes for children excluded from school and for those attending provisions such as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), where excluded pupils are educated (Harris *et al.*, 2025), and where some art psychotherapists work. However, removing children from mainstream schooling fails to solve the problems (Pirrie *et al.*, 2011). It can even create new ones by exacerbating children's harmful life experiences, prompting their search for respect and a sense of belonging in unhealthy, unsafe environments (Windle, Moyle and Coomber, 2020; Grey, Smithson and Jump, 2021). Exclusions can lead to further societal exclusion. Children may become involved in the justice system: the school-to-prison pipeline has been well researched (Apple, 2013). The current research, by examining how art therapy, as a specialised intervention in schools, can help identify and address children's mental health needs, aims to contribute to efforts to secure more hopeful futures for children and set them on a better path in life. I now turn to how the pandemic, which struck during the third year of my PhD studies, affected the implementation of research plans that were intertwined with daily work-life in schools.

## **1.6 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the research**

Towards the end of 2019, plans were made to replicate the research project in additional schools, involving further child research participants, art therapists, and school leaders. However, like many research projects, these plans were severely disrupted by the unprecedented international crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Spring of 2020, school closures and social distancing requirements made it impossible to replicate the research project. Discussions with therapists and schools about conducting further research were suspended. It was profoundly dispiriting that restrictions on movement and social contact, although necessary to halt the spread of the virus, prohibited the continuation of the research study plan. Fortunately, the introductory discussions with the children had not yet begun when mandatory social distancing restrictions were introduced. Given the excitement the first child showed when asked whether he was interested in being consulted as an expert on his art therapy experience, it would likely not have been very pleasant for other children if they had been invited to participate in something that never happened. This could have added to the multiple losses children experienced during the pandemic (Carpenter, 2020). The unexpected turn of events brought about by COVID-19 presented numerous challenges in my daily life, both as a therapist and a manager.

My deputy team leaders and I supported the team of therapists as the pandemic struck and unfolded. Multiple adjustments to our working methods were needed. These included adapting to the technology involved in working from home, delivering online sessions and attending multi-agency meetings online, organising risk assessments, supporting therapists working as key workers with the most vulnerable pupils who attended schools during lockdowns, organising separate materials for individual children, adjusting timetables to include sanitising operations between sessions, securing personal protective equipment, and writing in support of therapists' requests to their GPs for vaccinations. Mutually supportive understanding between and within the team of therapists and schools was critical to managing difficult times, including losses such as, in a few

cases, the deaths of school staff, their relatives and those of the therapist team. The pandemic continued for more than two years. People faced challenges related to time and space in these unprecedented circumstances, at the local, national, and global levels.

An alternative use for the time allocated to research was needed, but the way forward was not immediately apparent. It transpired, however, that although the pandemic posed a challenge, it also offered an opportunity to develop a new approach. As the autoethnographic narrative I present in Chapter Two indicates, I began to think about time and space differently. Bergson's philosophy of time took on new meanings as I drew, wrote, studied, and lived through the pandemic. My art-based research approach evolved in unexpected ways. During the Summer 2021 Lockdown, I had the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive online course in Interpersonal Neurobiology led by Daniel Siegel. This helped me integrate ideas on art, neuroscience, art therapy in schools, Foucault's concept of heterotopia and Bergson's *durée*. Ultimately, the study's interdisciplinary theoretical and philosophical aspects were enhanced rather than diminished. Rather than replicating across multiple schools, the single research project was transformed into a longitudinal, thorough study that examined a broader range of school art therapy processes in greater depth.

### **1.7 A brief outline of the thesis, chapter by chapter**

In this introductory Chapter, I have explained the research aims and outlined the context. I presented the research question and sub-questions, and briefly explained how they are examined in the thesis. I also explained the impact of COVID-19 on the research. In Chapter Two, to introduce the art at the core of my engagement in this research, I present an autoethnographic narrative of art experiences throughout my life. Through this, I hope the reader will understand the origins of my thinking about the dynamism of art for wellbeing, learning, research and mental health.

Chapter Three provides a more extensive background to the study. After explaining education and art therapy as distinct 'cultures', it examines the range of research on art therapy in schools and the research methods employed. The chapter then presents the four purposes of drawing, defined by

art-based education research, which provide a language for interdisciplinary dialogue between art therapists and educators. Communication processes intrinsic to building epistemic trust and their application to school art therapy are also discussed. The link between trust and play is then explored, drawing on Winnicott's concepts of 'potential space' and 'transitional phenomena,' as well as on the writings of French Lacanian psychiatrists. The second half of the chapter focuses on the situation of excluded children, explaining how some children are disproportionately affected, the legal challenges to exclusions, and the emotional and financial costs. A real-life example demonstrates how art therapy supported a child with complex needs, resulting in significant savings for the local government. Social and health inequalities experienced by looked-after children and their families, children's mental health and diagnoses, and links between permanent exclusions and children's involvement in the youth justice system are outlined. The chapter concludes with an overview of different types of 'school climates'.

Chapter Four explores the philosophical ideas that underpin the thesis regarding time, space, and power. Bergson's influence in the early twentieth century is traced, his theory of *durée* is explained, and his ideas on intuition, memory and action are introduced. The connection between Bergson's work and the arts is presented, seen through Stern's concept of 'vitality forms'. Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and carnival, Foucault's heterotopic theory, and several of Bergson's theories are explained and woven together, creating a textured analysis of spatiotemporal realities that are often taken for granted. The combined theories elucidate the art therapy counterspace, a vital, confidential space for children who need it, in which they can work at their own pace. The chapter then explains my positionality, the use of terms such as 'situated knowledge(s)' and partiality, and the role of emotion in studying and gaining insights into the social world. The chapter concludes by outlining Hannah Arendt's concept of the 'space of appearances' and its relation to Winnicottian potential space.

Chapter Five begins by explaining the strands I wove together to form my methodological approach: an ethnographic stance, reflexivity, and art-based approaches. I discuss the work of researchers who

have employed video microanalysis and explain how I learned from their methods and chose specific elements to develop my own method. I then describe the process of designing a research project in a school setting and explain the ethical considerations, including those involved in recruiting child research participants. Next, I describe the project's implementation in a real-world setting: a busy school environment in which art therapy was a regular intervention for children identified as requiring specialist support, including those affected by early relational trauma. I then present a table of the datasets generated throughout the research. This provides a chronological account of the developments and my decision-making processes. Finally, I provide a narrative account of the four data analysis phases, explaining the methods outlined in the table.

Chapter Six introduces the three research participants. All identifying features have been concealed: participants' names have been changed, geographic locations have been removed, and any other potential identifiers have been altered or removed. Firstly, I introduce the deputy headteacher. I explain her roles in the school and the broader responsibilities she shoulders for children's mental health and wellbeing. Secondly, I introduce the art psychotherapist research participant. I describe how her work was introduced into the school, elements of her art therapy practice, and how she works systemically in the school. Thirdly, I introduce the child participant, providing generic background details applicable to children in similar situations. A visual timeline demonstrates the child's school attendance, changes in home placements, consequent behaviours, and the cumulative effect these have on systemic decisions around a fixed-term exclusion.

Chapter Seven, at the heart of the thesis, presents the child's account of his experience with art therapy, in which he demonstrates his agency and competence. A palimpsest was created when the scaffolding of the classic triangular relationship between child, art, and art therapist resonated with the overlays of two other triangular relationships formed with the other two participants. The child showed how using art materials introduces numerous possibilities for expressing emotions without relying on words, as he utilised time, space, and agency at his own pace. Video microanalysis, in

conjunction with Stern's concepts of 'present moments', 'vitality forms', and 'shared feeling voyages' (Stern, 2004, 2010), reveals how the rhythms and nuances of communication between the three participants (including storytelling, silences, engrossed art-making, discussions, and shared enjoyment) exemplify art therapy processes in the school setting.

Chapter Eight analyses two audio-recorded interviews with the deputy headteacher and the art psychotherapist. The teacher shared her new understanding gained from observing the child working in the art therapy space. She also discussed her perceptions of the relationship between the art therapist and the child. The art therapist, in her interview, reflected on the process that unfolded during the research hour, its meaning in the room, and its resonance with earlier art therapy sessions. Like the teacher, she spoke about her perceptions of her co-professional's qualities in the work with the child. The chapter concludes with an account of how the teacher and the art therapist attempted to 'put themselves in each other's shoes' to better understand each other's roles.

Chapter Nine brings together and discusses the research findings. It begins by presenting three charts demonstrating significant numerical results from the video microanalysis, followed by a series of five conceptual maps, presented as Venn diagrams. The latter illustrates the chronological development of communication and creative processes observed in the video. Art-based processes revealed echoes of the rhythms of a schematic art therapy hour. This discovery and the identification of an innovative model for systemic art therapy research, based on the art therapy triangular relationship, suggest that the research uncovered more than a single individual's story. In the second half of the chapter, I synthesise and discuss the findings in relation to the research questions.

In Chapter Ten, as I conclude the study, I draw the thesis's threads together and present its contribution to the work of practitioners, teachers, art therapists, researchers, and policymakers. After outlining the study's limitations, I return to my positionality and the power of an arts-based approach in research. I end by presenting the significant impact of the child participant's contribution to the research.

## 2.0 CHAPTER 2 – Art Passion: An Autoethnographic Account

In this autoethnographic chapter, I offer the reader insights into my perspectives on time, space, and creativity, rooted in early experiences and central to this thesis. My childhood was very different from that experienced by the children at the centre of this study: I enjoyed my state school education. I grew up in a family that valued creativity and learning, and where I experienced unconditional love. Art-making remained central to my sense of being alive, from early mark-making as an infant to school activities, studying art in higher education, becoming an art teacher, and then in my training and work as an art psychotherapist.

### 2.1 Childhood art-making

Like all small children, I did not think about drawing—I just did it spontaneously. My aunt said I drew animals at a zoo when I was five. At the same age, I drew this picture. I was not interested in or concerned with depicting the accurate number of fingers. I painted the idea, the feeling.



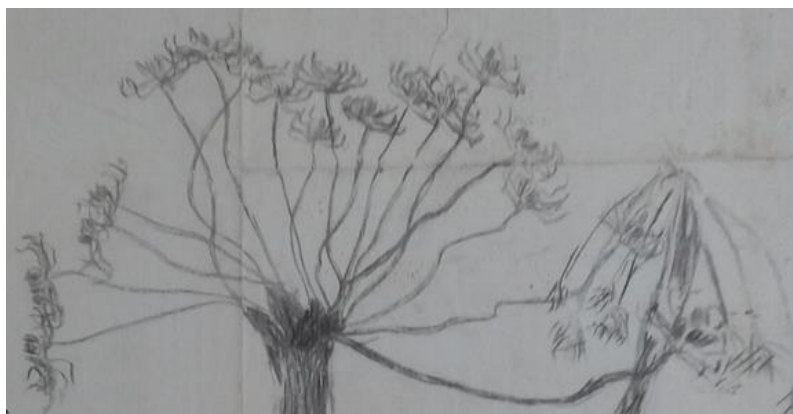
*Hello* (Paint and felt pen, 1964)

Our next-door neighbour in the small rural village I grew up in with my family was an art teacher. She taught art classes in a barn, encouraging self-expression and experimentation, often drawing inspiration from nature. It was the 1960s, a child-centred era of art teaching.



*An orange* (Poster paint, 1967)

My parents encouraged a love of music, too. Our home was filled with music, on the radio and live. My mother, who had left nursing to raise a family, loved languages: her grandmother was from Belgium, and her grandfather was Swiss. She learned Russian and Chinese from radio lessons. These languages sounded musical, and the scripts' shapes fascinated me, so different to the alphabet I knew. My tiny village primary school had a limited curriculum in English, maths, and nature walks. I learned the names of trees and flowers, and never to be bored, immersed in nature. With my brother, sister and friends, I played outside: safe and free. We were privileged.



*Hogweed or Queen Anne's Lace* (Charcoal, 1968)

My father loved the hills and geology of Ireland, his home country. His university department in Cambridge displayed large models of crystal structures: small, brightly coloured spheres linked with rods. As a scientist, he studied molecular patterns in minerals and smaller particles using his electron microscope. Occasionally, he painted. I watched his careful sketching, holding a pencil out, one eye closed to measure proportions by flattening perspective. It made me think when he said you only see things correctly when you draw them. We were rich, not financially, but in creative opportunities. This personal narrative of my art-filled childhood and the influence of my family aims to help the reader understand my deep connection to art and why I am so passionate about art therapy.



*Hands* (Ballpoint pen, 1973)

Art and art teaching can be approached in various ways, depending on the child's age and stage of development. In secondary school, the emphasis was on learning techniques; observational art was the predominant form. I lost the young child's spontaneous creativity, where everything seemed to flow, and mind and body were not separate but dynamically connected in a constantly moving flux of sensations. One spring, as I waited at the bus stop to go to school, I was struck by the vividness of yellow roses and lime-green leaf shoots in the nearby hedge. Astonished, I perceived nature and its seasonal rhythms as separate from myself for the first time. It was a distinct feeling of being in awe of nature, that I had taken for granted until then.

School art classes seemed to emphasise a separateness from things. Intuitive art was replaced by learning techniques such as tonal shading and one— and two-point perspective to create shadow and depth, negative shapes to identify the spaces between objects, and figure drawing to appreciate anatomy and human proportions. Later, travel and art therapy helped me rediscover spontaneity.



*Portrait* (Ballpoint pen, 1973)

At sixteen, I joined an organisation that allowed young people to volunteer locally. Visiting patients in Fulbourn Psychiatric Hospital, I learned that acute mental distress existed. Although I could not know the person's feelings, I could empathise with their suffering. I remember choosing to study the Book of Job in school. Between school and university, through a contact at another school, I worked as an au pair in southern Italy. Everything was different: the trees, plants, markets, the day divided by siesta due to the heat, and the language spoken with expressive hand movements. Train fares were cheap. On weekends, I travelled across the country to see architecture and art. I was immersed in a different culture, and seeing things anew, I drew spontaneously again. All that I had learned in art classes at school had become 'second nature'. My eyes, hands and mind worked fast as I drew and painted, sometimes with a crowd gathering around. Responding to what I was looking at came naturally, making incisive marks, selective choices, and a sense of dynamic connection. The drawing

process is similar to sculpting this thesis, deciding on the essential lines, discarding others, and remoulding the overall form.

## 2.2 Studying art

My University course in Italian and Fine Art bridged the two worlds of the University of Exeter and Exeter College of Art. As students, we had space and time to create art. The oil painting below was made for my father's 50th birthday. It is a Sunday afternoon village walk near our family home, leading through the fields to the next village. I painted it '*en plein air*', taking my easel and oil paints to the farm track. It was essential to feel the air on my face and experience the immediacy of the colours, connecting directly with nature. The French philosopher Henri Bergson, in his book *Time and Free Will: The Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1910 [1889]), wrote about *durée*, the awareness of sensory experience in the flow of time. Painting brings an aliveness to the present that can stay fresh for decades: the traces vividly recall the experiences of walking in and painting the scene.



*Village Walk, Angle Lane, Shepreth* (Oil on canvas, 1980)

The oil painting below was made in my first year at art college. Everything came from the family kitchen, evoking my mother's presence and warmth. Cooking utensils and vegetables are ready to prepare a meal. I had missed her and the family when I was in Italy for a year after school.



*The red seersucker kitchen tablecloth* (Oil on canvas, 1978)

I was the only student studying Italian with art; my peers studied French, Spanish or English. Those studying a foreign language and its literature had an additional year abroad. I studied in Florence, the birthplace of the exiled Dante Alighieri, whose work, *The Divine Comedy*, had been on the A-Level syllabus at school. I soaked up the architecture, the colours, and the light—windows and arches, like written notes of music, delineated space. Drawing oscillates between focusing on the details in rhythms and grasping the scene's whole 'melody'. I was thrilled when I was permitted to closely examine drawings by Titian and Raphael in the Uffizi archives. I witnessed movements in their hand gestures, traced in pencil strokes that danced across the pages—time across the centuries collapsed.



*Florentine cityscape* (Pencil and watercolour, 1981)

Compared to the situations of students today, it seems extraordinary that, like many others studying at the time, I received a full university grant, rather than a loan.



*Il Mugnone, Florence* (Pencil and watercolour, 1981)

After that year abroad, I returned to Exeter. I volunteered with Student Community Action, running clay sculpture sessions at the Victory Centre, a supportive space for individuals who had been residents of the local psychiatric hospital, which had since closed. I was struck by how the physicality of handling clay could calm and restore, even if only temporarily. I read the work of Viktor Lowenfeld,

who articulated my own experience of how 'creative activity' has a liberating effect, influences growth, and serves 'as an emotional outlet' (Lowenfeld, 1951, p. 1). I also read Viktor Frankl's book on Logotherapy, about the healing power of meaning (Frankl, 2006). He was a Holocaust survivor. In a newspaper article, I learned about 'Shape up North', an organisation founded by Gina Leveté that brought the arts to those isolated through illness, disability, or social disadvantage, and I noticed the London contact address for the British Association of Art Therapists. I sought advice, explaining my intention to train as an art teacher and my interest in art therapy. The person I contacted confirmed that working as an art teacher for five years to gain professional experience in schools, and then applying for the postgraduate diploma in art therapy, might be wise. I followed this advice.

### **2.3 Teaching art**

Teacher training at Didsbury School of Education, Manchester Polytechnic (now Manchester Metropolitan University), introduced me to the work of child development theorist Jean Piaget and art educator Herbert Read. I also took courses in special educational needs and multiculturalism, which influenced my career. Teaching in a mainstream secondary school for two years provided me with experience of the complex pressures and demands on teachers and schools. I also taught evening art classes at Styal Women's Prison. Then, I secured a teaching post in an 'Observation and Assessment' residential centre for teenage girls permanently excluded from school. These young girls had suffered emotional, physical and sexual abuse; they had been removed from their families. As a teacher, I provided creative opportunities for the girls to focus, experiment, and enjoy learning for its own sake through art and art-making. I aimed to make lessons stimulating and nurturing. We were a close-knit teaching and social care team, prioritising supportive relationships between the staff and the girls. A teenager I call 'Tessa' created a vibrant image reminiscent of a seascape, composed of thickly painted layers of saturated blues and purples. I was confused and saddened when she suddenly ripped up her beautiful painting. I did not understand why she did this. Perhaps here, she could exercise control. Her control had been taken away in some important aspects of her life,

including her family and school life. I was keen to understand more about possible psychological explanations, and I had completed a one-year introductory art therapy course at an adult education college. My headteacher understood my desire and my readiness. She negotiated with the Local Education Authority for my secondment to train as an art therapist.



*Portrait of a young woman* (Pastel and conté, 1986)

## 2.4 Training and becoming an art therapist

I was nearly thirty when I applied for the postgraduate diploma in art therapy at the University of Sheffield. The course opened another world of reasons for making art. I had observed things around me for most of my art-making life. During the art therapy training, I looked inwardly at images linked to emotion, energy, and memory. I discovered the power of personal metaphor and symbol.



*Containment* (Mixed media, 1989)

I learned that working imaginatively with colour, texture, and all aspects of art can, in a safe enough space, facilitate a better understanding of mixed and complex emotions on a conscious level. It can also expunge powerful feelings, provide ways of analysing causes and effects and much else.

Verbalising was important, but sometimes the art was enough, and words were unnecessary. The artwork above was created on a board. The central square is made of Modroc, a bandage-like plaster that hardens after being dipped in water. I immersed my hands in paint. I also painted with a brush

or squirted paint from the bottle. Paint slopped everywhere. It felt good to do – a release of pent-up energy - it was freeing. It was a venting of emotional energy. As I worked, the process gave me new insights into what was happening emotionally. It was self-referential and about containment; the art-making process could hold my powerful emotions. Continuing, I used the end of a brush to etch into the layers of paint, revealing those below. What had spilt out, swirling outside, does not disappear. It may be hidden, but memory can reveal traces of it at different times. The central containing form is a deep well from which to draw; intersectional aspects of identity are woven into it.

During my clinical placement in a children’s residential psychiatric unit attached to an NHS hospital, I began applying to practice the theories I had learned. Patrick Casement’s (1985) intricate and humble accounts of working as a psychotherapist and learning from patients were a reminder that the person is the expert on their own life. Robert Hobson’s book (1987), *Forms of Feeling*, on how symbolism and metaphor can lead to transformative life changes, was inspirational. Donald Winnicott’s (2005 [1971]) writing on playing and reality, which explains the role of creativity in children’s development and the importance of the ‘potential space’ and the role of ‘transitional objects/phenomena’, helped define the art therapy space, including the materials and possible functions of the artworks created. I found Mélanie Klein’s (1975) concept of the infant’s powerful opposing feelings and her theory of the ‘depressive position’, where the infant learns to hold intense feelings of love and hate in balance, essential. Jung’s (1965) concept of ‘active imagination’, applied in art therapy, for instance, when one puts oneself in the picture, imagining what might happen next, what quality a particular colour has or what can be changed, was also crucial to my understanding of art used for psychological health. Later, other theorists of art, culture, art therapy, pedagogy, psychology and neuroscience helped me hone my practice as an art psychotherapist.

In 1989, after completing my training and qualifying as an art therapist, the Observation and Assessment residential centre for girls excluded from school had closed. The city’s provision for children changed with the introduction of the *Children Act* that year. Education officials planned for

teachers like me and those in the youth justice sector to cease working in a teaching team with a social services brief. We were to be redeployed into mainstream education. However, with our commitment to interdisciplinary working (teachers and social workers working side by side) and the support of our teaching unions, our representative began discussions with education officials. A teaching service was established to facilitate communication between social services and schools, serving the city's looked-after children and aligning with the coordinated support stipulated in the *Children Act*. The service generated close collaboration among health, education, and care to support these children in the 1990s. It was an important local initiative and ahead of its time. I was allocated to a children's home for primary-aged pupils who needed long-term therapeutic support before they would be considered for a foster placement or adoption. All the children had experienced multiple school exclusions and failed foster placements. My art therapy skills helped my role as a teacher advocate for these children. Concurrently, I also worked as an art therapist for a few years, assisting children referred to me by social workers who were familiar with my work.

A social worker, whom I will call 'Emma', referred a teenage girl, whom I will call 'Claire', to me. I was given minimal but crucial information. Claire had suffered long-term sexual abuse. Emma, to ensure privacy, allocated me a small room with a table and two chairs in the social services building for a regular day and time for eight weeks, and introduced me to Claire. I explained to Claire that art therapy was her space to use art materials however she wished, and she did not have to speak if she did not want to. I also explained that whatever she said or did was confidential, unless she or anyone else was at risk of harm. The only person I would discuss our work with would be my clinical supervisor. I set up the room with large pieces of paper, bottles of paint in various colours, pots of water, brushes of different sizes, and a mixing palette. In each session, Claire would select colours, pour the paint into the palette segments, and arrange the paper on the table. Then, she would work energetically, and I would witness her creativity. She used brushes but sometimes squirted paint directly onto the paper from the bottle, then painted with her hands. She knew what she wanted and needed to do, working tirelessly, sometimes stepping back to reflect. Forms appeared and

disappeared in her work. I had no idea what was happening, but I was familiar with sitting with uncertainty and staying with my feelings, which is fundamental to psychotherapy practice. Sometimes, I could see what I thought were recognisable shapes, but it would have been a gross assumption to express what I felt, presuming that what I said might be helpful to her. We did not know each other well enough to risk making a mistake. I carefully kept Claire's images in a folder between sessions. After eight weeks, she thanked me and took her paintings with her. I met Emma again through our interdisciplinary work several years later. She told me that Claire's art therapy sessions had greatly benefited her. She also told me that she had kept the painting she had made during the experiential training session I delivered for her social work team, on the office wall above her desk. Such positive feedback was heartening. Emma's careful management of systemic support, as Claire's social worker, facilitated and 'held' the nonverbal power of art therapy.

Participating in professional development training helped me stay up to date with changes in the art therapy profession; at that time, there were very few art therapists working in schools. The image on the next page is a small detail of a sculpture I made during a training day. The theme was different identities in life. The training offered participants time, space and materials to explore the attention we give to the various facets of our personal and professional lives. I used cloth, wire, wood and other materials to create a three-dimensional triangular structure with four planes. The planes represented my work as an art therapist, my new involvement in human rights advocacy, my family and friends, and my leisure time. Creating this artwork helped me reflect on the relationships between the various aspects of my life. I realised which planes to focus more on and where to rein myself. The bandages referred to emotional wounds, mine and others', felt through empathy. Reflections on artworks can focus on *how* art materials are utilised. However, the content, concepts, feelings, and ideas are more than this. Heterotopia, a concept coined by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, combines the 'real' and the 'mythical' (like a mirror with a 'real' glass surface and an 'unreal' reflected image that cannot be handled). Art therapist Pam Whitaker proposed: 'Every piece of art is a heterotopia of learning about ourselves and the world' (Whitaker, 2005, p. 66).

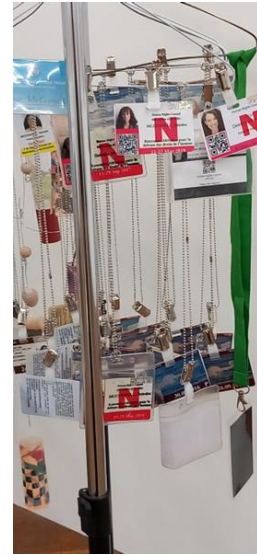


*Bandages (detail)* (Mixed Media, 2005)

Art-making has accompanied me throughout my life, helping me to make sense of my experiences. The installation below was made for a solo exhibition, *Heterotopia: Moments in Art*, held in Manchester. The turquoise dome, made during my Master's course in 2011, represents the 'Human Rights and Alliance of Civilisations Room' ceiling in Geneva's UN *Palais des Nations*. Spanish artist Miquel Barceló sculpted it, referring to the space underneath as an 'Agora', a place for speech and action. Like mine and other delegates' coats, my official passes to enter UN meetings and other international human rights forums and conferences are hung on coat hangers. I have made speeches and oral interventions under Barceló's and other ceilings. The passes total more than sixty.



*Looking back at twenty-eight years of human rights advocacy.* Installation (Mixed media, 2025)  
Exhibition held at the Rogue Artists' Studio in Higher Openshaw, Manchester, from 8 to 23 February 2025.



Details of the Installation shown above

The central section of the installation (the central detail above) comprises ten mobiles with different themes related to fact-finding missions, human rights defenders and ground realities in war zones.

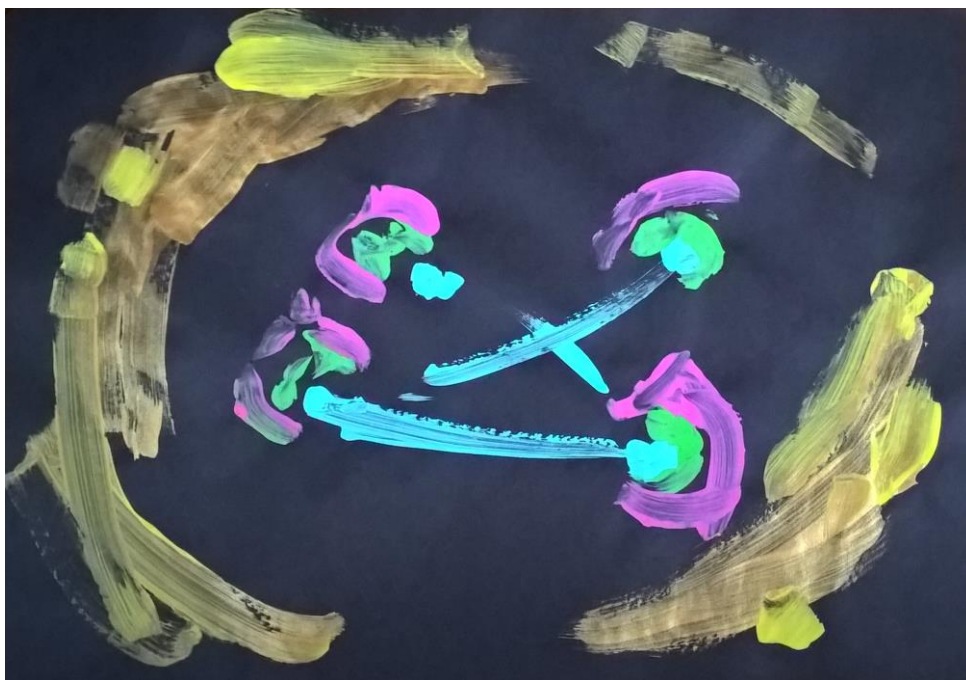
## **2.5 Art therapy in schools: First with refugee children**

The opportunity to work as an art therapist in a collaborative therapeutic team was made possible by the Children's Fund in 2002, thirteen years after I qualified as an art therapist. I was seconded from my then role as a local authority 'behaviour needs' specialist teacher advising schools, to work in the team due to my experience of supporting refugees. The project was holistic and interdisciplinary from the outset. It included an educational psychologist, a counsellor, a horticulture therapist, a retired medical doctor and the local Red Cross. All the interventions facilitated dialogue between families, teachers, social workers, health workers, and, most importantly, the children. In 2006, recognising the effectiveness of this multi-faceted approach to working with emotional trauma, city officials commissioned the growing team of therapists to work with children born in the UK who were distressed for various reasons. The referral criteria and the team's modalities widened. Dramatherapists, music therapists and more art psychotherapists joined the team. Creating safe spaces with gentle yet firm space-time boundaries (a feature of heterotopia, as we shall see later) where children could freely use safe 'tools' – such as art materials or other media – to explore past experiences helped children find creative solutions to problems. The team's work expanded into

many new areas. My Master's in Art Therapy Research analysed the team's evolution through nearly a decade of political and economic changes (2002-2011), including the immediate effects of the 2008 global financial crisis (McConnell, 2012). My experiences of personal art and various professional practices contributed to crystallising the research ideas for the present study.

## **2.6 Time and space: Art-making during the COVID-19 pandemic**

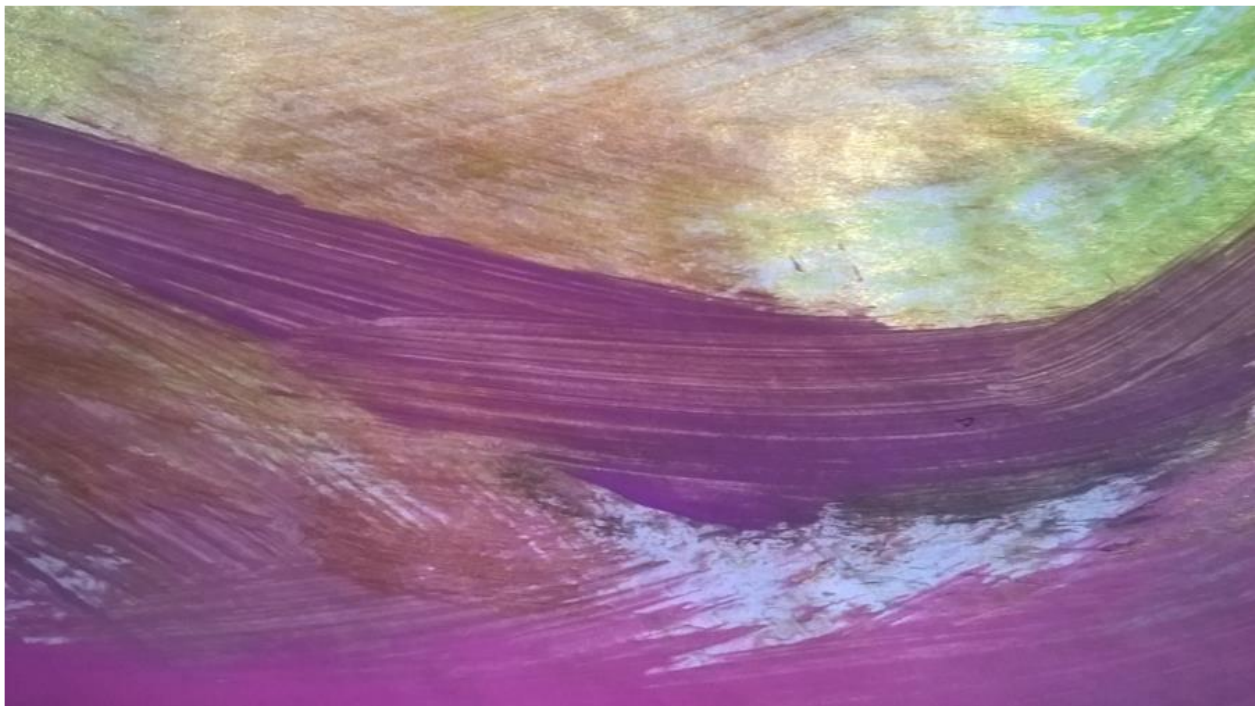
The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted my research plans, as it did for many. Yet it serendipitously provided an opportunity to examine the themes of time, space, and power, which are central to the thesis. In the hot Spring of 2020, with no planes in the sky or cars on the road, there was a stillness in my small inner-city garden that balanced the hectic life of online working. Like many, I immersed myself in nature during my free time, taking advantage of the one hour a day we were allowed outside, in the local park. One day, deeply relaxed and sitting in the sweltering heat of the garden, knowing I should take a break and go inside, I raised my face to the sun, eyes closed. I saw a pattern in technicolour lights. Wanting to paint this image, I hastened indoors to my studio, which had become a 'data' research room. I created the picture below. This started my visual enquiry into Henri Bergson's two concepts of time.



*Bright abstract patterns seen with closed eyes (Paint on sugar paper, 2020)*

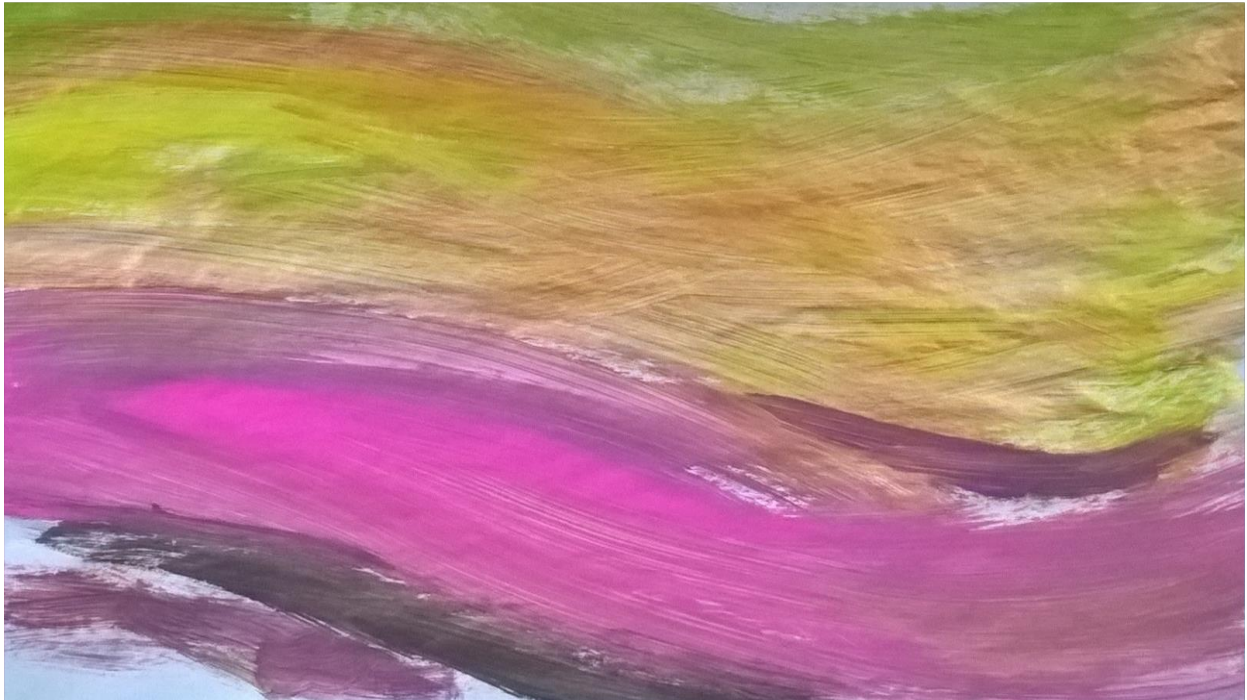
This swiftly painted image led to another that depicts the flow of time held by 'bookends' that define the beginning and end of a period of creativity. It encapsulates both kinds of time: clock time and *durée*, the latter being the subjective experience of time. However, before viewing this second painting as a whole, I propose to show a tiny fragment. The reason for doing this will become clear.

I invite the reader to look at the image immediately below and suppose it represents a fraction of a moment: some light, some dark, purple strokes sweeping through and blending, a sense of movement, maybe. A hint of gold. You will respond to it in your own way, and your interpretation is crucial to the process.



*Fraction of a Moment in Time (detail)* (Paint on paper, 2020)

On the next page, I invite you to look at another image. It zooms out from the image on the current page, showing more of the entire picture, but not all of it. The content of the picture you have already looked at on this page has decreased in size. It has become a small detail in the bottom right. It is no longer isolated. It is beginning to relate to a broader whole.



*A broader picture (detail) (paint on paper, 2020)*

We can imagine this image's textures, colours and movements representing moments in a child's art therapy session. Each colour could, for instance, represent a different emotion. Creating a painting involves continually moving between the parts and the whole, and then back to the parts again, and so on. Large parts may remain unfinished, in which case the unfinishedness is integral to the whole. As paint is brushed onto the page and interacts, colour and form may change; an organic process absorbs the artist, the child, or whoever is creating it. The emotions, sensations, thoughts and intuitions experienced chime with Bergson's idea of the 'data of consciousness' occurring in the person's *durée*, the flow of their experience. A more recent thinker's analysis of experiences of time resonates with Bergson's concept of *durée*. Psychoanalyst and psychotherapist Daniel Stern studied moments in human interactions, first between caregivers and infants (1971), then between adults (2004), and later in the arts (2010). He studied 'present moments', 'moments of meeting', and then developed the concept of 'forms of vitality' in the arts. I argue that children's paintings or artwork are replete with forms of vitality and carry signs of children's *durée*: their time and free will.

Zooming out even further from the same picture, we now see the whole, depicted in the image below. It can be seen as a prototype art therapy session, as I will explain:



*The whole session: Clock time and durée (Poster paint on thin paper, 2020)*

The vertical lines on the left indicate the start of the session, as measured by clock time, and can be adjusted by a few minutes depending on circumstances. Similarly, the vertical lines on the right signify when the session should end: again, this is not always exact. Multiple vertical lines indicate the ending may be a few minutes earlier or later than the predetermined time. For instance, the child may find the ending difficult. The therapist, school staff, and the child share a common understanding of the consistent weekly clock-time boundaries. If the child cannot tell the time, they may become accustomed to the shape of the clock hands' position at the predetermined time. The central flow from left to right, of different colours intermingling, overlapping, emerging, and disappearing, represents the flow of time when the child is absorbed in doing, making, being – whatever may be happening for them, whatever emotions are expressed. This time is *durée* and cannot be segmented or predicted. It flowed before the session and will continue flowing afterwards. However, here, the contained period prioritises *durée*. In the bottom right, you see the section you responded to earlier; its details are now less pronounced and subsumed into the whole.

### 2.6.1 Meditations on ferns: Clock time and *durée* during lockdowns

Here are more examples of reflexive meditations on these two aspects of time. Bergson emphasises that *durée* is real time. Clock time, he asserts, is a form of space. It marks, measures and calculates. It can create a timeline, a 'succession' of dots or points in space, allowing us to step back and look at it all. Absorption in subjective experience, *durée*, can lead to losing track of clock time. An eternity may seem to pass in a few minutes, or an hour can flash by, seemingly in no time.

Around the time that the blinding sun gave me starting colours to paint the representation of *durée*'s flow, I also noticed the intricate beauty of the ferns I had planted in my garden the year before. The fronds' rhythmic patterns illustrate succession in time, with individual tiny leaves denoting regular intervals. The overall shape denotes *durée* or continuity. A related way of thinking about this is the concept of the whole and its parts. Bergson uses the example of music, in which the notes on the page indicate the pitch and duration of the sounds to be played. Notes spell a tune, as letters spell a word. However, when you hear the musical instrument play, you do not hear the separate notes; you listen to the melody as a whole. Different emotional tones may emerge, evolve, or decrease as sounds and silences continue to combine. This flow of experience, *durée*, cannot be divided.



*The parts: Fern frond* (Photographs, 2020)



*The whole and the parts* (Photographs, 2020)



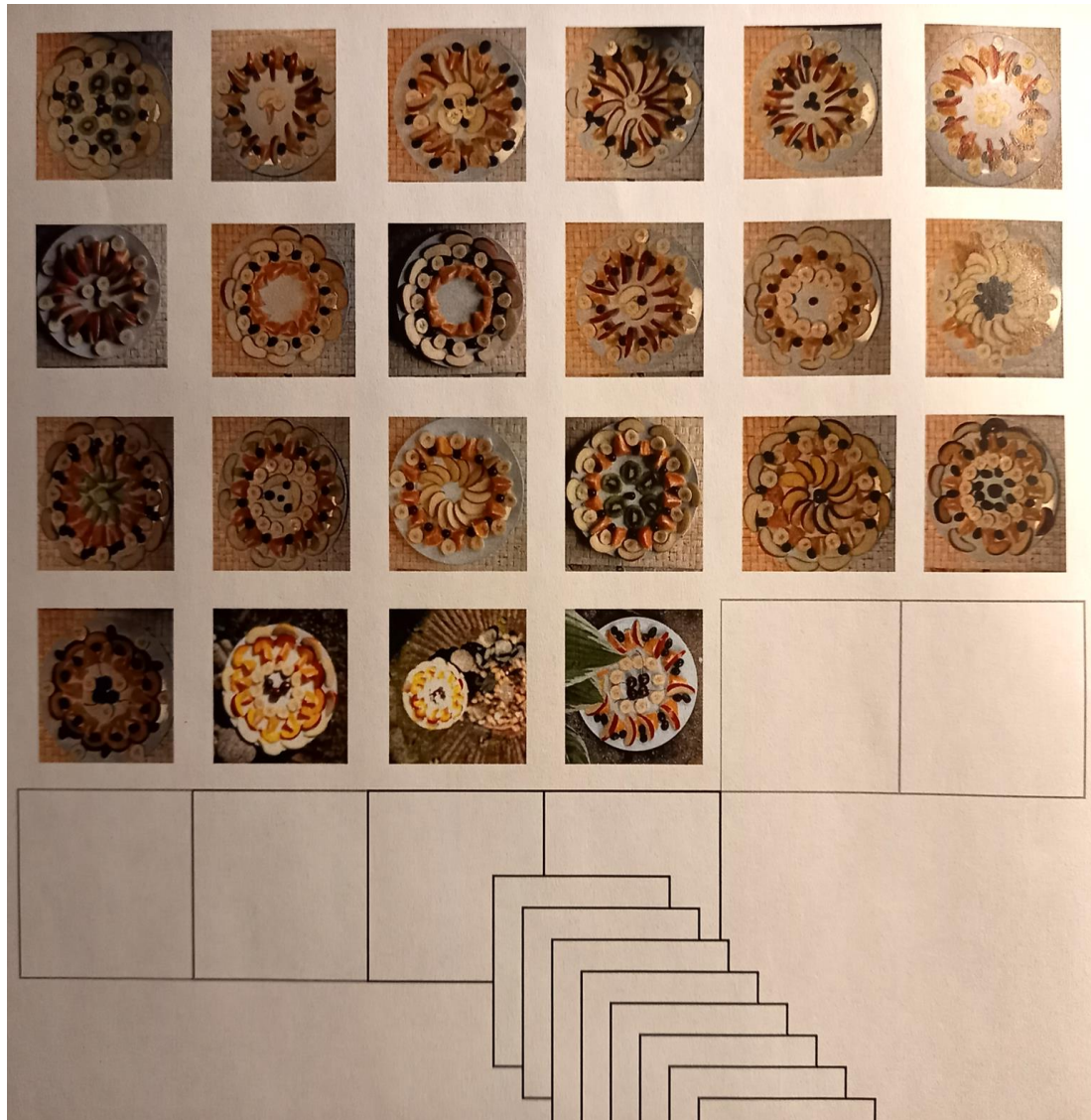
*Durée* (Photograph, 2020)

## 2.6.2 Breakfast mandalas in Lockdowns

Experimentation with the concepts of succession and *durée*, as applied to my breakfast routine, led me to peel and cut fruit each morning and create a mandala. Each day was different, and so were my feelings. However, the early morning ritual of preparing my food was the same. When I took my plate, sat down, and relaxed to eat, usually in the garden, new and unexpected thoughts would arrive at my mind's doorstep. The structured space allowed me to be aware of experiencing my *durée* flow as it unfolded that particular day at that specific time.



*A good morning mandala* (Plate and fruit, 2020)



*Visible succession: Invisible durée* (Photographs and computer graphic)

In this image of 'Visible succession', I illustrate how markers for clock-time make succession obvious: seen. By contrast, the inner experience of time is private. Others cannot see it. Earlier, I used the painting of the prototype art therapy session, in a two-step enlargement process, focusing on a small section and then zooming out, to deconstruct clock-time and *durée*, then reconstruct their relationship. I did the same with the ferns and the mandalas. I now return to the creative period of that hot Summer when the pandemic hit, and to another painting I created. To borrow from Stern, this delves into a 'present moment'. In doing so, it introduces Henri Bergson's most critical contribution to philosophical thinking, according to Gilles Deleuze: the concept of multiplicity.

## 2.7 The now and *durée's* multiplicity

I return to the medium of paint. In the image below, the dots represent units, approximately five seconds apart, which I used to analyse the research project's sixty-five-minute video. The flow of time, *durée*, is shown in the form of waves. The now, represented by the vertical line, constantly moves to the right as time flows on. The present becomes the past, and the future becomes the present. Thinking of the now as a 'present moment' of several seconds, as Daniel Stern proposes in *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life* (2004), and combining it with Bergson's *durée*, we behold the 'multiplicity' that this moment contains. If we are open to these phenomena, many possibilities exist at any moment, which are further enhanced when creative art-making is added. In art therapy, the therapist is often aware of moments of connection, as unforeseen new novelties emerge. Aileen Webber's book *Breakthrough Moments in Arts-Based Psychotherapies* (2017) describes such moments as different elements synchronising to reveal new insights of



*The present moment in durée's flow* (Painting 2020)

significant meaning. Indeed, such moments occur in the current research. On the next page, as we look at the second half of the present moment painting above, we might imagine the vertical line already moving into the future, towards possibilities ahead. Here, I use the Western cultural convention of a timeline proceeding from left to right, which chimes with the act of writing:



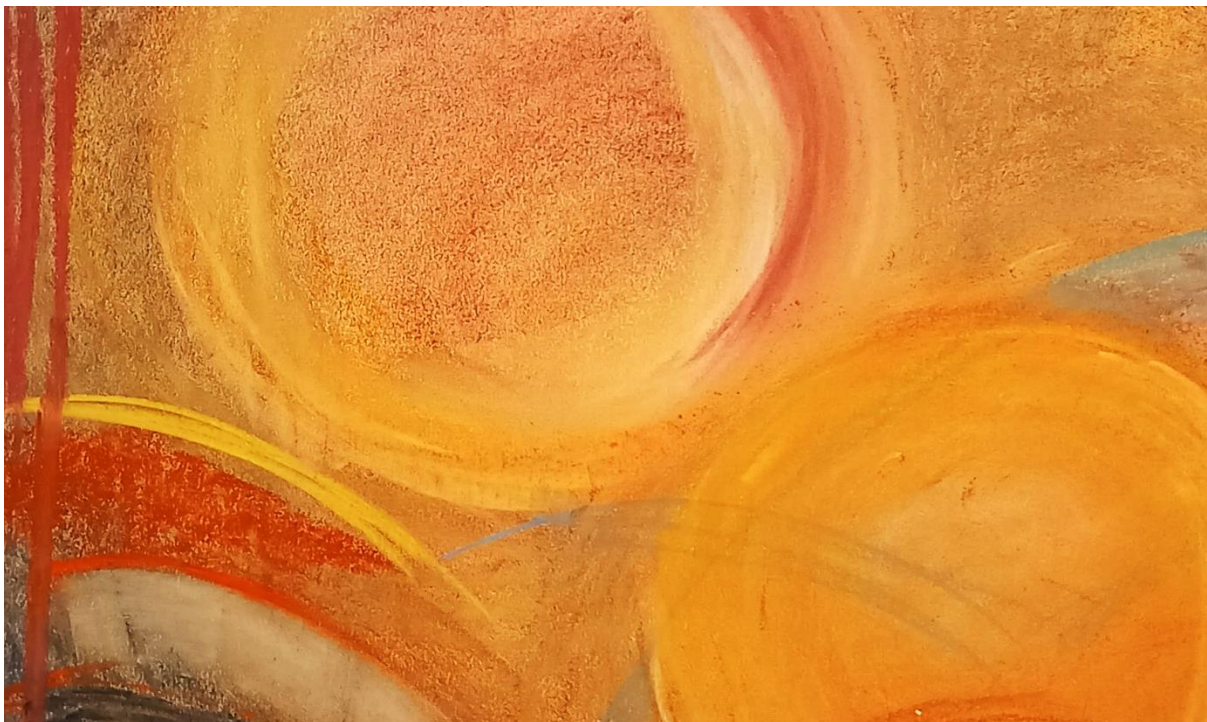
*The present moment in durée's flow* (detail) (Painting 2020)

### **2.7.1 The ‘now’, psychotherapy and the ‘shared feeling voyage’**

Since art psychotherapy combines the two distinct fields of art and psychotherapy, it may help orient the reader further to my perspective if I briefly explain what being a psychotherapist means to me. My experiences in practice have led me to synthesise different approaches. I mentioned the theoreticians who informed my thinking during my art therapy training. One of these was Donald Winnicott, whose writings have continued to inspire me, as will be seen in this thesis. Two psychiatrists, both also psychotherapists, Daniel Stern and Daniel Siegel, have influenced my practice and research significantly over the last decade. I have found Siegel’s work, especially on the self-organising, embodied and relational nature of the developing mind, helpful (Siegel, 2020a). Stern’s research on human communication in psychotherapy, as it unfolds in small units of time, mentioned earlier, links well with Bergson’s concept of *durée*. Indeed, Stern acknowledged the philosophical influence of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and William James (Bergson influenced both) on his idea of subjective experience as ‘a starting place to look for vitality forms or the feel of being alive’ (Stern, 2010, p. 34). In his later work, Stern applied his interest in the ‘here and now’ to dynamic and/or artistic expressions, which he called ‘forms of vitality’ (2010). He insisted that he was not inventing these; they are ubiquitous in human experience, in and outside the arts. However, he was ‘trying to identify, conceptualize, and give a name to such experiences, to better understand and use them’ (Stern, 2010, p. 129). Interestingly, Stern asserted that the role of vitality forms in intersubjectivity awakened interest in the ‘basic notions of non-verbal therapies’ (2010, p. 139), a remark that is significant for art therapy in a climate where the talking therapies are sometimes more widely understood than the arts therapies. Stern described ‘intersubjectivity’ as ‘the sharing of another’s experience’ (Stern, 2010, p. 43). In this context, he defined a particular kind of ‘moment of meeting’ as a ‘shared feeling voyage’ (2004, p. 172), explaining that ‘Shared feeling voyages are one of life’s most startling yet normal events, capable of altering our world step by step or in one leap’ (2004, p. 173). Shared feeling voyages are useful when thinking about psychotherapy, because it is in the aliveness of sharing in the ‘here and now’, that change happens. As Stern articulated:

most psychotherapists agree that therapeutic work in the 'here and now' has the greatest power in bringing about change. That is where and when mutually aware contact between the minds of the therapist and patient takes place (Stern, 2004, p. 3).

The 'mutually aware contact' is crucial in psychotherapeutic work. Exploring a range of these ideas afresh during the research period allowed me to name familiar experiences. For instance, the phrase 'implicit relational knowing', which describes 'how we implicitly know how 'to be with' a specific other' authentically, encompasses significant processes in psychotherapy practice (Stern, 2010, p. 11). Shared feeling voyages, which grow from implicit relational knowing, and vitality forms that grow from authentic artistic expression, provide language to talk and think about micro-moments, 'involving gestures, physical positions, muscular tonicity, voice and language' (Stern, 2010, p. 146). Through the research process, I gradually grasped new layers of meaning and made connections between ideas and experiences, as well as between theory and practice. Reflecting on how the research enabled me to consciously acknowledge what I knew but did not realise I knew, I created an image of vitality forms, visualising movements and expressions as they might appear, grow, and diminish in an art therapy session with a child. A detail is reproduced below:



*Forms of Vitality* (detail of drawing in pastels, 2025)

## 2.8 The focused art therapy hour

I close this chapter with an image which I created after seeing the research event video for the first time. Like a clock face, the hour is represented as a circle. Within it swirls the dynamic, focused energy of the participants. Looking at it now, the pastel drawing of vitality forms (on the previous page) could be a tiny detail within the circle. When I painted the image below seven years ago, I sensed hidden clues within this focused hour that, if investigated, might contribute to a better understanding of what happens in art therapy for schoolchildren and how. As the research progressed, I made unexpected discoveries regarding time, space, and power as I explored heterotopic theory, the idea of time as *durée*, a 'becoming', and Stern's work on present moments and shared feeling voyages. The awe I felt witnessing the focused hour has not faded.



*The Focused Hour* (Poster paint on paper, 2018)

### 3.0 CHAPTER 3 – The Context: Intercultural Encounters

This chapter starts by outlining the ‘intercultural encounter’ between art therapy and education. I review different paradigmatic frames for research in school art therapy and provide examples. Then I explain the benefits of art-based education research’s ‘Four Purposes of Drawing’ and adapt them for art therapy. As far as I know, this subset of scholarship has not been utilised in art therapy research thus far. Theories of trust, play, and creativity from related disciplines, such as psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, are then considered. The second half of the chapter presents the socio-economic and political realities of children’s permanent exclusion from school, examining societal, health, legal, and financial perspectives. Finally, various types of school climates are defined.

#### 3.1 An ‘intercultural encounter’ - art therapy and education

In the UK, the teaching and art therapy professions are situated under the purview of different government departments. Each profession has its unique training, qualifications, support structures, and continuing professional development opportunities, enabling professionals to stay informed about developments and acquire additional skills. After gaining a Master's qualification in art therapy, art therapists register as Allied Health Professionals with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).<sup>2</sup> NHS England’s brief description of the role of art therapists is: ‘Art therapists use art as a medium to address emotional issues which may be confusing and distressing.’<sup>3</sup> The Department for Education (2011) outlines the roles and standards of teachers. As mentioned earlier, guidance on multi-agency working underpins safeguarding and supporting children, and applies to all staff working with children, regardless of their role (HM Government, 2023).

---

<sup>2</sup> Art therapists/art psychotherapists, dramatherapists, and music therapists are legally protected professional titles in the UK. I use the terms art therapist and art psychotherapist interchangeably. The HCPC regulates these arts therapies and fourteen other Allied Health Professions. It defines an arts therapist as ‘a psychological therapist who has arts-based experience and training in psychological interventions using drama, music or art as their primary mode of communication’ (Health and Care Professions Council, 2018). Art therapists adhere to the HCPC’s *Standards of conduct* (HCPC, 2024) and the BAAT professional *Code of ethics* (British Association of Art Therapists, 2019). *Art therapy in schools: A guide for education professionals*, is available at: <https://baat.org/publications/public-documents/> (British Association of Art Therapists, n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> A brief description of each Allied Health Professional role was co-produced with the Workforce, Training and Education Directorate in NHS England and the professional bodies. See: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ahp/role/>

The shared goal of teachers and art therapists is children’s learning and well-being. The partnership between teachers and therapists in addressing children’s needs has been defined as an ‘intercultural encounter’, in which the integration of the two cultures should be approached both conceptually and practically (Wengrower, 2001, p. 109). Although written in another country over two decades ago, Wengrower’s analysis remains relevant to art therapy in UK schools today. Her table below defines the differences between the two cultures:

Table 1

Emphasis in the therapy culture	Emphasis in the education culture
The individual or the group	The class or the school
Uniqueness, difference	Common aspects of the age level, universalism
The child as a complex entity, with opposing motives, internal conflicts	The pupil as a learning entity, who must respect norms and be consistent (ego functions, reality principle)
The therapist accepts; the child expresses his inner world	The teacher teaches, makes demands, gives exams; the pupil is tested, competes for achievement
Deals with uncertainty	Definitions and clear concepts
Therapist thinks after the session, processing	Teacher works on course and lesson planning
Process, results are evaluated qualitatively	Measurable results
Thinking, introspection	Action, pragmatism
The interpersonal relationship between therapist-child is a “tool” used for the entire population of clients (transference-countertransference)	The importance of the teacher-pupil relationship is in reverse proportion to the age of the pupils
Thinking about what was done and what took place at the unconscious level	Thinking about what was done and what took place on the conscious level

*Emphasis on general and relative differences-comparison and contrast (Wengrower, 2001, p. 111)*

A revision is needed here concerning evaluation (seventh row), since art therapists in schools have found ways to evaluate their work quantitatively, using standardised measures, as will be seen below (for example, Ottisdottir, 2010) and in local practice-based evidence (in the author’s team practice.)<sup>4</sup> Before presenting the extensive body of art therapy research relevant to this study, I outline research that informs public discourse on art and wellbeing more generally.

<sup>4</sup> The team of therapists involved in the current research was established in 2002, originally commissioned by the Children’s Fund (CF) during the Every Child Matters policy era (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). The CF’s three priorities were ‘giving children a voice’, supporting school staff through ‘capacity building’, and creating partnerships with statutory and non-statutory organisations. The CF required regular data on outputs and outcomes. The team devised qualitative and quantitative outcome measures for: a) work with individual children and b) developments in the school’s understanding of the interdisciplinary support required to maximise the benefits children gain from arts therapies in school. The author presented a report (McConnell, 2007) at the ‘Sharing Best Practice in Assessment in the Arts Therapies’ conference, organised by the Scottish Arts Therapies Forum and NHS Quality Improvement, in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2008.

Members of the public and practitioners working across multiple models in broad, disparate fields, such as education, healthcare, social care, and the voluntary sector, are increasingly recognising the value of art-related activities for their own and others' mental health and/or for enjoyment and relaxation. There is a long history of research in this field, and we will see in Chapter Four how the founders of education in the West, William James and John Dewey, emphasised the importance of a balance in children's education between cognitive learning (thought) and affective learning (feelings). They recognised that cognition and affect are interconnected. More recent research has examined the arts' benefits for health and well-being directly through art-making (Adamson, 2000) and (McNiff, 2004), and the effects of art-related activities on social and health determinants (APPG, 2017). Global evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing, in many European countries, has been reviewed (Fancourt and Finn, 2019), and scientist Daisy Fancourt, Professor of Psychobiology and Epidemiology, has recently published *Art Cures: The Science of How the Arts Transform Our Lives* (Fancourt, 2026). Referencing these publications here helps set the broader societal context of art and health within which art therapy research and practice take place.

### **3.2 Art therapy research**

A review of quantitative and qualitative research on art therapy as a treatment for traumatised children found that it was used internationally in various contexts with children experiencing different negative psychosocial problems arising from traumatic life experiences (Eaton *et al.*, 2007). However, the breadth of the literature and the imprecision around the nature of children's symptoms suggested further research was necessary. More recently, an international review of quantitative research on the effectiveness, feasibility, and acceptability of art therapy for children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic concluded that art therapy appears to improve various aspects of mental health, sleep quality, and psychological well-being. However, these quantitative researchers found that, viewed through the lens of a positivist standpoint, 'more empirical evidence is needed with larger sample sizes and longer duration of interventions' (Le Vu *et al.*, 2022).

Most practitioner art therapy research involves noticing contextual details in complex situations. It has long been suggested that, as art therapists, we develop methods over time that enable us to ‘gather our own constellation of evidence, which is, art therapy specific’ (Wood, 1999, p. 55). Chiming with this suggestion, alongside the more well-known quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, a third has been proposed for art therapy research: the performative paradigm (Kapitan, 2025, p. 214). This may serve as a helpful framework when designing innovative methods in art therapy research. Broadly, quantitative research examines numerical measurements, qualitative research utilises words, and performative research uses non-numerical, non-word-based data, such as still and moving images, sound, and live action (Kapitan, 2025, p. 216). Art-based research has used performative methods for many years (McNiff, 1998; McNiff, ed., 2013).

### **3.2.1 Stern-inspired art therapy research**

In this section, I consider four research papers that can be situated within the performative paradigm. They are all inspired by Stern’s research. Although I have already mentioned Stern’s work several times, it is appropriate now to explain a little more about why I found Stern’s work so important in conducting this research. Daniel Stern was one of the psychoanalysts in the Boston Change Process Study Group, which has published extensively on early child development for twenty-five years. Photographs and, later on, video stills, yielded crucial information about human communication, motivations, and responsiveness in the first months and years of life. Studies revealed complex worlds of experience within infants, mothers, and in their joint interactions, as they interact with body movements, eye contact, facial expressions, utterances, and silence. The concepts of ‘implicit knowing’ and ‘implicit relational knowing’ evolved, stemming from knowledge of the other within the self, and knowledge of the self in the other. Stern then developed a research method by analysing micro-moments of adults’ experiences, using audio recordings of interviews (Stern, 2004). He called these micro-units of time ‘present moments’, and described them as having a range of one to ten seconds: averaging at three or four seconds. It is worth looking a little closer at

Stern's intricate and multi-faceted concept of present moments. His colleague and friend Robert Emde, in his tribute to Stern, helpfully provided a summary of Stern's concept of present moments:

He conceptualises these as basic units of subjective experience in which 'schemas of being with' occur. He elaborates that present moments are complex aspects of experience that involve simultaneous parallel processing with implicit, intuitive, and procedural nonconscious activity, often modeled according to 'time intensity affects' and with 'temporal feeling shapes' that organize them. Further, there is an intimate context for lived experience, referred to as an 'intersubjective matrix', that resides in the connectedness with others and that we breathe continuously without being aware of it, like oxygen (Emde, 2017, pp. 217-8).

Present moments in lived experience, situated in connectedness with others, which, like the oxygen we breathe continuously, we are not aware of, make them challenging to study and explain. A method of analysis is required that can capture their essence. Other art therapy researchers and practitioners have drawn on Stern's work in a variety of ways, and I now turn to four authors who have done so.

Hilary Hosea's Stern-inspired ethnographic and participatory research, in which she videotaped interactions between mothers and young children as they painted, revealed the aliveness of 'vitality affects' (Hosea, 2006, p. 69). Vitality affects precede Stern's concept of vitality forms. Hosea's video analysis revealed that the free play and improvisation of painting created a 'fertile space ... for co-creation where 'moments of meeting' can happen', facilitating shared meaning in a 'new, implicit, intersubjective understanding' (Hosea, 2006, p. 76). Jonathan Isserow (2008) also cited Stern, bringing together child development and psychoanalytic perspectives to discuss joint attention. He wrote: 'Looking together at the art object is determined by the dance of the eyes between patient, therapist and art object' in a dynamic 'inter-affective experience' that relies on the therapist's 'sensitive and attuned responses' to the patient and the 'patient's capacity to share affect with the therapist' (Isserow, 2008, p. 41). As we will see in the current research, 'what the image may reflect or mirror back to the patient may need to be supported by the therapist within the triangular relationship' (Isserow 2008, p. 41). Ali Cole's heuristic art-based research on how experiences of time might affect the practice of art psychotherapy uses an art-based study, inspired by Stern's concept of 'now' moments (Coles, 2014). Cole examined 'the state of heightened artistic sensitivity' the

therapist needs, to sense the 'spatial qualities of each 'now'', to 'mould a container to support the meeting of client and therapist in the moment' (2014, p. 80). Her perspective emphasises art-making's spatial and temporal value, enabling clients to 'mark, 'remark on' and contain temporal experiences' (Cole, 2014, p. 80). We see this in the current study. Finally, we consider a study situated at the intersection of the three paradigms. Swedish researchers employed a qualitative approach, followed by deductive content analysis, to explore 'vitality affects' (Holmqvist *et al.*, 2019). Interviews with women clients about their experience of inner change experienced through art therapy revealed that 'image making in the art therapy process', alongside attachment and trust, 'gives rise to vitality affects and basic affects that contribute to inner change' (Holmqvist *et al.*, 2019, p. 38). Basic affects are understood as 'primarily a biological response', distinguished from vitality affects, understood to be 'of an inner psychological nature' (Holmqvist *et al.*, 2019, p. 31). Having considered these four art therapy research papers that directly reference Stern's concepts of 'vitality affects', 'now moments' and 'moments of meeting', I turn to studies that include paradigmatically performative research, focusing on art materials.

### **3.2.2 Art materials: paint, paper, scissors and clay**

Materials and children's interactions with them can be a focus of art therapy research. Art therapist Meyeowitz-Katz, in her article titled 'Art Materials and Processes – A Place of Meeting', analyses her work with a four-year-old child (2003). She described the child's intense emotions expressed 'with the pouring and poured paint, and his absorption in investigating the effects of his own actions on it' and explained how this gave her insights into how the therapeutic relationship could evolve (Meyeowitz-Katz, 2003, p. 63). Also writing in a narrative style, art psychotherapist Caroline Case, explored children's use of scissors and 'cutting up, cutting out and sticking down', showing how observing children working can help 'trace the dynamics of the child's inner world' (Case, 2006, p. 42). She encouraged readers to consider how specific art-making processes can uncover potential meanings. For instance, cutting a shape from one piece of paper and sticking it on another could represent 'an island of experience in the mind, not yet assimilated', that the child could later explore

with the therapist (Case, 2006, p. 52). On a different note, a Bird's Nest Drawing (BND) projective assessment was adapted for use with sculpture. A study combined art-making with clay, twigs, and moss, with an 'open-ended phenomenological interview' to illuminate child participants' internal attachment experiences (Sheller, 2007, p. 120). The researcher proposed that nuances revealed by this adapted standardised measure, combined with a phenomenological approach that views artwork as conveying ideas and feelings, may enhance clinicians' understanding of a child's insecure attachment. Another study used drawing to adapt an investigative interview (Cohen-Liebman, 2021). Art therapy case study research, to which I now turn, also frequently has performative aspects.

### **3.2.3 Case studies**

In his article, 'The role of the case study in art therapy research', Dave Edwards proposed that the storytelling aspect of case studies can create meaning 'shared both inside and outside the clinical setting' (Edwards, 1999, p. 2). Having discussed scientific and humanistic approaches to research, he asserted that it seemed the truth about human experience was 'largely determined by metaphors, stories, beliefs and doctrines which in any given society shape our ideas about the world and what it means to be human' (Edwards, 1999, p. 5). Edwards urged art therapists to write 'closely observed case studies' to help with art therapy's theory building (1999, p. 8).

Two chapters in the book *Images of art therapy: New developments in theory and practice*, published nearly forty years ago (Dalley *et al.*, 1987), present detailed case studies illustrating work with children. The studies interweave narrative accounts of practice and theory. In the first chapter, Case, whom we have already met, powerfully described psychodynamic work with two children in different settings: one a looked-after child in an Observation and Assessment centre (the reader may recall from Chapter Two my work in such a centre), and the other, a child in a primary school. Her writing focused on loss, grief and transition. The children in the assessment centre had 'complicated multiple losses' (Case 1987, p. 49). Today, these children might be in mainstream schools, identified as having 'complex and additional needs', as will be explained later. Case described the function of the art

therapist and room as 'partly a counterpoint to the teacher and classroom', where the child could experience making choices and creating their own goals in a bespoke way impossible in the classroom (Case, 1987, p. 37). She described the role of the art therapy space as an area of experience that overlaps inner and outer, enabling children 'to accept and work with inner and outer reality' (Case, 1987, p. 69). While Case's colleagues were social workers, residential staff, and teachers, Diana Halliday's colleagues, the author of the second chapter, were members of the psychiatric team in the child guidance centre where she worked. Through her seven descriptive case vignettes, Halliday aimed to 'encapsulate some of the flashes of insight which illuminate the search for meaning' in her art therapy work with children in her therapy room (Halliday, 1987, p. 129). There, the children could be 'both seen and heard in the presence of one concerned adult' and transform the art therapy room as they wished: '(i)n an atmosphere of privacy and trust, the therapy room became a play room, studio, shop, battlefield, nursery, office, home' (Halliday, 1987, p. 128).

Halliday found that:

However sad, mad, or bad the children may have felt themselves to be, creative art and activities had enabled change to come about. Inner worlds have been expressed; fantasies and feelings have taken shape and colour in the magic play of art (Halliday, 1987, p. 128).

Children's imaginative transformation of the art therapy space will be highlighted in the current research and epitomised in Foucault's explication of how children intuitively understand heterotopias. Although general descriptors of children, such as 'maladjusted' and 'maladapted', used in this book are outdated, the substantive content of Case's and Halliday's case studies, which describe practice and applied theory, remains instructive and valuable.

Seventeen years after these chapters were published, a 'closely observed' single case study, written by Frances O'Brien, was among the first of many, linking art therapy explicitly with trauma theory (O'Brien, 2004). O'Brien's work with children affected by early infant relational trauma, caused by abuse and neglect, informed her article titled 'The making of mess in art therapy: Attachment, trauma and the brain'. She worked in the NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). At the time, trauma, a 'complex subject discussed in the neuroscience literature', was 'not yet widely

discussed by art therapists' (O'Brien, 2004, p. 2). She investigated how the child communicated and made sense of the room, materials, and herself, weaving aspects of trauma theory into the narrative and positing explanations. O'Brien described the child's symbolic representation of confusion and pain through the use of the art materials, but also how mess and chaos could appear to be without representation, 'an implicit memory of the abuse, stored in the body that becomes enacted rather than described' (O'Brien, 2004, p. 5). A decade later, when 'neuroscience literature' was more accessible to the profession, another art psychotherapist wove neuroscience findings, developmental theories and psychodynamic views (Chong, 2015). In a case vignette of work with a four-year-old girl 'clay provided an instant response and the capacity to contain, absorb and slow down her high impulse emotions. It became a neutral container' that could hold complex, non-verbal emotions (Chong, 2015, p. 122). Chong proposed that art psychotherapists offer a unique contribution to work with children affected by experiences of 'early relational trauma', resulting from art-based processes and interdisciplinary understandings. The field of expressive arts therapies working with effects of trauma is now well established (Malchiodi, 2020). In the following sections, I turn to systematic qualitative, then mixed including quantitative, then systemic research studies on school art therapy.

### **3.2.4 Systematic qualitative art therapy research in schools**

Systematic means 'using an organised method that is often detailed'.<sup>5</sup> Two chapters in *Arts Therapies in School: Research and Practice* (Karkou ed., 2010) present in-depth art therapy case studies, each demonstrating a different model of working in schools, depending on their approach and resources available (Ottisdottir, 2010; Prokofiev, 2010). Each constructed a different combination of research methods to investigate practice. Unnur Ottarsdottir included psychological and behavioural standardised outcome measures and academic outcomes to evaluate the art-therapeutic method she developed. Since her work incorporates numerical data, I will discuss it below in the section on mixed methods that include quantitative methods. I now turn to Frances Prokofiev's case study,

---

<sup>5</sup> Definition published in the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/systematic> (Accessed on: 12 June 2025)

which parallels the current study in terms of the client group, the length of art therapy intervention and reflexive use of the retrospective review process. Prokofiev had a large, well-resourced art therapy room. The school headteacher, where she worked for thirteen years, valued her work. She liaised closely with school staff and multi-agency systems as needed (Prokofiev, 2024). In her case study, Prokofiev employed a visual research methodology of retrospectively reviewing art to reflect on the child's artworks produced during the four years she worked with him. She also drew on insights from reflections on her process notes written during therapy, notes from school and multi-agency meetings, and the processes of selecting the child's art, creating a visual display, and inviting academics from other disciplines to discuss their responses to it. These elements, woven together, produced an integrated, multi-layered research method that was organised and detailed.

Retrospectively reviewing children's artwork is part of art therapy practice. This may be with the child in a session if they want to see previous work; at the end of an intervention, when art therapist and child review all the artwork and the child decides what to do with them; or by art therapists between sessions to gain insights, preparing for the next session with the child and perhaps taking it to discuss with their clinical supervisor. Writing brief notes after weekly art therapy sessions is a common practice among some art therapists to process their thoughts; this may be done with the artwork in view. While reviewing notes, significant threads may be traced; themes, patterns, meanings, and purposes unnoticed earlier may emerge. Such review processes have been used in studies on school-based arts therapies to examine outcomes. Each of the eighteen chapters in Karkou's edited book *Arts Therapies in Schools* (2010) thus reviews children's work. Prokofiev and Ottarsdottir's chapters describe shifts in the phases of therapy using information derived directly from children's pictures. Frances Prokofiev retrospectively reviewed artwork made by the child in her case study (Prokofiev, 2010). After selecting images from the 600 drawings he had created over four years, she curated a visual display and viewed it reflexively. Her writing and a video documenting the creation of the visual display are fascinating (Prokofiev, 2013a, 2013b). Prokofiev's data comprised the child's artwork, her process notes, her reports written for reviews, teachers' and multi-agency professionals'

reports, school special needs plans and documented conversations with members of the team working with the child, as he tried to manage high levels of distress and 'chronic uncertainty' in his life in care (Prokofiev, 2010, p. 161). The current research developed and adapted art therapy's retrospective review methodology, creating a design in which the child serves as the reviewer of his work and art therapy experience, and his actions and reflections constitute research data. Knight *et al.* (2015) asserted that researchers need methods that are both ethical and responsive to children in their contexts, and that collaborative drawing between children and researchers provided a means of communication and authentic access to children's ideas.

The child in Prokofiev's study was one of the looked-after children she worked with, referred 'for acute anxiety and sometimes challenging behaviour, which was an 'acting out' of feelings that were barely manageable' as they lived through periods of 'chronic uncertainty' (Prokofiev, 2010, p. 161). Prokofiev's research demonstrated how, despite challenges, trust developed gradually between her and the child, enabling opportunities for the 'regulation of unbearable feelings' (Prokofiev, 2010, p. 174). The case study, enhanced by the socio-economic contextual and visual analysis, tells a powerful story, leaning into Edwards' view of case study as storytelling that can embody truths about human society. The story of societal systems can be inferred: how children's lives can be caught in the confusion and uncertainties surrounding care proceedings and moves to and/or between foster placements. It is also a story about the stabilising system of the child's regular art therapy sessions, including his use of the art therapy room, the art materials, and the therapeutic relationship. As in most qualitative art therapy research, the agency and competencies of the child were highly valued. Prokofiev concludes that art therapy may support other children 'to cope emotionally with the impermanence of their home situation' (Prokofiev, 2010, p. 174). There were no permanent exclusions during the thirteen years when Prokofiev worked in the school (Prokofiev, 2024).

The publication of *Arts therapies in schools* was followed a year later by educational psychologist Frances Markland's doctoral study, 'Effectiveness of school-based art therapy for children who have

experienced psychological trauma' (2011). The three child research participants were from a primary school, a secondary school, and a specialist provision for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (as it was called then). Each child's therapist, parent/carer, and teacher/teaching assistant were also participants in the research. Systematic methods were used to gather and analyse the data. In a retrospective review at the end of their therapy, each child had selected artworks they had made. They discussed the images with their therapist, who recorded the conversation/interview. The children's drawings and artwork were central to Markland's research. She used thematic analysis to study the therapist-child interview and her interviews with the other participants. Her cross-case analysis explored potential areas for adjustment in pupils who had attended art therapy and examined how school-based art therapy contributed to these improvements. Her study included the children's school and home lives. She identified areas for potential adjustment: 'transformation within self, with others and for the future' (Markland, 2011, p. 114) and that the contribution to these adjustments was through 'Child Centred therapy: providing safe tools and a safe space to explore the unsafe' (Markland, 2011, p. 122). The looked-after child participant received only seven art therapy sessions due to funding constraints. Markland's research indicated that although he engaged well with the process, he needed longer-term support, corroborating Prokofiev's research findings. She recommended that future research focus on examining the variables in her study (Markland, 2011, p. 166). The current study examines longer-term support (three years).

Change has been a theme in art therapy work with children (Waller, 2006). Some years after Markland's study, and again researching one-to-one work with children, a team comprising two clinical psychologists and an art psychotherapist studied school art therapy outcomes (Deboys *et al.*, 2017). Their study, titled 'Processes of change in school-based art therapy with children: a systematic qualitative study', used grounded theory to analyse data gathered from children's initial art-making and triangulated interviews with children, parents and teachers. Children with experiences including domestic abuse, bereavement, developmental trauma, social anxiety, challenging behaviour, and difficulties related to parents' mental health were involved in the research. Changes related to

improvements in children's 'mood, confidence, communication and understanding, leading to improved resilience and learning' (Deboys *et al.*, 2017, p. 129). Interestingly, the study highlighted that staff and parents did not always perceive the relationship between the child and therapist as integral to the therapeutic work. The current study addresses this complex matter through the tripartite triangular relationship designed for school art therapy research, which will be explained later. Like Markland's research, Deboys *et al.* provide valuable information about relationality in the school system; however, unlike Markland's, permission to reproduce children's art was not obtained during the consent procedure, as it was not conceptualised as data (Deboys *et al.*, 2017, p. 128).

### **3.2.5 Art therapy research in schools and quantitative methods**

A review of controlled studies on art therapy in primary schools elucidated the need for more robust research 'if art therapy is to be recommended as a mental health intervention within UK primary schools' (McDonald and Drey, 2018, pp. 42-43). The review, undertaken by a quantitative methods health researcher and an art psychotherapist, was limited to controlled before-and-after and randomised studies, resulting in only four studies globally, none of which had been conducted in the UK. The review aimed to assess methodological strengths and weaknesses and synthesise findings. It concluded that the studies suggested children struggling with classroom behaviour, self-concept, and mental health disorders may benefit from art therapy in school. Another significant finding was 'the lack of harm reported' (McDonald and Drey, 2018, p. 42). The following year, researchers explored the perspectives of teachers and children on changes resulting from art therapy support, using the standardised Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (McDonald, Holttrum, and Drey, 2019). They found that art therapy was helpful for children's social, emotional, and mental health, but that further research was needed to assess its clinical effectiveness. Other reviewers examined research using quantitative methods to assess art therapy's effectiveness with children, without restricting the review to controlled trials (Cohen-Yatziv and Regev, 2019). They found five categories where children had appeared to benefit from art therapy: trauma, special educational needs, children without

diagnoses, a medical condition and 'juvenile offenders'. Again, due to the small number of quantitative studies (they found thirteen), they urged future art therapy research to select 'valid and reliable research indices'. Other claims regarding validity and reliability - in the context of qualitative research - should also be noted (Eisner, 1981; Yardley, 2000; Harre, 2004).

Due to the varied situations and contexts of children, quantitative research may not always accurately measure change. For instance, let us consider research that used mixed methods to explore art therapy and children with autism's capacity for imagination. The researcher studied a group of subjects who received a year of weekly art therapy and a control group that did not (Takeda, 2010). The study concluded that the quantitative method used, involving videotaped assessments and a Chi-square test, provided no firm evidence of change. However, the qualitative research methods revealed that a child showed his 'capacity for imaginative work' in the art therapy context (Takeda, 2010, p. 229). Takeda's research contradicts previous knowledge that found a lack of imagination in autistic children. Researchers in the Netherlands suggested that art therapy may improve autistic children's sense of self, mood and inner calm (Schweizer *et al.*, 2019), and Australian researchers conducting a systematic review found the likely effectiveness of art therapy on social, behavioural and motor symptoms in children on the autistic spectrum (Vogel *et al.*, 2024). Though not quantitative, these two studies are relevant to research on art therapy and children with autism.

As already mentioned, Unnur Ottarsdottir (2010), from Iceland, contributed a chapter to the book titled *Arts Therapies in Schools* (Karkou ed., 2010). She first worked as a special education teacher before retraining as an art therapist, and described how spontaneity and creativity can transform an old or traumatic situation into something new. Her conceptual framework blended 'educational therapy' and art therapy, addressing specific learning difficulties, stress and/or trauma. Children could choose how they wanted to work in each session. She worked at a primary school for about six months to conduct the research with five children (Ottarsdottir 2024). The child in her case study experienced complex and painful loss due to the abrupt and sustained absence of a primary

caregiver. Gaining mastery of coursework helped this child by ‘integrating the logical, cognitive function of coursework learning into art therapy’ (Ottarsdottir, 2010, p. 148). She proposed that when children face an overwhelming sense of emptiness and helplessness in the art-making process, if highly stressed and dealing with trauma, another direction may help: offering them the possibility of gaining mastery, while the therapist bears the emotional material in mind. To evaluate the impact of the method, she compared artwork, school grades and psychological tests conducted before and after therapy (Ottarsdottir, 2010, p. 150). Standardised measures were used: the Wechsler III IQ test for children, the Child Behaviour Checklist, and the Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Scale-IV. Although her research involved only a small number of children, she drew plausible conclusions from the results using descriptive statistics (2010, p. 150). This research offers rich possibilities for art therapists who bridge art therapy and teaching, or who are interested in this approach.<sup>6</sup> Recent research suggests that art therapy for children with specific learning difficulties helps them express feelings, increase self-esteem, and improve relationships (Greenboim-Zimchoni, 2024).

### **3.2.6 Systemic research on art therapy in schools**

Systemic means ‘relating to or involving a whole system’.<sup>7</sup> Opening this chapter, Wengrower’s Table showed the complexities of the intercultural encounter between education and therapy; an encounter explicitly understood by Unnur Ottarsdottir. On a different note, art therapists in schools are typically aware of the significant pressures that teachers face, which have been extensively researched (Ball, 2003). Art therapists need to be aware of the sometimes extreme stresses on support networks during times of financial cuts and health inequalities (Dorling, 2023; Marmot, 2020) and the need to work with ‘contextual, flexible and poverty sensitive’ approaches, aware of the wider socio-economic pressures on children, families and schools (Watts *et al.*, 2018, p. 153). For all these reasons, interdisciplinary communication between educationalists and therapists is vital.

---

<sup>6</sup> See Unnur Ottarsdottir’s website <https://www.unnurarttherapy.is/en/>

<sup>7</sup> Definition published in the Cambridge Academic Content dictionary. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/systemic> Accessed: 12 June 2015)

Teachers often witness mental health problems firsthand and may want to collaborate with professionals trained to support children when problems are complex (Rothi, Leavey, and Best, 2008). Art therapists can support teachers as they navigate day-to-day work stress and may, through workshops, draw inspiration from the health service (Havsteen-Franklin *et al.*, 2023).

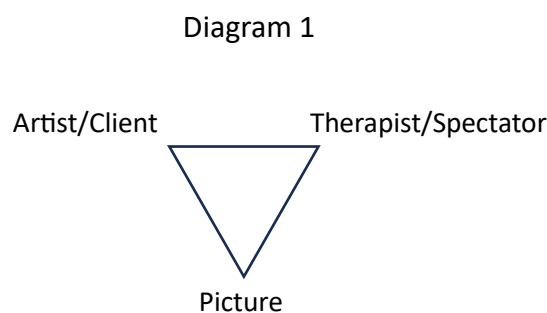
When it comes to some children's behaviour, the 'holistic impact of early developmental trauma' can be difficult for school staff to understand; the children's behaviour is 'often bewildering and exhausting', and the child and their family can feel isolated (Allen, 2017, p. 203). A survey of British art therapists found that 39% of art therapists working in educational settings involved parents/carers with some frequency (Taylor Buck, Dent-Brown, and Parry, 2013, p. 25). One of the best practice principles for art therapists, Principle F.4, recognises 'that communication with and work with the child's family, carers, school system and other systems in their lives are likely to play an important role in the helpfulness of the therapy' (Taylor Buck and Hendry, 2016, p. 61). Similarly, guidelines for art therapists working with adults and children with learning disabilities emphasise the need for working 'with people who make up support networks' (Hackett *et al.*, 2017, p. 89).

Several researchers have explored the extent to which we still need to achieve mutual understanding between art therapists and teachers, on both the conceptual and practical levels, as Wengrower proposed. Belity *et al.* studied the experiences of art therapy supervisors regarding the issues faced by the art therapists they supported, an opportunity that helped the researchers 'grasp the complex issue of implementing art therapy within the school system' (Belity *et al.*, 2017, p. 104). Problems included working conditions, maintaining pupil privacy, and some therapists' dilemmas in balancing loyalty to the child with that to the school. Another study, examining therapists' perceptions, highlighted gaps between art therapy practice, training, and the reality of working in the education system. The researchers concluded that future studies should 'examine the perspective of clients in art therapy within the education system' (Adoni-Kroyanker *et al.*, 2019, p. 47), a perspective the current study embraces. A study on art therapy rooms in schools contributed to understanding the

conditions needed ‘for the integration of art therapy in schools to take place in the best possible way’ (Danieli *et al.*, 2019, p. 73). The current study adds to this area of understanding. In another relevant study, Australian educationalists highlighted the health-related benefits of art-making to healthcare workers and teachers (Haring *et al.*, 2020). Undertaking transdisciplinary research, they explored how art-making can release children’s ‘disturbing emotions’, as they enter a sense of flow or liminality, recognising the ‘integrative process, which is non-verbal but requires total involvement’ (Haring *et al.*, 2020, pp. 32,33). Such work helps to bridge the gap between the cultures of education and art therapy, which share the same goal: the well-being and thriving of all children in the school. I now turn to the fundamental triangular relationship, which is unique to art therapy.

### 3.2.7 The triangular relationship

The dynamic processes involved in art therapy’s triangular relationship were featured in a special volume of *Inscape: International Journal of Art Therapy*, published twenty-five years ago (Case, 1990; Schaverien, 1990; Wood 1990). Analytical art psychotherapist Joy Schaverien later examined this ‘highly complex set of processes’ further, explaining how each axis of the triangle, and sometimes two or three simultaneously, may come alive at different times in a single art therapy session, and differently according to how a therapist is trained and conceptualises their work (Schaverien, 2000, p. 55). She described how, if the practitioner is working as an art therapist, an art psychotherapist, or an analytical art psychotherapist, different emphases are placed on the axes. She depicted the basic triangle thus:



The reader may recall my art therapy sessions with 'Claire', described in Chapter Two. Claire did not speak, but she painted: the axis between the child and her art in the triangular relationship diagram was highly activated. The images made had a 'formative nature' in that they shaped and were shaped by the artist in the moment (Schaverien, 2000, p. 58). Such images have been termed 'embodied' images: they 'need no words, there is no substitute for the image; it reveals, but it tells nothing' (Schaverien, 2000, p. 60).<sup>8</sup> Sometimes, people in their art therapy sessions 'stay with very difficult feelings during the time the work is being made', becoming 'absorbed in a way which means that they do not say anything' (Wood, 1990, p. 11).

Chapter Seven will illustrate how the child research participant in the current study became engrossed and fused with his creation during extended periods of silence. During such and other moments in an art therapy session, the art therapist uses their imagination to integrate theory and action, gaining an understanding of what is happening: art therapists accept 'magical thinking as an innate aspect of human existence – as an irrational layer of the psyche which harbours the seeds of self healing' (Schaverien, 1987, p. 77). In art therapy, the imaginative world is welcomed: as already noted, 'the art therapeutic relationship is a partnership between artistic and interpersonal phenomena' (McNiff, 1998, p. 92). The triangular relationship explains this. Using psychotherapy's concept of transference and countertransference, it is understood that a person's unbearable, mixed or other feelings may be attributed to or projected onto the therapist (or into the artwork). As Winnicott explains, this is known as transference, which is driven by 'instinctual backing' rather than conscious choice (2005 [1971], p. 161). The therapist's response is countertransference. Schaverien explains how in the transference process emotion (affect) initially experienced in the past, is 'brought 'live' into the present' and she continues: 'The intense form of relating which often accompanies transference mobilises affect, and it is this which offers the opportunity for transformation of the patterns of the inner world' (Schaverien 1991, cited in Wood, 2011, p. 249). A child may imbue their

---

<sup>8</sup> The embodied image differs from 'diagrammatic' images, which use various combinations of lines and shapes where words are needed to explain what is shown. For a fuller explanation of the two types see Schaverien, 1987, pp.77-79.

artwork and the relationship with the therapist with emotion, enacting past patterns, and may experience transformation due to the therapist's different reaction compared with others in similar past situations. A fascinating systematic study: *I, you and the art*, examines the interactions observed between art, children and the art therapist, bringing the triangular relationship into the foreground (Ball, 1998). I now turn to children's artmaking as defined in the 'Four Purposes of Drawing'. These 'Four Purposes' can be applied to other art forms beyond drawing: painting, printmaking, sculpture, and mixed media. The terminology offers a valuable lexicon for art therapists to use when discussing children's learning with teachers.

### **3.3 Art-Based Education Research and the Four Purposes of Drawing**

Eileen Adams, an influential proponent of Art-Based Education Research (ABER), conducted studies on the efficacy of drawing as a research tool, emphasising the multi-faceted nature of art:

Just as different kinds of speaking and writing serve different purposes, drawings need to be understood not only as ends in themselves but as perceptual, conceptual and expressive tools (Adams, 2017, p. 248).

Children's agency and competency are at the core of art education, and the four purposes of drawing, which Adams sets out. The first is drawing as perception, enabling the drawer to 'explore and to develop observational and interpretative skills to investigate and understand the world' primarily for their own benefit (p. 246). In the art therapy context, the purpose of drawing as a form of perception can be expanded to include apperception, sensorimotor perception, proprioception, and interoception, thereby conferring a broader range of benefits for children. I now present these forms of perception before turning to the three remaining purposes: communication, invention, and action. All four purposes are relevant to the child research participant's activities in the current study.

#### **3.3.1 The first purpose of drawing: Perception**

Perception involves the senses taking cues from the environment. Adams describes this first purpose as 'ordering sensations, feelings, ideas, and thoughts' (Adams, 2017, p. 246). Perception appears to be primarily effortless and occurs outside conscious awareness. The similarity and difference

between perception and apperception are important. In his talk to teachers, William James described the latter as ‘the act of taking a thing into the mind’ (James, 2001, [1899]). This happens by building on what has already been perceived. Therefore, when teaching a child, this presupposes that new learning must be introduced by naming and building upon what the child has already perceived. Winnicott brings the difference alive by defining apperception as ‘the beginning of a significant exchange with the world, a two-way process in which self-enrichment alternates with the discovery of meaning in the world of seen things’ (Winnicott, 2005 [1971], p. 151). This is relevant therapeutically. He explains that first, in early infancy, this requires ‘the baby to see a reflection of themselves in the mother’s face, their mirror’ (p. 151). When the mother looks at the baby ‘*what she looks like is related to what she sees*’ (p. 151, italics are his). If the mother does not reflect the baby’s mood but reflects her own, or ‘worse still’ if she reflects ‘the rigidity of her own defences,’ the baby does not see itself in the mirror, but makes a connection with something that is ‘not-me’ (p. 151). The baby (or later, the child) may have missed the developmental stage of seeing themselves, which they must do before ‘seeing’ others. Only then can they make creative, life-affirming discoveries. Art therapy can help with this, as will be shown later in this study. Winnicott poetically explains the link between apperception and perception using a time sequence which depends first on being seen:

When I look I am seen, so I exist.  
I can now afford to look and see.  
I now look creatively and what I apperceive I also perceive.  
In fact I take care not to see what is not there to be seen (unless I am tired)  
(Winnicott, 2005 [1971], p. 154, brackets are his).

When a child feels seen and heard, they feel they exist and can work creatively. The reader is reminded of maltreated child victims of abuse, who have missed out on these natural experiences. Winnicott states the poignancy of this situation: ‘It is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living’ (Winnicott, 2005 [1971], p. 87). Once children experience creative apperception, they can confidently explore the immediate world around them in what Winnicott terms the ‘potential space’, and endow objects with meaning. This potential space

can be understood as a rudimentary space of shared speech and action, an early form of Hannah Arendt's 'space of appearances'. The relationship between these concepts will be explained later.

Moving from apperception to another form of perception, we now consider sensorimotor perception. This acknowledges the intricate coordination between incoming sensory data and bodily responses. Using their senses, preverbal infants respond to social-emotional interactions with, and between, other people (Stern, 1971; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). The early interpersonal patterns established can endure (Stern, 2004; Siegel, 2020a, p. 126). Before acquiring verbal abilities, 'social-emotional input' is processed by 'sensorimotor perception and integration' (Klorer, 2005, p. 216). As a result, children suffering from stress and/or trauma may have difficulty processing specific information or combinations of bits of sensory information. This may seem bewildering to others who find the same sensory information pleasant. Providing sensory opportunities that the child can tolerate and engage with, while avoiding overwhelming experiences, can encourage flexible growth and accommodate new, safe incoming information.

Another form of perception is proprioception, which is part of the physiological system. This sense enables us to perceive the location, movement, and action of body parts, allowing us to perceive the body in space. For instance, it allows us to sense where our limbs are when our eyes are closed; it influences our level of alertness, which in turn affects our attention and learning. It is 'the sense of being embodied' (van der Kolk, 2015, p. 247). This form of self-perception is vital to living a healthy life and accomplishing daily tasks. The effect of stress and/or trauma may mean that the child is not aware of what their body is doing and how they are moving. Movements such as pushing, pulling, lifting, and stretching stimulate the proprioceptive system and can be calming, helping promote self-regulation. In art therapy, children naturally engage in this process while working with materials, such as pushing movements with their hands when kneading clay.

Interoception is another essential form of perception. This sensory system tells us how we feel on the inside: 'The body's response lets us know how we feel' (Siegel, 2020a, p. 258). Awareness of

feelings within the self is as vital to healthy living as our awareness of how our body moves (proprioception) and the effect that different sensory data have on us (sensorimotor perception). The effect of stress and/or trauma may mean that a child is not aware of what and how they feel about stressful occurrences in everyday life. They may be disconnected from feelings, which are blocked out as they are too painful to bear. This is sometimes referred to as 'dissociation'. Active doing and creativity can develop interoception by providing positive new experiences that help reflect on bodily feelings in the present moment. The primary data from the current research show examples of this.

### **3.3.2 The second purpose of drawing: Communication.**

The second purpose of drawing, which is communication, can also be expanded when applied to other art forms and to art therapy. I remind the reader of the last rung of Wengrower's comparative table at the beginning of this chapter; the unconscious (nonconscious) levels of the child's communication, expressed verbally or nonverbally, are as important as the conscious levels. Art-based education asserts that children use various codes or conventions to convey their feelings, ideas, and thoughts to others, thereby helping them connect with others. The art therapist enables the child to discover their personalised codes and conventions, which may involve symbolism and metaphor, allowing the child who struggles to connect with others to communicate non-verbally with the therapist. This process requires the therapist's adaptation to the child's assertions and alertness to emerging 'forms of vitality' and 'shared feeling voyages' (to use Stern's terms), which contribute to dynamic expressions that occur continuously in the art therapy therapeutic relationship.

### **3.3.3 The third purpose of drawing: Invention**

Drawing as invention is the third purpose, important for two reasons, which the following quotation explicates. Firstly, invention aligns with Bergson's concepts of becoming and *durée*. Secondly, it is crucial to art therapy's creative processes and the formation of personal symbols:

... you cannot think the thought until it is made visible and accessible. Ideas are at an embryonic stage, unformed or only partly formed at the beginning of the process of drawing. Ideas take shape when the drawer experiences 'reflexive oscillation' between impulse, ideas

and mark, receiving feedback from the marks appearing on the page which prompt further thought and mark-making (Adams, 2017, p. 247).

This process of 'reflexive oscillation' describes the mind's alternating between internal and external activity, between creating the whole and its parts, and between the incoming 'data' of the senses, as Bergson terms them, and the body's responses through movement. In art therapy, movement is visible as a child's body and limbs move. Even though the reflexive process is not directly observable, we can infer that thought reflexivity is occurring. Something unique happens during these moments of 'invention'. Self-identification as an inventor is a powerful statement: the child participant in this study did precisely this. The creative impulse to work in the presence of the art therapist creates a new mini-life story, and 'shared feeling voyage', as we will see in Chapter Seven.

### **3.3.4 The fourth purpose of drawing: Action**

The fourth purpose of drawing is 'action'. This occurs when drawings form a bridge between the realm of the imagination and implementation: not only is the content of the drawing essential, but so is putting ideas to the test and seeing how to put them into effect (p. 247). This implies a time sequence. The piece of art made has a purpose in the future, and is useful for achieving another iteration of the artwork, exploratory yet cognitively defined. A maquette or sketch may be created before an artwork is made, and there may be a succession of drawings, three-dimensional models, or both. Chapter Seven illustrates the child utilising this purpose when creating a model that precedes his artwork. Having explored the amplifications of art-based education research, I now focus on other research aspects that help explain the phenomena observed in school-based art therapy.

## **3.4 Research in related disciplines that informs the current study**

The following sections outline key elements from the disciplines of psychotherapy, childhood studies, and psychoanalysis relevant to the current interdisciplinary study. A noteworthy review of fifty years of research on psychotherapy with children and young people revealed that 'well-developed therapies often use approaches designed to fit youth developmental level' (Weisz *et al.*, 2017, p. 95). This meta-analysis examined outcomes for children and young people, indicating success while

identifying significant room for improvement in the field. The review did not mention art psychotherapy. Art-making offers additional benefits of corporeal experience involving the senses, the physical body, and innate sensory systems, as the previous sections on the expanded Four Purposes and the triangular relationship demonstrate. Possibilities are widened by the versatility of art materials, artistic processes, cultural content, sensory experiences, and the use of visual imagination. I now turn to how these creative possibilities can contribute to building trust within the psychotherapeutic relationship.

### **3.4.1 Psychotherapy and epistemic trust**

Researchers Fonagy and Alison define 'Epistemic trust' in therapeutic work as:

an individual's willingness to consider new knowledge from another person as trustworthy, generalizable, and relevant to the self... Epistemic trust is there to ensure that the individual can safely change his/her position; it triggers the opening of what we can think of as an epistemic superhighway—an evolutionarily protected mechanism that signals readiness to acquire knowledge (Fonagy and Alison, 2014, pp. 373 and 374).

These researchers defined three communication processes intrinsic to effective psychotherapy, regardless of the modality (Fonagy and Alison, 2014). The first communication process involves feeling that one's emotional states are convincingly recognised. This process can be significantly enhanced for children through art-making and the images created. The art-making process and artwork speak for emotions when the child has few or no words. In art therapy, emotional states are 're-presented' by the images the child makes, which 'stand for' their emotions. The art therapist's first goal is to establish a 'safe enough' environment where children can use art materials at their own pace. 'Safe enough' because children who have had only dangerous and ambiguous spaces to play in (where love, trust and abuse overlap in complex layers) require time for a more profound sense of safety to develop in later sessions. Through a range of responses to the child and their work, the art therapist shows the child that they recognise their emotional states. Body language and facial expressions can reveal the therapist's recognition of emotions. If the therapist does not recognise the emotional state, they may seek clarification from the child to better understand. This signals to the child that they are the expert in their feelings, they are being taken seriously, and that the

therapist is not making assumptions. In brief, this first communication process connects the child's internal emotional environment with the therapist's authentic 'felt' responses. The reader may notice this chimes with apperception; the child feels 'seen'. Looking in the 'mirror', they see themselves. Their emotional state is convincingly recognised.

The second communication process builds on the first. It involves the child being able to imagine what the therapist might be thinking. An example of this is when the therapist carefully and securely keeps the artwork between sessions, which often surprises the child and gradually makes them feel understood, knowing they are held in mind over time. They come to realise that their images and the feelings they contain are worthy of respect. The child starts to trust the therapist's thinking, anticipating how they will respond: the trust is epistemic – the child knows where it comes from, through personal experience, possibly after much testing. This may take a long time.

The third communication process builds on the previous two. It involves the child feeling that the trust developed within the therapeutic relationship and their newly gained positive self-image can be, or are, ready to be transferred into the world outside the therapy room. Thus, the child's ability to communicate is amplified. If the school responds to the child's and therapist's work with understanding and cooperates with necessary practical strategies (such as respecting the art therapy room's time and space boundaries), this may help the child feel welcome in the world outside the art therapy room. This is why interdisciplinary understanding between teaching staff and art therapists is so important.

When school staff appreciate the emotional work involved, this may lead to actions that accelerate transformational change, though these change processes must always be at the child's pace. The sense of trust may catalyse positive effects, chiming with the concept, cited above, of the 'epistemic superhighway'. Play, to which I now turn, is as integral to art psychotherapy with children as trust, with which it is closely associated.

### 3.4.2 Play is children's work

Childhood researcher Neville Scarfe asserted that:

play is the most complete educational process of the mind – Nature's ingenious device for ensuring that each individual achieves knowledge and wisdom. Play may be described as a spontaneous, creative, desired, research activity carried out for its own sake (1962, p. 117).

This notion of play as 'research activity' resonates with Winnicott's concept of play in the potential space, and children's intuitive knowing in their heterotopia, to be discussed in the next chapter. The therapeutic benefits of play in a supportive relational context have proven effective in working with emotionally vulnerable children suffering stress/trauma, allowing them to process thoughts and feelings naturally through play's symbolic representations (Association for Play Therapists, 2020).

Play is central to art therapy and occurs in the dynamic triangular interaction among the child, the art therapist, and the materials used in the art-making process. Winnicott explains that on a psychodynamic level, play has a unique role in the baby's early development:

In the average good experience ... the baby finds intense, even agonising, pleasure associated with imaginative play. There is no set game, so everything is creative, and although playing is part of object-relating, whatever happens is personal to the baby. Everything physical is imaginatively elaborated, is invested with a first-time-ever quality (Winnicott, 2005 [1971], p. 136).

Children who feel seen and secure, trusting their carer to protect them when necessary, naturally play with risk in ways that keep them safe even when not in the company of adults (Sandseter, 2007), and further research shows how play empowers children in many ways (Canning, 2007). Play continues into adulthood and is intrinsically linked with creativity, as psychologist and researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi asserted: '(t)he mind must be free to play with ideas, shapes, sounds that were never before expressed' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2018, p. 18). Cognitive scientist Liane Gabora also investigates creativity and uses experimental evidence to critique the assumption that creative processes involve assembling complete ideas, as if they were building blocks. In their experiments, she and a colleague found that an exploratory, play-like process preceded the creation of new ideas assembled from portions of other ideas; they discovered that half-baked ideas merge to produce something new (Gabora and Saab, 2011).

### 3.4.3 Potential space and transitional objects/phenomena

The reader is reminded of Winnicott's poem about creative apperception and his quote above about the 'first-time-ever' creative, imaginative quality of play. Trust and play are interrelated; '(p)laying implies trust, and belongs to the potential space' (Winnicott, 2005 [1971<sup>9</sup>], p. 69). Winnicott clarified play in terms of values attributed to place and time: 'I make my idea of play concrete by claiming that *playing has a place* and a time' (2005, p. 55, italics are his). This place and time for playing becomes what Winnicott called 'potential space', which is 'an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute' (2005, p. 3). This may remind the reader of art therapy case studies that mentioned the overlap between the inner and outer worlds. Winnicott described the 'transitional object' as the infant's 'first not-me possession' (2005, p. 2). In the caring potential space between the baby and the mother, an object is 'both created and discovered – a characteristic that yields freedom and joy to the baby' (Rodman, 2005, p. xi). According to the psychoanalytic view, this object facilitates the differentiation between mother and infant, simultaneously imbuing the potential space with life. A well-known example of an infant's transitional object is a teddy bear or a cloth. It helps remind the infant of their mother in her absence through sensory information gained from touch, sight, and smell. This stage of psychological development occurs in the first years of life as the baby gradually becomes more independent. Throughout life, materials and artwork can serve as transitional phenomena for artists, those in art therapy, and others as they engage with and grow from new experiences. The art object has been described as a transitional object that can help a child navigate difficult transitions (McCullough, 2009) and Prokofiev's case study described art in the context of complex transitioning. Similarly, transitional phenomena help us ground ourselves in external reality while nurturing our inner life, freedom, joy, and interconnectedness with others, while we are challenged by 'the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated' (Winnicott, 2005, p. 3). Transitional phenomena are unique to each person, although

---

<sup>9</sup> When referencing Winnicott's book *Playing and Reality*, hitherto I have used both the original date of publication, 1971 and the date of the edition I am citing, 2005. Henceforth I simply refer to the edition cited, published in 2005.

the process is universal. Winnicott was reluctant to 'pin down specimens' of transitional phenomena for classification (2005, p. xvi), and asked that this paradox 'be accepted and tolerated and respected, and for it not to be resolved' (2005, p. xvi). He said it is intellectually possible to resolve it, but warned that fixing it risks losing value. In art therapy, we may see objects and materials as potential transitional phenomena, and it is important to keep our thinking supple, as will be demonstrated by the child participant's transitional phenomenon/artwork in Chapter Seven. LaMothe (2014) noted that the flexibility of the potential space makes it a rudimentary space for speech and action. He bridged the Winnicottian potential space and Hannah Arendt's 'space of appearances'. In the latter, people are heard and seen, freely exercising their power to speak and act in the public space. LaMothe proposed that what happens in the interpersonal space between two people in therapy can connect to the wider outside world, where speech and action take on a political nature - meaning within and between citizens - thereby overlapping the inner and outer worlds. Children in therapy may gain confidence in expressing themselves through their voices and actions in the potential space, thereby making it a rudimentary 'space of appearances'.

#### **3.4.4 Child psychoanalysts speak on play, art and creativity**

Psychoanalysts have long recognised the importance of creativity. In her book 'On Not Being Able to Paint', prominent author and psychoanalyst Marion Milner wrote about her surprising discoveries when painting and 'letting hand and eye do exactly what pleased them without any conscious working to a preconceived intention' (Milner, 1950, p. xvii). Drawing on her personal experience with creativity and some of the forces that can hinder it, she eloquently explored how art-making can bridge the conscious and unconscious worlds. Maud Mannoni, an influential French child psychoanalyst active in the Lacanian movement, recognised the role of play and creativity in expressing 'the voice of the child in search of himself' (Mannoni, 1999, p. 75). She distinguished between empty speech learnt from adults but not necessarily coming from the child's identity, and full speech coming from the heart. To facilitate the child finding themselves, 'what is required of us

[therapists], in our journey with these children, is that we undo our own defenses' (1999, p. 100).

She gave the lead to the child, emphasising the importance of artistic creativity:

Giving small children the opportunity to paint, to invent a world of their own making ... allows them to express what has hurt them in a language without words, even if they are unaware of what is inherent in their scribbles. The important thing is that their loneliness, their unhappiness, and their 'craziness' can find expression, and can do so without an adult immediately seeking to supply a meaning (Mannoni, 1999, p. 85).

Children may surprise themselves with what they express and discover. This is important, and as Mannoni states, 'holds true for pedagogy as well' (1999, p.76). This recalls the encounter between the two cultures of therapy and teaching: surprise and discovery are as important in classroom learning as in therapy. For children who have lost confidence in the adult world, this creative therapy aims to 'bring about the restoration of a possibility of exchange between the self and others' (1999, p. 36). Another Lacanian child psychotherapist, Catherine Mathelin, describes how, eventually, children use the space to express complicated feelings: 'It is most often horror, hatred and death that are at issue in [therapy]' (Mathelin, 1999, p. 23). The power that trauma has over the child can be defeated through the sense of mastery and agency experienced in the story-telling, in the art-making: 'Each child has his own theory and it is from him that we get it' (Mathelin, 1999, p. 18).

Mathelin indicates the powerful experience for the child, when the therapist does not have to protect himself against the feelings that arise in him within the transference (1999, p. 73). The challenges therapists face should not be underestimated. A child's complex attachment emotions and expressions may baffle and discomfort a therapist in containing and processing them, hence the requirement for regular clinical supervision. In his article 'Hate in the Countertransference', Winnicott wrote candidly about the emotional and psychological processes involved in working with some children and the necessity of recognising and not burying negative emotion (Winnicott, 1949). Part of the therapist's training is to learn to manage negative emotions evoked in their work with children and to provide a response different from the one anticipated by the child, such as habitual rejection. School staff in all roles may be on the receiving end of negative emotions in children's behaviour and may find it hard, or even impossible, to tolerate the emotions such behaviour evokes in them.

Research has found that arts therapies may offer viable methods for team development, providing staff with meaningful opportunities to get to know others on their teams and offer mutual support (Havsteen-Franklin et al., 2023). Such creative methods may help develop new understandings of how to manage personal emotional responses to children's behaviour. Without adequate support, school staff who are trying to manage a child's behaviour and are not succeeding may unknowingly slide into a Winnicottian hate countertransference, characterised by powerful negative feelings towards the child and possibly the family as well. If everyday conflict resolution is not part of the school culture, and if there are no confidential therapeutic opportunities for the child, this may be the start of a trajectory heading towards the child's eventual permanent exclusion. Now, in the second half of this chapter, I will explain the current situation of school exclusions in England.

### **3.5 The phenomenon of school exclusions and the excluded child**

I now detail the complex societal and educational situations faced by some children referred for art therapy in schools. School exclusions occur within broader socio-economic and political realities, as well as educational policies and practices. As outlined in Chapter One, the two crises of poor mental health in schools and exclusions are interrelated. In 2007, the UK was placed at the bottom of a list of twenty-one 'developed' countries, for overall child well-being, by the United Nations (Adamson, 2007). Six years later, it was sixteenth out of twenty-nine countries (United Nations Children's Fund, 2013) and in 2020, it ranked twenty-seventh out of thirty-eight countries (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). Government austerity policies exacerbated child poverty, with a devastating impact on children and schools (United Nations General Assembly, 2019).

School exclusions have long been a focus of academic research and government interest (Billington and Pomeranz 2004; Lammy 2017; Timpson 2019). It has been argued that if political choices in the 1970s, had been more like those made in most other European countries, we would now have a more equal education system with 'hardly any children being excluded from school each year, as that is not normal on the continent (or now in Scotland)' (Dorling, 2023, p. 156). The UK government

elected in 1997 introduced policies to mobilise schools, health, and social care staff to collaboratively meet children's well-being needs, catalysed by the horrific death of eight-year-old Victoria Climbié (Laming, 2003; Department for Education and Skills, 2003). The Children's Fund provided resources to implement the Every Child Matters policy, and schools were identified as the most practical venues for offering coordinated support to children in familiar surroundings. In 2008, after the Children's Fund had ended and the global recession struck, schools familiar with art therapy's positive outcomes commissioned art therapy services despite tight budgets and competing demands. The austerity policies of the next government severely affected the societal support infrastructure for children that had been developed earlier. Another factor contributing to the exclusions crisis was the change in school disciplinary policy. Before 2010, policy aimed to reduce exclusions through Behaviour Improvement Programmes. However, since 2010, school exclusions have been accepted as part of effective behaviour management (Sealy *et al.*, 2023).

The Academisation process transferred funding and control of state-funded schools from local authorities to central government, and the new academies were permitted to manage behavioural issues with little legislative oversight. Most UK secondary schools introduced internal isolation units for children who had been excluded from mainstream classes. The press reported on isolation booths in school as a 'barbaric' form of punishment (Perraudin, 2018; 2019). Children's views on these matters were researched, revealing 'frustration and anger but also their pain and despondency in a system they see as unjust' (Sealy *et al.*, 2023, p. 1336). Isolation units are not subject to regulatory or inspection criteria and do not 'address or resolve the complex behavioural issues, or specific learning needs that many of [the children] possess' (Barker *et al.*, 2010, p. 383).

A common trigger for exclusions was identified as 'disruptive or challenging behaviour' (Graham *et al.*, 2019, p. 25). Such triggers often link to underlying tensions, which 'can be the result of multiple, interrelated and layered vulnerabilities, which when present can have a multiplier effect' (2019, p. 25). Other researchers found that suspensions from secondary schools 'increased substantially'

before the pandemic, reached ‘their highest point in more than a decade in 2022’ (Joseph and Gemma-Jennings, 2024, p. 5), and have increased 30% since the pandemic (Weale, 2023).<sup>10</sup>

Exclusions affect certain children disproportionately. Looked-after children, Black Caribbean boys, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, children with special educational needs and disabilities are disproportionately represented in the number of school exclusions (Graham *et al.*, 2019). Children with special educational needs ‘appear most likely to be excluded’ (Black 2022, p. 215). Indeed, it has been established that 47% of permanently excluded children have ‘an identified special educational need’ (Sealy *et al.*, 2023, p. 1337). Worryingly, scholars have found that excluded children with ‘complex needs linked to difficult personal circumstances and social disadvantage’ follow a highly differentiated educational pathway after exclusion, reflecting the ‘symbiotic relationship’ between social and educational disadvantage (Gazeley, 2010, pp. 306-307). In other words, exclusions reproduce social and educational disadvantages.

### **3.5.1 Legal challenges to permanent exclusions**

In 2012, the Children’s Commissioner’s Office found, in its inquiry into school exclusions, that ‘just under 25% of appeals made against permanent exclusions’ and 100% of appeals against exclusions of Gypsy, Roma Traveller and Irish Traveller children were successful (2012, pp. 70, 71). The inquiry report stated that such high success rates in appeals suggest that some schools unfairly exclude children. As a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the UK has legal obligations under Article 6, which guarantees ‘the right to a fair trial’. The Children’s Commissioner noted the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights’ assessment of the Education Bill 2010, in which it determined that ‘Article 6 ECHR applies to decisions permanently excluding a child from school’ (Children’s Commissioner, 2012, p.69). Pressures on headteachers, exacerbated by

---

<sup>10</sup> The interchangeable terms ‘suspensions’ and ‘fixed-term exclusions’ are used for the legal removal of children from school temporarily. Permanent exclusion is when a child is removed from the premises and cannot return - the terms for this differ: excluded, expelled, suspended, expulsion. It is a disciplinary practice used in many countries (Black, 2022, p. 200). In the UK there are also illegal practices known as ‘off the record’ or ‘under the radar’ exclusions and the informal practices of ‘off-rolling’ when a parent is encouraged to remove their child from the school roll, and ‘managed moves’ when schools transfer children into another school. This means actual figures are higher than official statistics (Black, 2022, p. 216).

competitive league tables, and the need for Ofsted to have close oversight of exclusion numbers and processes were then examined (Children's Commissioner, 2013). Four years later, the Commission expressed concern about the still-rising number of official exclusions and catalogued further forms of hidden exclusions (Children's Commissioner, 2017).

The Centre for Social Justice, a think tank established to transform government thinking and policy on social justice issues, made twenty-three recommendations on school exclusions (Centre for Social Justice, 2018). Notably, the report stated that 58% of young adults in prison had been permanently excluded from school (p. 20). Other researchers state that 'Overall the literature [on exclusions] described a tendency to blame the child, rather than examine the school's systems and processes' (Graham *et al.*, 2019, p. 99). Many parents are not in a position to appeal against exclusions for a variety of reasons, and the process of appealing against a school's governing body's decision, using the Independent Review Panel (IRP), is daunting. Private troubles and family matters may come under public scrutiny, causing further distress for parents and children (Hodge and Wolstenholme, 2016, p. 1302). This emphasises the need for confidentiality earlier on in the process of supporting children and families. Research reveals that blame and shame are prevalent throughout the process: parents have been prescribed anti-depressants to cope with their child's permanent exclusion and the IRP process, and some parents report their child as developing anger, depression or becoming withdrawn; powerlessness and depression are endemic (Kulz, 2015, p. 88).

Meanwhile, lawyers and charities collaborated to protect children's interests (Harris and Sheikh, 2023). A framework for legal action was published, invoking Article 6 of the ECHR, citing the case of a Black, disabled child who had successfully appealed against his exclusion (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2023). In 2022/2023 exclusions rose by 45%, from 6,500 to 9,400, catalysing efforts for change (Hayes, 2024). These data are for official exclusions: for each child officially excluded, it is estimated that there are 10 more whose exclusions are hidden because they are moved between schools or are not in school at all (Harris *et al.*, 2025). In a groundbreaking case in February 2025,

parents secured the right to independent legal aid support to challenge decisions regarding children's exclusion from school (Children and Young People Now, 2025). This concluded the process initiated by the then Children's Commissioner, Maggie Atkinson, in 2012, when she recommended that parents be provided with independent legal support to participate meaningfully in IRPs and to navigate the complex systems involved, ensuring a fair hearing and equality. As already noted, the underlying reasons for children's exclusions can be complex, comprising multiple, interrelated, and layered vulnerabilities that, when present, have a multiplier effect. To shed light on this, I now turn to social and health inequalities that may impact children and their family situations.

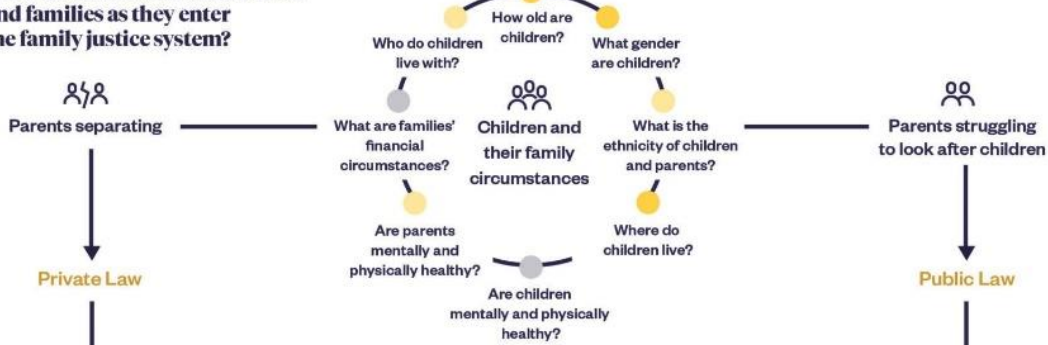
### **3.5.2 Social and health inequalities: Families and looked-after children**

Researchers examining the social determinants contributing to children's adverse experiences found that social and health inequalities play a significant role (Lewer *et al.*, 2020). Maltreatment, the most extreme category of childhood adversity identified in the study, focuses on children on a Child Protection plan for neglect and abuse. As explained earlier, the *Children Act 1989* protects children at risk of harm or who have been harmed. A continuum begins with 'Section 17' protection for a child 'in need' through local authority services and schools, supporting the child and family, and extends to 'Section 46', which involves the removal of a child from the family home when serious harm has been done or is likely to be done to the child. If a child is removed from home, they are placed in care, which is an alternative form of accommodation, such as a foster home or residential children's home; the child becomes a 'looked-after child'. The Infographics on the next page, produced by the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, illustrate how limited official understanding of children's experiences is after leaving the family care system. The infographics demonstrate that although children's return to the system is recorded, their whereabouts, health outcomes, whether they are in education, employment, or training, whether they are performing well academically, and whether they have contact with the youth justice system are only partially known. Whether those leaving the family justice system have good relationships is unknown.

## What do we know about children known to children's services?



## What do we know about children and families as they enter the family justice system?

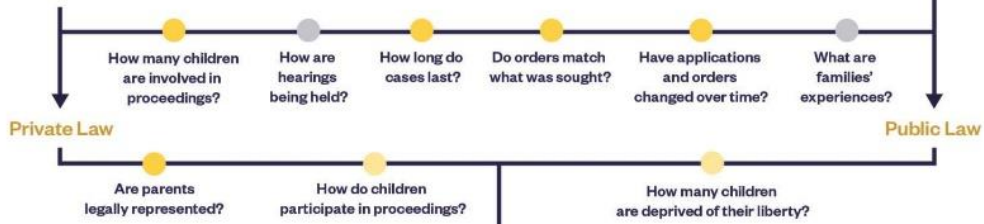


## What do we know about the support families receive on their journey?



WHAT KIND OF HELP PROVIDED

## What do we know about the children and families in the family justice system?



EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS

## What do we know about children after they have left the family justice system?



A report from the 'Child of the North' All-Party Parliamentary Group detailed the lack of support for parents under the austerity agenda, intensifying some families' problems (Health Equity North, 2024). The report indicated the complexities affecting young lives: 'there is no nuance in the system, no distinction between intentional harm inflicted on children and the unintentional harm experienced by children due to the unmet needs of parents' (Health Equity North, 2024, p. 22). This point was highlighted when the report was announced in the media, accompanied by an interview with a parent.<sup>11</sup> This parent courageously explained how, as a heroin substance user with physical and mental health problems, she lacked the support she needed at the time when her children were taken into care. She agreed that the removal of the children due to neglect was necessary, but asserted that if she had received support sooner, she would have had her children returned to her earlier. She had been supported by a community organisation for women who had experienced care proceedings. The report testified to the merit of co-designing and co-producing services: 'Best practice cannot be designed top-down' (Health Equity North, 2024, p. 21). Its foreword was written by Rebekah Pierre, a care-experienced author and social worker.

The report also posed another critique of current thinking: 'We question the potential harm and abuse children might experience if left with parents, but we never question the trauma experienced by children as a result of removing them from families' (Health Equity North, 2024, p. 22). As the parent mentioned above agreed, children need to be protected from abuse and neglect. However, the effects of separation from parents, and the grief and trauma which may result, can be underestimated. The complex needs stemming from early difficulties and traumas of neglect and abuse can be further compounded by the trauma of separation, loss and changes in home placements, which can contribute to behaviour that is difficult for others, such as staff in schools, and for the children themselves, to understand. Moving from one care placement to another within a year can lead to a 'higher-than-average rate of not being in school' (Children's Commissioner, 2023,

---

<sup>11</sup> The report was announced on the Radio 4 programme *World at One* on 17 April 2024.

p. 31). Recalling Bruce Perry's advice, stated in Chapter One, a child who has suffered extreme and persistent harm, affected by relational/developmental trauma, requires sensitive, multifaceted support that is not only trauma-informed, but also attachment-informed, neglect-informed and developmentally-informed (Perry, 2009, p. 241).

Out of the 12 million children living in England, 400,000, or approximately 3%, are in the social care system at any given time; more than 80,000 are looked-after children (Department for Education, 2023). Child poverty, inequalities, and reduced spending on children's services were highlighted as possible causes of the dramatic 20% rise in the number of looked-after children between 2004 and 2019 (Bennett *et al.*, 2020). Reduced spending on children's services seems to be a false economy: children who become looked-after experience separation and loss, often multiple times. Notably, not all looked-after children require additional school support. However, all need to feel a sense of belonging within their school (Greenwood, 2018). For those with problems, preventive help could save emotional and financial costs. The social costs of adverse outcomes for children who need a social worker are estimated at £23 billion annually (Equity Health North, 2024, p. 7).

The film *Earth Mama*, directed by British-born Olympic athlete-turned-filmmaker Savannah Leaf, narrates the story of a young mother's experiences with her children being taken into care amid poverty, racism, and social and educational disadvantage (*Earth Mama*, 2023). Although Leaf's film, based on her personal experiences, was produced in the US, the issues it raises are relevant to the UK. At the age of sixteen, Leaf's parents adopted a baby girl. Leaf empathised with her sister's young mother, whom she met a few times and was similar in age to herself. The combination of her in-depth research into the issues and her own experience, presented with stunning cinematography, conveys a powerful socio-economic-political critique, honouring the young mother's story with dignity and respect. A review stated that the film is 'bleak at times', but there is 'hope in the solidarity of Black women and dignity in Gia's [the young mother's] quiet stoicism' (Ide, 2023). Powerful images were featured in another review of the film (Bonaime, 2023).

### 3.5.3 Children, mental health and diagnoses

Diagnoses provide explanations for mental illness or disorders, which may be helpful and reassuring for parents. However, heavy reliance on a biomedical model and the ‘medicalisation of childhood’ has been critiqued (Hill, 2013). The Division of Educational and Child Psychology of the British Psychological Society urged more research ‘based on broader conceptualisations of behaviour and the social context in which it occurs’ (Hill, 2013, p. 5). Echoing these concerns, the National Traumatic Child Stress Network in the US noted that children are ‘...ill served by the current diagnostic systems that lead to an emphasis on behavioural control with no recognition of interpersonal trauma ... such children are diagnosed with an average of 3-8 co-morbid disorders’ (van der Kolk, 2015, p. 159).

A comparative international study found that in the UK, there was a 54% increase in young people being prescribed medication between 2005 and 2012 (Bachmann *et al.*, 2016). The study suggested possible causes were: routine prescriptions without accompanying psychotherapeutic support due to limited availability, parents’ expectations of quicker treatment and marketing by pharmaceutical companies (p. 416). This suggests that making psychotherapy more available would help children. It is not uncommon for school-based art psychotherapists to work with children diagnosed with, for example, attachment disorders, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.<sup>12</sup> Research found that: ‘primary-school-based art therapy may have benefits for children struggling with classroom behaviour, Opposition Defiance Disorder (ODD), Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD), Locus of Control and self-concept’ (McDonald and Drey, 2018, p. 42). Earlier research recommended art psychotherapy as effective for children with psychosis (NICE, 2013).

School is a familiar and easily accessible place for children to receive specialist mental health support ‘with the least fuss and disruption’ (Weare, 2015, p. 6), taking into account family situations that may cause stress (Cole *et al.*, 2005). Regarding children with complex emotional needs, as mentioned earlier, child psychiatrist Bruce Perry asserted that the social, emotional and developmental

---

<sup>12</sup> This is based on the author’s own experiences of working as an art therapist in a team of therapists in schools.

consequences of maltreatment are severe, especially when children are removed from home due to abuse and neglect, under the age of three, and taken into care (Perry, 2009). These children require sensitive relational support and a multifaceted approach. Joint care and attention from school and multi-agency staff are critical to supporting these children to remain in school. Research conducted with a working group of expert children confirmed that looked-after children's high levels of adversity result in 'negative impacts on health and wellbeing ... with greater intensity than the whole population ACE data'<sup>13</sup> (Simkiss, 2019, p. 32).

The Children's Commissioner (2023, p. 8) highlighted the vulnerability of these children: 'looked-after boys and looked-after children with Educational Health and Care Plans<sup>14</sup> for social, emotional and mental health needs are at a higher risk of being missing from education'. Additionally, a higher number of care placements in a year can lead to a higher-than-average rate of not being in school (p. 31). Transitioning between homes, children experience multiple reconfigurations of relationships and loss. The child may adapt to differences, only to lose a sense of connection and belonging when they are moved again. Schools and local interdisciplinary partnerships may strive to promote stability and consistency for pupils' mental health and well-being, as recommended by the National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence (2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022), but implementation of the guidance and standards across all schools is not consistent, as statistics on exclusions show.

When children's behaviour is not understood, and they feel labelled, resulting in statements such as 'I've got too much stuff wrong with me', the sense of feeling damaged and lacking hope can cause their self-worth to plummet (Caslin, 2019). Child-deficit labelling unilaterally blames the child and relieves societal systems of responsibility for addressing wider contextual realities (Heron, 2019).

---

<sup>13</sup> See Felitti *et al.* (1998) ACE is the acronym for Adverse Childhood Experiences.

<sup>14</sup> The legislation underpinning the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), is the Children and Families Act 2014. Duties are explained to local authorities, health bodies and schools in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0-25 years (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015). The local authority is responsible for collating reports from health, social care and education professionals and deciding which educational provision the child will attend. A specialist school may be recommended, or support in mainstream education. In the case of the latter, specialist teaching assistant support is sometimes named and funded. In my experience, funding is very rarely allocated to arts therapists. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

### 3.5.4 School exclusions and youth justice systems

Researchers have found a strong association between exclusion from school and being 'missing' from education and/or being 'hard to find' (Pirrie and Macleod, 2009, p. 192). Education for excluded children should continue in an Alternative Provision (AP) or Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), although some are also excluded from this 'highly differentiated educational pathway'. A study enquiring into what happens to children permanently excluded from PRUs found, maybe unsurprisingly, that the children experience 'multiple discontinuities in service provision': young people poignantly told researchers that what made a difference was 'the person who 'held the story', and for whom the young person was visible in their full humanity' (Pirrie *et al.*, 2011, p. 536). Sociologist Catherine Brown's PhD study found that families, therapists and other professionals sometimes find themselves having to manage 'the tensions and contradictions in the wider social systems and processes' around the child who does not fit the concept of vulnerability as being deserving and compliant but in whom 'vulnerability' and 'transgression' have 'a complex co-existence alongside one another' (Brown, 2013a, p. 304).

Due to the nature of art therapy, it is possible to provide such support to children, provided the system is flexible enough.<sup>15</sup> According to Brown, social policy has tended to operate a hierarchy of vulnerabilities, where some people are more deserving than others; the vulnerability-transgression bind marginalises some children, for whom being seen as vulnerable denies their resilience and survival capabilities. Art therapy, embedded in systems, may potentially address this complex co-existence by offering a counterspace (explained in the next chapter as heterotopia, and alluded to by Caroline Case earlier as 'a counterpoint') which can hold what the child wants to share/tell/ show of their story, in their own way, and where they are seen in their 'full humanity'. Art therapists are not alone in providing attuned relationships that help a child feel understood, though this is central to their work. Social workers and others do this as well. For instance, in her doctoral study, youth justice worker Cath Connor interviewed children in residential care whom she had worked with about their

---

<sup>15</sup> See chapter: Aligning with the chaos and navigating the trauma, (McConnell *et al.* 2019) in Gallard *et al.*(eds.) *Children and their education in secure accommodation: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. Oxon. Routledge.

experiences of care, the youth justice system, and their lives prior to entering care (Connor, 2012). In a later criminal justice situation, one child named her as next of kin (Connor, 2025). Social worker Pamela Mann's work and research also involved sustained relationships with children in care over long periods. In her book, *Children in Care Revisited*, she also described supporting foster carers and adoptive parents in caring for children. She writes:

The social worker has a classic role in helping substitute parents hold on during a child's initial testing to find whether he will be rejected yet again. But this involves empathising with the desperate pitch the care-givers can sometimes reach (Mann, 1984, p. 132).

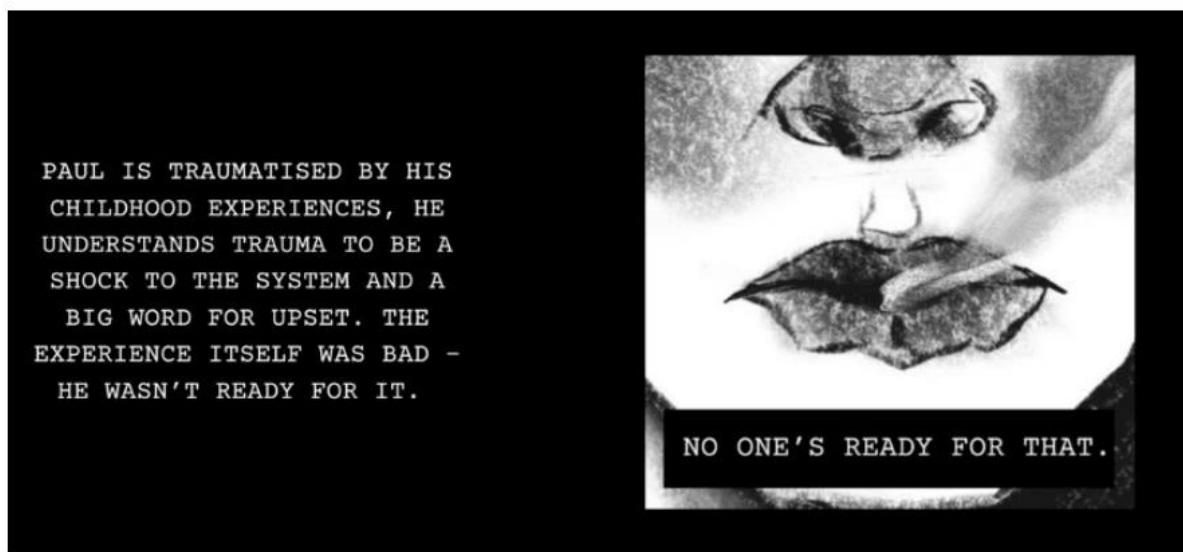
School staff *in loco parentis* may similarly reach a 'desperate pitch' and their need for support, as mentioned earlier, cannot be overstated.

Absence from school can be one of the factors leading children to involvement in the criminal justice system (Gyateng, *et al.*, 2014). The alarming statistic that 33% of looked-after children receive a caution or conviction, compared to 4% of children with no experience of the care system, means that looked-after children are more than eight times more likely to come into contact with the youth justice system (Hunter *et al.*, 2023; Lavelle and Hattenstone, 2023). Coupled with exclusion narratives, these children might be ushered into what is known as the 'school-to-prison pipeline' (Apple, 2013, p. 1; Hopkins, 2019). Public health collaborative approaches to preventing children's offending and re-offending have involved local health and justice system leaders, but, to my knowledge, not local education systems.<sup>16</sup> Documentation accompanying regional meetings cited school protective factors, but school risk factors were notably absent (Public Health England, 2019). Of further concern, it is possible that children rejected by schools and other educational settings are sought out by and attracted to individuals who offer them a sense of belonging and other rewards. Researchers suggest that many individuals recruited into 'county lines' may have experienced a range of adversities at home or within the care system (Windle *et al.*, 2020, p. 68).

---

<sup>16</sup> I was invited by the Head of the local Youth Justice Service to a large regional conference organised by public health and youth justice systems, and I was the sole education representative present.

Researchers and youth justice workers co-designed a study (Grey, Smithson and Jump, 2023) on the links between adverse childhood experiences (Felitti *et al.*, 1998) and serious youth crime. The researchers recommended that psychotherapeutic trauma-informed approaches be used when engaging with justice-involved young people (Grey, Smithson and Jump, 2023, p. 103). The study employed a participatory framework, incorporating arts therapy research tools, to co-constructively engage with justice-involved young participants, whose expressive narratives revealed their knowledge. Two dramatherapists facilitated workshops. I was also involved in the research, creating drawings that depicted the young people's narratives as they spoke. Looking at the action involved in creating drawings provided a focal point for their gaze; they preferred not to look at the researchers or each other. A graphic artist later worked with the researchers and my drawings to produce a video animation (Grey, Smithson and Jump, 2021). Reproduced below, with permission, is a still frame from this film, as published in a blog by Dr Paul Grey, one of the researchers (Grey, 2021).



(Image taken from the short co-created animation – [Trauma City: A tale of SYV](#) – that resulted from the workshops)

The animation demonstrates in graphic terms the links between memories of fear and violence at home, the lack of emotional support in school or community, and the dilemmas the young people felt about maintaining self-respect and the respect of others, whatever violent demands were made upon them by the adult criminals who exploited them. The research participants were not

recounting 'real' experiences, but their vocabulary and stories sprang from the realities of their lives. Violence had become normalised at a young age. The image still from the film shows how 'trauma' is understood as 'a big word for upset'. The study concluded that youth justice services must 'move towards more clinically informed therapeutic practices', to address serious youth violence effectively and 'develop a more humane approach to vulnerable young people who find themselves adrift in a sea of justice agencies with nothing to cling to' (Grey, Smithson and Jump, 2023, pp. 103-104).

### **3.5.5 Financial and emotional costs of exclusions**

Research indicates that when a family appeals against an exclusion, the Independent Review Panel process, according to one headteacher incurs the personnel costs of: half a day of the headteacher's time, two days of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator's (SENDCo) time and one day of a school governor's time (Graham *et al.*, 2019, p. 92). Each permanently excluded child is estimated to incur an additional £370,000 in costs for education, health, welfare, and criminal justice (Whitaker, 2021, p. 124). The financial costs of disciplinary exclusion, Alternative Provisions, and expenses associated with the criminal justice system and residential secure units are substantial. Emotional costs and stress affect all, including parents, as mentioned earlier (Kulz, 2015). The cost to children, their families, and society is incalculable (Hallett and Hallett, 2021). A real-life example from the author's team practice illustrates how savings were achieved – financially, socially and emotionally – when a child accessed art therapy in school.

In 2008, when local authorities reorganised and reduced their services due to the global financial crisis, the therapist team involved in the current research was obliged to start trading and charge schools for the delivery of art therapy interventions. Previously, funding had been provided by the central government (The Children's Fund) and then by local government. The first commission for therapy was from a school for secondary-age pupils with 'Social, Emotional, and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)'. Nowadays, this would be referred to as a school for children with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The school staff were concerned about a fourteen-

year-old who could barely manage half an hour in school before being excluded daily. He had, on one occasion, taken a knife into school. The home visiting educational psychologist described him as 'feral'. Concerns escalated further when he again brought a knife into school. The deputy head teacher was convinced that without help, 'he would either kill or be killed' – but she was convinced he was 'not inherently uneducable' (Gazeley, 2010, p. 306). The psychologist recommended a residential placement with on-site education for this child, costing between £250,000 and £500,000 per annum. However, after consultations with the school and home, and after gathering information, the therapy team delivered tailored school art therapy for less than £6,000 per year, or around 2% of the previous figures' average. After a year, the child's self-image had undergone a remarkable transformation. He had assumed he would be in prison by the age of 18, like his older brother. Yet, after a year of art therapy support, he was attending school and saw himself as creative and capable. The relationship between his school and home also underwent a significant and healthy change. Although the headteacher had no budget for art therapy, he had allocated funds based on word-of-mouth recommendations and his desire to help the child.

From this real-life example, the 'predictive savings' value of art therapy may be apparent. When the total costs of care, alternative provision, youth justice, and other involvements are aggregated across systems, the cost of delivering art therapy, which appears high from a school's perspective, diminishes significantly. The social cost is an obvious corollary of the same argument. Perhaps even more important than the financial calculations is the fact that a young life was spared a life of misery, confusion and pessimistic predictions. There can be serious repercussions when children are not offered well-developed psychotherapeutic interventions and systemic support, to find expression in a safe space with safe tools to resolve the lack of safety they feel in their inner lives. They may seek anti-social or even violent activities after rejection by school and society.<sup>17</sup> Research quotes a

---

<sup>17</sup> Five years before Axel Rudakubana shockingly took three children's lives in Southport on 29 July 2024, he had been permanently excluded after bringing a knife into school. It is unclear whether and how his mental health was addressed. Williams (2025), 'UK faces terror risk from radicalised 'loners and misfits' warns Keir Starmer', *Financial Times*. 21 January. These two descriptors of children as 'misfits' and 'loners' perhaps raise questions about the kinds of culture they are expected to fit into and what is causing them to be separate from it.

headteacher saying that children at risk of exclusion ‘burn most of their bridges within the school ... they don’t have many advocates for them’ (Gazeley, 2010, p. 305). The art therapist in the real-life scenario above was an advocate for the child; trust could gradually transfer to other individuals within the school and further afield as the art therapy work progressed at the child’s pace.

Asked about children, in her fourth Reith Lecture on Violence, broadcast on Radio 4, forensic psychiatrist and psychotherapist Dr Gwen Adshead expressed optimism that violence and its causes are being taken more seriously (Adshead, 2024). She noted the complexities between justice and health services in the UK, comparing this to the situation in Norway, where recidivism (re-offending) is much lower than in the UK, due to restorative solutions. When asked whether she had ever seen an indication of how the mind of a person imprisoned for extreme violence had changed, she paused and described how a patient/prisoner was keen to show her what was going on in his mind by showing an image he had made in art therapy.

### **3.6 School ‘climates’**

Schools face challenges in containing an ‘extraordinary variety of conflicting aims’ as they have several overlapping systems to work with: pupils, teachers, parents and administrators (Eisold, 2009, p. 138). School climate has been defined as ‘the nexus of individual and group experience’ since it is based on the individual’s perception of school life, but it is more than this; it reflects group trends (Cohen, 2009, p. 101). I now explain two major trends that exemplify the contradictory government advice described in Chapter One. The first trend illustrates the dominant ideology of accepting exclusion as a default position when all behaviour management strategies fail with a child, with no specialist support provided. This normative view holds that there is no moral or legal obligation to provide children with confidential support. The extreme version of this trend, typified by the isolation units for internal exclusion referred to earlier, has been described as a ‘new totalitarianism’ (Fielding, 2006). In this trend, a hierarchical leadership model with a top-down approach is believed necessary to attain high academic standards. Such schools may be considered to be functioning as ‘a

system designed primarily to ensure compliance and exert control' (Fielding, 2006, p. 347), and likely, the failure of behaviour management strategies would be the threshold for excluding children.

The second, less dominant trend, manifests in schools that offer children support that extends far beyond responses to external behaviours. They are likely rooted in a person-centred approach (Fielding, 2000) in which the headteacher and leadership team achieve the 'conflicting aims' by developing skills and managing well 'intangibles such as good communication, trust in relationships, responsiveness and flexibility' (Eisold, 2009, p. 138). In his book *The Kindness Principle: Making Relational Behaviour Management work in Schools*, Dave Whitaker explains how developing a school ethos based on good relationships can alter children's trajectories of social and educational disadvantage: 'Education should be the means to break the link between demographics and destiny' (Whitaker, 2021, p. 123). Emphasis is placed on the quality of relationships throughout the school, an approach which chimes with the study of teachers' compassionate intuition and 'pedagogical tact' (Sipman *et al.*, 2019). Research on whole-school approaches to inclusion for children with difficulties has shown that it is possible to achieve pupils' healthy well-being and good academic achievement simultaneously (Seligman *et al.*, 2009; Twemlow *et al.*, 2001; Holttum, 2015).

Educational psychotherapist Heather Geddes and psychologist Louis Cozolino demonstrate how teachers, key figures in children's school lives, elicit 'attachment' behaviour patterns - how a child typically relates to a significant other (Geddes, 2003, 2005; Cozolino, 2013). In a welcome development, the government advised designated teachers for looked-after children to be trained and to ensure all staff are aware of 'emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment awareness)' (Department for Education, 2018b, p. 11).

Furthermore, practices underpinned by trauma-informed theory have emerged in schools (Varghese, 2018). The five principles of trauma-informed theory are 1) creating safety, 2) building trust, 3) encouraging collaboration, 4) providing choice, and 5) supporting empowerment. These principles are crucial to building schools as safe spaces for learning for all pupils (Varghese, 2018, p. 137).

However, as mentioned in Chapter One, trauma-informed approaches are not enough for some children with early experiences of severe abuse (Perry, 2009). If persistent childhood trauma interrupts a child's development and relational growth, the child's capacity to benefit from relational interactions is compromised (Perry, 2009, p. 246). Such children may find it impossible to respond to verbal behaviour management strategies. They may require confidential therapeutic support, as the government's advice on mental health and behaviour outlined in Chapter One implies. Setting up and maintaining this support may involve liaising with external partnership agencies that can provide specialist support focused on the missed early stages of development. This will help the child progress well in both their emotional well-being and their learning, which are interdependent. Low-level, time-limited interventions, assuming the child's capacity for cortical modulation (making changes in cognitive thinking patterns), are unlikely to be effective for children who need relational support to first build and strengthen the early developmental layers. These children require developmentally-informed, neglect-informed and attachment-informed approaches (Perry, 2009, p. 241). This is specialist work that teaching staff cannot be expected to deliver. An interdisciplinary approach spanning different fields is required to seamlessly integrate health support into the education system. Research on collaborative ways of working across education, health, and the social sciences has inspired the development of new models. Examples include: interdisciplinary collaborative arts therapy in schools (Karkou *et al.*, 2010), transdisciplinary collaborative helping for families (Madsen, 2009), and intersectoral collaboration (Maceira and Topp, 2024). The current study demonstrates both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and practice.

Earlier, I quoted art psychotherapist Dave Edwards, who suggested that the truth about human experience may be 'largely determined by metaphors, stories, beliefs and doctrines which in any given society shape our ideas about the world and what it means to be human' (Edwards, 1999, p. 5). I believe that stories of time, space, and power significantly shape important ideas about art therapy. In the next chapter, I explain my ideas on the philosophical significance of these concepts - time, space and power - in relation to school art therapy.

## 4.0

## CHAPTER 4 – Philosophical Underpinnings

We saw in Chapter Two how artworks may be viewed as heterotopias: they create a context in time and space for us to think about our lives and the world anew. They are both real and ‘unreal’, making space for the imagination. This research proposes that the art therapy room in school can be understood as a heterotopia. Later, I will explain the six principles of French philosopher Michel Foucault’s heterotopic theory and their application to the art therapy space in school, with the aim of defining its physical structure and potential as a place of the imagination. First, however, I introduce the (also French) philosopher Henri Bergson’s ideas and his concept of time, *durée*, which I believe is fundamental to understanding what happens in the heterotopic art therapy room.

Henri Bergson’s philosophy of multiplicity and creativity resonates with my experiences as an artist and art therapist. In this chapter, I demonstrate how these aspects of his philosophy, gifted to us in his multi-levelled concept of ‘*durée*’, combined with Michel Foucault’s heterotopic theory, provide a robust theoretical framework for understanding the complex spatio-temporal features of school-based art therapy. I also explain how Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism adds linguistic detail to the Bergsonian and Foucauldian underpinnings of this study. I then explain how my research, grounded in learnings from everyday reality, draws on the work of feminist researchers Haraway, Stanley and Wise to justify my standpoint on situated knowledge and partial perspectives. Finally, I explain how political philosopher Hannah Arendt’s ideas on ‘action’ and the ‘space of appearances’ are germane to systemic school-based art therapy.

### 4.1 Bergson’s influence on Foucault and Bakhtin

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the writings of French philosopher Henri Bergson had a profound impact on the philosophical, literary, and art worlds in France and other countries, including the UK, the USA, and Russia (Rudova, 1996; Sinclair, 2019; Lawlor and Moulard-Leonard, 2022). Bergson was an influential public intellectual of his day, admired equally by erudite scholars, students, the social elite, and city dwellers who flocked in masses to hear him speak. Socio-cultural-

political factors during and after the First World War and developments in philosophy, particularly in Germany, contributed to the waning of Bergson's influence thereafter (Bianco, 2011; Canales, 2015). In the 1960s, Gilles Deleuze was responsible for revitalising interest in Bergson, asserting that Bergson's concept of 'multiplicity' was his most enduring contribution to philosophical thinking (Lawlor and Moulard-Leonard, 2022). In the 1970s, chemist Ilya Prigogine further highlighted Bergson's interdisciplinary influence (1993 [1977], para. 6). Michel Foucault's review of French philosophy, written in the early 1980s, presented Bergson as the key figure of the 'philosophy of experience' at the start of the century (Bianco, 2011, p. 855) and Bergson's interest in 'the role of unconscious memories within recognition' (Lawlor and Moulard-Leonard, 2022) anticipated early psychology studies. His work resonates with later developments in cognitive sciences. Recently, interest in Bergson's work has revived, Sinclair argues, perhaps because understanding the creative evolution of the natural world and human creativity has become so important (Sinclair, 2020). Given the effects of environmental destruction and the climate crisis in our era, a philosophy rooted in the continuous creation of life-giving forms and forces is welcome.

#### **4.2 'Continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty'**

Bergson's work on creativity in the arts inspired many by explaining how 'the new' derives from multiplicity. According to Bergson, the creative impulse (he coined the term *élan vital* in French) brings something new into being as part of the universe's 'continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty' which he felt part of: 'I feel I am experiencing it constantly' (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 73). The idea of continuous creativity and the concept of 'becoming' influenced Foucault and many others. Scholarly research exploring the links between Bergson, Foucault and Deleuze on the subject of 'becoming' asserts that abstract thinking, though practical in day-to-day life, sometimes 'blinds us to the wonder of singular becomings' (Bearn, 2017, p. 411). The writer continues: 'At the cutting edge of creativity there is no prior code which gives the meaning of our actions' (2017, p. 412). The code of creativity's actions does not exist, so we cannot decode it. It is uncharted territory, and we must construct meaning ourselves. Writing on 'inside processes', social constructionist John Shotter

observes how practitioner researchers and participants are ‘already caught up in a ceaselessly ongoing process’ (Shotter, 2005, p. 159). He quotes from Bergson’s *Creative Evolution*, highlighting Bergson’s emphasis on understanding ‘the inner becoming of things’ rather than artificially recomposing them, having placed ourselves outside them: ‘it is the flow of time, it is the very flux of the real that we should be trying to follow’ (Bergson, 2023 [1907], pp. 201 and 225-256).

At the start of the twentieth century, cultural and intellectual circles in Russia were interested in the nature of time, space, and mental processes, issues which Bergson consistently addressed (Rudova, 1996). His work was translated and taught in universities, influencing many, including the literary critic and linguist Mikhail Bakhtin, who developed the concept of multiplicity into his theory of dialogism. Shotter (1999) defines Bakhtin’s dialogism as the mental activities out in the world between, for instance, two people. Shotter saw that ‘the possibility of two quite distinct worlds coming into living, dialogical contact with each other’ was crucial to Bakhtin’s approach: ‘a new world is created between them, with influences from the unique worlds of both participants, and from their shared cultural worlds, at work in it’ (Shotter, 1999, p. 75). This concept undergirds the current study’s research project, where the two distinct worlds of two participants, a child and a school leader, come into ‘living, dialogical contact with each other’, creating a new world between them influenced by their unique and shared cultures. Interestingly, Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism has informed therapeutic work over time (Bertrando and Lini, 2021). Dialogism, combined with Foucault’s power/knowledge discourses, has also informed ethnographic research exploring ‘hybrid’ identities where: ‘meanings are transformed in interactions, so there is an ongoing process of construction and change within the dialogical process of identity making’ (Tate, 2007, p. 15).

I have briefly shown how the historical antecedent of Bergson’s work influenced both Foucault and Bakhtin. Bergson’s theory of multiplicity, Bakhtin’s dialogism, and Foucault’s heterotopic theory shape the current research. I now attempt to briefly explain Bergson’s theory of multiplicity and why it became central to this study. The updated entry on Bergson in the Stanford Encyclopedia of

Philosophy has provided valuable assistance (Lawlor and Moulard-Leonard, 2022). These scholars state that many philosophers today consider Bergson's concept of multiplicity, despite its difficulty, to be 'revolutionary' because 'it opens the way to a reconception of community' (para. 1). The current study seeks to demonstrate this in practice by rethinking school exclusions. The flow of time, the flux of the real, is central to all human experiences, from children to adults. I turn to the imagery that Bergson uses to introduce and explain the main concepts that I refer to in this thesis.

#### **4.2.1 The flock of sheep**

In his concept of multiplicity, Bergson attempts to unify the contradictory features of heterogeneity and continuity. The classic analogy for this conundrum is whether we enter the same river when we step into it again. In the pre-Socratic debate, Heraclitus said the river is in a state of perpetual movement, so he affirmed 'becoming' and 'change'. Parmenides denied both becoming and change, asserting that nothing ever changes and that abstract concepts are the ultimate reality. To understand how Bergson resolves this conundrum, we must first deconstruct his idea of multiplicity. Bergson argues for two kinds of multiplicity: qualitative and quantitative. He uses the example of a flock of sheep (Bergson, 1910 [1889], pp. 76-77) to illustrate their differences. We use generalised symbolic figures (numbers) to represent quantitative multiplicity when counting the number of sheep in the flock. However, there is further unquantifiable information about them. For instance, the purpose of their breeding, whether for mutton and/or wool, the particular space each sheep occupies in the field, why, and so on. These are features of qualitative multiplicity. Quantitative multiplicity, necessary for organisational purposes, deals with the outside world. Abstract thinking in numbers is helpful in 'real' life. Bergson asserts that our subjective experience of human life has qualitative rather than quantitative multiplicity, and it consists of two characteristics. These are qualitative multiplicity and unity. He refers to their blend as *durée*. Since neither the English translation 'duration' nor 'flow' adequately conveys the meaning, I use the term *durée*, coined by Bergson in French. Bergson uses three images to help visualise aspects of *durée*.

#### 4.2.1.1 Bergson's three images of *durée*

I now paraphrase the three images (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 137). The first comprises two spools with a tape unrolling from one and winding onto the other. As we age, we accumulate more memories, symbolised by the spool that augments. We have less life left, symbolised by the diminishing spool. The spool image represents the totality of a life, past and future. Since any image of *durée* would be insufficient to represent it fully, the limitation of the spool image is that some of the many moments on the tape may be assumed to be identical. However, none are, because each moment is affected by further change produced by immediately preceding moments. In practice, we can apply the spool image, for instance, to the length of an art therapy intervention. At the beginning, there may be a sense of a lot of time and space ahead to explore and express whatever needs to be addressed. The intervention progresses, and eventually, the ending comes, which is a distinct phase of the spool's unwinding/winding. Each moment is unique. The therapist holds the outer frame, cognisant of and in accordance with the spool's phase.

The second image is of a spectrum of colours, with '(a) current of feeling running through the spectrum, becoming tinted with each of these shades in turn' (2007 [1934], p. 138). If we imagine one of the moments on the spool tape and enter it, we could equate its quality with a colour, perhaps green. Entering the green and the feeling it evokes could lead to a growing awareness of many things. There may be awareness of the spectrum itself, and the gradual changes into yellow as the green colour lightens, or blue as it moves towards the other end of the spectrum. The limitation is that these colours are visualised as separate, whereas in *durée* there is a unity in the multiplicity; it all comes together at once. So the spectrum, separating the colours, does not convey *durée* entirely, though it offers rich visual and sensory possibilities in art experiences.

The third image is of an elastic band. Held in both hands in a relaxed position, it represents a moment. Stretching and extending it as far as possible shows the sense of dilation, amplifying the now and being present to more of its multiplicity. However, it does not indicate the multiplicity of

content, as the spectrum did, or the unity of time in the spool. Although *durée* cannot be fully encapsulated in a single image, these three images give a taste of what Bergson is trying to convey.

In the context of an art therapist working with a child, the image of the two spools also reminds the adult of a long history of experiences and associated memories accumulated over their lifetime. The child has gathered less and lives more effortlessly and spontaneously in their *durée*. The adult or therapist must keep themselves out of the way somehow, so the child can experience their *durée* freely. The image of the colour spectrum can equate with how real mark-making in colour, exploring the transformative effects as one colour meets another, can help a child notice change in the present moment and the feelings they are experiencing in their *durée* through absorption and interaction with art materials. Each gradual change in the image and the connected feelings might 'announce the following and sum up within itself the preceding ones' (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 138). Thus, *durée* is externalised via the image, a record of the traces of subtle nuances and changes in feeling. The reader is reminded of their feelings or thoughts arising while contemplating the *durée* painting in this study's Chapter Two. The image of *durée* may tally with the sense of dilating or amplifying, like a stretched elastic band. This can be embodied even literally, in therapy through slow, amplifying arm movements, making brushstrokes across a large piece of paper, or stroking clay to create a sculpture. The sensory experiences of perception, the first purpose of art-making as defined by art-based education research, described in the last chapter, also come into play here. Bergson says no image conveys *durée*: each is incomplete. If we focus on one aspect, such as the movement of the elastic expanding, we overlook the wealth of colouring characteristic of something lived. *Durée* is not complete, but is 'the state of completing itself' (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 138). Becoming engrossed and connected with the flow of their *durée*, children intuitively create something new from the 'continuous creation of unforeseeable novelties' (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 73), in their process of becoming. Bergson's point is that our intelligence, structured around its needs and interests, often fails to recognise qualitative multiplicity, which has an internal order, direction and unity, and from which intuition arises.

#### 4.2.2 Bergson's method of intuition

Bergson asserted that intuition is always an intuition of *durée*: we 'seize' ourselves 'from within' (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 136). He wrote of a method of intuition corresponding to three acts. Firstly, a leap. This is new, has no code and springs from multiplicity. Secondly, effort is required to dilate or stretch out this newness and see where it leads (like an elastic band). Thirdly, effort is again necessary to differentiate between the extremes of this newness. These acts happen in art therapy, as people use materials, explore their properties and respond in 'reflexive oscillation' to use Adams' term.<sup>18</sup> The leap in ideas or expressions seems to come from nowhere. Another important aspect of intuition, Bergson stated, is self-sympathy (p. 135). If a kindness can be extended within the person, towards themselves, there is the possibility it can develop into empathy towards another, as we would say today. Intuition springs from memory, from *durée*, the increasingly large spool that gains more memories, as time progresses. In art therapy, the child's artwork accumulates over time like a spool. Folders containing paintings and drawings become fuller. The shelves in the cupboard hold more sculptures. The artworks bear traces of the memories of their creation and the conversations that accompanied them. Upon review, it becomes apparent that the attached meanings evolve and vary across different contexts. New insights and intuitions occur. According to Bergson, intuition comes from memory, not from perception. Art therapy provides a safe forum for memory and matter to interact, allowing connections to be discovered through the use of art materials. These could be explicit or implicit: ones that are more consciously near the surface, and others that are deeper. Bergson affirmed that both matter and memory are real, in different ways. We approach matter, art materials, and artwork, and these may or may not be laden with memories. As we interact with matter, memories may gather or be galvanised. We then perceive, use our senses, act, and create. Bergson's familiarity with artistic and musical imagery is steeped in awareness of the power of emotion, which is intrinsic to human experience. Emotion is central in Bergson's concept of *durée*.

---

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter Three on ABER Art-based Education Research. The Third of Four Purposes is 'Invention', which involves 'reflexive oscillation' (Adams, 2017).

### 4.2.3 Bergson, the arts and emotion

The writings of John Dewey and William James, as founders of democratic education, preceded modern psychology (Dewey, 1897, 1934; James, 1890). They held holistic views on education, recognising the importance of emotional experience and development, as well as cognitive skills and abilities. Art-related knowledge, and what we might now refer to as 'well-being', played a prominent role in their ideas. At the time, James faced criticism from those who emphasised the superiority of thought/cognition over feelings/affect. He was delighted and encouraged by personally meeting and reading the work of Bergson, whose philosophical work *'Time and Free Will: The Immediate Data of Consciousness'* (Bergson 1910, [1889]) chimed with James' position in the debate. James saw Bergson as expounding a coherent critique of the prevalent 'vicious intellectualism' (Anderson, 2000), which accorded no inherent value to the arts and the power of emotional life.

Bergson's observation of the mind's 'indivisible process' of concentrating on parts, adding and deconstructing them, describes creative activity, reminding us again of Adam's 'reflexive oscillation'. He explains how the mind deals with the relationship between 'the parts and the whole':

What properly belongs to the mind is the indivisible process by which it concentrates attention successively on the different parts of a given space; but the parts which have thus been isolated remain in order to join with the others, and, once the addition is made, they may be broken up in any way whatever (Bergson, 1910 [1899], p. 84).

This process of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing describes well my own experiences of painting and echoes the previous chapter's discussion of creativity and play (Gabora and Saab, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 2018). It is as if Bergson were describing what happens in an artist's studio or a music room. He likely personally witnessed artistic creativity. His father was a pianist and composer who headed the music school in Geneva. Bergson's early years were likely steeped in vibrant creativity as his father worked on new musical compositions. At nine, his family left Geneva for Paris, where his father performed in many concerts across the city for four years. Bergson (1910 [1889]) draws on numerous examples from music and art to explore the nature of the subjective human experience of time, which he terms *durée*. Bergson and his wife, Louise, had one child, Jeanne, who

was born deaf. The couple taught her and encouraged her artistic skills. Education for children with special needs was not yet well developed. Jeanne became a celebrated painter and exhibited her work at various Paris Salons; Bergson would have likely been aware of her creative methods. Music and visual art can express strong emotions, and it is to the subject of emotions that I now turn.

Neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux described how 'Emotions are notoriously difficult to verbalize' and 'operate in some psychic and neural space that is not readily accessed from consciousness' (LeDoux, 1998, p. 71). Because of the challenges in verbalising emotion, art, poetry, and other creative endeavours are helpful. Hence, the arts play a crucial cultural role in helping people express their feelings. LeDoux states that psychotherapists must first work with a person's 'visceral' experience, 'not words' (LeDoux, 1998, p. 97). Art can find a form, shape, texture and/or colour for this 'visceral' experience. This recalls Stern's 'forms of vitality', or dynamic expressions - how art therapists help people express emotions, including complicated ones: all at once, or in overlapping stages. LeDoux uses striking language to compare the sensitivity required when working with emotions, distinct from the relatively well-defined certainty of words or already-formed thoughts. Vividly, he describes the need to defend emotion 'from being consumed by the cognitive monster' (LeDoux, 1998, p. 69).

Using a positivist ontological approach, Jaak Panksepp's work on 'the science of emotions' was groundbreaking. Initially an engineer, his experiences visiting people in large psychiatric hospitals led to his desire to alleviate mental suffering. He studied cognitive neuroscience, then turned to emotion, founding the now-renowned field of affective neuroscience (Panksepp, 1998). Panksepp's analysis provided a quantitative, scientific baseline for emotions. His investigative studies identified seven primary 'emotional/motivational circuits' in animals, 'built into the ancient subcortical regions of our mammalian brain' by 'Mother Nature' (Panksepp, 2018, p. 247). He suggested that in humans, 'the positive emotions (especially SEEKING, CARE and PLAY) probably help ... inspire productive creativity' (2018, p. 247, capital letters are his). Opportunities for seeking, care, and play abound in the art therapy room, and these positive emotions can lead to 'productive creativity' that, in turn,

has a positive multiplier effect. Further scientific research with animals has shown that enrichment can improve animals' emotional states, which may help people in the future with mental health (Sangarapillai *et al.*, 2022). Enrichment is not a luxury. It can help with entrenched emotional states. Knowledge around powerful emotions has been applied to school children's behaviour: 'What looks like disobedience usually masks anxiety, fear, and emotional dysregulation' (Cozolino, 2013, p. 57).

As noted in the last chapter, sensory enrichment can help. Three more of our emotional/motivational circuits - rage, fear, and panic/sorrow – that Mother Nature has built into our mammalian brains (Panksepp, 2018, p. 247) may be experienced by particular children at specific times. Working with positive sensory, comforting experiences can help children learn. Cozolino explains that 'Learning is inhibited when the amygdala pairs relationships with fear, pain, or shame. Openness and trust are fragile creatures' (Cozolino, 2013, p. 234). Art therapists seek to give emotional/motivational circuits the space and time needed for implicit memories and somatic experience to be 'heard' and 'felt' in the art therapy room. The term 'implicit memory' refers to unconscious (or nonconscious) memory; it is not accessible to verbal consciousness as explicit memory is, and words for the stored memory have not yet been found. Emotion plays a significant role in the creation of implicit memories in children's early development (Siegel 2020a), as we saw when discussing early sensorimotor experience in the last chapter. Similarly, 'somatic experience', the body's felt-sense, awareness of emotion, anatomy, memory and dream, and imagination (Collinson, 2020), also play a vital role in developmental work. For adults and children alike, play and creativity help express emotion and change patterns in emotional circuits (Marks-Tarlow *et al.*, 2018). Stern proposed that 'forms of vitality' encapsulate aspects of what art and life are all about; they are 'hidden in plain view... We live impressions of vitality like we breathe air' (Stern, 2010, p. 3). Broader than, though including, emotions and sensations, 'vitality forms' have a temporal contour; they arise from '(i)mmersion in the dynamic flow' (Stern, 2010, p. 140). This sounds Bergsonian: the temporal contours of 'forms of vitality' are like a mini-time boundary that defines a space within which an expression has occurred. We will see examples of these in Chapter Seven.

Stern and Bergson both emphasise the universality and uniqueness of human creativity, expressed in moments of time. Stern's concepts of the 'present moment' and 'forms of vitality' which manifest as creative processes unfold, woven with Bergson's concepts of time and multiplicity, informed my thinking as I developed a methodology to analyse data, and underpin this thesis.

#### **4.2.4 Creativity and silence**

Art therapists refer to the unconscious in various ways, including as a source of creativity, the inner world, the unknown, dreamlike states, parallel universes, and imaginative worlds. Stern and Siegel prefer the term 'nonconscious' to 'unconscious' because the latter, rooted in psychoanalysis, may imply repression. When children are engrossed in their creative work, internal work is taking place, often nonconscious, uninterrupted by others, and sometimes in extended periods of silence and quiet. Maggie Ross's work, which explores the effects of silence, is relevant here. I appreciate her term 'the deep mind', which is directly linked to the creative process, preverbal experience, and the practice of staying with silence. Ross proposes that 'the energy generated by engagement with deep mind in silence seeks expression' (Ross, 2017, p. 26). Thus, when the child research participant in this study works silently, he uses his energy, which is converted into action and thought, and into making. The 'deep mind', according to Ross, is accessible to all:

Engaging deep silence does not depend on specialised language, celebrity gurus, exotic practices, weird phenomena, education or belief. It costs nothing. It is quintessentially simple, and therefore difficult for modern people to realize fully; and it is, paradoxically, both far more personal and far more objective than any claims of the self-conscious mind. (Ross, 2017, p. 25)

Like Stern and Bergson, Ross emphasises the coexistence of the universal and the unique in inner creativity. She describes how 'restoring the circulation between silence and speech' makes us 'at home with the liminal spaciousness of our own minds, in the equipoise of attentive receptivity that opens the flow between these two aspects of knowing' (Ross, 2017, p. 12). Pertinent to art therapists is her observation that engagement with silence leaves traces or marks of transfiguration, changes in how we figure things out. I now return to Bergson's concept of *durée*, which encapsulates the experience of subjective time in which our emotional circuits flow.

#### 4.2.5 Bergson's distinction between 'clock time' and *durée*

Bergson's fundamental distinction between two ways of understanding the phenomenon of time corresponds to the earlier discussion of quantitative and qualitative multiplicity, as in the flock-of-sheep example. The first concept, 'clock' time, is commonly understood as minutes, hours, days, and so on. Relying on numbers enables communication and social functioning. Bergson argues that this sense of time is spatialised, enabling it to be divided and measured. It can be laid out on a clock or a timetable. It can be segmented and calculated. It can measure distance – travel backwards and forwards – stretched out before us on a timeline: points in time can be seen in simultaneity.

Bergson's second concept of time, *durée*, explained earlier in this chapter, is neither divisible nor measurable. It is not easily defined. It is a person's experience of the passing of time and is internal: it cannot be seen by others but is felt by the person who experiences it. Our emotions and feelings arise within our *durée*. They swell and bulge from the immediate past into the present moment, then diminish, overlap, and re-form, propelling us into the future. Each moment is unrepeatable and irreversible, linked to a deep flow within us that has its own logic of unity. The inner states of the 'deep-seated self... permeate one another' and are 'ever changing and inexpressible' (Bergson, 1910 [1889], p. 125 and p. 129). This is qualitative multiplicity. There are so many variables in how each moment evolves, yet Bergson asserted that our experience of *durée* has its own logic of unity too, unique to each life. Activities that allow us to get into a flow state, which absorb and stretch us enough but not too much to overwhelm, can lead to time 'flying' fast; our absorption in *durée*. This chimes with Csikszentmihalyi's concept of being in the creative flow (2018), art-making's absorption resulting in positive change (Haring, 2020), 'flow' in art therapy practice (Warren, 2006), and Stern's 'forms of vitality' in artistic expression (Stern, 2010).

Bergson's theories, including the nonlinearity of time and the creative evolution of life in humans and nature, have attracted many. Developmental psychologist Jean Piaget acknowledged Bergson's two very different types of order: 'As you know, Bergson pointed out that there is no such thing as

disorder but rather two sorts of order, geometric and living' (Bringuier, 1989, p. 1). Similarly, Iain McGilchrist explores two interdependent broad areas of knowledge: linear, logical thinking, and holistic, embodied experience, which has its logic. He asserts that the former originates in the brain's left hemisphere and the latter in the brain's right hemisphere and states that these two areas of knowledge parallel Bergson's ideas on linear measurement and holistic flow: 'Bergson referred to two different orders of reality (*'deux réalités d'ordre différent'*)' (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 462, italics are his). Ilya Prigogine, on receiving the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1977 for his work on 'dissipative structures' which gave birth to dynamic systems theory, declared in his acceptance speech how Bergson's work had influenced him. He quoted from Bergson (2023 [1907], p. 7):

The more deeply we study the nature of time, the better we understand that duration means invention, creation of forms, continuous elaboration of the absolutely new. (Prigogine, 1993 [1977], here *durée* is translated as 'duration')

We can extend Piaget's interpretation of a 'living' sort of 'order' and, linking it with Prigogine's ideas on emergent self-organisation, see resonances with Stern's ideas. Stern noted that dynamic systems theory offers a description that clarifies complexity in psychotherapy:

In complex systems with multiple, independent and interdependent variables, (like the weather or psychotherapy) change occurs in a non-linear fashion, where one cannot predict the exact moment of change or the specific form it will take. These discontinuous leaps occur when the variables interact such that an "emergent property" appears. It represents a new element created by the auto-organisation of the system and can throw the system into a new state. (Stern, 2004, p. 181)

Other researchers who have applied a complex systems approach to psychotherapy have identified 'tipping points and nonlinear transitions' in system change (Hayes and Andrews, 2020, p. 2). For two decades, there has been growing recognition of 'complex systems theory' in health services (NHS, 2005; Zimmerman, 2013). It has also been applied to social work (Wolf-Branigin, 2012). These trends are relevant to the current study's concern with complex health inequalities and social and educational disadvantages affecting some children. In art psychotherapy, further multiple possibilities inherent in creative endeavour add to the complex system of psychotherapy: 'the art therapy relationship is a partnership between artistic and interpersonal phenomena' (McNiff, 1998,

p. 92). This partnership allows the child freedom to use energy and express themselves in novel ways that are natural to them. Such a process is full of surprises and ‘discontinuous leaps’.

As seen in Chapter Three, research shows that children with high-level emotional needs, sometimes described as ‘additional and complex needs’, require extended time and space with a person with whom they can build trust, who can honour their *durée*, ‘hold their story’ and see them in their ‘full humanity’. If *durée*, a person’s personal subjective experience, flows in all human life, it flows in the lives of all children. When children receive sufficient emotional support during their early years, they may feel at ease in their *durée*. For maltreated children who require specialist therapeutic support to develop and grow, through creative absorption in their *durée* in protected time and space with an attuned adult, Foucault’s concept of heterotopia provides a useful spatiotemporal framework.

### **4.3 The heterotopic art therapy space in school**

The concept of heterotopia presupposes a space set aside for a special purpose. Before I examine the application of its principles to school art therapy spaces, I briefly mention three art therapists who have referred to this concept.<sup>19</sup> Caryl Sibbett suggested that Foucault’s theory can be used to conceive of liminal space and time between life and death in her chapter ‘Betwixt and between’ on caring for cancer patients (Sibbett, 2005, p. 18). Barrie Damarell considered how heterotopic principles remind art therapists and their supervisors of ‘what (their) spaces represent, how they function within the culture and how they function as spaces apart, even while connected with a matrix of other spaces’ (Damarell, 2007, p. 40). In her work on art therapy and social action in public places, Pamela Whitaker conjectured that the heterotopic art therapy space can contain juxtaposing sites, themselves incompatible, ‘offer(ing) a resistance to social restriction ... ignit(ing) our release from the dynamics of social colonisation’ (Whitaker, 2005, p. 66). She stated, as quoted in Chapter Two, that every piece of art is a heterotopia for learning about ourselves and the world.

---

<sup>19</sup> I did not know when I wrote an article on heterotopia and art therapy (McConnell, 2019), that these art therapists had previously linked Foucault’s concept with their work.

I now introduce Foucault's work. He first presented his ideas on heterotopia and utopia in two radio programmes broadcast in France in 1966 (Foucault, 1966). The first section of his talk on heterotopia focused on children's experiences. This does not appear to have been translated from French into any language. I listened to his animated explication of heterotopias in French and how '*les enfants les connaissent parfaitement*', children know them perfectly. I translated this section from the French. Foucault describes children spontaneously creating these spaces. They play at the bottom of the garden, in the attic, in tents or in their parents' room when they are out: 'the double bed can become an ocean because you can swim between the covers, the sky because you can leap on the springs, the forest because you can hide in it, or the night because you can be a ghost under the sheets'. Children intuitively find and delight in these 'other places' where they play, desire, develop ideas and tell stories in word or action. They express themselves unselfconsciously and imaginatively, away from the adult world, using real objects at hand. In Bergsonian language, they are in the flow of their *durée*. When Foucault presented his theory in a lecture to architecture students in Paris some months after the radio broadcasts (Foucault, 1984 [1967]), he omitted his reference to children's instinctive understanding of heterotopias, these 'other places'. My explorations below reclaim his recognition of children's innate and perfect knowledge of what a heterotopia is. I aim to foster an innovative understanding of the art therapy space in schools as a heterotopia.

#### **4.3.1 A space that is 'simultaneously mythical and real'**

Foucault distinguishes heterotopia and utopia. Utopias are ideals that do not exist in everyday reality and cannot be physically touched or experienced with the senses. Heterotopias, by contrast, exist in and deal with messy reality and are located in real places. Foucault says they are '*une espèce de contestation à la fois mythique et réelle*', a sort of contestation of the space that is simultaneously mythical and real (1984 [1967], p. 4). He uses the mirror as an analogy to elucidate this concept. The flat surface of glass exists in the material world. It holds images and reflections that appear compellingly real under our gaze: the photons of reflected light are real, yet the images cannot be

touched physically. So the mirror holds the real and the unreal. Likewise, the world of reality and the mythical world of images meet in the space of art therapy. Each of these worlds provides infinite creative possibilities in each present moment. Each world —real and mythical, matter and memory —interacts with the other. The inner and outer worlds of the therapist and the child also interact (consistent with Bakhtin’s dialogism). These real-mythical spaces offer dynamic possibilities of positive change, in which the child leads the imaginative art-making process within an authentic therapeutic relationship with the art therapist. Art materials and the space may be transformed into something new. Diverse images and stories are born and developed. All is possible: time and space travel, being and doing, speaking and silence. In such a space, the child’s personal speech and actions are welcomed. The reader may recall: the therapy room is a ‘counterpoint’ (Case, 1987, p. 37), it can become a playroom, studio, shop, battlefield, nursery, office, or home (Halliday, 1987, p. 128). It has a different culture from the other spaces in the institution (Wengrower, 2001).

#### **4.3.2 Foucault’s six principles of the heterotopia**

The first of Foucault’s six principles of heterotopias is that every society has heterotopias of some kind, and delineates two main categories: crisis and deviancy. The second principle is that heterotopias are adapted according to new functions required by society, and the third defines heterotopia as multi-faceted. The fourth principle is that heterotopias exist in ‘slices of time’ with clearly defined beginnings and ends. The fifth principle is that ‘Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable’ (Foucault, 1984 [1967], p. 7). The final principle is that heterotopias ‘have a function in relation to all the space that remains’ (p. 8). I will now discuss each principle and its relevance to art therapy in education settings.

Foucault illustrates the first principle by giving examples of the categories of crisis and deviance. He describes crises as natural, unsettling periods in life, such as the transition from adolescence to adulthood. He refers to sacred or forbidden places in early or traditional cultures, which existed to manage these crises. Today, the unsettling period of transition into adulthood is addressed in various

ways. Children in supportive environments develop naturally, navigating the challenges involved. Yet, as seen in the mental health and school exclusions crises, without societal and individual support, too many children living through various transitions are plunged into desperate, ongoing situations. Misunderstood, some, even today, have been described as 'evil'.<sup>20</sup>

The second principle of heterotopia pivots on society's adaptation of heterotopia to meet new functions. Foucault asserts that as Western culture evolved, traditionally designated spaces to cope with natural life crises disappeared, replaced by spaces for individuals whose behaviour was judged deviant from the required norm. Psychiatric hospitals and prisons exemplify this second heterotopic principle in Foucault's writing. The current crisis of exclusions and subsequent issues of severe mental health conditions and/or involvement in the youth justice system, and attendant youth forensic facilities, testify to Foucault's second principle. I argue that society must review the phenomena that led to these heterotopic spaces. If cause and effect are analysed, early intervention suggests that adapting school rooms into heterotopic therapeutic spaces for children in crisis would be an appropriate new function for our society's contemporary heterotopia, meeting the urgent preventative needs of both mental health and school inclusion in constructive ways.

The third principle is the heterotopia's multifaceted nature. Foucault highlights the garden as an example of this. In antiquity, the garden was conceived as a sacred space, both a tiny corner of the world and a microcosm of the world as a whole, conveying symbolic perfection. Carpets were decorated with flora, symbolising a 'sort of garden that can move across space' (Foucault, 1984 [1967], p. 6). As we saw with the four purposes of drawing, rich possibilities abound in art-making. Artworks created in the art therapy room can serve different functions. For instance, art can be a container for raw, expressed emotion, trace thoughts, and reflexivity, or do all of these. Images can be developed, destroyed, changed, and reviewed based on the child's actions/decisions. Artwork can

---

<sup>20</sup> See news item 'Councillor removed after calling some children in care 'downright evil'' (Social Work Today, 2025). <https://www.socialworktoday.co.uk/News/councillor-removed-after-calling-some-children-in-care-%22downright-evil%22>

re-author stories. Physical artworks are carefully and securely stored during the art therapy intervention. They can be reviewed, providing a real connection to past experiences, moments of *durée*, and 'shared feeling voyages' in the room. They can access aspects of qualitative multiplicity, refreshing memory or finding a new angle or nuance. The art therapy session is multifaceted and can flexibly meet the child where they are.

The fourth principle introduces the concept of time slices. The reader is reminded of the painting in Chapter Two in which the vertical lines act as 'bookends' defining the session, or 'slice of time'. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when people arrive at a sort of break with their traditional time (1984 [1967], p. 6). This implies a change of focus, a change of consciousness. Something different is going to happen in this slice of time. The weekly one-hour art therapy session is set apart with a clearly defined beginning and end. The precise timing of the therapy is carved into the child's traditional school timetable. In practice, there may be a difference of a few minutes, as will be shown in Chapter Seven. The therapy is carefully planned by the school staff, the therapist, and the child so that sessions do not coincide with the child's favourite lessons. The boundaries of space and time for the weekly sessions and the entire intervention are agreed in advance, though they can be reviewed if extended time is required. The rhythmic, routine nature of the sessions contributes to a sense of safety, stability, and predictability. The concept of ritual is valid here. Not in a mechanistic preordained way, but as 'a social practice in itself', by offering opportunities that are creative and active (Berry, 2009, p. 32). Children and therapists develop creative ways to begin and end sessions, co-constructing patterns of safe familiarity as will be illustrated in Chapter Seven.

Consolidating the notion of separateness and securing the spatiotemporal boundaries, the fifth principle is that the heterotopia has a system of openings and closings that isolates it and makes it possible to enter. For example, the child or the therapist may make a sign for the door to indicate that the space should not be disturbed during the session. Uninterrupted time allows the child's *durée* and creative process to unfold. It cannot be rushed. Only the therapist and child are permitted

in the space during the designated times. The child or therapist removes the sign at the end of the session, signalling that it reverts to its other 'everyday' uses. During sessions, large glass windows may be temporarily covered with paper. For safeguarding reasons (health and safety, and to prevent abuse of power), a small viewing section of the window remains. To ensure that privacy concerns are understood, the therapist may provide training to the school staff.

#### **4.3.3 A function in relation to the rest of the remaining space**

The final principle is that the heterotopia has a function in relation to the rest of the remaining space. What happens in the heterotopic art therapy space affects what happens in school and society. It reconfigures the relationship between children and institutional adult authority. Research in educational psychology has highlighted how important it is:

... to listen to the voices of those who are marginalised in society, with particular reference to children and young persons... the voices which often go unheard in schools and in our other institutional arenas which function as authority in children's lives.  
(Billington and Pomerantz, 2004, p. 3).

Contemporary understanding of the personal history of pupils excluded from school and most youth offenders is that they are survivors of abuse and complex trauma rather than being 'delinquents' or 'deviants' (Wright and Liddle 2014; Youth Justice Board 2017). School-based art therapy sessions offer children who could follow such negative trajectories a spatiotemporal experience that is separate yet alongside ordinary life, where they can be seen and heard in their 'full humanity'. Here, the child's verbal and non-verbal expressions are accepted as the child's truth and language. In this heterotopic space, the child is free to speak and act. It is a rudimentary 'space of appearances'. The concept of art therapy as heterotopia is rich precisely because it encapsulates reality and mystery. The combined spatial and temporal aspects serve essential functions in containing, or 'holding', powerful emotional content expressed. Children are affirmed with dignity as uniquely intelligent, imaginative and creative. With the child's permission, insights from this counter space can begin to permeate processes and strategies across the broader school environment. Language is crucial in this context, and I turn now to the helpful theories of the linguist Mikhail Bakhtin.

#### 4.3.4 Bakhtin's dialogism and theory of carnival

Bakhtin offers insights into different voices in dialogic encounters, as mentioned earlier.<sup>21</sup> He also defines carnival as a counter-space. Sue Vice comments on Bakhtin's carnival theory, the suspension of hierarchical structure allows for another realm of existence 'unofficial, characterized by reversal, parody, song and laughter' (Vice, 1997, p. 150). Carnival suggests spontaneity and release of emotion in a form of enchantment that is invigorating and necessary in a world that buffers itself against the mythical (Taylor, 2007). The counter-space can serve to 'wipe out' other spaces and 'compensate, neutralise or purify' them (Foucault, 1966). Triggers rooted elsewhere, of emotional dysregulation, can, in this counter-space, tentatively put down new roots. There is also space for humour, nonsense, laughter and fun, as well as emotional work, depending on what the child brings to the session and how the therapist responds to and works with it. Fun and enjoyment have been found to be crucial elements in school art therapy (Deboys *et al.*, 2017). As in the Rabelaisian carnival, themes of death and renewal might intertwine or appear simultaneously. Dialogism and carnival both involve overturning power relationships. Even if only temporarily, such an experience can hold significance. The art therapy heterotopia is set aside from the gaze of authority. In this space, there is freedom to say and do things that are not permissible elsewhere. Children, however young, can make their own decisions about how they want to use the time and support offered. Having choice and control is highly significant, especially if children have been denied choices and control in their own lives by others who have chosen to control them, abusing their trust.

The art therapy counter-space in school can be a catalyst for powerful transformation. It exists in real space and time, providing sensory and imaginative experiences with art materials, choices, and infinite possibilities as the child's *durée* meets the art therapist's *durée*. The counter-space becomes a landscape of the imagination, where stories of mythic proportions coexist with tiny details of everyday life. Unutterable stories can start to splutter, scream or whisper through visual metaphor or

---

<sup>21</sup> See quotation from John Shotter (1999, p. 75) on p. 101 of this thesis.

utterance, free from shame or comeback. Nothing is too outrageous, tragic or sad to be accepted in the Bakhtinian heterotopic space. As novelist Isak Dinesen wrote, 'All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them' (quoted in Arendt, 1958, p. 175). Reality and mythical images are privileged equally. Children work with images that arise from their imagination and their interaction with materials. These could be grotesque, outrageous, dangerous, revolting or violent images. Children bring stories from their cultural life, from social media, film, and television, and work with superhero figures, characters from film, literature, and comics, whatever they know. These can tell powerful stories of epic feats, killings, endurance and survival. When a child is thus allowed to gain mastery in constructive ways, through sharing fragments or whole parts of their story and art-making, the art therapy space performs a vital function in relation to all the space that remains in school and wider society (Foucault's sixth principle). Previously unmanageable situations in an educational institution can be contained and transformed; behaviours can be better understood.

#### **4.4 Situated knowledge(s) and researcher partiality**

My inquiry explores a multifaceted reality of everyday life, where heart-searching is happening locally and nationally. Stanley and Wise argue for a theory of knowledge that is 'irrevocably rooted in concrete, diverse, practical and everyday experiences' (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 191). These writers assert that local and reflexive analytic knowledge gained from such inquiry into the everyday world where we live and work is 'epistemologically tied to their context of production' and 'ontologically grounded' (1993, p. 191). How we know what we know is evidenced by our senses; what we know springs from personal experience. Feminist researcher Donna Haraway coined the term 'situated knowledge' to describe a person's multidimensional contextual knowledge of their experience, recognising the complexity of people's lives as they affect and are affected by one another and their social context (Haraway, 1988). Haraway explains why partiality is valid and crucial when researching situated knowledge: 'it is precisely in the politics and epistemology of partial perspectives the possibility of sustained, rational, objective inquiry rests' (Haraway, 1988, p. 583).

I acknowledge my partial perspective in giving a child, through the research design, the freedom to decide what and how they wanted to share: 'Situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource' (Haraway, 1988, p. 592). Situated and embodied knowledges are 'about communities, not isolated individuals' (Haraway, 1988, p. 590), hence 'knowledges' used as a plural noun. I have situated knowledge, as a practitioner-researcher, as do those I collaborate with: colleagues and the children. In this research, all three participants shared cognitive, emotional, and social knowledge sprinkled with the fruits of their imagination. Each participant was invited to exercise agency in the research design's Bakhtinian dialogic encounter, where all expressions were welcome. The adult participants shared my standpoint, favouring the child: we wanted to learn from what the child chose to share.

Researchers, Haraway asserts, can use the 'ability partially to translate knowledges among very different - and power-differentiated communities' (Haraway, 1998, p. 580). The present research, which brought together the least and most powerful persons in a school, aimed to achieve such knowledge translation. Investigating emotion in power-differentiated groups is 'vital to systematic knowledge about the social world' (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 193). The current study examines how emotional realities can be expressed and transformed in embodied, artistic and relational ways in the art therapy room and, subsequently, beyond it. Emotions 'invoked, displayed, questioned, justified – show mind in action': these processes can be examined by learning from 'everyday accounts of mind and its relationship to the body and emotions' (Stanley and Wise 1993, pp. 207-208). Not restricted to an individual's body, the mind operates between people and groups, as anthropology, linguistics, pedagogy, and social and cultural studies tell us: it is embodied and relational (Siegel, 2020a).

#### **4.5 Disclosure through action**

In her book *The Human Condition* (1958), political philosopher Hannah Arendt introduces her chapter on Action with two quotations. The first, already mentioned, is by the novelist Isak Dinesen. The second is from Dante Alighieri's political treatise on governance, written in 1310. Dante had

direct experience of turbulent political times and was exiled from his beloved city, Florence, on trumped-up corruption charges. He writes about motivation, intention and action:

For in every action what is primarily intended by the doer, whether he acts from natural necessity or out of free will, is the disclosure of his own image. Hence it comes about that every doer, in so far as he does, takes delight in doing; since everything that is,<sup>22</sup> desires its own being, and since in action the being of the doer is somehow intensified, delight necessarily follows... Thus, nothing acts unless [by acting] it makes patent its latent self. (Dante<sup>23</sup>, quoted by Arendt, 1958, p. 175)

There is a freshness in Dante's writing about actions that disclose the image of the doer; his words reflect strong emotion, and the intensification of feeling chimes with Bergson's writing on *durée*.

Although he wrote about political leaders and their actions, Dante's words can apply to leadership at all levels: in schools, everyone is a leader of some kind, and sometimes even children are. Actions school leaders take reveal their own image. Recalling the previous chapter, we might say that through their actions, school leaders disclose the school climate trend they follow. The school that participated in the current research followed the lesser-trodden path, providing caring support to children who needed it rather than exclusion, thereby disclosing its values through its actions.

#### **4.5.1 Speech and action in Arendt's 'Space of Appearances'**

Scholar of Pastoral Care and Counselling Ryan LaMothe, argued that psychotherapy and politics often seem worlds apart. He attributed this to the 'stark bifurcation of the private and public realms in the West' (LaMothe, 2014, p. 289). Yet there is a correlation, he asserts, between childhood development (the psychosocial space of interactions between parent and child) and the political (political spaces between and within citizens). This translates in the current study into a correlation between the psychosocial space of the art therapy room and the broader political spheres of the

---

<sup>22</sup> I have added a comma to assist the reader's understanding of this sentence.

<sup>23</sup> See Peluso (2021) for a fascinating discussion about this translation by Hannah Arendt, who wrote in a footnote that the last line 'though clear and simple in the Latin original, defies translation' (p. 293). The quotation is from Dante's treatise on secular and religious power, *De Monarchia* (Libro 1, xiii, 3). In Prue Shaw's English translation, the last sentence reads: 'Therefore nothing acts unless it has the qualities which are to be communicated to the thing acted upon' (Dante, 1996 [1310], p. 22). Another translation of the phrase is: 'Nothing can act, therefore, unless existing already as that which the thing acted upon is to become' (Dante, 1904 [1310]). The question of interest for the current study is the nature of action and authenticity. Children reveal their 'latent self' by externalising emotion. Adults reveal 'latent value systems' through, on the local level, different school climates and on the national level, socio-economic, political and educational policies.

school, community, and national educational environment. LaMothe's study bridges Winnicott's concept of potential space and Hannah Arendt's concept of potential political space. Regarding the former, the reader is reminded of art therapy's potential space and Foucault's description of children playing in their heterotopias: speech and action emerge through play and creative means. The heterotopic Winnicottian potential space is the 'rudimentary political space wherein there is shared speech and action' (LaMothe, 2015, p. 304). Arendt proposes the potential political space as a 'space of appearances', where speech and action occur publicly and diversity is acknowledged. Arendt's 'space of appearances' is a space where people are free to express themselves in the 'intricate economic, social and cultural web' of a shared life of language, stories and rituals; it is 'the active foundation that keeps alive the common world' (pp. 294-295). LaMothe's proposition neatly frames the continuum within which this current study is rooted, as reflected in the three communication processes involved in building epistemic trust outlined earlier. The heterotopic art therapy safe space helps children express their feelings and thoughts, enabling them to find their own 'speech and actions' and feel heard. Children can then be supported in transferring the trust and confidence built in the art therapy room into the sphere outside, such as the classroom, playground, assembly hall, and other places, if conditions are conducive (and sometimes even if they are not).

Arendt distinguishes between power and force. Political spaces that value everyone's contribution encourage the sharing of power and the subsequent empowerment of contributors. We have seen collaborative power-sharing in the 'dialogic encounter', in the art therapy room, and in school climates rooted in caring, inclusive practices. By contrast, force imposes conditions and breeds fear and totalitarianism. Arendt was cognisant of how ordinary speech and action can be the conduit for force to be enacted. Awareness of the values underlying ordinary patterns of feeling and thinking is therefore vital in society and in schools, values that either empower others or deplete them through force. The next chapter describes the values, research methodologies and methods employed in the current study, derived from the praxis of everyday work in the social world.

### 5.1 Chapter overview

The philosophical reasoning on time, space, and power explained in the last chapter underpins the present study. This chapter is divided into four parts and explains the interpretative qualitative methodologies and research methods used in the study.

In the first part, I explain the strands I wove together to form my methodological approach. The weaving developed as the research progressed, as I responded to the unfolding events. This was not a linear process. The strands were: an ethnographic stance, reflexivity, and art-based approaches. I also explain how video microanalysis emerged as a valuable methodological tool. I discuss where my methods fit within the work of the inspiring range of researchers who have employed video microanalysis.

The second part of the chapter describes the process of designing a dialogic research project for a school setting. I explain the ethical considerations, including those involved in inviting child research participants. I describe the project, its purposive sampling, confidentiality, consent forms and procedures, safeguarding protocols, data protection, and data collection methods.

In the third part, I describe the project's implementation in a real-world setting. This was a busy school environment in which art therapy was a regular intervention for children identified as requiring specialist support, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). I explain how the research participants were recruited within the practice of a team of arts therapists.

In the fourth and final part of the chapter, I present a table of the datasets generated throughout the research. This provides a chronological account of the developments and decision-making processes involved in the four data-analysis phases spanning seven years. I then provide a narrative account of the four phases, explaining further the methods outlined in the table.

### 5.1.1 An ethnographic Stance, reflexivity and art-based approaches

Neither art therapists nor educationalists rely on a single research methodology. Similarly, my approach to research at the ground level traces critical elements within the range of values and practices in art therapy and education. An ethnographic stance brought a personal closeness to research conducted within an educational environment and a geographical region in which I had been immersed for years in various roles. I was familiar with the issues, dilemmas and practical logistics involved in delivering art therapy interventions in schools, for a broad range of children's needs. Researching familiar professional interdisciplinary networks and practices through an ethnographic lens required careful delineation of boundaries between work and research agendas. At times, these boundaries were inevitably blurred. I had to ensure that the excitement of research discoveries did not overwhelm the workplace or distract from the keen focus required in busy, real-world settings. Equally, empowered practice and its knowledge acquisition that precede theoretical endorsement cannot be incorporated into a research agenda without proper analysis.

A criticism of my ethnographic stance from a positivist perspective might be that I lacked the objective eye of a stranger-researcher outside the field. It is interesting, however, that autoethnographic research, drawing more deeply on the researcher's personal biographical experiences than ethnography, has gained traction. It has been considered 'empirical' research, where 'empirical' refers to the investigation of direct data from the senses to draw conclusions or test ideas (Hughes *et al.*, 2012). In the current research, given the long-standing professional practice under examination, an ethnographic and, in some respects, autoethnographic approach (see Chapter Two) was employed, bringing a nuanced sensitivity cultivated through my practitioner experiences to the interrogation of, for instance, relational processes in school. As researcher Jan Berry explains, in her study, an ethnographic stance tapped into the 'benefits of mutual collaboration which grew out of relationships of trust and personal involvement' (Berry, 2009, p. 39). Trust built through collaborative professional relationships facilitated the development of the novel context for the

current study. The challenge was to conduct rigorous research in a familiar setting in the ‘hurly-burly of life’ (Shotter, 2014, p.95) while maintaining transparency and coherence; this was both challenging and invigorating. Aware that my self-location, position, and interests would influence all stages of the research, I trusted that a reflexive approach would lead to new understandings of ‘the workings of our social world’ (Pillow, 2003, p. 178). The ‘social world’ of art therapy interventions in schools had not yet been researched from an ethnographic stance using reflexive arts-based approaches.

Art-based research is now a well-established qualitative research methodology (Eisner, 1981; McNiff, 1998; McNiff, ed., 2013; Michaels, 2023). It aligns well with art therapy research: both fields prioritise the pursuit of new knowledge through exploration of and experimentation with creative and artistic processes. These offer vast possibilities. Sean McNiff proposes that ‘the guiding tenet of artistic knowing is a faith that the process will carry us to deeper levels of insight and knowledge’ (1998, p. 36). In my experience, children can readily access and gain insights from experiences of artistic knowing, given time and support. In the context of research, McNiff continues that the two focal points of art-based enquiry are ‘trust in the intelligence of the creative process and a desire for relationships with the images that emerge from it’ (1998, p. 37). Trust in the creative process and reflection on the images produced throughout the study were fundamental to the current research.

The commitment to use artistic enquiry as a basis for research involves ‘a complete paradigm reversal’ from quantitative psychological research methods, which analyse art and its processes, seen as separate from the researcher (McNiff, 1998, p. 24). In Chapter Three, different art therapy research methodologies were discussed, including the quantitative, qualitative and performative research paradigms. The latter encompasses artistic enquiry, symbolic forms of data, such as image, sound, and movement, and is practice-led and multi-method (Kapitan, 2025, p. 216). An example of research in this paradigm is artistic improvisation (also featured in the current study), which, as an art-based research approach emphasising unanticipated actions, has been explored as a means of creating new knowledge (Levine, 2013). I believe that the artist-researcher’s inquiry into their own

artistic process involves immersion in personal aesthetic, metaphoric, sensory, emotional, kinaesthetic and cognitive experiences to generate new understandings. In art therapy research, the artist-art therapist-researcher's subjectivity is brought into the field of enquiry. The personal and professional interconnect: 'Personal involvement in the experiment is a direct extension of the practice of creative arts therapy' (McNiff, 1998, p. 42). The aim is not simply to experience the joys and challenges of creativity for oneself, but to deepen understanding of one's own creative process, to connect with others' experiences, and to help others by advancing arts therapy in a particular context. In re-search, searching repeatedly to understand art therapy practice better, it is salutary to remember we cannot explain everything. In the creative arts therapies, 'unexpected and unpredictable moments of magic are fundamental qualities of the enterprise' (McNiff 1998, p.43). Improvisation can lead to such magic moments.

Barbara Fish, whose seminal work on 'response art' articulates the dynamic between the art therapist's artistic knowing and their relationships with images and processes that clients engage with, wrote how the creative process offers tacit understanding and a tension between holding mystery and finding words. She found that the critical investigation and understanding of patterns that characterise 'a researcher's eyes' can resonate with making art; 'Art, used intentionally as investigation, is research' (Fish, 2013, p. 113). In the current research, I intentionally used art-making to investigate the patterns I observed. Reflexive journaling and art therapy reflexive practices were natural companions throughout my study. They served as an outlet for processing the workings of my yet-to-be-voiced intuitions, thereby enabling new questions and discoveries (Cameron, 1992). Art-making provided me with word-free, sensory time to play and to pay attention to what was happening at a less conscious level across various research stages; it was simultaneously a method of inquiry and the phenomenon under study. The artwork held multiple data; 'Like a camera, response art captures what we are focused on in a given moment' (Fish, 2012, p. 142). I used response art 'as an unflinching mirror' to contain, explore, and express my thoughts and feelings, and to inform and

synthesise the research (Fish, 2019, p. 130). As layers of palimpsests thickened, my own symbolism for the research emerged through art-making, as will be shown later in this thesis.

Artist-researchers in art therapy and education, says McNiff, adapt their artistic knowing and creative expression to their professional practice. They ask, 'why not use my art as research, since this is what brought me to this work in the first place?' (McNiff, 2013, p. xiii). Art-based Education Research applies art-based research specifically to children's education. Elliot Eisner, a leading educational theorist, advocated for the inclusion of cognitive and affective skills acquired through art and design in the school curriculum (Eisner, 2004). As outlined in Chapter Three, Eileen Adams, another proponent of art-based education research, developed the Four Purposes of Drawing as a methodological tool to define the cognitive and affective benefits of art-making processes. Eisner emphasised the 'central role of emotion' in artistic knowing, while recognising that 'emotion and cognition are not independent spheres of human experience' (Eisner, 1981, pp. 8-9). I found that his discussion of the differences between scientific and artistic approaches to qualitative research chimed with aspects of my research. He argued that we need both kinds of knowing: we must 'achieve binocular vision' (Eisner, 1981, p. 9). However, the centrality of emotion in artistic knowing is critical to understanding the power of art therapy and its creative processes in the social world of school. Analytically defined measurable time sequences, such as 'present moments', are also vital. I aimed, through mixed-method binocular vision, to arrive at a detailed account of an art therapy experience rich in quality and thick in quantity. What I mean by thick in quantity is a triangulation of data, theory, and methodological approaches: 'Thick data is a lot of data' (Fusch, Fusch and Ness, 2018, p. 24). The weaving together of an (auto)ethnographic stance, reflexivity and art-based approaches contributed to this 'thick quantity', as did video microanalysis, to which I now turn.

### **5.1.2 Video microanalysis - a 'social microscope'**

Why did I choose video microanalysis as a methodological lens to examine data? The capacity of videos to 'capture conversations, interactions and events as they occur in natural environments is

enormous' (Grbich, 2013, p. 201). Nevertheless, art therapists rarely use video recording in their work. In contrast, music therapists routinely use video recording in training, practice, and research, and have developed an extensive body of research employing video microanalysis. I found this difference between theory and practice in these two arts therapies fascinating. The difference is perhaps shaped by the temporal nature of the musician's art form, compared to the materiality of an artist's work whose images in the material world can be revisited and reflected upon. Artwork does not disappear as sound does. A music therapist's work, recorded on video, can be viewed. Yet observations of how a child moves, is silent, or expresses utterances also apply to a child in art therapy. Art therapy is not only about the artwork but also about how it was created and the multiple micro-interactions between the therapist and the child. Research in yet another modality of the arts therapies has elucidated this point. Video microanalysis was used in dance movement psychotherapy research because 'Microanalysis of movement patterns operates as a 'social microscope,' revealing aspects of a subterranean world of communication within the dyad, which are too rapid for the naked eye to grasp in real time' (Houghton and Beebe, 2016, p.334). I observed the rapidity of movement patterns in the research video; in fact, some were dance-like, and I needed a way to circumvent the naked eye's inability to perceive them.

The history of video analysis dates back to the second half of the twentieth century, when psychoanalysts began documenting natural interpersonal interactions in the first months of human life. In 1969, Beatrice Beebe joined Daniel Stern's research team. Stern, already mentioned in this thesis, conducted the first microanalysis of interactions between mothers and their infants (Stern, 1971) and, with his colleagues, filmed these interactions using a single camera. After converting the video to 16mm film, they divided it into 24 frames per second—an expensive process at the time. Beebe paid tribute to Stern's work, recalling the excitement of this new research venture into a whole world of gesture, vocalisations, silences, and rhythms that constitute moment-to-moment change (Beebe, 2017). Units of behaviour were defined as movements from the beginning to the end of the transformation process. Beebe's studies were built on Stern's research, when she served as

principal investigator with a research team of 12 decoders who micro-analysed interactions between 84 babies and their mothers. They used research videos filmed between 1992 and 1998, when the babies were 4 months old, and again at 12 months old. The first 2 ½ minutes of uninterrupted continuous play were coded and analysed. The split-screen video displayed the film from two cameras simultaneously, each focused on one participant. The film was segmented into 1-second frames, then decoded into affect, touch, and spatial orientation categories. She noted how 'as the coder rocks the film back and forth between the two reels, the coder's hands and body move with the mother's and infant's movements' (Beebe, 2017, p. 230). We see here the use of the researcher's own visceral responses and the role of somatic bodily movement, 'embodied simulation' (Beebe, 2017, p. 231). The researchers describe how 'through a detailed microanalysis of mother-infant face-to-face communication, we take up the challenge of investigating in a more fine-grained and precise way the process of attachment transmission between mother and infant' (Beebe *et al.*, 2010, p. 6). It was found that early communication patterns predicted future attachment patterns.

In a UK study wittily titled 'How infants see the point', researchers observed meaning-making gestures and the gaze of an infant on their own, filmed by three cameras (Churcher and Scaife, 1981). This showed the infant took initiative. Beebe explained that the debate over whether only the mother or the infant determines interactions was settled when time-series analysis showed that both initiate communication, in a reciprocal process known as bidirectional regulation (Cohn and Tronick, 1988, in Beebe, 2017, p. 287). The use of film analysis in research and therapy developed further. Colwyn Trevarthen's extensive video analysis of mother-infant interactions revealed 'both aesthetic and moral values expressed in joyful play with children too young to appreciate talk about how to behave' (Trevarthen, 2019, p. 3). Inspired by Trevarthen's work, educational psychologists and health professionals use Video Interactive Guidance to support families in using the attachment strategies they habitually employ by identifying interactions that promote positive emotions (Kennedy, Landor and Todd, 2011). As noted earlier, music therapy has used video microanalysis extensively. Researchers describe how 'Microprocesses are processes and changes / progressions

within one session of music therapy' (Wosch and Wagram eds., 2007, p. 22). Seven of the twenty methods explained in Wosch and Wagram's book analysed video recordings. I was interested in the length of the units studied. The most extended clips were 5 minutes (Ridder, 2007; Scholz, 2007). One author analysed four moments of change in a one-minute clip (Pavlicevic, 2007), and another used a three-minute music therapy sequence (Schumacher, 2007). These units of time and the analysis of microprocesses of change, combined with Stern and Beebe's 'fine-grained and precise' approach to analysing films, informed my analytical work.

Stern extended his initial interest in analysing micro-units of time in parent-infant interactions to work with adults, examining speech, and exploring cognitive and non-cognitive layers of thought. His book, *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life* (Stern, 2004), significantly influenced the practice of arts therapies, particularly dramatherapy and dance/movement psychotherapy. Interestingly, Stern noted that although the nonverbal therapies 'pay much attention to the micro-temporal structure of the process in practice, they pay less attention to its detailed description and conceptualisation' (Stern, 2004, p. 143). The current study attempts to do this by describing concepts of 'the present moment'. One category comprises 'forms of vitality'. These are multisensorial and, more than content, sensation, or emotion, they are 'usually short-lived events with nuanced temporal patterning that arise in different contexts' (Stern, 2010, p. 61). I also anticipated that video microanalysis might reveal present moments that Stern described as 'shared feeling voyages'. These are 'so simple and natural yet very hard to explain or even talk about' (Stern, 2004, p. 173).

I turn now to video microanalytic work in schools. Five chapters in *Arts Therapies in Schools*, a book already cited in Chapter Three, involve video recording as part of the authors' research methodologies (Karkou ed., 2010). Unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the prevalence of video microanalysis in music therapy, three of these studies focus on music therapy. Elefant used video analysis to yield categories of communication and emotional expression in her music therapy with children with severe developmental disabilities. Her single-case design 'had the flavour of therapy

sessions. It took place in a natural environment, in a known setting, and in a situation familiar to the participants and the researcher' (Elefant, 2010, p. 254). This description resonates with the current study. Another music therapist, Tomlinson, used clinical notes and film to record processes and musical developments, but did not employ micro-analysis (Tomlinson, 2010). In the third chapter on music therapy, sessions with pupils with severe learning disabilities were recorded on video. The researchers graphed the results, and action was coded into mirroring, matching and initiating. They found that the pupil's facial expression data was unreliable (McFerran and Stephenson, 2010, p. 264). Other collaborative arts therapies researchers employing video analysis revealed that a secondary school pupil's movement became more integrated, gaining a 'sense of the flow of energy' during dance movement psychotherapy group sessions (Karkou, Fullarton and Scarth, 2010, p. 77).

The only chapter on video microanalysis in the book, written by an art psychotherapist and mentioned in Chapter Three, explored the question of unbending rigidity in autistic children (Takeda, 2010). Takeda explored imagination by analysing 18 minutes of video footage, but found that quantitative analysis revealed no significant findings. However, the qualitative methods employed in this mixed-method study demonstrated an autistic child's capacity for imagination.

We have seen how researchers Stern and Beebe used video microanalysis to conduct empirical studies investigating the complexities of early human development, and how Stern continued to develop microanalytic work with adults in psychotherapy and then in the arts. I adapted these ideas and dovetailed them with an art-based research approach to create a method suited to my purposes of examining movement, communication, and art-making, while asking 'what makes a difference?' in school art therapy. Video microanalyses conducted by music, art, and dance movement psychotherapists invited me to push the boundaries of video microanalysis in art psychotherapy, to explore meaning in a precise, fine-grained way. I wanted to look through the video microanalytical 'social microscope' and discover what could not be seen with the naked eye.

## 5.2 Designing the research project

### 5.2.1 The 'dialogic encounter': A collaborative approach

I sought a method that would give children agency<sup>24</sup> to express their opinions and share their thoughts and feelings about their art therapy experience. Research on intergenerational collaborative drawing suggests that adults and children engaging in art-making together can produce valuable new learning (Knight *et al.*, 2015), but did not involve an explicit levelling of the school hierarchy, nor communications between a child with problems and a person in authority in their school. To date, the creation of a space where a child who might be rejected by society if they become excluded from school, speaks thoughtfully about their experience of art therapy with a person representing power in their school life, and that person is shown to engage with and receive the truth they speak, has not been studied. My ideas also drew on models common in feminist theology literature, which are 'antonymous with silencing', epitomised by phrases such as 'hearing to speech', 'speaking truth to power', or 'finding authentic voice' (Woolley, 2019, p. 10).

My interest was sparked by the 'Imagine Chicago' methodology for building community, in which civic leaders engaged in dialogue with young people to explore visions for the city's future (Browne, 2004). The methods are based on Appreciative Inquiry, a qualitative method that examines what is going well to better understand why. The Imagine Chicago projects are an 'illustration of social construction in action' in which the 'dialogic construction of values, beliefs, knowledge, ethics, and daily practices generate sustainable results' (McNamee, 2004, p. 406). Intergenerational conversations were powered by a dynamic combination of the 'experience and wisdom' of 'seasoned' adults and the 'energy and commitment' of young people, generating new ideas for the future (Browne, 2004, p. 396). The premise for this methodology for cultivating community was that 'young people could be effective agents of hope and inspiration if they were released from their (all

---

<sup>24</sup> See Cummins (2014) for a thoughtful discussion on the linguistic and philosophical distinction between agency and autonomy, which are sometimes used interchangeably.

too common) negative positionings' (Browne, 2004, p. 397, brackets are hers). I thought that intergenerational in-depth dialogue about school art therapy might reveal new insights.

However, initially, I was unsure about the feasibility of a similar approach in school-based art therapy research. Then, I recalled a vivacious conversation between a primary-school child and a headteacher following an art therapy session I had with the child. I recorded this personal recollection in the first of my eleven reflexive research journals: my memory of being struck by the ease with which the headteacher had responded, the fluidity of the child's 'private to public' initiative, and the child's control of the process. My respect for the child's energy and volition, my trust in the headteacher's ability to respond authentically and helpfully, and the delight I felt at the positive outcome for the child - all vivid memories - contributed to my sense that a 'dialogic encounter' might be possible. I thought the research might reveal something new about art therapy in a school.

Designing the research project, I drew on my practical knowledge of the school environment, adopting an iterative approach in which experience is studied as it unfolds (Edwards and Talbot, 1999). I hypothesized that upending the possible hierarchical nature of a school, and creating a channel where communication could flow between those responsible for decisions about mental health provisions children have access to in school and children who have experienced art therapy support, might shed new light on the child's social skills, knowledge, problem-solving strategies, rich identity, and wisdom, and also on the senior teacher's perspectives on school art therapy. I thought that the dialogic encounter, as a starting point for examining what works well and why, might contribute to understanding how art therapy 'makes a difference'.

### **5.2.2 Ethics and logistics of 'dialogic encounter' research in school**

Conducting a dialogic encounter research project in a school raised multiple ethical questions, including those concerning power dynamics and the psychological safety of the child, the adult, and me. However, these questions were not insurmountable. The ethics of art therapy practice in UK schools are enshrined in professional and government-regulated standards. Research requires the

application of the same rigorous ethical standards to all aspects of the research: the logistics of setting up and implementing a research project, the care taken of all participants and researchers, before, during and after the research project, the participants' right to withdraw at any time with no negative consequences, secure storage of generated data, analysis of data, and planning for reporting and dissemination of results. Literature on researching sensitive topics (Renzetti and Lee, 1993) expanded my understanding of research and life as intimately interconnected: the ethics of research echo the ethics of everyday reality and practice (Stanley and Wise, 1993). I now examine the question of child participants in research.

### **5.2.3 Child research participants**

There is a long history of children as objects of study across several research disciplines, including psychology, education, and sociology (Harwood, 2010, p. 4). Inviting children to be research participants is crucial to valuing their voices, honouring their knowledge, and respecting their human rights<sup>25</sup> (Lansdown, Jimerson and Sharoozi, 2014; Lundy, Orr and Marshall, 2015; Lundy and O'Lynn, 2019; United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). However, this is not straightforward. A systematic review of the literature on the voices of young children in educational research acknowledged ethical considerations to be a 'salient and widely debated area' (Urbina-Garcia *et al.*, 2022, p. 24). They found a tendency toward adult-led rather than child-led methods despite claims to represent children's voices, and also found rare use of specific theoretical frameworks. Implications for research, policy, and practice included the need to move beyond tokenism, to prioritise children's competence and agency within a theoretical framework, and to use methods such as art that actively involve children in research. The current research aligns with these suggestions.

Early childhood educator Debra Harwood gathered data from children's interests, insights, and conversations, creating a space for meaningful engagement in which children could express their views, be heard, and be taken seriously (Harwood, 2010). Other research using a relational lens

---

<sup>25</sup> Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the right to be listened to and taken seriously.

highlighted the need for sensitivity to place and space, showing how context and location shape interactions and children's participation (Mannion, 2007, p. 406). The current research's heterotopic concept explores the sharing of time and space to address power issues shaped by 'the complexities of the differences and similarities between children and adults' (Christensen, 2004, p. 173). The research contributes to the contemporary agenda of giving children an agentic voice as research participants: 'Nothing about me, without me'<sup>26</sup>. Both the child's art therapy and the research design can be considered to be 'socio-contextual conditions' that facilitated the 'natural processes of self-motivation and healthy psychological development' (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 68).<sup>27</sup>

Educational psychologist Michelle Harwood noted the tension between the 'protectionist and participatory standpoints' in research with children (Harwood, 2018, p. 37). The former can exaggerate the protection afforded to children to the point of excluding them from research participation. The latter emphasises children's competencies as 'active social actors' (2018, p. 15). The current research, conducted within known inter-professional networks, addressed the issues of access to children (Phillips, 2011) and 'hard to reach' child participants (Pirrie and Macleod, 2009). Careful boundaries were vital at every stage to protect confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality safeguards already in place in education systems were implemented sensitively and thoroughly.

#### **5.2.4 Research Praxis**

The design of an ethically robust mixed-methods research project emerged from my practitioner experiences. It was rooted in concepts embedded in everyday art therapy practice, such as clear, negotiated time-space boundaries, creative freedom, the therapeutic relationship, and access to art materials. In my practitioner work during that period, I managed a team of therapists and developed

---

<sup>26</sup> Valerie Billingham used this phrase in 'Through the Patient's Eyes', Salzburg Seminar Session 356, 1998. [https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/shared\\_decision\\_making/files/sdm\\_pinnacle\\_of\\_patient\\_centered\\_care.pdf?m=1446225643](https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/shared_decision_making/files/sdm_pinnacle_of_patient_centered_care.pdf?m=1446225643).

<sup>27</sup> Self-Determination Theory postulates 'three innate psychological needs--competence, autonomy, and relatedness--which when satisfied yield enhanced self-motivation and mental health and when thwarted lead to diminished motivation and well-being' (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

opportunities for work in new geographic and clinical areas. My clinical work involved a smaller caseload than before, with a focus on complex family therapy cases rather than individual work. Therefore, it was not possible to design a project in which a child I had worked with individually and a headteacher at their school would engage in dialogue. Yet, if I were present during an interview between a child who had worked with another art therapist in the team and a headteacher, I would not know the child's art therapy processes as well as the art therapist would, and the child would not know me. That was ethically problematic. Also, I needed to consider the power dynamics involved and how a therapist who had worked with a child might feel if the child were interviewed by the headteacher, with me, the therapist's team leader, present. It made better sense for the child's art therapist to be present during the conversation. Although the dialogue was intended to be between the child and the headteacher, the therapist would be present to reassure the child if needed. Thus, the potential balance of power between an adult and a child, often perceived as tilted toward the adult in institutional contexts, would be adjusted to enable the child to rely on the therapist. It was essential to create conditions that made all participants as comfortable as possible throughout all stages of the research in this social setting, where their interactions would be recorded for research purposes. I hoped to create as natural an environment as possible, despite the research not being part of everyday school life. My thinking was informed by my previous experiences with the parameters within which school systems operate, sometimes in very adaptive and flexible ways. The Ethics Application and submission to the university ethics committee was a comprehensive process, followed by comments and questions to which I responded. Different information sheets and consent forms for each of the three participants were submitted for scrutiny.

### **5.2.5 Initial thoughts on narrative methodology**

In the early stages of the design, I adopted a narrative research approach, as it fitted art therapy, which is process-driven. John McLeod outlined the appropriateness of narrative research for psychotherapy practice, due to its relevance 'as a form of knowing' (McLeod 2006, p. 104). Riessman,

an authority on Narrative Analysis, attributed 'reflexive personhood and inner experience to her (research) informants' (McLeod, p. 106, on Riessman, 1993). These notions chime with art therapy, which facilitates reflexivity on inner experience, as a fundamental aspect of its process. Additionally, McLeod asserted, 'The central idea in narrative analysis is that the stories told by informant or research participants can be treated as a primary source of data' (McLeod, 2006, p. 104).

Furthermore, McLeod explained how narrative analysis can facilitate agency, as an approach that combines a discursive emphasis on the construction of meaning through talk and language with a humanistic image of the person as a self-aware agent striving to achieve meaning, control, and fulfilment in life (McLeod, 2006, p. 106). I wanted to show how several narrative voices might add explanatory power to the videoed dialogue, hoping to elucidate a small fragment of the world, through whatever stories arose between the child and the headteacher. Through analytical attention, as I asked, 'What stories do the data tell?', I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the values and meanings embedded in the data. Both participants in the conversation would already be familiar with the art therapy intervention from different perspectives. I hypothesised that the dialogic encounter might yield new insights into the events that occurred during the art therapy intervention. It might address hopes, dreams, passions, principles, achievements, skills, abilities, and more by providing a safe environment for spontaneous interaction between a headteacher and a child who had received medium- to long-term art therapy support.

### **5.2.6 Sample size**

Psychologist Ian Parker's writing on radical approaches to research helped me consider how to use narrative methodology to address the question: What is the statistical validity of a sample of one? Parker notes that narrative research can reveal rich and important descriptions from small or single samples. He writes 'little individual narratives might also be big individual narratives, and ... they might then connect with wider historical narratives' (Parker, 2005, p. 82). He describes the way that 'narrative research ... may help to bring history alive again so that it is not merely the recounting of

the chronological order of past events' (Parker, 2005, p. 86). Moreover, given that the key ideas of narrative research are 'agency, temporality, event, context and format' (Parker, 2005, p. 76), I anticipated that there would be significant data to investigate and report on from a single half-hour video recorded conversation, in one school, between one headteacher and one child, with the art therapist assisting the child if required. Each participant would have agency and express themselves at a specific time and place, in their unique way, within a social context that had not been examined in this way before. My interest in narrative methodology, as outlined above and in the previous section, became incorporated into art-based approaches as the research progressed.

Eisner's dialectical distinction between scientific and artistic approaches to qualitative research also addresses questions regarding sample size. Trends identified from large numbers of random samples, using a scientific approach, might demonstrate how particulars represent the general, while artistic enquiry into one original case might reveal that 'the general resides in the particular' (Eisner, 1981, p. 7). Through my research, I aimed to understand the unique culture and dynamics of a specific school-based art therapy intervention. I hoped that general conclusions might be gained from studying the particular in-depth and that insights gained may 'exceed the limits of a situation' and 'expectations may emerge from examining the particular in its vividness' (Eisner, 1981, p. 7). This is similar to Parker's observation that an individual small story may resonate with a larger one. Thus, rather than aiming to produce ideas that enable certainty or control over the future, this research aimed to develop an understanding that can inform the potential shape of things, or 'anticipatory schema' to inform future practice, research, and policy (Eisner, 1981, p. 7). I sought to analyse the construction of meaning by studying the participants' talk, language, and creativity. Committed to rigour, I considered other case studies and the justification for single samples.

Case study methodology in art therapy has evolved and, as we saw in Chapter Three, has sometimes incorporated systematic inquiry to make sense of and learn from the complex interactions among contextual factors within the case. Social constructionist approaches have further contributed to the

evolution of case study methodology (McNamee, Rasera, and Martins, 2023). Drawing on Patton's work (2002) it has been proposed that instead of judgement being based on statistical significance, the qualitative findings of a single case study should be judged by their 'substantive significance' and that such studies may provide ways of 'making sense that may apply to other cases of people who share commonalities of experience' (Kapitan, 2025, p. 124). In brief, substantive significance derives from researchers' use of first-hand experience and intellectual rigour, authentic responses from participants, and consideration of reviewers' and others' views: I aspired to meet these criteria.

Interestingly, the child in Prokofiev's (2010) case study, one of the children in Markland's (2011) research and the child participant in the current study appear to have 'commonalities of experience'. Each attended a mainstream primary school and had experienced severe early abuse and different care placements. Each required the in-depth relational support that longer-term art therapy provided rather than a brief intervention. Each, to use Parker's concept, can be seen as a 'small individual' narrative that is also a 'big individual' narrative, and even as part of a 'historical' narrative (Parker, 2005, p. 82) of vulnerable children in the UK who require specialist emotional support in schools. The same logic underpinning the significance of a single case can be applied to a single research site. Since relationality was fundamental to the research, the venue's unique character, particularly its relationships and school ethos, would be a significant factor determining its eligibility. The chosen school would not be new to the art therapy process. It would have an established art therapy service, with relationships already formed among the art therapist, the school, and the child. The availability of the art therapist and me (I would be in another room) was designed to alleviate any discomfort for the two main participants, the child and the headteacher/senior teacher. Given the demands on schools, a headteacher might wish to delegate one of their Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members to participate in the research rather than do so themselves. This still fulfilled the premise of the dialogic encounter I had envisaged, since responsibility for delivering art therapy services at the whole-school level is shared by the headteacher and the SLT.

### **5.2.7 Care for the participants and myself**

As already explained, the child would have their therapist present in the room during the conversation and afterwards, thereby addressing the institutional power imbalance between the senior teacher and the child. It was also necessary to consider the senior teacher's well-being. They may not have engaged in research before, and even if they had, this particular research design would likely be unfamiliar. All necessary precautions would be taken to address any nervousness and unease about participating in the research. The information sheets detailing the aims and character of the study were designed to help with this. The research project's short timeframe aimed to ensure that the formal aspects of the experience were not unnecessarily prolonged. The art therapist and I would be available to the senior teacher throughout the process as needed. In this research project design, the art therapist would play a significant organisational role. As with the senior teacher, they may not have been involved in research previously. Their well-being also needed to be considered. This new experience may cause nervousness, and I recognised that involvement in the study could be onerous for the therapist. Because I already knew all the art therapists on the team, I would know the therapist involved in the research and could support them. They would also have access to their clinical supervisor for consultation. I would maintain an ongoing professional relationship with the therapist, and it was essential to set aside time in the work environment for follow-up conversations dedicated to the research. Time boundaries would need to be set so that discussions about the research remained contained and did not spill into the team's everyday work. To enable the two adult participants—the senior teacher and the art therapist—to reflect on their experiences of the research project with me, the design included a reflexive interview with each participant. This would be held within two weeks of the dialogic encounter, providing an additional opportunity to address any concerns or discuss further thoughts, at their convenience. In addition to providing care for participants, the interviews, as a formal component of the research, could yield data that would enhance understanding of the encounter conversation. Therefore, the interviews would be audio-recorded.

It was unlikely that I would come to any harm. However, if anything made me anxious or unsure, there were several people and organisations I could turn to for help or advice. My own clinical supervisor and my university supervisors were essential sources of support and guidance. As team leader of the Emotional and Trauma Support team, I had support from my line manager, the organisation's board of directors and the Research and Development Department. Named people would be aware of the research project's dates and times, and my immediate colleagues (two assistant team leaders) would know my whereabouts and be available if necessary. If I had any personal concerns, I could also talk to the school's headteacher, my professional body, the British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) or the regulatory body, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Health and Safety regulations for schools apply to everyone in the school. The headteacher of the chosen school would be responsible for the safety of all persons in the school, including me as a visitor, would be aware of the research project and would have agreed to the school's participation. I would officially sign in and out of the school's secure system on the day when the research took place, as is the usual procedure. Safeguarding the child was paramount.

### **5.2.8 Safeguarding**

In the unlikely event of the child disclosing maltreatment or abuse of any kind, relating to any period of time, past or present, during the research conversation, usual procedures would be triggered to ensure the appropriate protection and well-being of the child and the other participants. In the UK all schools have a mandatory duty to implement Child Protection/ Safeguarding policies and procedures approved by the LSGB (Local Authority Safeguarding Board). The school chosen would already have protocols in place. The organisation I worked for was a former local authority education service. The Child Protection and Safeguarding policies and procedures of schools and my organisation followed government guidelines set out in the document *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* (Government 2015, updated in 2023). All staff in schools and other organisations are trained

in safeguarding policies, practices, and protocols. To ensure that staff received appropriate support, each department in my organisation had a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) fully trained by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).

The art therapist research participant would be a member of the Emotional and Trauma Support team, comprising over 20 therapists, who worked on safeguarding matters and with vulnerable children on a day-to-day basis. Many of these children were victims of abuse and/or had suffered trauma over extended years of their young lives. In line with safeguarding and therapy ethics, the therapists always explained to children that sessions were confidential; however, if a child or anyone else was at risk, the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) would be consulted to take action to ensure the child's safety. This critical explanation of the limits of confidentiality between the child and the therapist was provided to children at the beginning of their therapy intervention, in an age- and developmentally appropriate manner, so they would know what would happen. The therapists kept their sessions with children confidential, sharing information only when necessary for safeguarding or review purposes, and with the child's permission. If the child research participant made an allegation or disclosed information which raised concern about Significant Harm, the initial response would be limited to listening carefully to what the child said in order to:

- Clarify the concerns;
- Offer reassurance about how they would be kept safe; and
- Explain that the information would be passed to Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

The following sequence of events would then take place:

- The school's DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) would be informed, as would the DSL for my team, and for my organisation.
- The school's DSL would inform the Local Authority's Children's Social Care Contact Centre, sending a written report to the duty officer.
- The incident would be recorded in the school's and my organisation's CPOMS (Child Protection Online Management System).
- The decision would lie with Social Care as to what steps to take next. Escalation procedures were in place if the DSLs were not satisfied with the action taken.

### **5.2.9 Confidentiality regarding research data**

Measures were needed to ensure the confidentiality of the research project's data. All data would be kept confidential on the university's and the researcher's computer systems, protected by encryption, as soon as possible after the project's completion. Computer-stored data would be accessible with a password known only to the researcher and supervisors. Any images and artwork created would be protected and stored in locked cabinets, accessible only to the researcher, researcher colleagues, and supervisors. The original data would be kept secure for five years for research and academic purposes, after which it would be destroyed. All data gathered from the video and audio recordings would be anonymised to protect participants' confidentiality. Pseudonyms would be used in reporting and dissemination of research outcomes. Identifying names, if used visually on images created during the research, would be masked out if the pictures were reproduced in reporting. Clips or photos from the video recording would not show faces or any features that could identify the participants or the school. The data would be analysed as part of my PhD research; therefore, participants' explicit consent to share their anonymised data in this way was sought. They were assured that the data collected about them would not be traceable to them.

### **5.2.10 Participants' informed consent**

Informed consent would be obtained from the participants. The art therapist would initially give the headteacher an information sheet explaining the research project. If they agreed to the research taking place at their school with their pupil and a staff member, the art therapist would give separate information sheets to the senior staff member and the child's parent/carer, who would discuss them with the child and answer any questions. If the parent/carer were willing for their child to participate, the child would then also be given an information sheet, appropriate to their age and containing pictures as well as words, which they could discuss with their parent/carer. The child would also have the opportunity to discuss the contents of the information sheet with their art therapist, who would ensure the child felt comfortable saying either 'yes' or 'no' to participating. The

visual information sheet for the child explained the nature of the conversation and that the senior teacher was interested in the child's thoughts and feelings about art therapy. The child's participant information sheet included, in this language:

- There are no wrong or right things to say.
- Whatever you think, say and feel is ok. It's whatever is right for you.
- Even if they are uncomfortable things to say, that's ok because the adults will be alright and want to know things as they really are for you. Like when you are in an art therapy session.
- If there are silences, that's ok too.

The child's consent form re-iterated the fact they could withdraw at any time if they wish:

- 'I understand that I am free to choose to take part and that I can stop being part of the project at any time without anyone getting cross with me or any problem'.

The parent/carer's information sheet emphasised this too: 'It is up to you and your child to decide whether or not s/he takes part. If you do decide that (name of child) can take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Your child can still withdraw at any time without it affecting them in any way. You do not have to give a reason. Your child will have an information sheet too, and a consent form to sign, if s/he would like to take part'.

The staff member and therapist's consent form included consent for me to conduct individual interviews afterwards and for these interviews to be audio-recorded. All participants' explicit permission was sought for the anonymous use of visual and auditory data for research purposes only, including publication and conference presentations. Images from the video would not show faces or any features that could identify the participants or the school. If they chose to participate, they would receive an information sheet and be invited to sign a consent form, confirming their willingness to participate and authorising the video recording of the conversation for research purposes.

#### **5.2.11 Information for the potential senior teacher research participant**

The senior teacher's participant information sheet explained that their views on how art therapy impacted them, their pupil, staff, and school, and its effect on relationships and processes in supporting children would help shed light on how art therapy makes a difference in school. The data

collected would be analysed to better understand the relationship between the child's engagement processes in art therapy and the processes which support the children through the wider network of relationships in and beyond school. The results would help inform the research. The sheet explained that they were invited to participate in the research study because their school had commissioned a school-based art therapy service, and that a child who had received art therapy sessions and the art therapist working in their school would also be invited to take part. It was explained that they were not required to participate; it was up to them to decide whether to do so. If they chose to participate, they would receive an information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. They could still withdraw at any time: they did not have to give a reason. The information sheet explained what would happen, how much time would be involved, and when. The project took the form of a conversation between them and their pupil, who had received at least 15 art therapy sessions and had completed the intervention with the therapist. The child's art therapist would be present to help the child if needed. The senior teacher was given some questions to consider regarding their perceptions of the impact of art therapy and what they might have personally and professionally learned. These would inform the conversation with the child rather than relying on scripted questions. The child might have questions for the teacher that they had formulated with their therapist's support beforehand. A follow-up interview with the researcher, within a fortnight of the conversation with the child, would provide the teacher with an opportunity to reflect on their experience of participating in the research. The schedule was explained as follows:

- A conversation with a pupil who had received art therapy (30 – 60 minutes)
- A follow-up interview, one-to-one with the researcher (30 minutes) within a fortnight after the conversation has taken place.

Mutually convenient times for the research would be planned in advance, ensuring the child did not miss lesson time and the teacher was not unduly inconvenienced. The child's therapist would know how the child used art therapy processes in sessions and could help the child articulate thoughts and feelings they wished to express if needed. The aim was to allow the teacher and the child to speak

spontaneously as they felt prompted. Possible questions for the senior teacher to consider were set out as follows:

Table 2

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Preparatory questions for yourself, the senior staff member</b></p> <p><b>Possible questions for you to consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you name one thing that you have in common with the child?</li><li>• Can you talk about how this thought about the child and their work connects with your own life or work?</li><li>• How will you use the offering of the child, how will you make use of what you have learned from the child?</li><li>• Where does this take you in your own life or work?</li><li>• What has been learnt and what connections have you made?</li></ul> <p><b>Possible questions to ask the child:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What did the art therapist see in you/ appreciate in you?</li><li>• What was invisible to others that they saw in you?</li><li>• What made you feel hopeful? Who helped you to hope?</li></ul>
---

*Questions for the senior teacher to consider*

### **5.2.12 Possible disadvantages or risks of taking part**

Potential physical and/or psychological harm/distress to the participants needed to be addressed.

The possible disadvantages or risks of taking part in this research were stated on the information sheet as follows: participating in the study would require some of their time, although the conversation and follow-up interview would be scheduled at times convenient for them. Participating in the conversation might be temporarily unsettling, because difficult feelings the child had experienced may be shared. This may cause some distress during or after the study, although participation was not expected to cause severe or lasting distress. The teacher would have the opportunity to discuss any aspect in the interview afterwards.

The child would already know their art therapist and the senior teacher over time. The venue would be a familiar location to all three participants. The teacher chosen would have a positive relationship with the child and would understand the child's circumstances and the goals of the therapeutic intervention the child had experienced. This research would involve reflecting on art therapy

processes rather than undergoing an art therapy session. The child would be free to communicate as they wished about their experience, without being asked leading questions or prompted to discuss anything personal they would rather not share. The fact that the child would know the two people in the room, who already communicated regularly and sensitively with the child, would be reassuring. If the teacher had any concerns about the study, they could contact me directly using the contact details provided. If they wished to make a complaint about any aspect of how they had been approached or treated during the study, they could, in the first instance, contact my university supervisors, whose contact details were also provided on the information form.

### **5.2.13 Possible benefits of taking part**

The research would provide an opportunity to share experiences in a new way, while remaining within the school context with familiar people. The idea was to create a positive reflection space on a process that had been enriching and helpful, producing positive changes for the child. There could be a range of feelings about this: as the experience unfolded, all would be held respectfully and carefully, as is common in art therapy sessions. No financial or in-kind payments were offered to participants. The possible benefits of taking part were explained to the adults as follows: the conversation would be a shared experience between them and the child, with the therapist's support as required. The conversation was intended to provide an opportunity for the senior teacher to learn directly from the child about their art therapy experience, and to give the child a chance to hear from the senior teacher some of their thoughts and feelings about the process as seen from their perspective, and about any changes that may have resulted within the child and school. It gave the child the opportunity to ask questions, if they wished, in their own words or communication style. It was hoped that the senior teacher would gain insights into the child's art therapy experiences and that the conversation would be mutually beneficial. Whilst there may not be tangible, immediate benefits for those participating in the project, it was hoped that this work would expand existing knowledge of what makes a difference in school-based art therapy.

Regarding whether their participation in the project would be kept confidential, it was explained that no identifying information would be disclosed to anyone except the researchers involved in the study. The conversation and the interview data would be anonymised for analysis, and all the data would be stored securely. The senior teacher, the school, the therapist and the child would not be identified in any of the results. The conversation would be video-recorded, and the interview would be audio-recorded for research purposes. The recordings would be securely stored, accessible only with a password, and not transmitted electronically. All information collected would be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research.

#### **5.2.14 Summary of research project design**

The Ethics Application process helped secure a rigorous, robust framework for the research project. The project involved one school, one senior teacher, one child and one art therapist. The chosen school would have an art therapy service, with relationships already established between the art therapist, the school and the child. Once the school had been selected, I would introduce myself as a researcher and explain that the project would involve a conversation between the senior teacher and a child, with the child's art therapist present. Information and consent sheets were provided. The conversation could include artmaking/mark-making if participants chose to. I would not be in the room during the research conversation, but I would be in the building. I would analyse the data later, from the video recording. I hoped the narrative I might construct would be rich and multifaceted, given the dialogic encounter between the senior teacher and the child, and potentially the art therapist too, multiple 'voices' to enhance the video's explanatory power. I would conduct interviews with each of the two adult participants (the art therapist and the senior teacher) within the following two weeks, giving both the opportunity to reflect on their participation in the research. The child would have a chance to discuss their experience in the study with their art therapist. Analysis of the research data would help shape the next phase of the school-based art therapy research. The initial ethics application was for a pilot project, to be refined and replicated if the research experience

warranted it. However, as explained in Chapter One, it was impossible to replicate the project due to social distancing imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. What began as a pilot research project evolved into an extended, in-depth study. In the next part of this chapter, I will explain how the theoretical model described above was implemented in the real world.

### **5.3 Implementation of the research project**

#### **5.3.1 Recruiting potential participants**

Advertising for research participants was not required since this research took place within already established professional relationships. Art therapy was one of the six therapies delivered by the team of Emotional and Trauma Support therapists who provided services to schools for individual and small groups of children referred for various reasons. These included early relational trauma, war trauma, grief, loss, children with special, educational or disability needs (SEND), including social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), and children with diagnoses of ADHD or autism. The team provided art psychotherapy, dramatherapy, music therapy, dance movement psychotherapy, horticulture therapy, and counselling. The twenty-strong team of qualified therapists worked across forty schools in several local authorities, were employed as associates and adhered to the standards of their professional bodies. Seven art therapists worked in ten schools, six of which were primary schools. The research project was scheduled to take place over two weeks, between mid-June and mid-July 2018, at the end of the school year, to minimise disruption for the child, the senior teacher and the school. The first stage of the recruitment process was to identify an art therapist who had been working in a school where a child and a senior teacher met the following criteria:

- The child would have a supportive and strong relationship with his/her art therapist,
- The child would have recently completed their art therapy intervention of at least 15 weeks.
- A senior teacher in the child's school would;
  - know the art therapist well
  - be familiar with the general aims of school-based art therapy
  - know why and how art therapy had been established in the school for the benefit of their pupils
  - would be an adult who was not only a familiar person to the potential child research participant but also had a positive relationship with them

- know why and how the child's specific art therapy intervention had been organised
- would have had liaison meetings with the art therapist at various times during the course of the intervention: during the referral process at the beginning, during review meetings mid-way, and at the end, when recommendations would be made for the future well-being of the child
- know the art therapist well and s/he would have seen reports written by the art therapist, which the child would have approved as information that they were happy to have shared.

Within the team, we discussed potential research participants and schools. Time constraints, such as those imposed by events, for instance, sports days and end-of-term school trips that may have coincided with therapists' working days, reduced the number of eligible participants. Some art therapists were working with children who would continue their art therapy the following school year, with some pupils transitioning from primary to secondary school. Other children had completed brief art therapy interventions or had received art therapy in a small group. None of these children met the criteria, either because their therapy had not ended or because their art therapy intervention was too short or in a group. One art therapist was working with a child who was to complete his three-year art therapy intervention before the end of the summer term. The art therapist was enthusiastic about being involved in research. She played a crucial role in communication throughout the project's setup and implementation, liaising with the school's headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher (DHT), who would become a research participant, and the child. The therapist's art therapy skills, her collaborative relationship with the deputy headteacher, and her intuitive understanding of how to ensure the child's comfort at each stage of the process secured an alert, relaxed approach to the project for all involved.

On the scheduled day, the art therapist prepared the room to facilitate the child's use. It was the child's art therapy room, familiar to the child and providing stimuli for spontaneous verbal or nonverbal communication. A technician set up the recording equipment. I remained in a nearby room, on call as needed. In this thesis, to avoid repetition, I refer to the time the three participants spent together in different ways: the 'research hour', the interview, the dialogue, the dialogic encounter, or the encounter. The term 'interview' was used in the research information provided to

participants for clarity and accessibility. My preferred term is 'dialogic encounter' because it conveys immediacy, equality, and spontaneity, drawing on linguist Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and aspects of the Foucauldian-Bergsonian philosophical framework of this research.

### **5.3.2 Primary and secondary data gathering**

The video and audio recordings of the dialogic encounter, along with the two interviews conducted afterwards, provided primary research data. I specified in the participant information that the encounter could last between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the child's comfort. In reality, the encounter lasted sixty-five minutes. Afterwards, everyone was thanked, and I worked with the technician to securely store the video and audio recordings for analysis. Later, as I interacted with the primary data, transcribing, writing in my journal and making response art, the analytical processes generated new datasets. The toing and froing between the datasets, my research journals, and analyses elicited further questions, dilemmas, and ideas.

When it became clear that the project could not be replicated due to COVID-19 restrictions and that research on the single-case project would instead be intensified, I considered obtaining more information from the art therapist about the child's past art therapy sessions, to find out, for instance, about resonances between images mentioned or created in the encounter and those produced before. However, there were ethical implications in meeting with the art therapist to review her notes and any information she may have, such as written reports and multi-agency reports. Time had elapsed since the project, and my request might have felt burdensome. I consulted my supervisors and wrote the pros and cons of speaking with the therapist regarding this aspect of the research. Finally, I decided that, since the research concerned our professional practice, drawing on factors beyond the dialogic encounter itself was meaningful and might enhance understanding of what makes a difference in art therapy, provided that any information obtained was anonymised. The process-oriented, nonlinear nature of art therapy meant that some of the art-based data in the video were linked to the child's experiences in prior art therapy sessions. If it were possible to access

previous information, I would consider it in keeping with sensitive, thorough, and rigorous research, taking greater account of the temporal context. I submitted a second application to the ethics committee. After some questions and answers, approval was granted. The team of therapists' standard practice was to submit a final report to the school for official records upon completion of a therapy intervention. After six months, the therapists destroyed their process notes, in accordance with the organisation's General Data Protection Requirements (GDPR) protocols. In this case, the art therapist retained her notes, anticipating that they might be needed for research purposes. Obtaining this secondary data was crucial to expanding the study's scope, and with the extended time frame, the study became longitudinal. In the table below, the fourth phase of the research project's data analysis specifies the information obtained from this secondary data.

## **5.4 Data analysis**

### **5.4.1 Table of datasets (in four phases over seven years)**

The four phases of data analysis spanned seven years. Each phase represents a progression that emerged organically in the research process. I approached images and artwork as data. The table below illustrates the phases and lists the datasets and associated processes. A different colour is used for each phase. The first phase (purple) was a four-year period of familiarisation with the data and exploration of philosophical ideas on time and space. In the second phase (blue), I tested methods to systematically analyse the video as a coherent whole. I conducted my first video microanalysis of a 2 ½-minute unit to experiment with the technique. In the third phase (green), I undertook a systematic microanalysis of the entire video, divided into 780 x 5-second units, and combined this with an art-based approach. In the fourth phase (yellow), I analysed the analyses completed thus far using reflexive thematic analysis to distil the multiple research processes and outcomes into overarching and sub-themes, in preparation for writing the thesis. After the table, I provide a narrative of my experiences as I moved through the four phases of data analysis.

Table 3  
Table of Datasets and related processes

<b>DATA ANALYSIS PHASE ONE - Familiarisation with the data and exploration of philosophical ideas on time and space</b>			
<b>Academic Year 1, 2017 - 2018</b>			
<b>Research Project primary data</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Person/s involved</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Video Recording and Audio Recording	Dialogic encounter of three research participants, with art materials available	July, at the end of the first year of PhD study	64 minutes and 50 seconds
Audio recording	Reflexive interview with the Deputy Headteacher (DHT)	On the same day, immediately after the dialogic encounter	43 minutes and 35 seconds
Audio recording	Reflexive interview with the Art Psychotherapist	One week after the dialogic encounter	50 minutes and 48 seconds
<b>Academic Year 2, 2018 - 2019</b>			
<b>Manual transcription of audio recordings of primary research data</b>			
<b>What was transcribed</b>	<b>Text produced</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>No. of words</b>
Audio recording of dialogic encounter	Initial transcription (of spoken words, sounds, and audible expression), by hand.	Initial transcription started one month after the research project took place (August and September)  Three years later, when improving the initial transcription (still by hand), I divided the text into six files, each containing approximately 10 minutes of the video, for two reasons: i) To break down the task into more manageable parts and ii) because I sensed a change in rhythm over the hour.	Sections: 1) 1, 713 2) 1, 776 3) 1, 584 4) 1, 261 5) 1, 348 6) 1, 011  Total = 8, 693

Audio recording of the interview with Deputy Headteacher	Initial Transcription	Three months after the research project took place (October)	4, 609
Audio recording of the interview with art psychotherapist	Initial Transcription	Four months after the research project took place (November)	6, 386
<b>First visual interpretations</b>	<b>How words were selected</b>	<b>The art-based process involved</b>	<b>When</b>
Main circular 'Word Pool' (A)  Visualising time and words – using space. This image was generated in response to transcribing the audio recording of the video	I selected words I felt were analytically significant from each five-minute section of the video's audio transcription. I wrote these by hand on the corresponding five-minute segment of a large 'clock-face'.	I made an initial sketch for producing a 'circular report', but simplified this when I started art-making.  I drew a large circle around a washing bowl onto A2 paper, then cut it out. I marked 12 radial segments to represent 5-minute intervals, as on a clock face. Later, I added wooden numbers and two borders to frame the data.	Four months after the research project.  This analysis took two weeks.
Derivative word pool B Objects/things/characters	I made three photocopies of Word Pool A, to highlight categories of selected words. In B, Objects/ things, and characters from literature were highlighted	I chose a gold felt pen to highlight objects/things that I felt were important and held sensory and other data associated with them. Objects were 'concrete' realities mediating between people.	Four months after the research project.
Derivative word pool C Therapeutic relationship	Words linked to relationality: the therapeutic and research relationships were highlighted	I chose purple to highlight the therapeutic relationship and green for the relationship between the child and the research process.	Four months after the research project.
Derivative word pool D Story	Words linked to stories and storytelling were highlighted	I chose orange for 'stories': a combination of yellow and red. Yellow for insight/light, and red for passion. The energy the child and the deputy headteacher invested in the storytelling appeared to come from a deep, passionate place within.	Four months after the research project.

First list of themes	What, materially	Art-based process adopted	When
Initial intuitive responses to data generated thus far (Word pools and transcriptions of audio recordings of the video and the two interviews)	7 x A3 sheets of 'First thematic responses', depicted in diagrams: an attempt to encapsulate multiple levels of 'experience, relationality and representation'.	I created diagrams and drawings to record the elements in the seven initial themes I had identified. My approach was: all material is data, whether words, objects or images, and that intuitive responses are permissible in qualitative research.	Four months after the research project.
Synthesis of preliminary findings	What and why	Art-making process and artwork produced	When
Collage of objects, positioned during the hour. I worked with the materiality of objects: they held a degree of certainty. This felt like a 'concrete' place to start art-making.	I found photographic images from magazines and the internet that represented the objects and literary characters highlighted in Word pool B. Objects included: physical objects, objects referred to, and 'in the mind's eye' as mentioned in storytelling.	On an A1 sheet of pale-orange, sand-coloured sugar paper, I made large circular movements with my arm, creating a wide, grainy circle with pastels that covered most of the paper. I cut around the pictures, arranged them, and affixed them to the circle corresponding to the time they were mentioned, used, or created. This echoed time on the 'clock-face'.	Five months after the research project.
Painting 'The focused hour'  Synthesising 'the whole' hour 'all in'.	I aimed to summarise what I had learned so far. I did not feel ready to represent the hour in a detailed painting, divided into sections, colours, and themes.	I wrote: 'I decided to use gold, purple and turquoise paint – and three blues. Circular motion with my arm. Enjoyed the gold swirling against a background of dark, black, and I added greens. Did a monoprint and worked more'.	On the same day, after making the collage.
<b>Academic Year 3, 2019 - 2020</b>			
Artwork created during Lockdowns	Themes	What I did	When
Paintings on Time and Space – <i>Durée</i> Spatio-temporal boundaries.	Exploring, visually, the experience of time during Lockdowns, linking heterotopia and <i>durée</i> , how they affect and are affected by each other.	A series of paintings, some of which are referred to in the autoethnographic account in Chapter Two. I used sugar paper of various colours, thin paper, and poster paints	June 21 <sup>st</sup> 2020 Summer Equinox

Photography	Ferns as visual representations of <i>durée</i> and succession – the whole and the parts: Fronds, blades, pinna, pinnule, fiddlehead, rhizome, root	Contemplation led to new ways of observing nature. Ferns emerged from stumps into glorious shapes and all the stages between. Looking at them closely revealed structures chiming with <i>durée</i> /succession.	June 2020
Mandalas	Chaos and order. Pattern/ design Time: <i>durée</i> /synchronic and succession/diachronic	Cutting fruit into portions and creating shapes for breakfast: a temporary, consumable art form. Usually, in the garden.	Summer 2020 onwards
<b>Academic Year 4, 2020 - 2021</b>			
<b>Weekly online MWE gatherings of ‘Personal Experience of this Planetary Pandemic’ - PEPP</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Relevance to research</b>	<b>When</b>
My handwritten notes and diagrams Record of acronyms	Introduction to Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB) as a interdisciplinary framework	These weekly (free) meetings, hosted by Dr Daniel Siegel of the Mindsight Institute, covered multiple perspectives. The interconnectedness of all things is represented by Me + We = MWE.	2020 Sep-Dec
<b>Online six-week comprehensive course on Interpersonal Neurobiology</b>			
<b>What</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Relevance to research</b>	<b>When</b>
My handwritten notes/ diagrams, written during 36 asynchronous hours of training, which were led by Dan Siegel	IPNB’s nine domains of integration explained: consciousness, bilateral, vertical, memory, narrative, state, interpersonal, temporal and identity	The domains promote integration within the body and/or within relational connections. I experimented with using 3 domains as lenses for analysing the video dataset. I consulted Dan Siegel during Q & A sessions.	June and July 2021
<b>Post Graduate Colloquium on the question of ‘Belonging’ during the pandemic</b>			
<b>Format</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Relevance to research</b>	<b>When</b>
Production of a 15-minute video presentation	Trauma theory, IPNB domains, Siegel’s ‘First model’ of the brain, my team’s and my knowledge of children’s experience of COVID-19 from practice.	My approach to working with ‘moments’ crystallised through analysis of data and nature. For example, a goldfinch trapped in a bird feeder in my garden seemed lifeless, but when released, it flew.	July 2021

## DATA ANALYSIS PHASE TWO - The whole, and one small unit of time

**Academic Year 5, 2021 - 2022**

### Defining an overview of the video using three lenses: 'Domains of Integration'

What	Why	Result	When
<p>First formal idea to structure three chapters in the thesis on the video, basing each chapter on a 'domain of integration'</p> <p>This was designed as a 'broad brushstroke analysis' as I began to think about how I could write about the video.</p>	<p>These three chapters would explicate the processes observed in the video, by examining the data through the lenses of each of the bilateral, narrative, and interpersonal domains of integration.</p> <p>(9 domains of integration would be unmanageable. I selected the 3 that seemed most relevant, and also linked easily with the remaining 6 domains).</p>	<p>One A4 sheet of paper for each five-minute section of the video.</p> <p>Each sheet was divided into four:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Summary of what happened /materials used/interactions</li> <li>2. Data relevant to bilateral integration</li> <li>3. Data relevant to narrative integration</li> <li>4. Data relevant to interpersonal integration</li> </ol> <p>I envisaged the results being collated into three chapters, but abandoned this idea due to its complexity.</p>	<p>October 10<sup>th</sup> 2021</p>

### Video data analysis was resumed

Format	What	Columns	When
Table	<p>I analysed a significant event that had struck me during the first viewing of the video: a 2 ½-minute extract.</p> <p>I was interested to understand the 'time contours' of the preceding and following 'moments'</p>	<p>Time (minutes and seconds) Words (transcription text) Coding categories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocalisations</li> <li>• Affect (linked to memory)</li> <li>• Touch</li> <li>• Gesture</li> <li>• Silence</li> <li>• Movement</li> <li>• Rhythm</li> </ul>	<p>October 11–15th 2021</p>
Summary table	<p>The 2 ½-minute extract was divided into 8 segments, each lasting 4-28 seconds. Each 'moment' could be clearly defined.</p>	<p>Column 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moment numbers 1-8</li> </ul> <p>Column 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My observations summarising the 'moment' in prose</li> </ul>	<p>October 11-15th 2021</p>

## DATA ANALYSIS PHASE THREE - systematic video microanalysis

Academic Year 6, September to December 2022

### Video microanalysis

What	Purpose	What I did
Ideas sketches	To design a method for implementing an art therapy video microanalysis process.	I segmented time in the research hour by drawing a circle. I carved it up into 5-minute units, then 5-second units
Diagram to guide the 13-day analysis process	I needed a coherent form of annotation for the different kinds of time units: days, hours, minutes and seconds	I designed a 2-D multi-temporal circular model to encapsulate the entire analytical process over 13 days, spanning 65 hours (3,900 minutes, 234,000 seconds). It held the complexity, aided the analytical process at the time, and afterwards.
780 record charts: Each on a sheet of A4 paper	To structure the process by defining what I was observing. For time efficiency, I entered ticks in columns.	Each day, I marked out the record charts for the following day: I needed 12 sheets per hour (1 for analysing each 5-second unit). Given five hours per day, each day required 60 record charts.
13 Pastel segment drawings -	To record emotional experience and capture the essence through art-making.	Before starting each day's analysis, I spent 5 minutes creating a drawing with soft pastels, summarising the previous day's analysis (of the previous 5 minutes of the video). This brought feelings and awareness powerfully back.
13 short poems / calligraphy	To record emotional experience and capture the essence through language	After drawing in soft chalk pastels, I wrote whatever few words came to me. The drawing and writing took around 5 minutes
Short play  I wrote this four days after completing the 13 days of systematic video microanalysis	A dramatisation of the video – characters entered the stage at different times  See Appendix	I created a 'Little Book of Fullness' which summarised the experience of conducting the video microanalysis, and remembering how the art therapist had remarked, 'it was like a performance'. I used the pastel drawings and poems to illustrate the 'play'. I found that the 13 drawings, when assembled into a circle, for the first page of the little book, finally produced 'The Circular Report'.

Analysing the analysis		
What	Purpose	What I did
Tally sheet	To analyse the numbers of ticks in each column of the record sheets	I made a table with x-axis as A-M days and y-axis as columns for the aspects observed. Entered data using different colour felt pens
Excel charts	To analyse the data from the tally sheet	I created Excel charts and entered the data. Interesting patterns were observable from the data presented as pie, line, stacked or bar charts
Silence	To analyse the pattern observed, whereby silences started halfway through the video (day G) and dramatically increased as Nathan became absorbed in creating artwork	82 of the 780 5-second units were recorded as 'silence'. When returning to these, I found 7 consecutive silences ranging from 20 to 55 seconds. These were of different types: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preparatory/organisational/interactive</li> <li>2. Absorption, engrossed in making</li> <li>3. Engrossed in searching</li> <li>4. Interactive 'game' – participatory event</li> </ol>
Writing on Silence	The fact that nearly 10% of the video was without any participant talk highlighted the nonverbal activity.	I brought together thoughts on silence from a variety of sources and disciplines to better understand it. The nonverbal activity raised questions about what was happening.
The 'fourth Participant': 'the speaking image'	To explore how materials affect and are affected by those participating in research. I did not have access to participants' thoughts on this topic.	Some time after completing the 13-day analysis, I applied the same time-keeping method. Watching the video again, I imaginatively explored my own response as researcher, to the role of art materials in the dialogic encounter as the image began to take shape.
Jigsaw diagram December	<p>After the video microanalysis, the idea of three chapters on the domains of integration was discarded as too involved and complex.</p> <p>The five parts of the 'focused hour' emerged as a better, clearer template for five chapters on the video analysis</p>	<p>A new idea for writing five chapters on the video—the 'focused hour'—emerged from the analysis. The chapters were to examine each part:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Beginnings:</b> days A + B, minutes 0 – 10</li> <li>2) <b>Getting Somewhere:</b> days C + D + E, minutes 10 to 25</li> <li>3) <b>Absorbed:</b> Days F + G + H + I, minutes 25 to 45.</li> <li>4) <b>Towards ending:</b> days J + K, minutes 45 to 55</li> <li>5) <b>Ending:</b> days L + M, minutes 55 to 65.</li> </ol>

<b>Revisiting the transcriptions of the two interviews</b>		
<b>What</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>What I did</b>
Analysis of the Interview with the Deputy Headteacher (DHT)	<p>To improve transcription and identify themes.</p> <p>After four years of passage of time, and completion of the video microanalysis, my understanding of the interview had deepened.</p>	<p>I identified 15 themes, placed in three categories:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>1. PERSONAL:</b></p> <p>i) Uncertainty;  ii) Relational process - joint attention;  iii) Post-trauma creativity;  iv) What she felt;  v) Her relationship with child.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>2. INTERDISCIPLINARY- PROFESSIONAL:</b></p> <p>vi) Confidentiality;  vii) Destruction – pushing away;  viii) Safety;  ix) Child’s relationship with art therapist;  x) Attachment;  xi) Attention on image</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>3. INSTITUTIONAL - PUBLIC SERVICE:</b></p> <p>xii) Exclusions and macro realities;  xiii) School and behaviour management;  xiv) Planning after therapy;  xv) Economics, budgets, and equity for pupils</p>
Analysis of the Interview with the art psychotherapist	<p>To improve transcription and identify themes</p> <p>After four years of passage of time, and completion of the video microanalysis, my understanding of the interview had deepened.</p> <p>I identified 5 broad themes and 6 parallel processes.</p>	<p><b>Themes identified</b></p> <p>I. Organisation of research process;  II. ‘Knowing’ – memories of working with the child;  III. Art therapy practice and research – theory;  IV. Education and social policy;  V. Energy</p> <p><b>Parallel processes</b></p> <p>I. Searching;  II. Looking through;  III. Holding;  IV. On the Edge;  V. Concluding;  VI. Finding.</p>

## DATA ANALYSIS PHASE FOUR - Analysis of analyses undertaken so far

**Academic Year 6, January to July 2023**

### **Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) involved:**

Coding (Semantic and latent) of data items; then building initial themes, reviewing and distilling them, constructing overarching and subthemes, in a continual process of examining the whole and the parts, oscillating between them, and finally writing the thesis chapters.

### **Interrogation of each interview using RTA**

What	Purpose	What I did
RTA - Interview with the Deputy Headteacher	To improve on earlier analysis, which I realised had produced 'bucket' themes, that had not been analysed with a fine enough grain ('bucket themes' is an RTA term).	<p>Coded the interview transcript and grouped data items into the 15 themes, and identified four more. Eventual distillation of themes into 1 overarching theme of 'relationality,' with 3 sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the art therapy space,</li> <li>• 'the unspoken word' of the art therapist's understanding, and</li> <li>• creative processes versus budgetary constraints.</li> </ul>
RTA - Interview with the Art Psychotherapist	As above: To improve on earlier analysis, which I realised had produced 'bucket' themes, that had not been analysed with a fine enough grain ('bucket themes' is an RTA term).	<p>I identified 171 codes: (117 semantic; 54 latent) and these 14 themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mechanics of the research</li> <li>• Significance of bespoke child-centred ritual(s)</li> <li>• Role of art materials in the research</li> <li>• Perceptions of DHT's experience of the research</li> <li>• Reflecting on interactions between the child and the DHT</li> <li>• The artwork</li> <li>• The interdisciplinary nature of school-based art therapy</li> <li>• The mechanics of school-based art therapy</li> <li>• Reflecting on child's past work</li> <li>• Reflecting on the research experience for the child</li> <li>• Doing</li> <li>• Connecting</li> <li>• Emotional toll of the research on the art therapist</li> <li>• Art therapists habitual practice of reflexivity</li> </ul> <p>Later these themes were refined and condensed.</p>

Interrogation of the Video Data using RTA				
What	What I did			
Reflexive Thematic Analysis of 65-minute video (post microanalysis)	<p>I made photocopied printouts of the transcribed audio from the video recording. I worked through the phases one at a time, until the analysis was complete, including a final Venn diagram, to make the task manageable. First, I labelled semantic codes on analytically significant data items; then, latent codes. Then I cut them up, grouped them and stuck them on paper.</p> <p>Themes were then reviewed, checked and condensed in a construction process.</p>			
	Phase of the hour	No. of: Semantic Codes	Latent Codes	Initial Themes
	<b>Beginning</b> (A,B)	49	41	14
	<b>Getting Somewhere</b> (C,D,E)	23	11	03
	<b>Absorbed</b> (F,G,H,I)	30	11	04
	<b>Towards ending</b> (J,K)	15	08	
	<b>Ending</b> (L,M)	10	06	
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>21</b>
Thematic Venn diagrams of the five phases of the 'focused hour' – constructed from RTA				
What	Purpose	What I did		
Thematic diagrams for each of the five phases in the 'focused hour':	<p>To present the analysis in a visually succinct way.</p> <p>At the time, I envisioned a chapter for each phase due to the volume of data.</p> <p>Thus, a diagram per chapter would show the phase progression. Due to word count constraints, I decided to condense the five chapters into a single one in my final thesis.</p>	<p>As the focused hour progressed, the interrelated themes became more complex, with each building on the previous one.</p> <p>The complexity, already there, hidden, is brought to light by the research.</p> <p>The RTA processes helped me construct a Venn diagram for each of the five phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginnings,</li> <li>• Getting somewhere,</li> <li>• Engrossed,</li> <li>• Towards endings,</li> <li>• Ending.</li> </ul>		

Academic year 7, 2023 - 2024		
Secondary data analysis		
What	Purpose	What I did
Art therapist's process notes from 96 sessions with the child, recorded as part of practice.	<p>To identify the precedents from earlier sessions regarding the artwork created during the dialogic encounter and the other artwork the child referred to.</p> <p>To identify possible patterns in behaviour linking life events, school attendance and art therapy engagement</p>	<p>I analysed the notes on the use of art materials and the evolution of imagery initiated by the child. There was evidence of a non-linear, creative process. I also analysed whether the observations that staff noted correlated with home placement changes, and if so, how the stress impacted the child's schooling and art therapy.</p> <p>The art therapist wrote notes under the following sections (for each session):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation and main summary of the session</li> <li>• Process, observations and interactions</li> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Themes</li> <li>• Communication with family, class teacher or multi-agencies</li> <li>• Any safeguarding concerns to be reported?</li> <li>• Future focus and points for next session</li> </ul>
Art therapist's three annual summary reports	To track the child's progress via annual official school records	The reports were analysed for cross-referencing with the research data, noting observations regarding clock time and subjective time, <i>durée</i>
Assessment feedback report from the Local Authority's 'Additional and Complex Needs Service'	To ascertain the local authority's perspective	<p>I could confirm that the child's complex early-life experiences were noted. However, the possibilities of traumatic experiences due to neglect were not mentioned or posited.</p> <p>Class teacher and HLTA (high-level teaching assistant) support were recommended.</p>
Analysis of the secondary data analysis		
What	Purpose	What I did
Overview timeline of the child's three-year art therapy intervention	I constructed this to investigate and show temporal links by analysing the three types of secondary data indicated above.	<p>I mapped onto a horizontal chronological timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The three years of the child's therapy, subdivided into years, terms, and sessions.</li> <li>• The timings of the child's home placement moves.</li> <li>• The timings of exclusions.</li> </ul>

#### 5.4.2 Data analysis: First phase

As I transcribed the project's audio recording manually, I recorded my initial responses. A focus on words and sounds provided a manageable way to begin unravelling the wealth of visually and auditorily layered data in the video. During this hand transcription process, salient extracts leapt out at me. Given my former role as a 'behaviour needs' specialist teacher, I was particularly struck by the clarity with which the child demonstrated his creative process, and the references he and the deputy headteacher (DHT) made to behavioural changes resulting from his art therapy experiences. After transcribing the audio recordings from the video and the two interviews, and typing up my handwriting, I watched the video again. I wrote the following text and bullet points in my journal:

'I decided I need to segment the 1 hour into 6 sections, of roughly 10 minutes each. I need to find a way to organise myself, as clearly there is a wealth of data on many levels:

- Words
- Interactions and overlapping words
- Gestures with hands and arms
- Eye contact and focus of stare/gaze
- All three persons interacting simultaneously
- Pauses and silences
- Laughs
- Shared stories and knowings
- Communication clarifications and problem-solving
- Neural feedback

I began working on the first 10 minutes of the typed transcript to improve it, adding a second column for my observations of particularly significant nonverbal expressions from the list above as I repeatedly replayed the video. At this point, I wrote in my journal that I had 'the idea of doing a circular report'. I sketched a circle divided into six segments (one for each 10-minute section) with three concentric rings. Words signifying definable objects taken from the transcript were to be entered in the middle. In the first concentric ring, I planned to record bodily responses, movement and eye contact. In the outer ring, images and metaphors, along with my emotional reactions to them, would be noted. In my mind's eye, this sketch encapsulated all my future data analysis. However, I decided that this idea was too complex, with multiple overlaps; I felt I could not act on it. I needed to analyse each component separately and later bring the parts together as a whole.

I continued improving the transcription and noticing the components in the bullet list above, writing in my research journal: 'I LOVE DOING THIS,' in capitals. The tiny details of the data I noticed were full of life. I experienced the act of transcription itself as a form of analysis, and I identified and recorded, with words and drawings, the following seven initial themes, on seven A3 sheets:

1. Objects – shapes, animals, rides, people, artwork
2. Images – what I see, hear regarding the therapeutic relationship
3. Stories: fragments with feeling: child and DHT. The story of the research itself.
4. Deconstructing developmental psychology: the reality of the child in encounter v. diagnosis
5. Creativity – evidence of, in therapist, child and DHT (deputy headteacher).
6. Research context. Ethos of the school. Relational responsibility. DHT's new realisations.
7. Researcher's worldview: my standpoint, ontology and epistemology.

The sheets of paper that I used had been left over from a training session. They were already folded into eight rectangles and served as containers for my ideas, which poured into the sections, the 'ground' as we call the paper, board, or canvas employed in 2-D visual artwork. The ground elicited the form of my mark-making as I considered the themes. Perhaps it is an example of serendipity in research: we use what is available and adapt it to the task at hand.

Around this time, I wrote: 'I want to do a poster using the circle idea: to get a sweep feeling about the whole research project'. I instinctively preferred a circle to a rectangle: later, I realised that non-linearity would be a crucial aspect of the research. I mapped keywords and phrases from the transcribed text onto a large clock face, creating a visual representation corresponding to five-minute segments of the research hour (reproduced below). I judged that 5 minutes was the appropriate time unit for this exercise; not too microscopically small, nor too large and unwieldy, both of which would have been overwhelming. I called this circular image a 'wordpool', which combined the fluidity of water with the definiteness of words. Each word was a significant data item. Selecting and presenting them within the relevant time segment of the clock created a new sense of order and relationship among them, distinct from their being embedded in the transcript. The circle displayed time spatially, visually recording the video's entire temporal flow in a single shot. The number of words, taken directly from the video's audio transcript and written in each segment, was

roughly the same to provide an overview of the data I considered analytically significant across the hour, giving equal attention to all parts. As with the drawings on the seven rectangular A3 sheets, here too, the segment, this time triangular, created a ground that elicited the pattern of mark-making/writing. Later, I added the two border frames and the wooden numerals to complete the image aesthetically and to emphasise its temporal meanings.

Diagram 2

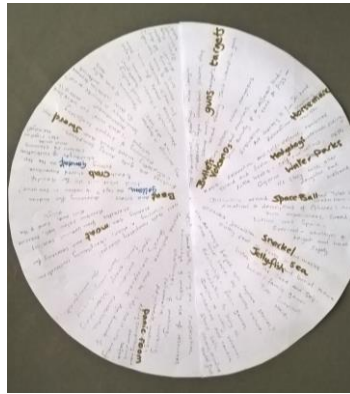


Word Pool

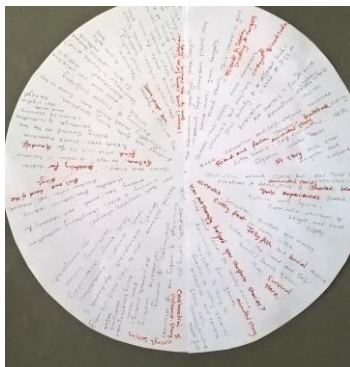


I photocopied the wordpool, creating three new versions, and highlighted words on these relating to selected words from my list of seven initial themes. On the three circles shown below, I highlighted (in different colours) words related to: i) objects and things, ii) the therapeutic relationship and iii) stories. Thus, I worked with two datasets: the word pool words selected from the video transcription and the drawings/words on the seven thematic sheets produced after completing the transcriptions. This analytical work led to a new idea based on the first of these three circles.

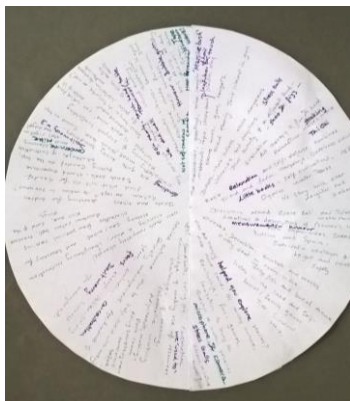
**Words marked in gold:**  
Objects, things mediating meaning  
**Blue:**  
Characters from literature



**Orange:**  
Stories told by the child and the DHT (Deputy Headteacher)



**Purple:**  
Aspects of the therapeutic relationship  
**Green:**  
Research equipment



*Three Thematic Word Pools (Photocopies on paper, felt pens)*

After completing the three wordpools, I wanted to move beyond words and work solely with images. Similarly to how I began data analysis by transcribing audio data only, not the video recording, I now selected one of the seven themes to work on visually. The category of 'objects' and characters (spoken about, mentioned, or real) insisted I give it attention. I sought images of each 'object' from magazines or printed from the internet. I left these for a few days, unsure what to do with them. I prepared art materials in a room at home, which I called my 'data room' and wrote 'I wanted to get a sense of the circle, the circular nature of time and experience'. When ready, I prepared myself to make response art in relation to 'objects' (see image below).

Using broad arm movements, I applied soft pastels to create a large circle that covered most of an A1 sheet of pale-orange sugar paper. I was using art-making intuitively, interacting with the data and seeing what happened. I wrote that 'the practicality of making really strikes me ... I began to arrange [the object images] according to the Datapool circle.' I now referred to the wordpool as a datapool. Words had been translated into data in the form of images. I placed and affixed the pictures of objects on the circle at the temporal position corresponding to when they were discussed or appeared during the hour. Some clustered in the first 'twenty minutes', when, strikingly, speech and storytelling had been fluent between the child and the deputy headteacher. This corresponded to the chatty settling-in period that, in my experience, may occur at the start of an art therapy session. There then followed a gap, indicating silence, when the child was absorbed in the making process. A different type of cluster of images, looser and less tied to material objects than the earlier one, appeared in the '7 to 10 o'clock' section of the circle. Significantly, references to technical recording 'objects' appeared just before 6 o'clock and 12 o'clock. Significant because this awareness both framed and punctuated the hour, the equipment was neither too obtrusive nor ignored. This was serious work. The finished circular collage of objects held great significance, illustrating temporal and cultural motifs of the research hour and also representing the generic flow of an art therapy session. This image remained a constant companion and inspiration throughout the research: it visually structured the specific research hour and schematically represented an art therapy session.



*Objects in Time*

Having completed the collage, I wanted to paint. I wrote, 'What painting will I do?' I stood in front of a large blank sheet of paper. I had the idea of representing the flow of the whole hour, without objects this time, but recording the other six initial themes. However, I was not yet ready to do this; I felt the task needed to be broken down into sections, colours, or themes. It felt too complex, like my very first circular sketch. I wrote 'I decided to use gold, purple and turquoise, and three blues. Again, I made a large circular motion with my arm: I enjoyed the gold swirling, with a background of dark, black and added greens. I made a monoprint and worked on it more'. It was satisfying to create this painting, which seemed to sum up something important, though I was not quite sure what. Having first worked with words through the wordpools, then reproduced images that echoed objects through collage, the direct sensory experience of using paint that swirls was invigorating, integrative, and emotional. At this point, four months had passed since the day of the dialogic encounter. I initially titled the painting 'the golden hour', reflecting my immediate emotional response. Later, I renamed it 'the focused hour', emphasising its place within the overall research.



*The focused hour*

My art-based approach thus far responded to the video's audio data. I made the wordpools, the 'collage of objects' which visually represented a generic therapy hour, and the 'focused research hour' embodied in my painting of the gold circle. A few months later, I used painting to explore philosophical ideas about the relationship between time and space in these images. These artistic explorations intensified when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. The collage-schematic-hour image reverberated with my deepening understanding of Bergson's two concepts of time. In Chapter Two, I described how, through painting, I integrated Bergson's concept of the 'immediate data of consciousness', *durée*, and the concept of succession, clock time, into a single image which I invited the reader to enter into. Linear, spatialised time was represented by vertical lines indicating the start and end of a session. Colours merging, shapes re-forming, overlapping and diminishing along a left-to-right time axis, represented *durée*, life's subjective flow of experience, deeply entered into, bounded by the vertical lines. I also explored my personal experiences of time and space during the pandemic, representing these two temporal concepts through images of ferns and mandalas.

### **5.4.3 Data analysis: Second phase**

I began the second phase by revisiting the video and closely reviewing it to further refine the transcription I had completed nearly three years earlier. Before the pandemic, at a regional conference, I had spoken about the relevance of Bergson's ideas on time to art therapy. A delegate introduced me to Daniel Stern's book, *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life* (2004), which I found particularly inspiring. I analysed a sequence of movements and speech, and identified eight 'present moments' in a 2 ½-minute excerpt from the research video. This sequence had arrested me during my first viewing of the video years earlier; I discussed it at an international conference and wrote a chapter for the post-conference publication. Conducting this microanalysis gave me deeper insights into the data. I became interested in the interpersonal neurobiology 'domains of integration' which pertain to human physical, cognitive, emotional, and imaginative experience, as articulated in Daniel Siegel's interdisciplinary work on the developing mind (Siegel, 2020a). The comprehensive online course on Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB) I attended covered the nine domains. I observed numerous examples of these in the research video. I thought they could serve as lenses for analysing the research data, and I focused on three: bilateral integration, narrative integration, and interpersonal integration. Alongside these three categories, I wanted to use three strands to construct epistemic trust (Fonagy and Alison, 2014) and three phases of the creative process, as articulated by the poet Audre Lorde. However, I decided not to pursue this plan due to complexity: a decision similar to rejecting my first sketch of a 'circular report' and my idea of painting all initial themes in one image. Phase two lasted a year.

### **5.4.4 Data analysis: Third phase**

The compelling use of video microanalysis in psychology and psychotherapy research prompted the initiation of this third phase of data analysis. I selected ideas from prior research and combined them with my own to devise a method for systematically examining the entire video in a manageable way, incorporating response art and building on my earlier examination of the 2½-minute section during

which I had gained some experience and confidence. At this juncture, similarly to spreading words evenly across all wordpool segments, I sought to avoid missing anything in the video that might have been important under closer examination. It was not immediately apparent how to do this.

There was a problem with handling four aspects of time simultaneously. Firstly, my *durée*, subjective time as I was living it; secondly, the time flowing in the video as life unfurled, never changing, though my perceptions of it were continually evolving, thirdly, the clock, a 'spatial' representation of time on my wall measuring Greenwich time as I worked, and fourthly, clock time measured in numbers on the computer, showing precisely which part of the video was playing. It was easy to confuse the 'Real' time passing during the lived day with the 'Virtual time' in the video, which, though it flowed as participants interacted dynamically, could be played repeatedly and was 'fixed' on film. To solve this simultaneity problem, I drew a large circle representing the 'research hour'. I divided it into 12 radial parts corresponding to the five-minute segments I had become familiar with in the wordpools, a representation universally recognised as a clock face. I thought if I spent one day studying one five-minute segment, then in thirteen days I could study 65 minutes. The final five minutes were doubled, with the first five minutes on the diagram I made (shown below), to maintain the notion of the hour. It then occurred to me that, if in a day's work of five hours I could study the selected 5-minute segment of the video, I could spend one hour studying each minute.

Five hours seemed about right for a good day's work, with breaks in between. I needed to organise my output so that the new dataset would be easy to locate in the future. I named the thirteen days A to M; each day was allocated to analysing 5 minutes of the video. The same circle now represented the whole video. When I looked at the circle afresh, it could also represent one hour of the five hours to be spent during any of the A to M days. It thus served as a guide for work in that hour. I was amused that VR could stand for Video Recording or for Virtual Reality (which the film was and was not)! I was replaying real lived experience that existed in a preserved digital form. I used the letters DA to designate 'Data Analysis time' as the time I spent on each unit. During each hour of

clock time (60 minutes), which was one hour's worth of my *durée*, I would analyse one minute (60 seconds) of VR time. I then subdivided the minute (sixty seconds) into 12 units of 5 seconds of VR time. I used every five minutes of my hour-long *durée* to analyse five seconds of VR. Using different colours, letters, and numbers, I created a model to differentiate the two types of time. On the one hand, subjective temporal flow, *durée*, and on the other hand, clock time, which marks succession. These could (maybe inevitably) become conflated in the analysis. These images show how I moved from the idea of microanalysis to a plan for its systematic implementation.

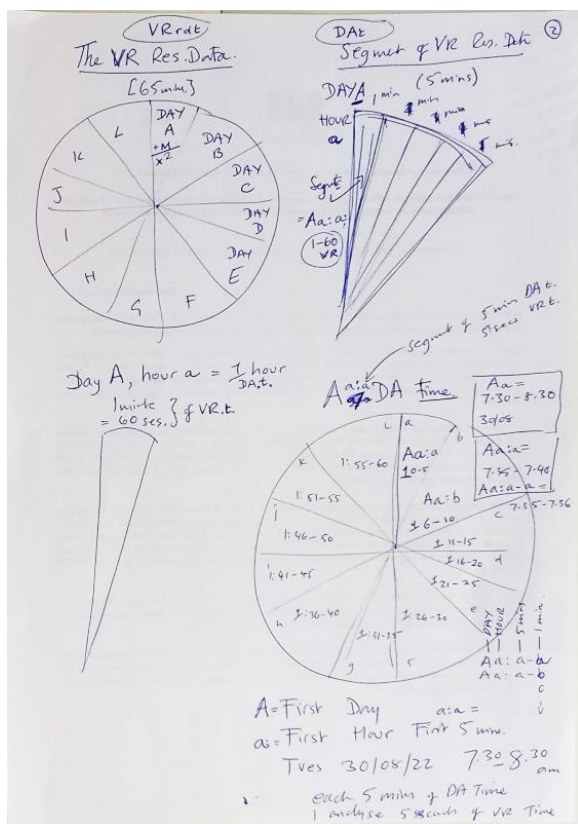


Diagram 2  
Sketch for defining  
video microanalysis time units

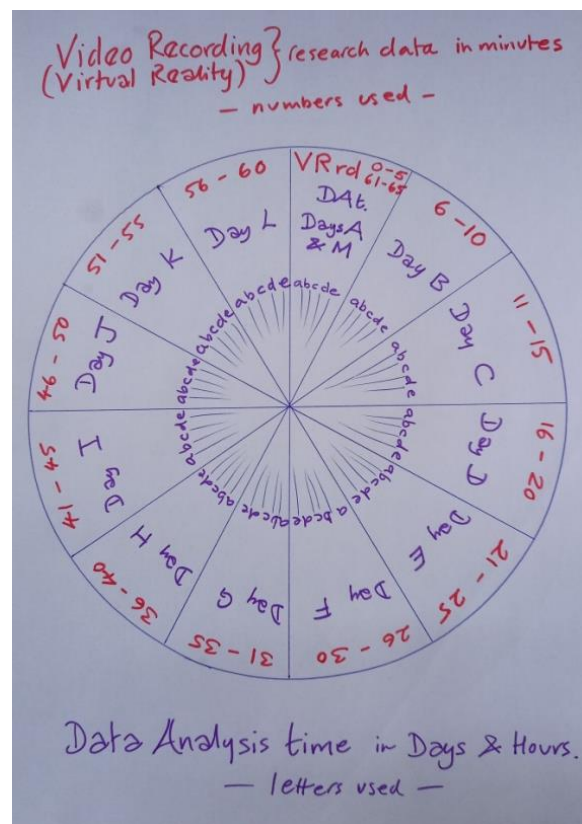


Diagram 3  
Implementation  
of video microanalysis

Over the 13 DA days, I recorded my observations for each 5-second VR unit. There were 780 units in total. Each record sheet had three rows: C = Child, T = Teacher, and AT = Art Therapist. The five columns were headed VE = visible emotion, M+D = movement plus direction, V = verbal expression, M = relation to materials, and S = silent. It transpired that 5 minutes were insufficient to take notes on all categories. I ensured that I always recorded, with a tick mark, who spoke and who did not, as

this was quantifiable data of interest to me. I was also interested in the proportion of time spent in silence. Absorption in silence had struck me from the first time I saw the video. I added a fourth 'participant' row halfway through, on 'Day H', as the child worked with the materials and an image began to emerge, as if it were an active participant. It had a will of its own regarding its qualities and materiality, and responded to the other participants' actions. After completing the 13-day analysis, I transferred the results to a tally sheet. Thus, I analysed the whole video, paying equal attention to each 5-second unit.

I also recorded my own emotional responses to undertaking this intensive analysis. Each morning, before starting the day's work, I set aside five minutes to draw with pastels, keeping in mind my emotional and cognitive experiences from the previous day's data study. This response art helped me contain and process the emotions I was experiencing and capture them artistically through colour, line and form. I also recorded my responses in a few words on a separate sheet of paper after doing the pastel drawing. Four days after completing the 13-day analysis, I wrote a 'Little Book of Fullness' to capture my emotional experience of the entire analytical process (see Appendix). It took the form of a play: characters entered the stage at different times, as themes, stories, and events unfolded. It encapsulated the joy of the focused research hour, resonated with the golden hour I had painted years earlier, and fulfilled what I had wanted to achieve when I abandoned the too complex plan of using 3 X 3 analytic lenses in phase two. The book was interspersed with the 13 response art pastel drawings and the poems. After completing the microanalysis and the response art/writing, I used Excel to chart the statistical data generated by the project.

#### **5.4.5 Data analysis: Fourth phase**

In the fourth phase, I used reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke, 2021, 2022) to analyse the two recorded interviews, which I had previously hand-transcribed and was therefore already familiar with to some extent. The six stages of RTA provided an adaptable approach well-suited to my iterative study. It is an approach that encourages researchers to remain continually

aware of their subjectivity in the analytical process and to embrace it. The first stage, immersion in the data, questions the meanings of the data, their relevance to the research, and the researcher's assumptions. The second stage comprises coding the data and attaching particularly relevant labels. Codes can be 'semantic', derived literally from the text's words, or 'latent', which hold deeper meanings below the surface. The third stage is constructing initial themes from the coding. The fourth reviews and develops the themes using the coded, collated data and the entire dataset. The fifth stage refines, defines, and names themes; brief descriptions are written to capture the scope and boundaries of each theme, conveying their essence. The sixth stage of the process brings everything together, potentially revisiting previous stages, before producing the written report. At any stage, a recursive step can be taken, and this non-linearity suited my research processes. RTA served as a valuable guide to systematically analyse the two interviews. Using RTA expedited these analyses and linked them to the video analysis I had already completed. I then returned to the video text transcripts and applied the RTA approach. Having already micro-analysed the participants' interactions, movements, gestures, gazes, and expressions, having worked with the data for some time, and now having also analysed the two interviews, this was an exciting integrative process.

As I worked with the video data this time, I divided the hour into five phases, defining the collage-schematic hour of a therapy session. Each phase consisted of a varying number of five-minute segments. Thus, my earlier video microanalysis provided the unit structure for segmenting the entire video, handling the data, and reassembling the 5-minute sections into a new pattern of five phases. Hence, I used RTA in manageable, meaningful chunks (the five phases) before unifying them into the whole. I constructed a diagram after completing the RTA analysis of each of the five phases. RTA provided a comprehensive, flexible, adaptable, and creative theoretical model for study at this point, and helped organise ideas leading up to the writing of the thesis. The first three photos below show the RTA process applied to the text data from the first 10 minutes of the video, corresponding to the first phase of the schematic hour. All the text from the ten minutes was included. The same method was then applied to the remaining four phases of the hour. Although RTA has six 'phases', I use the

term 'stages' to avoid confusion with this research's four phases of data analysis and five phases of the schematic art therapy hour. While conducting the RTA work, I intended to write five chapters on video data analysis, each corresponding to a phase. Each phase had a distinct character, warranting thorough examination. However, due to thesis word-count limitations, after completing the RTA for each of the five phases, I applied RTA stage 5 to the entire-hour dataset to condense the five chapters into a single Chapter Seven.

*Examples of RTA – from the first ten minutes of the video transcription*



Diagram 4

*Noting the data items' analytical significance to the research questions and grouping data into initial themes*

**Data extract – first ten minutes of video transcription – all text used.**

**RTA stages 2 and 3**

These photos show the use of RTA in this study, after an extended time immersed in the data. At the start of the coding process (RTA stage 2), any significance to the research question has been noted in handwriting on each slip of white paper. Each slip has some data/text typed on it. The slips are then grouped into separate sections of blue paper, yielding fourteen initial themes (RTA stage 3). Each blue section is a different initial theme.

Diagram 5

*Semantic codes*

**Return to RTA stage 2**

Codes can be semantic, based on language or they can be latent, when the meaning is deeper, not necessarily articulated in words.

Here semantic coding is added; each yellow/orange paper has a semantic code (I ran out of orange paper, hence yellow paper is also used).

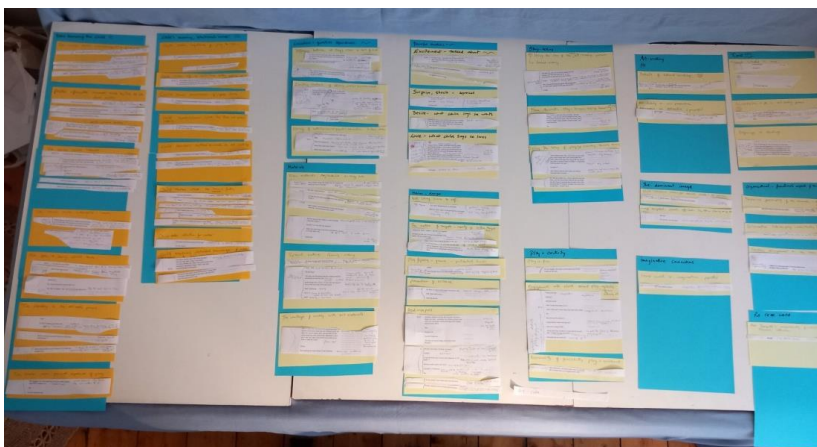




Diagram 6

*Latent codes*

**Return to RTA stage 2**

Here latent codes are added; each pink note has a latent code.

The fine-tuning of the coding also partially involves reviewing, which is **RTA stage 3**

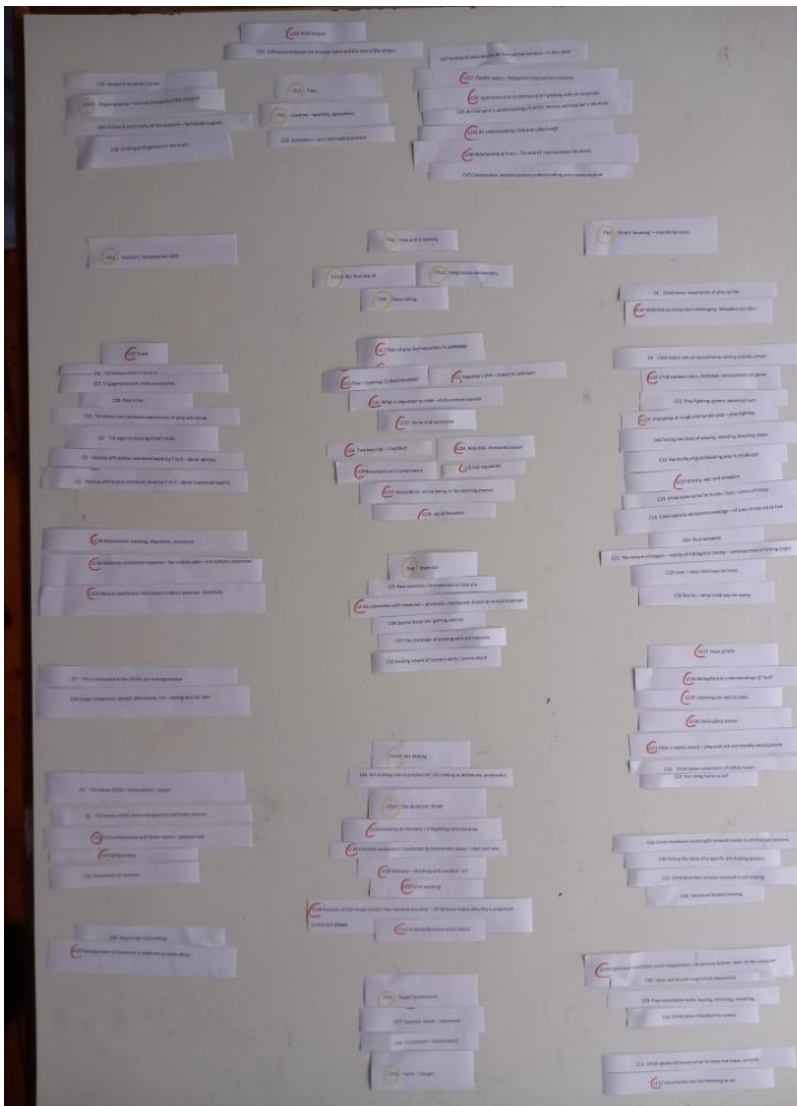


Diagram 7

*Reviewing coding/themes*

**RTA stages 2 and 3 combined**

The semantic and latent codes were then typed up and clustered by initial themes

There were:

49 Semantic codes

41 Latent codes

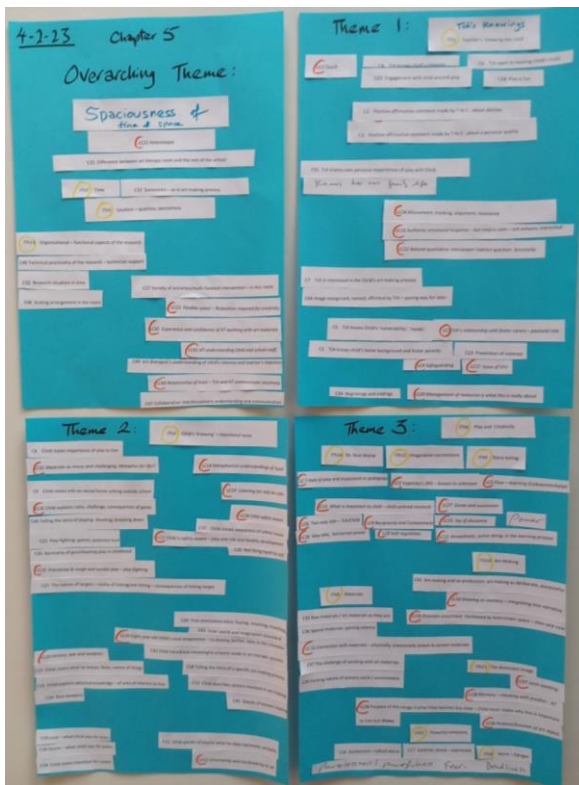


Diagram 8

*Reorganising themes*

**RTA stage 4**

An overarching theme and three others were identified, distilling what went before in this section of the analytical work.

The blue paper on the top left is titled Chapter 5. At the time, I was planning five chapters (5-9), one for each of the five phases of the research video: Beginning, Getting somewhere, Absorption, Towards ending and Ending.

So the overarching theme and three sub-themes were for the first phase, or first ten minutes of the video. The same process was completed for Getting somewhere (15 mins), Absorption (20 mins), Towards ending (10 mins) and Ending (10mins). Then RTA stage 5 was applied to the dataset of the hour as a whole.

The fourth phase of data analysis concluded with an examination of the secondary data: the art therapist's process notes and reports. Striking correlations were identified among changes in home placement, school behaviour and potential school exclusion, demonstrating how the nuances and impact of a child's mental health and ability to cope with phenomenal external circumstances can easily be underestimated: both in the child's ability to manage/survive, and their struggles to do so.

The secondary data also indicate the school's willingness to understand the child's external circumstances and to identify positive solutions early on, rather than allowing the situation to deteriorate. A close and careful examination of this secondary data led to the construction of a timeline that demonstrates the stress the child was under, his ability to cope with crises when supported by the school as a whole, and the reliability of an interdisciplinary safety net. This timeline will be presented in the next chapter, which introduces the research participants. Importantly, the secondary data also elucidated components of art therapy that are elusive and difficult to characterise, such as the emergence of images. By documenting the use of evolving imagery over

time, the therapist demonstrated how the child worked within the heterotopic art therapy space, illuminating his powerful relationship with art materials and the metaphorical processes he and his therapist explored together throughout their work.

In concluding this chapter, I acknowledge the profound contributions of researchers who have used video microanalysis. The inspiring, meticulous work of Beatrice Beebe and Daniel Stern, who used empirical methods to study micro-interactions between parents and infants, influenced my thinking. Beebe's 2 ½-minute analyses of playful interactions, rhythms, and cadences between mothers and infants influenced the time unit I chose to use when testing video microanalysis. Similarly, Trevarthen's extensive video analysis of mother-infant reactions, which revealed 'both aesthetic and moral values expressed in joyful play with children too young to appreciate talk about how to behave' (Trevarthen, 2019, p.3) suggested the value of embracing analysis of artistic creativity in an older child, who missed out on developmental stages normally achieved in secure and reliable relationships with primary caregivers, and consequently found talk about how to behave difficult to appreciate. Daniel Stern's microanalysis was particularly important, first working with infants, then studying 'present moment' interactions between adults and then studying artistic expression. His definition of the present moment as lasting 'between 1 and 10 seconds, with an average duration of around three to four seconds' (Stern, 2004, p. 41) influenced the time unit I identified as fitting my research context. I decided on 5-second units. My units were functional for managing the analysis; they were not intended to represent the probabilities of present-moment temporal curves. However, the unit I chose helped determine and locate newly observed present moments that crossed over the units. All these legacies contributed to the fine-grained texture and the precision of analysis I aimed for. As I became immersed in the research data and familiar with the ideas others had used in microanalysis, my ideas became more integrated, eventually producing a method that had not been used before. Of course, I had no idea what I would find. This will be revealed in the microanalysis results presented in Chapter Seven. But first, in Chapter Six, I introduce the reader to the research participants: the deputy headteacher, the therapist, and the child.

## **6.0                    CHAPTER 6 – The Three Research Participants**

This chapter introduces the three participants in the research project. The reader is reminded that all identifying features have been concealed: participants' names have been changed, geographic locations have been removed, and any other potential identifiers have been altered or removed. Also, in accordance with the research ethics agreements, the research video is not, and will not be, made available to the public.

### **6.1 Deputy Headteacher – ‘Tina’**

Tina (pseudonym) was one of two deputy headteachers in a large inner-city primary school. Along with other members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the headteacher, she shared responsibility for the smooth day-to-day management of the school. Like her colleagues in the SLT, she had multiple roles. These included standing in for the headteacher when necessary, serving as the school's designated teacher for looked-after children, and leading the development of trauma-informed approaches. As the designated teacher for looked-after children, she knew each looked-after child well. She organised their Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings, placing the child at the centre of the process and involving them as much as possible. PEP meetings were introduced to improve academic attainment and well-being among looked-after children, given their documented underachievement (Department for Education, 2018b).

Preparation for PEP meetings required collaboration. Tina ensured that everyone involved with each child's education and care contributed to decision-making, including the class teacher, teaching assistant, foster carers, social worker, therapist, and any others supporting the child. Those unable to attend the PEP meeting were invited to provide feedback and progress reports. Before each child's meeting, Tina discussed with the child how they felt about school, what was working well, and how to address what was not working well; the child then actively participated in their meeting. Although not expected to be a mental health expert, Tina had the skills to 'understand the impact trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on looked-after and previously looked-

after children and their ability to engage in learning' (Department for Education, 2018b, p. 26). She had received training on trauma-informed approaches, recognising children's attachment patterns and how children's behaviour may communicate emotional experiences.

Tina worked at the whole-school systemic level, interacting with individuals of all ages. Some children in Tina's school had experienced early traumatic life, which later manifested as behaviour that the school found difficult to cope with. Behaviour management strategies usually employed with other children were ineffective. In line with standard practice in schools, if teachers and teaching assistants could not manage a child in crisis, the child would be referred to a member of the senior leadership team. When staff brought a child to Tina, in her role as deputy headteacher, she would provide the child with space and time, listen to them, de-escalate the situation, and identify a constructive solution. This would involve thinking about the immediate causes and consequences of the crisis. She knew each child's background and personality and used the school's resources to manage the situation. Sometimes these situations were very difficult. The school very rarely excluded a child: they considered such action a last resort, and were loath to do so.

A new teacher at Tina's school suggested a different approach to the seemingly intractable problem of children's occasionally severe behavioural difficulties. Her previous school had introduced arts therapies and had successfully supported children in crisis. Tina agreed to try it, discussed the idea with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, and the school governors. It was agreed to proceed with funding art therapy on a trial basis, to be reviewed after one term. A referral process was established. Tina's school initially commissioned one day per week of art therapy for four children who required specialist support. Tina liaised closely with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator (SENDCo), who oversaw the school's provision for children requiring additional support. Having been instrumental in the decision to host art therapy at her school and having observed its transformative effects on children's lives, Tina was willing to participate in research and help expand knowledge about how art therapy makes a difference for children in schools.

## 6.2 Art Psychotherapist – ‘Julia’

Julia (pseudonym) was an experienced art psychotherapist who had spent several years collaborating with a team of arts therapists working in partnership with schools and other educational settings, providing emotional and trauma support. Like all art therapists in the UK, she was a member of the British Association of Art Therapists and registered with the Health and Care Professions Council as a psychological professional/Allied Health Professional. She delivered individual and small-group art therapy sessions for children and had developed skills in working systemically. Where needed, this included liaising with teaching assistants and class teachers to introduce carefully planned, bespoke creative activities to support the children’s emotional well-being throughout the week.

Working in Tina’s school, Julia operated as she did in other settings, within the school's ethos, drawing on her hybrid capabilities: artistic and psychotherapeutic skills. As discussed already, the art therapy profession is inherently interdisciplinary. Art-making practice and theory, as well as developmental and psychotherapeutic practice and theory, are integrated. Julia synthesised these, along with other interests and relaxation methods, and designed art therapy interventions tailored to each child's needs and interests. She worked at the intersection of theory and the unknown, responding to the child's imaginative creativity.

After a year of working one day per week at Tina’s school, Julia’s time was increased to two days per week. Not all looked-after children required support, and some children who were not looked after did. Julia worked with children experiencing a range of social and emotional difficulties. When recruitment for the research project was underway in the Spring term, Julia was working with eight children at the school. Some children received art therapy interventions shorter than 15 weeks, and the plan for some was to continue therapy; none of these children was eligible for the research project. One child met the eligibility criteria for research participation. He was nearing the end of his art therapy sessions. He had begun working with Julia three years earlier, after being referred at age 7, due to behaviour problems that the school recognised as related to anxiety, fear, and emotional

dysregulation. He had been excluded from school several times. It was hoped that art psychotherapy would prevent his permanent exclusion, which seemed imminent at the time. In this study, the name 'Nathan' is used for this child. This is a pseudonym, not the child's real name.

'Julia' began art therapy sessions with 'Nathan' after consent was obtained from his social worker and foster carers, and information was gathered from them and the teaching staff. The referral process and form were completed. Julia liaised with Nathan's class teacher, teaching assistant and foster carer. She aimed to have a brief conversation weekly with staff, on Nathan's achievements, progress made, and any concerns they might have had when he was emotionally dysregulated. Julia's process notes,<sup>28</sup> which became a research dataset in the current study, provided a record of some of these comments. Regular art therapy progress reviews ensured that the support Nathan received was aligned with his needs at the time. The evidence strongly suggests that if the staff had not been so understanding, Nathan's social and emotional health would have deteriorated, and he would have possibly caused hurt to others, leading to eventual permanent exclusion.

### **6.3 Child Participant – 'Nathan'**

Nathan (pseudonym) was a lively, energetic and enthusiastic child, well known in the school. Significantly, in their first art therapy session, Nathan introduced himself to Julia, stating his identity: 'I'm an inventor'. He loved making things and experimenting. Nathan attended the same mainstream nursery and primary school during periods of immense upheaval in his life: this stability provided welcome consistency. The nursery teaching staff managed his distress when it showed, including his enuresis. Nathan engaged well with the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, taught through sensory-based activities and play-based learning. As he got older, the staff started to struggle to meet his emotional needs. When Nathan was seven years old, the

---

<sup>28</sup> Julia wrote concise process notes (PN) after each art therapy session, with points for recall for the following session and for report writing as mentioned in the section on retrospective reviewing in Chapter Three. Her notes included observations on his artwork, the processes he was using and brief information from staff about his foster placement moves, which impacted his school life. The PN annotations, indicated in brackets, include the Year and term Nathan was in, and the session number. Julia had 96 sessions with Nathan, starting when he was in School Year 2, aged 7, until Year 5, aged 10.

school staff sought external help, understanding that ‘stress, anxiety and fear are all enemies of learning’ (Cozolino, 2013, p. 86). A local authority assessment for an Education, Health and Care plan indicated that Nathan had no literacy or numeracy special needs and that his reading age was above average. However, he was deemed to have ‘additional and complex’ social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, due to his ‘complex early life experiences’. His additional and complex needs were not detailed further. Early relational trauma was implied in the document but not suggested as a possible reason for his behaviour, and art therapy was not named as a possible source of support. Twenty hours per week of teaching assistant support were allocated in the additional budget, aiming to help Nathan focus on classroom learning tasks at school.

Nathan, aged 3, was placed on a Child Protection Plan and removed from his family for his physical and emotional safety. Even with no historical social services reports available, it is logical to deduce that the infant Nathan experienced extreme emotional abuse and neglect. The threshold for removing a child from their family is high, so it is reasonable to assume that Nathan’s first years were fraught with complex emotions and difficult interpersonal relationships. Managing anger and complicated feelings of grief and loss was hard for Nathan. Teaching assistant support helped Nathan to some extent, but specialist training was required to work with emotional dynamics rooted in early experience: art therapy can help with complicated grief (Brandoff, 2021).

Nathan was known in school for telling ‘fantastical’ stories, insisting they were real; he ‘lived in a world of his own’. In this sense, he could be difficult to teach and reach. To him, his stories were very real; they needed to be heard. In and outside school, interpersonal relationships were challenging for him. Sometimes, his impulsive responses involved infringing on others’ personal space, even putting others’ safety at risk. The school leadership team feared that if risks to others’ safety continued, they may have no option, after several fixed-term exclusions, but to exclude Nathan permanently. As noted earlier, this would have been a last resort: the school was reluctant to take such action. Fortunately, the new teacher in the school suggested art therapy might help.

### 6.3.1 Nathan's fixed-term exclusion: A breathing space

Nathan had at least three changes in foster placement before starting art therapy aged 7. The timeline below starts when Nathan began art therapy sessions. It shows he had three more foster placement changes and two brief emergency placements during his time in art therapy. These five changes are shown in the alternating yellow and orange blocks as he changed placements.

Table 4

Nathan is in <b>YEAR 2</b> He is <b>7</b> years old				Nathan is in <b>YEAR 3</b> He is <b>8</b> years old												Summer	
Summer Holidays				H H H H H H H H H H H H H H H H												H Holidays	
May	June	July	August	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	August		
Foster Placement 1 Short term six weekly contact with mum and siblings throughout the three years				F/P 2 long-term				Emergency Placement		Foster Placement 3 Short term							
Term 3 Summer <b>9 sessions (1 - 9) E?</b>				Term 1 Autumn <b>9 sessions (10 - 18) E?</b>				Term 2 Spring 11 <b>11 sessions (19 - 29)</b>				Term 3 Summer <b>10 sessions (30 - 39)</b>					
Report 1 after 9 sessions				Fortnightly mtgs with class tch - monthly mtgs with F/Carers												Report 2 after 29 sessions	
Nathan attends school full-time				Nathan is attending school full-time													
<b>H</b> = holiday <b>E?</b> = potential ending of AT <b>E</b> = planned final ending																	
												Nathan is in <b>YEAR 4</b> He is <b>9</b> years old				Summer	
												H H H H H H H H H H H H				H Holidays	
			Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	August			
			Emergency Placement		Foster Placement 4 Short term												
			Term 1 Autumn <b>9 sessions (40 - 48)</b>				Term 2 Spring <b>11 sessions (49 - 59)</b>				Term 3 Summer <b>10 sessions 60 - 69)</b>						
			Report 3 after 32 sessions														
			Exclusions N attends 2 missed 2 hrs/day														
												Nathan is in <b>YEAR 5</b> He is <b>10</b> years old				Summer	
												H H H H H H H H H H H H				H Holidays	
			Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	August			
			Foster Placement 4 Short term														
			Term 1 Autumn <b>10 sessions (70 - 79)</b>				Term 2 Spring <b>11 sessions (80 - 90)</b>				Term 3 Summer <b>7 (91 - 96)</b>		Art therapy ended				
			Julia continues with liaison meetings with Tina/ safeguarding/ welfare staff as throughout												Research Interview		
			Nathan is attending school full-time														

Timeline of Nathan's school life, home life and art therapy sessions

According to his Social Care plan, Nathan was to move to a long-term placement eight months after he started art therapy. There was significant preparation before his move to his 'forever-family' home. Julia conducted a safe ending to their art therapy sessions over six weeks. Nathan said goodbye to the school staff and pupils, as he was to attend a school closer to the new foster carers' home. Nathan's class teacher recognised his hopeful feelings at the beginning of the new placement. Sadly, the pattern was familiar: Nathan was excited and happy when things were going well, but after six weeks, his eagerly awaited long-term foster placement ended under challenging circumstances. Everyone's hopes were dashed. Nathan was accommodated in an emergency placement.

Another foster placement was found within reach of his long-standing school, to provide consistent education, so he returned to where he had said his goodbyes. Julia and Nathan resumed their art therapy sessions. The staff recognised his heightened distress and helped him cope with his unbearable feelings and regain a sense of stability. As noted earlier, the school had known him since he was in the Reception class. There were tensions in Nathan's new foster placement (number 3 in the timeline). His teacher understood that Nathan was unsettled, telling Julia she was 'kind of waiting for the burst' (PN/Y4.T1/46). Nathan's fixed-term exclusion (highlighted in the bright red box at the centre of the timeline) occurred as tensions rose. Nathan missed two art therapy sessions. The new foster home placement broke down. This time, after seven months.

This pattern of events in Nathan's life exemplifies the link between moving care placements and the risk of school exclusion. When Nathan's foster placement that followed his failed long-term foster placement broke down, and his behaviour in school escalated to aggression, immediate action was taken. He was removed from school for only a short period. The reasons were explained to him in a way he could understand and without shame. This removal from school was known as a 'fixed-term' exclusion. It gave everyone some breathing room to work out the next steps. Knowing that he would return gave Nathan hope. His connection with the school was not severed. After carefully planned reintegration meetings, Nathan returned to school, starting with one hour per day. This gradually

increased to two, then four hours per day until his attendance was eventually reinstated to full-time. During this part-time period, the school ensured that Nathan never missed his art therapy sessions. He had a space to go to weekly, his heterotopic art therapy room: he knew he would be understood and could express himself as he was, however raw his emotions were, without being asked to explain himself. At this juncture, ripples from Nathan and Julia's robust therapeutic relationship injected a crucial, perhaps life-saving, sense of energised hope for the future. Tina and Julia were essential in Nathan's broader team of 'corporate parents'.<sup>29</sup>

An example of the school's care for Nathan was the staff's response to his behaviour toward another child, who had been aggressive toward him. The teaching assistant told Julia that Nathan had been bullied, witnessed by staff. However, when the incident was discussed with Nathan, he had not perceived it as bullying; he was unaware that he could receive support. The teaching assistant surmised that this might indicate his lack of self-worth: for him, maltreatment was normal as his feelings were influenced by implicit memories of early life. This commitment to try to understand the cause of Nathan's aggression indicated a trauma-informed and attachment-friendly approach; perhaps even a neglect-informed and developmentally-informed approach, too. Nathan's school incorporated multi-faceted support through 'targeted interventions' for vulnerable pupils, and in so doing, heightened staff awareness. Once the risk of Nathan's permanent exclusion from school was eliminated and adequate support from school staff was in place, Nathan's art therapy with Julia ended. When invited to consider whether he would like to participate in research, Nathan's primary concern was whether he could use art materials. Excited about signing the consent form and the study's formalities, Nathan seemed to know he was doing something important, that he was being taken seriously. He appreciated being treated as a capable equal. He agreed with Julia's suggestion to use their familiar art therapy room as the research site, which we now enter.

---

<sup>29</sup> The term 'Corporate Parenting' was first defined in law by the Social and Care Act of 2017, though it was introduced into everyday practice in the 1990s. Government guidance was issued to local authorities (See: Local Government Association 2017) for all involved in multi-agency work with looked-after children: foster carers, social workers, teachers, nurses, etc.

## 'Nathan' showed 'Tina' the 'feeling voyage' he and 'Julia' shared

### 7.1 Chapter overview

On a hot Friday afternoon in July, 'Nathan' and 'Julia' welcomed 'Tina' into the art therapy room.

They closed the door behind them and sat at the table. Colourful paper, art materials and several boxes of art equipment were invitingly spread out on the low secure cupboard for storing artwork.

Natural light streamed in from the window.

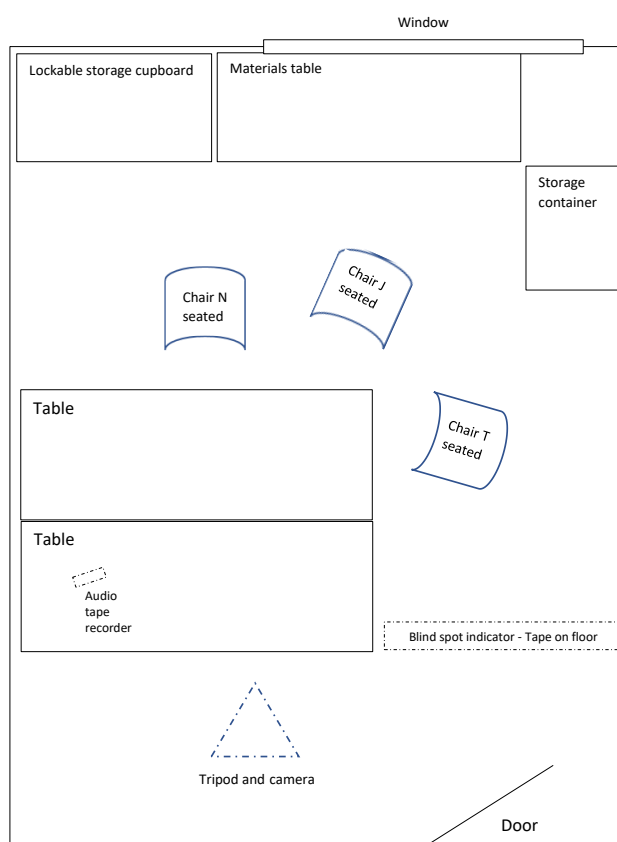


Diagram 9 *The site of the research project: The art therapy room*

Nothing was predetermined. The only certainty was that Nathan, Tina and Julia brought themselves as individuals and as a group into this social research setting in school: a pupil (artist/'interviewee'), a senior teacher ('interviewer') and Nathan's art psychotherapist (artist).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The reader is reminded that the participant information sheets explained the purpose of the 'interview' and the reason for the art therapist's presence, as a resource for the child participant should they need support of any kind.

Before I present the chapter overview, we glimpse into the space Nathan and Julia had created through Tina's eyes. She had never entered the room when transformed for art therapy. As the three participants took their seats, ready to begin, Tina and Nathan interacted intuitively and spontaneously. After initial greetings, Tina looked around the room and exclaimed with delight:

T: This is a bit of a privilege, being invited into the art therapy room!

N: Mmm

T: Well, I've been in the *room*, but not when it's *set up*. Tell me a little bit about it? Because it looks very interesting, and I'm dying to touch some of those things Nathan (VR 00.33 – 00.50)<sup>31</sup>

Tina's remark about how special it was to be invited into the art therapy room surprised Nathan. It elicited a thoughtful utterance: 'Mmm', voiced with a questioning smile and quizzical look. After all, it was very familiar to him. He knew the 'feel' of it, having breathed, played and worked there for three years. Tina answered his implicit question by explaining how different it looked from the days when Julia was not in school and how fascinating the materials looked when the room was 'set up'. She invited him to speak to her about 'it', meaning the room. Nathan did not find this easy. Maybe 'it' encompassed so much that it was hard to know what to say or where to start. Tina instantly tried a more concrete question, sensitively enquiring about the materials she saw laid out. She asked him about what was familiar to him, implicitly knowing he would be able to answer her question:

T: Are all these things the things that are usually out when you do art therapy?

(VR 01.05 – 01.09)

Julia had prepared the space according to Nathan's preferences, laying out art materials and equipment he enjoyed using, and following his requests during the research preparation. Julia knew about Nathan's creative processes and the themes and materials that interested him. Their shared intersubjectivity<sup>32</sup> continued post-therapy. Later in the chapter, we return to Nathan's answer to Tina's question about the things available in the room, this heterotopic potential space.<sup>33</sup> I now give the reader an overview of this chapter.

---

<sup>31</sup> The video recording (VR) was 65 minutes long. Quotations from the recording are indicated in minutes and seconds.

<sup>32</sup> Intersubjectivity is 'mind reading another's thoughts, feelings or intentions' (Stern, 2004, p. xvi).

<sup>33</sup> Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopia, its six principles, and how this links with Winnicott's 'potential space' is explained in Chapter Four.

Throughout this chapter, I describe Nathan's expressions, in words, actions, and images, and analyse some 'present moments'<sup>34</sup> and a 'shared feeling voyage'.<sup>35</sup> I introduce the 'settling-in period', which encompasses two overall themes: firstly, the relaxation techniques Nathan learned from Julia and demonstrated to Tina and secondly, Nathan's spontaneous storytelling as he relaxed into the space with his new guest. This phase ensured that a safe and vibrant space was co-created to enable him to move through uncertainty, with Julia's presence, into the next phase of the hour. In the central phase, he steps into the flow of his creative subjectivity, his *durée*.<sup>36</sup> I explain how Nathan fully immersed himself in his creative process, showing Tina what this was like for him. He worked with imagination and intuition, becoming engrossed in making art, often during periods of silence. He showed how Julia connected with his images and how they communicated through them: in one instance, literally 'through' an artwork, as we shall see. Parallels between relationships and art appeared, a feature central to art therapists' thinking. Nathan also demonstrated that this creative process went beyond his therapeutic relationship with Julia: he extended his ease with himself and his creative process to include Tina, trusting she would understand what he showed her.

In the penultimate section of the chapter, endings are analysed. Nathan's exit from the heterotopic space and from his immersion in *durée*, into the 'outside', 'real' world, is examined. Nathan demonstrated that transitioning from absorption back to everyday life can be difficult but not impossible, and that this is a process which must be handled carefully. Finally, the chapter summarises the outcomes Nathan reported regarding his management of difficult emotions and his relationships with others, showing how art-making processes and his trust in Julia had helped him. Understandably, he did not verbalise *how* art therapy had helped him.

---

<sup>34</sup> The present moment is 'our microscope for viewing how change comes about' at the local level in psychotherapy (Stern 2004, p. xix). There are different kinds of present moments, for instance, 'now moments' and 'moments of meeting'.

<sup>35</sup> The 'shared feeling voyage' is a concept proposed by Stern that is useful to art therapy. It is a moment of meeting that is 'a kind of journey, lasting seconds, taken by two people, roughly together through time and space' (Stern, 2004, p. 172).

<sup>36</sup> Bergson's concept of *durée* is explained in Chapter Four. The reader is reminded that Bergson's philosophical ideas distinguish quantitative multiplicity from qualitative multiplicity. The former is essential for measuring time, organising, and getting things done. The latter, combined with unity, is *durée*. This flows continually, is not measurable and encapsulates our experiences and memories as individual beings, our unique self. Every moment new memories accumulate, so no two moments are identical, yet *durée*, the flow originating in creative evolution, has its logic and unity.

## 7.2 Settling-in phase 1: Relaxation

Nathan showed Tina two de-stressing techniques that Julia had incorporated into their work together. These involved relaxation and mindfulness.<sup>37</sup> Use of relaxation is intrinsic to art therapy and can take many forms, depending on the child's and the art therapist's interests.

The first technique was inspired by Julia's meditation practice: the art of Tai Chi. She had taught Nathan some slow, flowing, yet controlled body movements and how concentrating on them may help manage feelings. The excerpt below shows how Tina recognised that, for Nathan, art therapy and Julia were synonymous when she invited him to share how art therapy had helped him. She recognised the special quality of their therapeutic relationship:

T: So, art therapy for you is coming to an end now. I know that the beginning, the first time we started to talk about that you weren't so sure were you? Cos' you've had such an amazing relationship with Julia. What do you think it is about Julia that's helped you, or about doing the art therapy that's helped you? (VR 09.35 – 09.50)

Nathan paused, smiling. He looked around and up, thinking of what to say. Then he responded:

N: Well, we did a lot of relaxation bits, didn't we? (VR 09.53 – 09.55)

As Nathan retrieved his memories and articulated the phrase 'relaxation bits', he nodded and turned to look at Julia. She nodded and smiled at him. The communication between them showed their 'implicit relational knowing'.<sup>38</sup> They knew about 'being with' each other in the art therapy room.

The extract below is divided into four present moments<sup>39</sup>, numbered on the left. Each moment has its shape as emotions crescendo, overlap, change and decrease in intensity. Microanalysis reveals the intricate to-and-fro movement of gaze and speech between Tina, Nathan, and Julia as they explored meaning and sought shared understanding. Analysing a sequence of unfolding present moments helps bring 'understanding of process ... closer to the foreground' (Stern, 2004, p.139). As Stern says, each present moment is 'a micro-lived story' with a minimal plot (Stern, 2004, p. 243):

---

<sup>37</sup> Art therapy practice often incorporates mindfulness practices (Bokoch and Hass-Cohen, 2021). It is worth noting that Mindfulness practices are invaluable for the well-being of health professionals (and others) (Kriakous *et al.*, 2021).

<sup>38</sup> 'Implicit relational knowing' (Stern, 2004, p. 242) is interpersonal understanding that does not rely on words. Stern dedicated Chapter Seven in his book *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life* to Implicit Knowing (2004).

<sup>39</sup> Stern's concept of Present Moments is explained in Chapter Three of this thesis on p.56.

- |   |   |            |
|---|---|------------|
| 1 | T: What do you do in relaxation, and what does that help with?<br>N: What's that?..... (looking at Julia, searching for the name) The one that were like that?....<br>(Nathan demonstrates movements) | 10 seconds |
| 2 | J: 'Stroking the horse's mane'. Yes, yes, that was a few steps of Tai Chi<br>(she demonstrates the same action)<br>T: Oh! (Tina sits up, clearly surprised and fascinated).                           | 5 seconds  |
| 3 | J: Cos' Nathan is quite interested in self-defence and relaxation, and we were putting those<br>two things together   | 10 seconds |
| 4 | J: ...to help to calm things down (she demonstrates the movement again)<br>(VR 10.05 – 10.35)   | 5 seconds  |

When Tina pronounced the second 'do' in her question 'what do you do in relaxation...?' Nathan knew what she meant. The first 'moment' lasted ten seconds. It was a micro-lived story. The plot involved a questioner, an interviewee and a helper, and pivoted on the dilemma of how to convey the memory of a bodily felt experience in words. The word 'do' is kinaesthetic, relating to practical activity. Nathan immediately demonstrated movements: lifting his right arm, then lowering it to his right hip, and lifting his left hand. He turned to Julia and said: 'What's that ... the one that were like that?' Tina leaned forward, intrigued. Julia's gaze was focused on Nathan. He had internalised the movement through practice. Within four seconds, Julia identified and named the movement. Nathan nodded vigorously with a broad smile. He was now holding his arms across his stomach, smiling. Concentration showed on his face as he gripped his top teeth over his bottom lip. He looked proudly at Tina as if to say, 'That's the complete answer for you. I implicitly knew my body knew what you meant, and I knew that Julia could explain it to you, on my behalf'. The dilemma was solved.



*Part of the Tai Chi sequence of movements called 'Stroking the horse's mane' (Pen and ink Illustration by the author)*

The second moment was five seconds long. Julia turned thoughtfully towards Tina, then to Nathan again, and finally back to Tina. Nathan's gesture had enabled Julia to verbalise what he wanted to say to Tina. Gaining Tina's eye contact, Julia slowly performed the long, stretched, flowing movement to fully demonstrate it. She moved consciously, aware of the rhythm and curves her hands created. As she did this, she softly said 'Stroking the horse's mane. Yes, yes, that was a few steps of Tai Chi'. Seriousness in her voice stressed the importance of this 'relaxation bit'. Tina was impressed and uttered a thoughtful 'ooh!' She turned her gaze questioningly towards Nathan, raised eyebrows, then again toward Julia. She beheld Nathan's beaming face. His hands were now in front of him, moving slightly, relaxed. His gaze alternated from Julia to Tina, to Julia and back to Tina. Here, the protagonist of the 'micro-lived story' is Julia, who was challenged to communicate to Tina the essence of her and Nathan's shared experience of this 'relaxation bit'. This present moment is a 'fascinating package of experience' (Stern, 2004, p. 139) that Tina has been allowed to see. The enactment that Julia performs in real time, recreating moments of past therapy that held meaning for Nathan, and which he had selected, fascinates Tina. This present moment evoked wonder within Tina and happiness in Nathan.

In the third moment's ten seconds, Julia explained why this relaxation technique was vital to Nathan. She made slow circling movements with both hands as if around a large ball (this movement precedes the first one made by the figure depicted on the far left, in the illustration above). She proceeded to sum up multiple concepts with carefully chosen words. It was as if she were creating a globe with her hands. She calmly spoke of Nathan's interests in self-defence and relaxation and how they had worked collaboratively to put these two 'things' together. There is depth to putting these two 'things' - ideas or activities - together. They seem to be opposites. Self-defence requires alert, assertive action; relaxation does not. Julia paused for two seconds, holding Tina and Nathan's attention, before demonstrating the movement again. Nathan was perfectly still, concentrating on what Julia did and said. He then looked at Tina for her response. The protagonist of this micro-lived story was again Julia. She had the task of synthesising a complex range of concepts in language

accessible to Tina and Nathan. Her poise and deliberation held her audience spellbound. Her gestures, facial expressions, and carefully pronounced words signalled the story's gravitas. Self-defence and relaxation need each other. Self-defence without relaxation can lead to unintended horrors. Relaxation, when unaware of a real threat, can be dangerous.

In the fourth moment, which lasted five seconds, Julia explained to Tina that training the body to move in this way, gently and relaxed, helped 'calm things down...' As she said this, Nathan nodded energetically in agreement. His arms were crossed before him, and he rolled them up his chest in his T-shirt. His body language showed his concentration. Julia repeated the movement slowly, making eye contact with Nathan as Tina watched. Tina desired to learn from Nathan and Julia. She responded to the graceful, flowing movement, gently taking time to perform it herself, 'stroking the horse's mane'. The idea of horses gave rise to a vivid story, as we will see later. Perhaps the silent protagonist of this micro-lived story is Nathan. He had set the scene in motion, and now he could see Julia giving a fuller explanation of the 'relaxation bit' to Tina, who responded with interest and mirrored the movement. His enthusiastic absorption is the key event in this story, though the five-second moment could also be told from Julia's and Tina's perspectives.

Thus, there were four sequences of 'present moments' in a total of thirty seconds. Nathan's initiatives showed his relationship with Julia: he communicated an aspect of relaxation he remembered by re-enacting part of it in bodily movement; he sought support from her to remember more for him and to name the movement; he focused his attention on her while she explained the creative and logical 'putting together' reason for the movement; and he nodded energetically as she explained that this slow and deliberate movement helps 'calm things down'. Nathan needed Julia's help to articulate his relaxation experience and why it was important. He relied on their 'implicit relational knowing' to convey significant information and meaning about his experiences to Tina. To cite Stern again, by micro-analysing the present moments, '(t)he understanding of process moves closer to the foreground, and the search for meaning moves more to the background' (Stern, 2004,

p. 139). The micro-analysis reveals the processes undergirding what was experienced, communicated and learned in half a minute. After the analysis, we continue with the search for meaning. Julia's explanation combined self-defence and relaxation: a conflation that Nathan could not articulate verbally but recognised. Borrowing from Bion's 'Learning from Experience', Julia contained and held conflicting emotions for Nathan, digested them, and handed them back to him as more manageable (Bion, 1994 [1962]). She saw him without judgment, 'in his full humanity' (Pirrie et al., 2011, p. 536), figuring things out compassionately. This 'relaxation bit' of therapeutic balancing and movement, practised over time, had become a patterned behaviour Nathan adopted as his own. The stroking of the horse's mane movement pattern can be seen as a 'somatosensory intervention' (Perry, 2009, p. 243), helping Nathan learn coping skills to stay calm.

For a child with a normal developmental history, the scenario above would not seem remarkable: simply a child learning a new skill. For Nathan, it was much more than this. Neglect and abuse had affected his development, and ongoing changes in foster carers had meant he did not have the consistency of positive relationships needed for relational healing. His inability to respond to adults' requests and conform to the behaviour norms expected in school, challenges easily surmounted by children with supportive developmental histories, posed a risk of permanent exclusion. He had not been initiated into a safe world of 'implicit knowing' where adults had the time and space to nurture and care for his developmental needs. Subsequently, he lacked support in 'decreasing the trauma-induced activation of the stress response systems' that had built up in the first years of life (Perry, 2009, p. 246). The present moments analysed above show the fine-tuned, moment-by-moment attention that Julia and Nathan paid to each other: 'mutually aware contact' in the 'here and now,' an ingredient of change in psychotherapy (Stern, 2004, p. 3). Tina was aware of and appreciated the 'amazing' relationship Nathan had with Julia, developed over three years.

Other aspects of art therapy also offer somatosensory nurturing possibilities, providing the patterned, repetitive input of early developmental processes that Nathan had missed. The second

relaxation technique, which Nathan showed Tina, involved interaction with materials. This occurred later in the encounter, when the wooden sand tray, one of Nathan's preferred pieces of equipment, had been placed on the table. Clumps of damp sand evoked the idea of sand balls: Nathan made some, tossing them gently across the tray. This reminded him of making stress balls:

N: I know; we could make those stress balls, couldn't we? Cos' we used to make them, didn't we?

J: I haven't got any balloons today

T: What did you use to make? (Tina asks gently)

N: Stress balls.

T: And how would you do that?

N: Well, we'd get a balloon. Normally Julia has a lot of them don't you? (demonstrates actions) get a little pipe, like a kitchen roll tube, we'd pour sand into it and blow it – foo -into the pipe to blow the balloon up so the sand will fall in but then, I have to suck it in really quick, have to suck it in pretty quick or else it'll blow in my face.

J: Or your mouth!

N: Then I keep on doing that until it's full, the balloon.

(VR 27.33 – 28.15)

Tina smiled. Given that they had no balloons, Nathan dropped the idea of making stress balls. Tina stroked the sand saying: 'Mmm... I love the feel of sand, soft sand like this' (VR 28.15 – 28.20). The only sound was the gentle swishing of hands moving in the sand. Making stress balls during his art therapy sessions had introduced Nathan to ideas linking sensory experience with physical and mental relaxation: a strategy for wellbeing. The sensory experience of sand beckoned the next phase of the hour when Nathan stepped into his *durée*. However, before Nathan leads us into that experience, I summarise the stories that he and Tina told each other during the settling-in phase.

### 7.2.1 Settling-in phase 2: Storytelling

Stories told with emotion, passion, energy, and humour, and listened to attentively, helped create a comfortable environment in the heterotopic space. In his art therapy sessions with Julia, Nathan was familiar with using his imagination, which can be understood as 'a form of mental play' (Cozolino, 2013, p. 172). The stories have literal and metaphorical aspects. Some evoke a Bakhtinian sense of carnival.<sup>40</sup> During the settling-in phase of the research hour, Nathan and Tina playfully shared stories

---

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter Four and Bakhtin's theory of carnival, where hierarchies are flattened, the usual order is overturned, and dramatic themes of life and death interweave. The heterotopic space also flattens hierarchy: adult and child are equal.

and fragments of stories. These evoked exciting sensory experiences, such as when Nathan and Julia made a volcanic explosion or when Nathan and Tina enjoyed holidays at the beach. Spontaneous storytelling created a warm dialogue as they shared personal experiences. They used language that was, to some extent, linguistically and culturally familiar to both of them.<sup>41</sup> Nathan told Tina how he used sticky tape to make a helmet for protection, 'in case I ever have a nerve war' (VR 01.12 - 01.13). Initially, a little shocked, Tina responded, 'Nerve wars?' But when Nathan said, 'Even though they're only foam bullets, they'd still hurt' (VR 02.20 – 02.23), she realised that he was talking about a game she also knew, and she became visibly relaxed. Tina knew the value of play at home and school, and shared some experiences of her family's home life:

T: It's fun, though. We've got a nerve gun at our home. A big one like that (she raises her hands high and wide apart)  
(VR 02.23 – 02.26)

A conversation about shooting games played in families then unfolded rapidly; the toy nerve guns evoked strong memories. Nathan and Tina discussed the rules of the game and safety and risk factors. They compared the equipment used, showing, with hand/arm gestures, the barrel size, the number and position of the bullets, and how long it took to refill. When Tina asked what he shot at, there was a long pause. Relaxed, Nathan took his time to voice his reply with humour:

T: And what do you shoot at?  
N: (Long pause) mmm Targets? Not the cat! (laughter)  
T: I'd hope not the cat! It'd have to be the dog in my house. We've not got a cat.  
N: Once I shot in the air, and it actually hit the cat –  
T: Oh no! Hopefully, it was at the soft point when it's just about to hit the ground, without hitting the cat hard.  
N: It's the nib of it, which was foam and a bit of plastic inside it.  
(VR 02.45 – 03.16).

For a split second, anguish cast a shadow on Tina's face as she empathised with the pet which had been hit. Immediately, she recalibrated her emotional reaction, showing hope that the impact had not been severe and trust that Nathan had not hurt the cat. Again, Nathan communicated his awareness of the fine line between safety and potential harm, describing the materials the nib was

---

<sup>41</sup> This illustrates Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, where worlds, individual and shared, meet. See the quotation from Shotter (1999) in Chapter Four, p. 101 of this thesis.

made of. The conversation raced through intricate details of Nathan's collection of weapons and his aspired career in the army. At the hint of the idea of shooting people, Tina, after the playful four-minute exchange with Nathan on the subject of guns, gently differentiated her values, referring to her safety rule at home. The conversation was no longer reciprocal; each person spoke their truth for five seconds. Dissonance is possible, permissible and welcomed in the dialogic encounter: <sup>42</sup>

T: Oh dear, It's against the rules in my house, that,...

N: And I have loads more....

T: ...Shooting people.

N: ...I've millions of guns.

(VR 04.18 – 04.23)

Tina emphasised the need for safety. Nathan proudly stated the number of guns he claimed to have, which he might have thought would impress Tina. In her interview, Julia stated that Nathan had discussed similar themes during a single conversation early in their work together and had not mentioned it since. Maybe the guns represented being powerful or even the ability to be deadly, in self-defence, in a life-threatening world where Nathan had sometimes felt powerless. Or perhaps he wanted to shock Tina, though he did not wait for a response. In this short five-second extract, much seemed to be at stake. Nathan's world met Tina's caring, protective concern and her values in this 'micro-lived story' with a minimal plot about violence. Tina became aware of what was happening, switched mode, and deftly aligned and attuned to his imaginative story; three minutes of narrative about guns followed. Tina appreciated his knowledge: 'You've got a mind of information, Nathan' (VR 06.07 – 06.08). Later, Nathan told Tina how he liked to play with one of his friends who had 'millions and millions of miles of fields to play in' (VR 11.05-11.08). He sometimes played nerve wars with this friend, shedding light on the protective helmet artwork he mentioned earlier. Tina was interested in and open to learning about Nathan's friends and his interests outside school.

---

<sup>42</sup> The reader may recall Foucault's concept of heterotopia and Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, explained in Chapter Four. Nathan showed his confidence in expressing his feelings as he wished, in this carefully constructed context. Here, Tina and Nathan expressed differing views. Tina is uncomfortable with violence and asserts her values. However, she realised the need to accept Nathan as he was, despite her disagreements: she could not easily change his views. If he did change them, whether consciously or not, this would only be possible by first feeling heard and seen, and then making connections and decisions. The heterotopic art therapy room offers a designated space and time in which disrupting everyday life patterns and hierarchies can lead to temporary experiences in therapy that can facilitate long-term, future change.

### 7.2.2 Of horses and kamikazes: The excitement of 'safe danger'

The Tai Chi move evoked ideas of horses. The following extract, in which Nathan recalls the challenge of riding a horse, is humorous and energetic. It is vital because Tina is included in the intersubjective field that Nathan and Julia had created - here, an imaginative, daring world:

N: And they have a horse, and I sat on it. I managed to sit on and it nearly threw me off, it tried throwing me off.

T: With or without a saddle?

N: Without! (gasps of amazement from Tina and Julia)

T: Oh – bareback!

N: It tried throwing me off!

T: No wonder. Should have tried stroking its mane! (T mimes action. They all laugh)

(VR 11.49 – 12.12)

Nathan's voice had a deep, guttural quality; his narration was gripping, conveying powerful emotions of fear and vulnerability and evoking the horse's natural strength. With its risk and danger, Nathan's world came alive to Julia and Tina, also when talking about the imminent summer holidays. Nathan was reminded of a water park ride: 'There's this one just called 'drop'... It feels like it's one thousand metres into the air. I've never been on it, it's that scary. It's that high' (VR: 14.45 – 14.55). Nathan's excited gestures mimed falling. In this space, Nathan's stories were welcomed and nurtured:

N: They also have a kamikaze that's about 55 metres into the air, and there's this new ride they're still building, they don't know if it's too fast for a human to survive or not. They're testing it still, an' it's that high that they have to like, put carpet on the steps so that it's not like red hot. And it's that high (Nathan moves his hand to indicate the height of the stairs and the horizontal carpet)

(VR 19.13 – 19.38)

Fantastical dimensions of heat and height featured in some of Nathan's stories. During one, Tina queried the estimated size. Nathan replied, a little dismissively, 'Well, it's either less or more...' and carried on: the story was important, not the exact facts. He recounted a story of '...millions and millions of jellyfish that invaded the beach a few weeks before' and how he buried one he had found following the lifeguard's advice. This led to memories of being buried up to the neck in the sand and feigning death. Nathan re-storied his experiences as wild narratives of near-death survival. Maybe he was unconsciously communicating how he sometimes felt buried or submerged by life events that triggered past trauma.

### 7.2.3 Injury and protection

Nathan and Tina also spoke of real pain as they both described how their heads banged against the wall of one of the water park rides. No helmet made with sticky tape was available. But they survived. Another story contained an incident of actual physical injury to Nathan's foot when it was cut open by rocks as he stepped into the sea:

N: There was this pebble beach we went to. And guess what, under the water, there were these massive rocks everywhere. As soon as I put my foot on it, I cut my foot. (Nathan shows the expanse of rocks with his arms).

T: Oh no!

N: It was like a giant cut all the way from there to there. (Nathan indicates where on his foot)

T: Oh, not good.

N: Just the top layer of my skin

(VR 22.07 – 22.23)

Tina responded empathically, imagining the scene with blood in the water. When she spoke with emotion, Nathan observed her face, his body still as he listened to every word. He seemed to understand the emotion in her voice. She noticed this and stopped mid-way:

T: And obviously in the water, it looks like there's so much more blood. Doesn't the... (Nathan watches Tina's face, still and attentive to every word). Do you like looking at the fish? Finding the fishes. I love that.

(VR 22.24 – 22.32)

Avoiding disturbing imagery of the painful, bloody scene (this was not a therapy session), Tina changed the conversation to one about looking for fish, leading to the topic of jellyfish invading the beach. The lifeguard protected the beach population from them and, as mentioned, told Nathan to bury one; it could sting someone. Thus, Nathan's stories conveyed a sense of protection, making things safe, while also acknowledging the risk. Nathan had a new protective mask for protecting his face underwater: another example. Each story incorporated a core of his experience, referencing danger, injury or protection. Through telling stories and thereby externalising inner life, Nathan showed how he felt safe and secure, seen and soothed in the now.<sup>43</sup> He voiced his ability to survive adversity. Listening to his words, Tina and Julia witnessed his courage.

---

<sup>43</sup> See Siegel (2020b) for an explanation of the four Ss: children need to be: 'Seen, Soothed, Safe, Secure (most of the time)'.

In the heterotopic art therapy space, a story does not need to be complete; it may be a fragment - a present moment's micro-lived story. It does not have to be socially acceptable or understood on a literal level. The way the story is told, or the emotion powering it, may be the critical element, as we have seen with the stories told here. The final tale became farcical. Nathan described how he was left buried on the beach as the tide came in, trying to dig himself out with his spade, with only his head visible. This Bakhtinian tragi-comedy elicited Tina and Julia's laughter, as the earlier story about not wanting their heads hit in a nerve war had. The settling-in phase of relaxation and storytelling contributed to a trauma-informed approach.<sup>44</sup> Humour in storytelling, vital in Nathan's relaxation and trauma support work, turned everything upside-down and released emotion, preparing Nathan to immerse himself comfortably in the flow of his *durée*.

### **7.3 The central phase of the hour: Nathan engrossed in *durée***

#### **7.3.1 Nathan's absorption in creative art**

Our *durée* is always flowing, constantly moving and changing, though we may not be conscious of it. After a 'warming up' at the start of the research encounter, where the focus on de-stressing and storytelling helped the settling-in process, the main phase of Nathan's absorption in his art-making supervened. This was the central and most significant part of the video recording: the stories became deeper in meaning and more challenging to define. The way Nathan worked with the art materials, how he created his artwork and what he created revealed parallels with his relationship with Julia. This was a relationship that was a creative process itself with a constant adaptive movement, that contained and accepted Nathan, was layered and dynamic, and had its own forms of implicit relational knowing. Talk of sand on beach holidays and touching real sand initiated this phase. The first hint of this came when Nathan shaped the sand with his hands into a cone. Leaning on Art-based Education research, Nathan's 'reflexive oscillation'<sup>45</sup> was visible as he moved his head and

---

<sup>44</sup> For the five features of a trauma-informed approach, see Chapter Three.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter Three for the 'Four Purposes' (Adams, 2017). The third purpose, invention, involves 'reflexive oscillation'.

hands, creating his 'representation of ideas in symbolic form' (Adams, 2002, p. 222). Working with mental images of past artwork, Nathan used his imagination in the new present moment to transform and animate the materials. The themes were complex and interwoven.

As we shall see, Nathan carefully constructed a sand volcano. It contained a panic room and later became the mountain for characters from *The Lord of the Rings*. Nathan's artwork was unique, though built on familiar imagery. He made 'his own references to (his) own significant objects and techniques' (Winnicott, 2005, p. xviii). Borrowing from Winnicott, artworks can be seen as 'transitional phenomena', whose meaning cannot be easily defined. They cannot be wholly understood or deconstructed by an observer, but Nathan knew what he was doing. He trusted that, like Julia, Tina would accept, tolerate, and not try to 'pin down' or 'resolve' his creations.<sup>46</sup> Julia was familiar with the volcano image from past sessions with Nathan, but she knew he was now creating something new. He was immersed in his *durée*; he was in the flow of 'the continuous creation of unforeseeable novelties' (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 73). Julia knew how to facilitate this without knowing where it would take him, herself, or Tina. Freedom of expression within their relationship had earned her his trust: She could keep him safe without restraining his creative freedom. Nathan knew he could be in charge, make and be whatever he wanted. Before we look at Nathan's decision-making around what he would make, we turn to his feelings about the materials in the art therapy room, for they, along with the sand already mentioned, accompany him as he steps into his *durée*.

### 7.3.2 Nathan's favourite materials

We return to Tina's question mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. This concerned whether the items in the room were typically present during Nathan's art therapy sessions. The excerpt below, though from earlier in the hour, is examined here in the context of the absorption phase, because it

---

<sup>46</sup> See Chapter Three, for Winnicott's irresolvable paradox regarding transitional phenomena: Meaning cannot be resolved or pinned down. This links with Bergson's *durée*, flow, which cannot be pinned down despite the several visual images that Bergson uses, explained in Chapter Four. Each of the three images has limitations - none conveys *durée* completely. Likewise, explanations of Nathan's image have limitations - none can fully convey it. This difficulty in pinning down meaning in words also applies to Stern's 'forms of vitality', which are impossible to define precisely, despite specific instances.

links with sensory experience, materials, and Nathan's choices. He articulates his feelings about particular materials verbally and through his gestures. This connection with materials facilitated his entry into *durée*, as it does for many other children in art therapy:

T: Are all these things the things that are usually out when you do art therapy?

N: Yes.

T: So, have you got some favourite things?

N: Yeah. That! (he points enthusiastically).

T: Oh the tape?

N: The tape, (inaudible) and the sand-tray, and the gold paint, oh, and the clay.

T: A few things then. Gosh. Is it this, the lump of clay or the coloured stuff underneath?

N: That's plasticine (pointing to it).

T: Oh is it?

N: Yeah

T: You were very excited about the tape. Have you used that to make some wonderful creations?

(VR 01.05 – 01.44)

Each of the items Nathan listed held memories of sessions where they had come alive, imbued with his creative energy and imagination. They held emotional resonance, encapsulating worlds of experience in which each present moment might be a 'micro-lived story' with a minimal plot. As materials, they had been significant objects in their own right, and he had developed his techniques for dealing with their properties. The sensory qualities of colour, texture, viscosity, softness and hardness were rich and varied. Paint, clay, and tape each have distinct smells, visual qualities, and sounds when used, as well as their feel on the skin when touched.

Tina understood that these materials held significance for Nathan. She sensed how he had enjoyed interacting with each of them, and she noticed his strong emotional connection with the first 'thing' he mentioned - the tape. She expressed her curiosity. In response to the 'wonderful creations' she suggested he may have made with tape, he told her more, with an intense passion in his voice:

N: **I love it.** Once, I remember when we (turning to look at Julia) made one of those things, one of those mid-air robot helmets - with that - and we put something like see-through plastic on and used the double-sided sticky tape to stick it on. So we use the double-sided sticky tape to stick the see-through plastic over the eye-holes so it's just a helmet in case I ever have a nerve war. (VR 01.45 – 01.13)

The tape harnessed powerful memories. Nathan explained what he had made, how he had made it, and why. Sitting close to Julia, he used animated gestures to show the shapes and mechanics of the helmet's design and making. He demonstrated the detailed construction process in words, while re-enacting it with body movements: each movement a 'vitality form',<sup>47</sup> a dynamic expression of feeling. He and Julia had shared memories of this artwork and how he experimented, explored, and developed it. Collaborative working was evident; Nathan said 'we' three times, inviting Julia to remember what happened. It was clear how confidently Nathan expressed his creative process in Julia's presence. The conversation about nerve guns and wars gives context to the protective helmet he needed in self-defence. The robot he mentioned was a life-size model that he could step into, created during his therapy sessions (PN/Y4.T2/56).<sup>48</sup> Julia had felt that he explored the power of his own body, getting into his skin metaphorically and getting to know himself and his body. Maclagan proposes that art can explore aspects of 'the body or its parts as 'felt' from the inside' (Maclagan, 2001, p. 57); therefore, not only proprioception but interoception too.<sup>49</sup>

Tape is a powerful metaphor; it joins things together, connecting them in some way. Tina had noticed Nathan's excitement upon seeing the tape, and her question about what he had made worked well, sparking a connection between her and him, as well as to the images, action, and stories he associated with it. In her interview, discussed in Chapter Eight, Julia spoke about how significant the tape was in Nathan's early work in therapy.

### **7.3.3 Explosion and mirroring hands**

A few minutes later, after discussing his favourite materials, Tina asked Nathan if he could share anything else he had made in the room. He responded enthusiastically, explaining the procedure of making a volcanic explosion, with his favourite materials of sand and clay:

---

<sup>47</sup> See references in Chapters Three and Four to Stern (2010) on forms of vitality, dynamic experience in the arts.

<sup>48</sup> This is a chronological annotation of Julia's process notes, explained in footnote no. 28 on p. 184, in Chapter Six.

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter Three for the expanded Four Purposes. Perception (the first Purpose) is expanded to include proprioception and interoception, both key elements in art therapy work with children who have suffered early developmental trauma.

T: So... do you feel like you could share anything else that you've made in this room because you've been doing art therapy, for a very long time?

N: We've made a volcano out of clay and out of sand.

T: The clay in the sandtray?

N: No. We made it out of sand, a model of it, then we made it out of clay, didn't we?

J: yep.

N: I built it, and painted it, and made it erupt

T: That sounds really exciting

N: With vinegar, bicarbonate of soda, and the food colouring, red and yellow food colour

T: What did you put it in to contain it? Or did it go straight into the volcano, into the clay?

(VR 07.15 – 07.57)

Tina was interested in the operation's logistics and wanted to understand how he managed them.

Julia got up, went to the materials table and fetched a small tray among the equipment. She placed it between Nathan and Tina on the floor as a helpful theatrical prop in his narration.

N: Well, we poured the vinegar in, then the food colouring mixed in, (Julia brings the tray)

T: Poured it in? into the clay volcano?

N: Yeah, this little tube in the front and hold on, we put it in there, didn't we ... (pointing to tray)

T: Good idea (Clearly relieved at the containment implied)

(VR 07.58 – 08.16)

Then Nathan's gestures dramatised the telling, and Tina instinctively mirrored Nathan as he raised his arms high, spreading out his fingers in the air, saying 'it just went shooo...'. Tina raised her hands similarly, fingertips leading in the air, mirroring his circular movement. This was a Sternian 'form of vitality', a dynamic expression, amplifying a sensation that they experienced jointly, multi-sensorily:

N: And then we, after we've put the vinegar and the thingy, and the food colouring in, we put bicarbonate of soda, and it just went shoooo.. (demonstrates with hands)

T: Fizzed .... (mirrors Nathan's movements).

N: Me, I just put, like, kept on going, kept on pouring it in. And **it was a great one**, the last one, wasn't it? (turning towards Julia)

J: It was.

(VR 08.17 – 08.38)

Nathan's account of his and Julia's art-making activities evoked the same joy and excitement as the original sensory/relational experience. His actions, reciprocated by Tina, reflected what was happening in the present as the imagined explosion occurred. This was a dynamic moment of action, a dance of common purpose, re-enacting the moment when materials changed through chemical reactions. It is worth mentioning Bergson's assertion that memory and matter are both real. The

matter (clay, vinegar, bicarbonate of soda) and the memory of what happened are real in different ways. The dynamism was about Nathan's perceptions of matter through his sight, hearing, and touch, but it was also about being seen, perhaps helping heal memories of not being seen. The present moments that made up the sequence exemplify Winnicott's explanation of apperception: Nathan felt seen and, therefore, could see and creatively imagine.<sup>50</sup> Tina saw and heard him, took him seriously, and showed this by mirroring his body movements, just as she had when stroking the horse's mane. As Nathan joyfully reflected on the shared experience of making their last volcano, he turned to Julia, and she calmly and warmly affirmed that it had been a great one. Tina was moved by the moment's joy and Nathan's beaming smile. We have seen how favourite materials and memories have intertwined, and now return to Nathan's absorption in *durée*.

#### **7.3.4 Nathan's volcano metaphor**

Sand had featured in the stories Nathan and Tina told about their holiday experiences, creating lasting memories. Sand was available in the room: matter. What had been an object of conversation and imagination then became a tangible object to touch and feel: an art resource. The following sequence shows how the end of the 'settling in phase' merged into the central absorption part of the hour when Nathan performs the serious work he implicitly knows he wants to show Tina. First, Nathan discussed the properties of sand with Tina and, in a humorous vein, offered to bury her, just as he had been buried in one of his stories. She politely declined, but proposed he might want to place figures in the sand to demonstrate what burial felt like, revealing her empathic imagination and familiarity with symbolic play. Memories of the sensations of touching sand, recalled when telling the holiday stories, were about to become embodied, tangible, in the room.

Julia gently suggested bringing the sand tray from the materials area to the table. The wooden sand tray had a blue-painted base, measured 70 by 40 centimetres, and was 20 centimetres deep. Nathan

---

<sup>50</sup> See Chapter Three p. 71, for Winnicott's definition of apperception. This is located (like proprioception and interoception) in my expanded version of 'Perception', the first of Art-Based Education Research's 'Four Purposes', to address therapeutic aims in art-making/art therapy.

silently welcomed her gesture. Julia joked that there was not quite enough sand for a burial. He did not decide immediately to make a volcano. The first things he said he wanted to make for Tina were sand stress balls, but, as mentioned earlier, balloons were unavailable, so this was impossible. A rudimentary conical form created with both his hands in the sand suggested he may have been thinking consciously or non-consciously about making a volcano, but he did not say so. Then he asked Julia: 'Shall we show her the volcanoes that we made, that we normally make?' (VR 26.53 – 27.00). He was not surprised when Julia did not answer him. It was a rhetorical question. Julia allowed him to search for his own answers rather than actively advising and determining what he made. He could have changed his mind and decided on something else. The process of trusting his feelings and thoughts, as they arose in this space from his *durée*, was familiar to him. Instead of responding to his question, Julia looked at him to show she was listening and reminded him that the tape recorder was on the table, so they needed to ensure it did not get wet. He was interested in where the power supply came from and looked for the socket under the table. When I observed this in the video recording, I smiled, thinking of his personal power supply, his creative energy.

#### **7.3.4.1 'I'll make a miniature model first'**

Of all the many artworks Nathan created over the three years, it was the volcano that he eventually decided to show to Tina. He consulted Julia several times. He spread his hands in the sand. Tina said:

T: Mmm, I love the feel of sand, soft sand like this  
N: Like a beach, only not as warm  
T: No. I was thinking exactly the same thing, Nathan  
(VR 28.15 – 28.30)

Nathan looked at the camera and waved at it jokingly. He had rarely noticed the camera. It was as if he were waving goodbye to the world of external stimuli, to all that did not directly relate to his *durée's* flow. He was diving into his qualitative multiplicity, unconstrained by external demands. This effort would require all his will and commitment over the next period: he knew the interview would last between half an hour and an hour. Nathan was feeling the sand.

J: Have you got enough sand?

N: What should we make, then?  
J: Have you got enough sand in there? 'Cos I've got more if you want  
N: Is there enough to make a volcano?  
J: I'm not sure  
N: Shall we make a volcano? Or...  
J: A bit more sand here, a bit more. And I have got some water, if you... it's slightly wetter  
N: A lot wetter!  
J: Yes, it is, I thought it was drier actually.  
T: Well, that's helpful.  
(VR 28.57 - 29.20)

Nathan started compacting sand with his hands into a conical form in the centre of the sand tray (VR 29.10). This action demonstrated resolve; it was firmer than the earlier conical form. Fifteen seconds later, Nathan announced his decision:

N: Yep, I'll make a miniature model first.  
(VR 29.20 – 29.25)

He still did not say what he was modelling, but it seemed clear from the form he was constructing. In making a model first, Nathan demonstrated the Fourth Purpose<sup>51</sup> of art-making: Action - a piece of art serves as a template or trial for another: working from imagination to implementation. The silence lasted eight seconds. There was tension in Nathan's face as he determined whether the sand would stay put as he wanted it to. Tina watched him, and Julia collected water for him in case he needed it. Physiological movements in Nathan's creative process were observable: his body was balanced and steady, his movements deliberate, his hands symmetrically cupped around the sand, and his eyes focused. He added the sand around the small conical form as he spoke. It became solid as he patted it down and mixed water and sand to create effects. It was as if he were limbering up, doing an exercise before making the real thing, like drawing quick sketches before embarking on a painting or doing warm-up stretches before a dance routine. As his hands worked, Nathan observed the qualities of sand and explained to Tina how they affected the construction process. Having decided what to make and how to prepare, he described what he was doing:

N: Ok. Then if you put dry sand in it, it keeps it standing for some reason whenever you just put it in with wet sand it just likes pours off but then it makes that shape whereas if you just put wet sand or just dry sand then it'd fall off wouldn't it?  
J: I've got more wet sand here

---

<sup>51</sup> See Chapter Three: Art-Based Education Research's Four Purposes of Drawing (Adams, 2017) adapted for art therapy.

N: Oh have you?

T: Can you remember the first volcano you built?

N: Yes!! (said with enthusiasm). I can rebuild it, but, it might take a few of that stuff  
(VR 29.33 – 30.15)

Tina's question was insightful. Nathan's face lit up with a joyful smile when he remembered the first volcano he and Julia had made. It was a powerful, positive sensory experience. Hands in the sand, he nodded at Tina and Julia and then at the materials in the corner of the room, indicating 'that stuff' (VR 30.15) that he might need. He squashed the miniature model and shook the sand off his hands. The main creative act then unfolded. Interestingly, Nathan's slight head and eye movements, sometimes referred to as tics, were apparent at the beginning of the hour and disappeared as he became absorbed in his artwork, working with his hands and mind.

#### **7.3.4.2 The panic room**

Julia brought more sand to the tray, knowing their routine and responding to Nathan's unspoken need for materials and equipment. Nathan noticed and discussed the amount of sand and sandball fights. As he handled the sand mixed with water, he gently tossed balls he made, breaking them across the expanse of the tray. They exploded and settled into fragments. After a fifteen-second silence, Nathan mentioned the rolling pin he and Julia used to make the volcano's vent. The same one was not there, Julia confirmed. Nathan was confident he could adapt to what was available:

N: Remember, we always used one of those rolling pins, don't we, to make the hole in the middle?

J: (picking up a rolling pin) It's not the usual one, will that be ok?

N: Oh that's the roller

J: Is it? I thought it was the other one which is straight

N: Oh yes it is, but that'll still do.

(VR 31.05 – 31.22)

Nathan conflated the past and the present in his use of tenses: 'we always used' in the past, and 'don't we?' in the present. The moment they were living was new but inextricably linked in memory and matter to previous, 'present moments': an example of unity in *durée*, the flow of his subjective life. Julia handed the roller to Nathan. He took it and carefully inserted it into the side of the conical form he had built. Nathan, the able constructionist, gave a commentary:

N: Do this first. That first, don't we? And then the hole on the side

T: Oh

N: That's the hard part. Not getting it to collapse.

(VR 31.27 – 31.45)

There were challenges in the construction process as Nathan made two horizontal tunnels across the centre of the volcano, one from each side. Tina offered to help, 'Do you want some help? Do you want me to hold it?' Then Nathan found another way to do it, and she said, 'I knew you could do it'. Tina looked down through the volcano's vent and could see the bottom. It had worked well. Nathan said, 'Then can you hold while I do another hole?' Tina was happy she could help. Intrigued by the purpose of the traversing hole, she asked Nathan: 'What does it do?' Nathan replied: 'panic room' (VR 32.58 – 32.59). Intensive work ensured the construction remained solid. Nathan pushed the rolling pin carefully through the breadth of the volcano. Tina said it was 'amazing, wonderful'. Nathan continued to work, reassuring Tina: 'That's ok. It won't collapse'. Tina then asked:

T: Who's idea was it to put a panic room in a volcano

N: Me

T: how did you come up with that idea then?

N: I don't know (shrugging his shoulders). Anyway, it's still a trap and if anyone walks around it they'll just fall through the hole won't they?

T: Yeah, they will.

(VR 33.57 – 34.12)

Nathan first made a panic room in his volcano nearly a year after therapy started. He had treated the task with great seriousness. Julia had felt that this was about 'sharing anxiety' through their joint work, as they created a fortified space within the solid frame of the volcano (PN/Y3.T2/29). Nathan never spoke about why he made it. He may have had implicit memories of an early experience associated with a panic room. Research suggests that art can access images of early non-verbal experiences through automatic skills and procedures, as well as perception systems (Talwar, 2007, Table 1, p. 27). A panic room was a fortified room in the home of a victim of domestic violence, to retreat to if under threat of attack.<sup>52</sup> It had direct alarm communication with the police. When Tina

---

<sup>52</sup> The 2002 horror film 'Panic Room' starred Jodie Foster as a divorced mother who, with her daughter, moved into a large, old house. Due to threats of violent attacks, a panic room was installed in the house for protection and to alert police immediately in times of danger. In 2006, some local authorities provided panic rooms for victims of domestic violence (Curtis and Benjamin, 2006). By that year end, 'Safe Rooms' became part of national social policy (Tempest, 2006). Further embedding of the concept led to developments in safe room simulation in gaming and healthcare (Anderson *et al.*, 2020).

asked Nathan how he came up with the idea of building a panic room, he could not, or did not wish to, verbalise. But the fact that he associated it with a trap rather than safety is chilling. A bad experience of being in a panic room may have felt like a trap to him; enclosed, frightening and unsafe. Nathan later said that the panic room's purpose was to deter attackers: again, self-defence.

Within the body of the larger image of the volcano, this fortified space, protected by bars, deterred attackers: they would fall through the shaft. But their fate was not clear. In his earlier work, soldiers protected those who fell down the vertical shaft of Nathan's volcano (PN/Y3.T1/17). Perhaps those who had emotionally neglected or physically abused him in the past, the people who should have fulfilled the role of protectors and nurturers as parents, actually needed rescuing. These hypotheses arise from observations of Nathan's work in light of his social and family context. If the purpose of protection had not been fulfilled, and the real-life panic room could not protect Nathan from danger, it is possible that nowhere would feel safe for Nathan. What was meant to protect him from danger had not done so. Nathan's mother could not protect him. However, he did not seem to blame his parents. He missed his mother and worried about her; he made a Father's Day card for his father and wanted him to receive it via his mother, whom he saw on six weekly contact visits.<sup>53</sup> Whether or not Nathan experienced the real-life situation of being in a panic room during a time of threat and danger, he created one that was also a trap. Places may have seemed safe, but were not necessarily so: they may also have been places of panic. For some children, school is the only safe space in their lives. The reader is reminded of the trajectory of abrupt changes in Nathan's foster placements and the exclusions from school linked to a long-awaited 'forever' foster placement breakdown.<sup>54</sup> In such a situation, maybe even the 'safe' school space could feel like a trap: the only safe space he knew, yet he was sometimes under threat of exclusion even from there. Nathan used his art-making with Julia to create his own safety, a safe place within himself. Julia felt that making the panic room with her helped him to share his anxiety about danger, loss and failure. With her support, he had his own

---

<sup>53</sup> The source for this information was Julia's process notes. Information from Social Care was not available in this research.

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter Six: Nathan's Timeline Chart. His 'fixed term exclusion' correlated with moves, times of acute anxiety.

objects and techniques (Winnicott, 2005) and could work things out for himself. He could discover his own meanings through his artwork, consciously or nonconsciously. Julia could concentrate on ensuring an art therapy process that gave him this freedom.

The implicit process of working with the image of the panic room was significant to Nathan's work. Julia respected his non-verbality, knowing he preferred to work with metaphors, and did not ask him about the panic room, instead staying with the tension of not knowing. It is worth looking at Tina's question to Nathan about how he came up with the idea of the panic room as a specific type of present moment Stern called a 'now moment'. He describes its impact: 'as soon as a now moment arrives, all else is dropped and each partner stands with both feet in the present. Presentness fills the time and space. There is only the *now*' (Stern, 2004, p.167, italics are his). Stern describes how a 'now' moment may be followed by a 'moment of meeting' resolution (Stern, 2004, p. 220). The question Tina asked Nathan tapped into deep reservoirs of emotion, possibly connected to early, painful experiences and the 'chronic uncertainty'<sup>55</sup> of his current home situation. Tina was not a therapist, but an art therapist might conceivably ask a question, seeking to clarify the origin of an image and establish its meaning. On the other hand, an art therapist may feel they need to remain with the unknowing, sensing and respecting the person's uncertainty, recognising that if the person or child wanted to convey certainty, they would do so when they were ready. Tina's question sought to extract the explicit from the implicit. The art therapy sessions' rhythms and boundaries, which also resonated through the research hour, kept the space available for 'now moments' to occur. These moments can challenge the therapist and the child. This demonstrates the need for 'a clear frame for these events to take on meaning' (Stern, 2004, p. 167). In this case, in this moment, Nathan's shrug emphasised his not knowing. He could tolerate the question in this context, and while not answering literally, he offered an alternative answer.

---

<sup>55</sup> Prokofiev described the life situations of looked-after children in school, who move between home placements as living in 'chronic uncertainty' (2010, p. 161). Prokofiev helped children work with embodied images in the process of releasing emotion, within the stable setting of the art therapy room. This was more appropriate than interpreting or working literally with imagery.

### 7.3.5 Images of self-defence

As already mentioned, Nathan's artwork incorporated notions of self-defence when he spoke about the helmet he made to protect his head. In this central absorption phase of the research hour, he protected his whole self, reinforcing the room with bars to ensure it did not implode:

N: Then we use these to make the bars of the panic room, don't we?

J: Yes, supports

N: Plus, then it supports the hole a bit more so that it doesn't, like, collapse  
(VR 34.20 – 34.25)

Nathan tried something new, 'never done before'. He is familiar with confident experimentation; he is in the flow of his *durée*: 'the continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty' (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 73). Tina understood Nathan's sense of excitement and discovery as vital to the learning process.

Much is hidden, both in the sand and metaphorically:

N: It's gonna... I've got an idea we can do this - we've never done before, huh, Look, oh wait... the hole ..

T: Oh it's cracking there, Nathan, you might want to fix that bit

N: Then...

T: Hidden

N: That just looks like a regular seal or just like a regular room or entrance  
(VR 35.00 – 35.59)

Nathan's image had many layers, and here he was creating more. Whether consciously or not, he was dealing with a robust and resilient construction that could be vulnerable to attack and collapse. He was confident in his ability to manage the situation, contain panic, make support structures and divulge as much or as little information as he wished.

### 7.3.6 Response to collapse

Before any significant collapse of the volcano, Tina asked Nathan about a small section fallen away:

T: Do you want a hand? It's quite dry in there. Do we need some wet stuff to hold it together a bit better? I don't know, you're the expert in this. All this art therapy you've been doing and holidaying abroad. (An upper part of the volcano falls) Oh no, what are we going to do about that?

N: I'll rebuild that

T: Mmm. Can you just rebuild it?

N: yeah.... I might need a bit of scaffolding, but yeah

J: Seem to be managing very well, keeping very calm  
(VR 36.03 – 36.33)

Nathan was realistic about how to rectify the situation. Julia's remark about Nathan managing well was significant; she knew this was a stressful situation, and Nathan could easily become frustrated when things did not go as well as he would have liked. Yet he remained calm and self-regulated. He knew he might need some 'scaffolding'. He knew his limits and how to ask for help: articulating this was also a considerable achievement. Tina suggested the rolling pin could act as scaffolding and provide a centerpiece. He accepted her idea, and they worked together, echoing the second communication process in building epistemic trust (explained in Chapter Three). Nathan could receive ideas from Tina as a trustworthy person. Engrossed in his work, the only sound was Nathan's hands patting sand. Tina decided to give Nathan some feedback and asked him some questions:

T: It's really good Nathan.. I like the sound of the sand. This is relaxing isn't it Nathan, playing with the sand? You're concentrating really well on this... do you feel that working on things like this, Nathan, and developing your concentration on things like this helps in class?  
(VR 37.39 – 38.03)

We will return to Tina's reference to Nathan's capacity to concentrate in class later. First, let us consider his capacity to focus on a crisis at hand, which occurred less than a minute after Tina asked these questions. Everything was going well, but then the sand structure around the hole collapsed. Tina had feared what might happen if Nathan became frustrated and upset, but Nathan remained calm, working to solve the problem. He reassured Tina, containing her anxiety, as Julia had contained his in earlier sessions. Julia remarked on his sensitivity and emotional maturity in advising Tina not to worry. He had already reconstructed the hole, this time not as deep:

N: Oh, I've made it a bit thicker than this, haven't I, oh hum, there it is, ooh, the hole's gone, completely collapsed, caved in  
T: Through now. You're putting it right. You've got it, you've got it... Oh ... Oop  
N: Don't worry that can go back there.....  
T: Oh.....  
J: I like the way you say don't worry  
N: I've made a hole not as deep  
(VR 38.58 – 39.43)

Tina followed this by offering Nathan positive observations about his problem-solving and emotional self-regulation, which she had directly witnessed during the research hour. I return to these comments made by Tina and Nathan's responses at the end of the chapter.

### 7.3.7 Glimpsing each other through the volcano: The 'shared feeling voyage'

Nathan had made the space inside the volcano, using wooden sticks for internal support structures. They acted as reinforced steel girders do when constructing a house's ceiling. Nathan carefully drove a slim rolling pin through the entire form, creating a horizontal tunnel. This required concentration and skill. A quiet atmosphere prevailed as Nathan and Tina focused joint attention on the artwork. Julia attentively held the scene in her gaze. It was as if Nathan were demonstrating how carefully and deliberately he approached his creative acts, and that this was necessary to showcase his ability, imagination, and skills to Tina. Then, a dramatic change (not a collapse) occurred in the artwork's physical structure. Tina declared in an energised voice:

T: Oh, now that's changed completely! That's a completely different look to how it was before, isn't it?  
(VR 41.43 – 41.51)

Tina's attention to Nathan's evolving art showed him how she noticed and appreciated the change he was creating in something outside him: a change noted, not judged.<sup>56</sup> She connected emotionally with his art and communicated this to him. This is important in art therapy. In a sense, the art is the child; it is of and from the child. At this point, a remarkable moment occurred: an example of apperception, which can also be conceptualised as a 'moment of meeting'.<sup>57</sup> A series of spontaneous movements in a synchronised dance followed. Nathan leant back in his chair; Tina bent forward to her right. Nathan leaned forward to his right. They both bent down and peered through the tunnel; their eyes met, framed by the small aperture and protected by a solid structure. It seemed a connection had been made. There was a symmetry between this 'moment of meeting' and the times this happened in Nathan and Julia's work together, as Julia explained later in her interview. It can be seen as a parallel process occurring (Cassoni, 2007). A moment of meeting can also be understood,

---

<sup>56</sup> This resonates with the first communication process in building epistemic trust, explained in Chapter Three. Nathan sensed that his emotional state/art state was convincingly recognised. It also recalls Winnicott's stress on the importance of time: 'To control what is outside one has to *do* things, not simply to think or to wish, and *doing things* takes time. Playing is doing' (Winnicott, 2005 [1971], p. 55, italics are his). Hope lay in Nathan's desire and ability to play and to create.

<sup>57</sup> Stern conceptualises the 'moment of meeting' as a resolution that can precede the 'shared feeling voyage in which 'two people traverse together a feeling-landscape as it unfolds in real time,' (Stern, 2004, p. 172).

says Stern, as ‘a kind of journey, lasting seconds, taken by two people, roughly together through time and space’, it is ‘a shared feeling voyage’ (Stern, 2004, p. 172). The exchange between Tina and Nathan echoed the therapeutic experience that Nathan had had on several occasions with Julia: this moment of meeting where ‘intersubjective ‘fittedness’ is sought, where both partners share an experience and they know it implicitly’ (Stern, 2004, p. 168). It did not need to be verbalised. They did not look ‘at’ but ‘into’ each other’s faces, reminding us that a face can be a mirror that the child looks at or into, seeking a reflection of themselves<sup>58</sup> (Winnicott, 2005, p. 152).

After their gazes had met, Tina exclaimed again how different the sculpture looked, making a sweeping gesture with her hand and brimming with positive energy. Nathan looked at her with a beaming smile. The sequence of moments celebrated joyful connection and ‘mutual recognition’ (Stern, 2010, p. 140). Nathan’s confidence that he mattered was learned from his ‘shared feeling voyages’ with Julia in art therapy; it was what he showed Tina. He allowed Tina to experience ‘the unfolding of a piece of reality’ that he knew (Stern, 2004, p. 220): he allowed her to ‘see’ him. Similarly, she allowed him to ‘see’ her. In her authentic relationship with him, Tina opened her mind to being present alongside him, trying to understand what he was doing as he created art. They did not need to discuss this. Their shared feeling voyage ‘had worked its magic implicitly’ (Stern, 2004, p. 170). Work resumed on the sculpture, in this framed freedom, this heterotopic space.

### **7.3.8 Nathan ‘storied’ his artwork**

The artwork was not finished yet. Nathan wanted to develop his sculpture by adding figurines familiar to him during his work with Julia. He started to search and remembered where he had left one of the characters, but the contents of the boxes had changed slightly over time. He accepted this, consulted Julia, and she helped him without assuming she knew what he was looking for and which characters. It is worth noting that Panksepp described seeking as one of the ‘major emotional/

---

<sup>58</sup> Again, see explanation of apperception, as an extended and nuanced adjunct to Perception, the first of the Four Purposes of Drawing, identified in Art-Based Education Research (Adams, 2017).

motivational circuits' that 'Mother Nature' gave us (Panksepp, 2018, p. 247). Furthermore, He proposed that 'the positive emotions (especially SEEKING, CARE and PLAY) probably help inspire productive creativity' (p. 247, capitals are his) – as shown here. Tina and Julia patiently sought to understand Nathan's experience. Nathan sought a figurine that had been meaningful and helpful to him, and sought to explain it. He seemed to be searching for himself in the new context, working on his art anew. To help identify what he wanted to find, Julia prompted his memory firstly by mirroring what he said, then by giving him a clue with the initial letter of the character's name:

N: So where are those.....?

J: Has it gone to the bottom?

N: those little figures of thingey ....you know...

J: These ones?

N: lego ones,

J: lego ones?

N: Lord of the Rings.

J: Ah! Lord of the Rings, yeah, I think... There was only one of them, wasn't there?

N: Oh yeah, and the evil one, ya know

J: The evil one. The evil person.

N: Oh, I remember his name. Oh, this, I remember putting him in here.

J: Beginning with G?

N: Yeah?

J: Gollum?

N: Yeah, Gollum.

(VR 43.10 – 43.54)

Gollum appeared, got lost, and reappeared in menacing ways in *The Lord of the Rings*. Nathan and Julia had worked with this epic story, steeped in the struggle between good and evil and embedded in popular culture across several genres, including literature and film. Tolkien wrote this epic after the Second World War, arguably with traumatic war memories still fresh in mind (Tolkien, 1995 [1954-1955]). Gollum is a complex figure: an evil guide (though not entirely evil) who is contrasted with Gandalf, the wise wizard. In the Jungian sense, Gollum can also be understood as a shadow figure of the quest-seeking main protagonist. The story features powerful archetypal characters, and it appears that working indirectly with them may have helped Nathan. The story frame offers a balance of distance and intimacy when exploring emotions and personal expression. Julia knew the story well and how Nathan had used it to make his own meaning of it.

During Nathan and Julia's search for Gollum, Tina was unsure how to help. She had not been part of the therapy process and did not know the story. Tina held a little bell in her hand. It was a new addition to Julia's resources that Nathan had found and given her earlier. In a supportive gesture, as if to encourage the search she was witnessing, she handed him the little bell, whispering, 'Treasure.' Neither distracted from his search nor ignoring her, he reached out, took the bell, said gently, 'I'll put it there, look!' and placed it in a tiny safe box. Julia affirmed 'yes, keep safe'. The slightest expressions and actions were valuable and meaningful: micro-lived stories. Tina's attention was focused on Nathan and Julia. She noticed their discovery in one of the boxes:

T: I can't help 'cos I don't know what I'm looking for Nathan. So, ah! is that who you are looking for?

J: Who's that?

N: Gandalf

J: Gandalf the Grey (silence)

N: Oh I've found an arm!

J: His arm?

N: Gollum. (silence) Gandalf the Grey will work

J: You carry on Nathan and I'll have a look for you.

(VR 44.06 – 44.51)

Nathan had found 'good enough' material to work with. He held a figurine in his hand that matched the symbolic message he wanted to convey. He knew it would work. He could return to creating his art. It did not need to be precisely what he was looking for; he knew he could improvise. Since they only found one limb belonging to Gollum, Julia continued looking for him, adding, 'I've got other evil things... If you want..' Thus, she offered Nathan an alternative, allowing him to continue working with the theme of evil without Gollum if he wished.

### **7.3.8.1 The evil one**

Children can subliminally grasp philosophical themes of mythical stories through culture and the arts (Bettelheim, 1976).<sup>59</sup> The art therapy room heterotopia is both 'real' and 'mythical' and welcomes imaginative stories and myths in all forms. In the film version of *The Lord of the Rings*, the Lady of the

---

<sup>59</sup> Psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim explored how children use stories to help them cope with confusing emotions and anxieties (Bettelheim, 1976).

Woods, Galadriel, articulates an agentic message of hope when speaking to Frodo, the protagonist: 'Even the smallest person can change the course of the future' (*The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 2001). This can speak to children's sense of agency, and maybe spoke to Nathan. Another aspect of the film is the sense of life as a unified flow, *durée*. In the first film of the trilogy, Gandalf the good and wise wizard responded to Frodo's wish that the Ring had never been found:

Frodo: I wish it need not have happened in my time!

Gandalf: So do I, and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide.

All we have to do is decide what to do with the time that is given us.

(*Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 2001 [Film])

Such poignant messages can be powerful for both children and adults. In the second film of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, an anthropomorphised tree, 'Treebeard', overturns the assumption that bigger people know best. Commenting about Hobbit Pippin's plan, he says to him: 'That doesn't make sense to me, but then you are small. Perhaps you're right!' (*The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, 2002).

Such subliminal messages might touch a child; Nathan was passionately fond of this story.

Two minutes after the first mention of searching for the 'evil one', Tina asked an interesting question, although it is unclear what she meant. Nathan did not provide an answer, but repeated the words as if he were formulating one. Tina and Julia also repeated the words, with slight variations. It is as if all three were thinking together to understand the moment:

J: I've got other evil things... if you want...

T: Are the evil ones the ones you like best, Nathan?

N: Evil ones

T: The Evil ones

J: That evil one

(VR 45.38 – 45.52)

Nathan then found a completely different object he remembered from the past, which whirred and was connected to boats—the topic of conversation changed. The volcano became a mountain and also a castle, and Nathan and Tina worked on building a moat. Nathan started to 'cut a bit off' from the mountain to make more space for the moat. Tina voiced her concern about another potential collapse, but this time did not 'rescue' him or make the changes for him: she had learnt that Nathan knew his work and how to manage it, including crises. Nathan continued working. She apologised

after panicking as Nathan cut away the sand from the volcano/mountain. She knew he knew how to fix it. Nathan regretted the quantity of sand in the tray and accepted Tina's suggestion of piling handfuls of sand into the tray's corner to make space for the moat:

T: Just have a look here. Come round here and have a little look. And check you want to do that before you start .. I wouldn't want you to end in disaster when you've only got a couple of minutes left!

N: I'll cut off a bit there.

T: ok. Aaahh

N: Don't worry....

T: Sorry, I know you can fix it!

N: oops

T: Da

N: Oh, I wish I hadn't poured in as much sand in cos it's hard to get the sea in it now...

T: Perhaps, lift it and pop it in that corner. There's a big space. Will it work here?

N: Yeah, that should work, actually, yeah

(VR 53.05 – 54.10)

On several occasions, Tina expressed her uncertainty about whether things would work out. Her anxiety was palpable and understandable. On each occasion, Nathan reassured her that he could find solutions. As Julia had helped Nathan in the past to persevere and process his emotions in his own way, at his own pace, he now helped Tina not to worry.<sup>60</sup>

### 7.3.8.2 On the edge

Julia wondered if Gollum was hiding again. She suggested Nathan may have hidden him, and he would return in 200 years. We see how Julia created an imaginative environment with Nathan:

J: It's very strange Nathan, I think Gollum has gone hiding again.

N: Again?

J: No well, High in the Mountain.

N: Remember at one point I thought he would end up leaving didn't I?

J: Maybe you've hid him and he will come, he will arrive 200 years later.

(VR 46.33 – 46.53)

Nathan temporarily placed the figure of Gandalf on the top of the Volcano-cum-mountain, while dealing with the sea moat. His actions demonstrated that he wanted to convey the epic story as he

---

<sup>60</sup> Coping with uncertainty in therapy is a major psychological process that art psychotherapists, other arts therapists, and psychotherapists become familiar with, first in training and then in practice. Psychotherapist Barry Mason describes how therapy can provide a space where 'safe uncertainty' is experienced (Mason, 1993). Educational psychology has also explored the concept of working creatively with uncertainty when researching with children (Mercieca, 2011).

experienced its meaning at that moment. He seemed to be integrating body and mind, with a persona modelled on Gandalf on the volcano-mountain. He organised the scene as he wanted it:

N: Now all I need to do is to make a sea, for this boat...

I'll put him there for now (he places the figure of Gandalf on the top of the volcano-mountain).

T: Don't let him break it! I'm very nervous about that collapsing Nathan, I'm glad that you're more relaxed about it than me.

(VR 48.30 – 48.50)

Tina acknowledged Nathan's ability to cope with the emotionally tense situation. She was anxious that the structure, with Gandalf perched on the summit, might collapse under his weight. An edgy climax seemed to prevail in the unfolding story. Nathan commented on Gandalf being on the edge. This seemed to mirror aspects of Nathan's precarious situation concerning being at risk of exclusion.

N: 'He's right on the edge!'

T: 'He really is!'

(VR 52.03 – 52.10)

The multi-layered image resonated with Nathan, maybe derived from memories of the film, accumulated past experiences of art-making in Julia's presence, and new experiences in the room with Tina and Julia during the research hour. The image was also mysterious and unexplained; it was beyond the verbal: a creative gift, a poem that Nathan was 'writing'. Tina sensed that it held crucial meanings for Nathan and respected his endeavour. She had honestly shared her lack of familiarity with the story, 'I'm not really up on Lord of the Rings, I have to say', and without hesitation, Nathan had offered her a succinct summary, circling his hand around the mountain topped with Gandalf:

N: Well, this is what the Ring is, all in!

(VR 51.18 – 51.20)

Perhaps Nathan was summing up the triumph of wisdom in the end. But whatever he meant, it made absolute sense to him. He had summed up the last film in the trilogy (*Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, 2003). The image was a lone figure on a high mountain summit. Organising and expressing himself, he confidently gathered the whole story and its meaning in one sweep of his arm. As a composite, his actions, words, and images seemed to be a powerful metaphor for his intuitive knowing. He knew the story from the inside. In this nurturing environment, he had space and time to

express himself. Maybe he felt as if he was on the top of a mountain. He had 'made it', in both literal and metaphoric senses. Trusting the creative process, he had demonstrated what he felt and knew.

Nathan was confident in the heterotopic uncertainty and the freedom to make choices. He was satisfied that he could demonstrate what he had learned well: to think independently, use his hands to create artwork, and accept what was available with flexibility and adaptability. He demonstrated his skill in 'drilling', recognising the danger of collapse, knowing that he could restore/rebuild his sculpture after it collapsed, working collaboratively, and knowing when he needed help. He could not have put it into words, but he showed what he had learned. This was not limited to gross and fine motor skills. There was a metaphorical aspect to building not only his artwork but also his confidence and self-image. This shows the parallel, unique to art therapy, between art and relationships with self and others. Nathan's work alluded to possible inner stories of threat and danger, as well as protection and security. On an aesthetic level, he demonstrated his sensibilities by creating texture on the volcano, which indicated its ancient origins. He also showed his cultural knowledge of *The Lord of the Rings* and his ability to summarise the story. All this sprang from Nathan's *durée*. He did not talk directly about the meaning of his image; it seemed to be a sensory metaphor (Maclagan, 2001, p. 126) that conveyed something about his personal, emotional, and cultural experiences during and outside his art therapy sessions. These were integrated with present moment experiences as he interacted with the materials in the presence of Julia and Tina. The volcano was central to Nathan's work with Julia, and he chose to make one to show Tina. I now turn to the volcano as a metaphor in broader culture and literature because of the further resonances it offers.

### **7.3.9 Volcano as metaphor**

Representations of Nathan's volcano were prominent in the research and played a significant role in Nathan and Julia's relationship. When overwhelming emotions arose or bubbled away under the surface, venting them and escaping into creative and imaginative endeavour helped. The volcano metaphor has often been used in the visual and literary arts. Emily Dickinson wrote two poems that

feature the volcano as a complex, multifaceted metaphor.<sup>61</sup> An account of volcanoes and their symbology suggests that a volcano, 'in its paradoxical nature, is both formless and ordered, and it is the volcano itself that gives form to its own formlessness' (Ariel, 2010, p. 19). Nathan's volcano arises from the 'formlessness' of the heterotopic space, and the creative possibilities latent in the spread of art materials. This potential space 'affords the opportunity for formless experience, and for creative impulses, motor and sensory' (Winnicott, 2005, p. 86). Observing Nathan as he worked creatively in this central absorption phase of the hour, seems to recall Bergson's words: 'And from the idea to the effort, from the effort to the act, the progress has been so continuous that we cannot say where the idea and the effort end, and where the act begins' (Bergson, 1910 [1889], p. 211).

Immersed in his *durée* in the research hour, Nathan recreated, reinforced, embellished, transformed, inhabited, defended, and celebrated his competencies. It is worth noting that the volcano has frequently been used as a metaphor to help children work with their emotions, as exemplified by the book '*A Volcano in My Tummy: Helping Children to Handle Anger*' (Whitehouse and Pudney, 1998). Volcanoes and emotions can quickly become too much when on the edge of an explosion. This recalls the 'on-the-edge-ness' of Gandalf/the figure in Nathan's artwork. After he made the volcano, its form was transfigured into other things: 'the definitions and qualities of volcanoes are as changeable as volcanoes themselves' (Ariel, 2010, p. 41). Eventually, Nathan's volcano returned to formlessness, sand reverting to sand after serving its purpose. But it remained an image of creative endeavour, success and delight linked to his time with Julia. It could be rebuilt multiple times and deconstructed at the end, with no sense of failure or distress. An internalised image, Nathan communicated that his artwork had become a secure force in his mind, a safe base within. He could access it when he wanted and needed to, provided that the conditions were conducive. Nathan's sculpture showed Tina how he could construct, withstand difficulties, cope with material changes,

---

<sup>61</sup> Emily Dickinson's poem *I have never seen volcanoes* conveys the potential power of unexpressed emotion, which may, with 'smouldering anguish' beneath volcanic stillness in the human face, eventually erupt. Her poem '*A still – Volcano – Life*' indicates that her writing (unseemly for a woman of her day), done at night, can nevertheless be explosive (Freitas, 2000). This poem is no. 601 of 1,775 poems in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Dickinson, [ed. Johnson], 1986, p. 295).

improvise, utilise his experience, invent new things, and demonstrate his aesthetic judgment. He showed what was important to him. Perhaps it represented the joy, freedom, success, and collaborative work he had experienced with Julia and now with Tina. Perhaps most of all, it spoke of Nathan's recognition of his achievements: of autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Nathan showed Tina his intellectual, emotional and creative capabilities, self-regulation, interpersonal skills, imagination and humour. He showed his interest in technical things in his references to the recording equipment, microphone, and stand, all crucial elements of the constructed research frame. He showed his social and cultural interests in games, travel and literature. Nathan's volcano was a metaphor for all these things and more, including the positive value of destructiveness<sup>62</sup> in art. The image from past sessions became a significant motif in his work when he needed it. It helped him deal with powerful emotions. Interestingly, it did not appear during the period when the eagerly anticipated long-term foster placement hopes and dreams were being dashed: Julia noted how the volcano became 'extinct' (PN/Y3.T2/26). It came alive again in later sessions: a flexible 'default' image that Nathan would return to when he needed and wanted to. However, his volcano's meanings cannot be 'pinned down' definitively. Nathan's volcano metaphor is one of his 'transitional phenomena'. The reader is reminded of Winnicott's paradox:

the essential feature in the concept of transitional objects and phenomena (according to my presentation of the subject) is *the paradox, and the acceptance of the paradox*: the baby creates the object, but the object was there waiting to be created and to become a cathected object. (Winnicott, 2005 [1971], p. 119, italics are his).

Nathan was not a baby, but the same process applies to children and adults in our 'perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated' (Winnicott, 2005, p. 3). Nathan was emotionally invested in his flexible image of a volcano: it was a cathected object. Entering the qualitative multiplicity of inner life, *durée*, and working creatively with whatever he found, helped

---

<sup>62</sup> The reader may recall that in the Prelude I wrote that, as a young art teacher, I had wondered about Tessa's destruction of her artwork. As an art psychotherapist, I have valued the way art materials can externalise destruction on many emotional and creative levels and for many purposes. For art therapy research on 'Create, destroy, transform' see Stickleby and Wolf (2021). The way art therapy can work with themes around mess is also relevant (O'Brien, 2004; Hinds, 2024).

him develop in his inner life. We could not ask Nathan whether he created the volcano, found it, or invested it with emotional energy. If we relied on words, he would likely shrug his shoulders and say 'I don't know'. It is difficult to put the experience of *durée's* flow and creative experiences into words. It is equally difficult for a child to emerge from the free, creative, liberating space that welcomed their *durée*, their full humanity, and re-enter the outside world. We now turn to what Nathan teaches us about these challenges.

#### **7.4 Ending phase: Coming out of *durée* / creative absorption**

There was no predetermined cue to prompt Nathan to exit: no bell to summon him to a change of scene, like at the end of the school day. His exit required a gentle ending, similar to ending his art therapy sessions. It can be a challenge for art therapists to accompany a child from their integrative experience of being engrossed in their *durée's* creativity, back into the everyday world.

##### **7.4.1 Management of time: Respecting Nathan's energy**

The research dialogic encounter was designed to occur at a designated venue and at a pre-planned time. It was not intended to be like an art therapy session, but there were some surprising and noteworthy similarities. Nathan knew the room. He was also familiar with the time boundary, a one-hour time slot in his school timetable, so he was aware of the time limit. He had enjoyed his sessions with Julia and often found it challenging to end. As the time to finish drew near, Julia gave Nathan two gentle reminders of the time, and Tina gave him one. Care and sensitive time management ensured a good ending. There was no sense of hurry: Julia was confident that a way to end would be found somehow. She told Tina, as an aside, that this was a delicate, tricky process. Julia trusted that a safe and positive ending would be constructed in the final ten minutes or so. Nathan completed his sculpture. As seen earlier, Nathan and Tina's joint work involved mountain collapse and rebuilding, moats and boats. Nathan had placed Gandolf / the figure on the top of the mountain. We pick up the conversation as Julia gave the first cue that they needed to start thinking about ending their time together. She spoke softly, Nathan responded, and they discussed the subject of time:

J: We've got about five more minutes left  
N: Oh, have we?  
J: Yes.  
N: It's like we've been here ages. How long have we been here?  
J: About fifty minutes  
N: Fifty? Oh, do you mean this was supposed to be an hour?  
J: About that. Up to an hour.  
(VR 48.56 – 49.20)

Nathan continued working. The absorption he experienced obliterated all sense of clock time: 'It's like we've been here ages'. He was immersed creatively, at the edge of change – symbolised by Gandolf, on the summit: 'He's right on the edge' (VR 52.03 – 52.05). Five minutes later, Julia gave Nathan a second cue, also alerting Tina to how it felt for Nathan as the end of the session approached: an imminent gear change. Nathan indicated he was working towards ending:

J: Just about an hour now. Endings are quite tricky sometimes (said softly to Tina).  
N: I'm so close... oh here's a good bit.. ah... yes... (making final touches to the moat)  
(VR 54.30 – 54.47)

Tina worked with Nathan on adding finishing touches to the scene. Nathan placed a sword on top of the mountain with Gandolf and began removing support structures from the sculpture, saying it would make it look like ruins. Then he took more supports away:

N: I don't think we need that. Hey, it'll make it look like it's in ruins, won't it?  
T: It will  
N: In fact, we don't even need that, do we?  
T: Don't we now?  
N: needed this, oh we needed these for... to make the shape... I've done this job  
T: Super  
(VR 55.30 – 54.47)

Nathan drove the sword into the sculpture, it collapsed and he broke it down saying:

N: Oh I don't mind. I don't mind that cos we've done most of it haven't we?  
(VR 56.30 – 56.37)

The creative endeavour had come to an end. Tina expressed a sense of completion:

T: I think we've done haven't we? I think we achieved what you set out to achieve. Do you feel like you did?  
N: Yeah.  
(VR 56.37 – 56.40)

The session was drawing to a close. Tina had marked the end of the artwork and the 'shared feeling voyages' with a sense of fulfilment. She and Nathan then simulated a game they both knew.

### 7.4.2 Playing Jenga

Nathan deconstructed his sculpture. The small mound left with the support sticks still in it conjured up the memory of playing Jenga, building a tower from thin wooden blocks and carefully removing them without letting the structure fall. The shared stories of nerve guns at the beginning involved imaginary props and gestures indicating the objects during the enactment. Here, the game involved 'doing' with real objects. Tina had the same thought: they took a stick in each hand, reached out, and slid the sticks under the supports in the structure, coordinating their actions intuitively:

N: It's like (looking at what is left of the sculpture)... do you know that game where you pull the things out... and then ...  
T: Try and lift it – you do two and I'll do two.... Are you ready shall we see if we can do it?  
Oh... (they lift the top half of the structure off) Teamwork!  
N: Then put it back down  
J: Brilliant  
N: We did well though  
J: We did well  
T: We did do very well  
(VR 57.10 – 58.20)

There was consensus about how well they had all done. They had 'played' well. They had worked closely and collaboratively as a team, which felt good. The game here was perhaps symbolic of the joint working throughout the hour. The game helped the group move towards closing the session. The participation in structured play was enjoyable. It symbolised achievement.

### 7.4.3 Exploratory play with art materials – 'just' play?

Towards the end, Tina referred to Nathan playing in the sand, appreciating the role of play in

Nathan's enjoyment of art therapy. She articulated this in her following exchange with Nathan:

T: It's been nice for you to come back in, I think that was a surprise to be able to play in the sand-tray again for a while. You didn't know you were going to do that today did you?  
N: No, well, I knew I'd be doing the interview  
T: But you didn't know we'd get the sand-tray out.  
N: Well, I know we could have.  
T: Oh, did you?  
N: Julia asked me what I wanted, didn't you?  
T: Oh, that's kind  
(VR 56.45 – 57.10)

Tina understood how enjoyable it was for Nathan to return to the art therapy room and ‘to play in the sand tray for a while’. What Nathan wanted to show, or tell, Tina about his art therapy experiences could not be predicted. In preparing for the ‘interview’, Julia had consulted Nathan about the materials he wanted, and Tina appreciated the kindness in Julia’s act. In the psychotherapeutic process, the therapist uses their feelings to serve the people they work with. This professional practice inherently involves kindness, in the same way a teacher who intuitively understands their pupils’ emotional needs may be kind, and use ‘pedagogical tact’ (Sipman et al., 2019). Kindness may even be used as the foundational policy of schools (Whitaker, 2021). In pedagogy and therapy, kindness does not eliminate ruptures, and does not mean that attunement always implies unquestioning alignment. However, mismatches, which will of course occur, are followed by repair, which involves regaining healthy shared values and fostering good interpersonal relationships. In the final minutes of the research hour, when it became necessary to return to everyday life, humour and playing again helped move the process along, as we now see with the bubble gum game.

#### **7.4.4 The Bubble Gum ending game**

In the Jenga game, Nathan and Tina celebrated success and teamwork with much laughter. The world outside the art therapy room beckoned; they all needed to rejoin it. Tina understood the importance of a thoughtful ending. She gently invited Nathan to think how he would like the ending to be:

T: What do you usually do at the end of the session, Nathan?

N: This bubble gum thing! D’you remember that? (looking at Julia)

T: Would you like to show me? Or something else, to end the sessions? cos we do need to end the session now. What’s the best way to do it, do you think?

(VR 58.25 – 58.42)

Tina presented Nathan with the choice of the usual ending or ‘something else’. He did not reply; instead, he told her tenderly about the necklace he had made for his mother as a gift. After saying what he wanted to say, which lasted two minutes (presented in the next section), Julia returned to the subject of the ending. She intuited that Nathan would like to do ‘this bubble gum thing’ since he had suggested it. It was somewhat urgent to find a conclusion, and a method was needed. The

bubble gum game had been a light-hearted way to part company at the end of sessions, until they met again the following week. It involved Nathan and Julia each unwrapping imaginary bubble gum, holding it to their mouths, taking a deep breath, and blowing a lungful of air into it to make a giant bubble. Then, it would pop and collapse. They would mime scraping the sticky gum off their hands and wrapping it in paper. Nathan would give his gum to Julia, and she would put it in her pocket. Then Nathan would declare it was unwrapped after all, and she would cry out in disgust. Then they would laugh. Julia asked Nathan how they should do it:

J: How are we going to do it? Do you want to show Mrs Blake how we do it? So she can have a go?

N: You start it off.

J: So do we need three bits of bubble gum. Really lucky today. Remember to take the paper off (Julia gives the imaginary gum to Nathan and Tina. All three blow the gum into a big bubble, blowing sounds)

N: You already knew how to do that though, didn't ya? (to Tina, who anticipated the gist of the game and joined in)

J: Have you put the paper on?

N: Yeah.

J: ...I put it in my pocket!!

N: No paper!

J: Oh... It's stuck!! It'll be there for another time

(VR 60.53 – 62.05)

Laughter brought enjoyment and release. In art therapy, it had been 'safe enough' for Nathan to explode; he has been able to let any mess pop. Everything that had been let out could be held by Julia, who would continue to hold it for him. Even if it was unseen, she could still hold the mess for him. In fact, it was so 'sticky' it would never come off. The humorous ritual of Nathan's and Julia's end-and-goodbye game-joke with the imaginary bubble gum helped ease the parting of ways. After the game, Tina responded:

T: What a lovely ending! Do you want a couple of minutes with Julia, before I.., I'll leave you ... Thanks for sharing that, I really enjoyed it!

N: You're welcome.

(VR 62.05 – 62.30)

Tina got up from her chair and left Julia and Nathan to talk for a few minutes. Tina had witnessed their relationship in a new way. In the space Julia held, Tina could see Nathan as Julia saw him. Tina would not have been able to do this without Julia's presence and understanding of the feelings

Nathan shared during the research hour. There would have been no one to facilitate the space for her to see. Nothing would have enabled him to learn that he could explicitly and implicitly show Tina what he knew. Julia held the spaciousness of the art therapy room for Nathan and Tina.

#### **7.4.5 Nathan's gift for his Mum**

We return to what Nathan wanted to say before the ending. When Tina asked Nathan how he and Julia had usually ended the sessions, he briefly described what they did, but was not ready to end. He made it clear he had something else he wanted to say. Nathan asked Julia if she remembered what he chose to take away with him at the end of their sessions, which he gave to his mother. This was a tender moment. His choice to show Tina what he gave his Mum also showed Tina what art therapy has enabled him. He had felt 'well enough' mothered. He felt safe enough to name the person who had not had adequate support to mother him well enough, whom he had innately longed for. There had been no expectation that he would or should take something for his mother in his final art therapy session. It had been an opportunity to take something for himself. Yet he had wanted to give his mother something of the gift that he had received. It is as if he were saying: 'I'm going to give this thing that I have taken from in here to the person who was not able to give me what I needed to feel whole, in the hope that it might be able to make her feel whole too'. The circle that had been broken was now complete: 'I'm giving it to you to show that I'm ok – and you're ok': 'And now I am showing you how Julia helped me say these things to my mum'.

N: Oh my mum loved the, you know that circular thing I got her

T: what was that?

N: necklace

T: something you bought on holiday? Or something you made?

N: it was from in here

T: not made it. What did you do?

N: Julia said I can keep one really good thing I want at the end of art therapy so I chose that for my mum

T: That's really kind thinking about someone else.

N: And not me

T: And making it yourself. Really kind. So what did it look like Nathan?

J: Was it?

N: In the shape of that, but it wasn't that, it was a bit better than that.

T: Was it a necklace?

N: Made it

T: Oh you made it into a necklace, that's really thoughtful  
J: You made a box didn't you?  
N: It was a choice between this (box) and another and I chose the other one because everyone else liked this one and I didn't want to take it in case anyone else wanted it  
T: Thinking about other people again, aren't you? What did she say, your mum when you gave that to her?  
N: 'Oh I like this! Thank you very much!' She loved it.  
T: Gave you a hug?  
(VR 59.05 – 60.32)

The 'circular thing' was complete and whole. He had also made a box to keep it safe. Maybe something caught his eye and attention, or maybe it was the pain of the answer, that caused Nathan not to respond to Tina's question about a hug. Instead, he said, looking at the box:

N: That could be some rations. A ration box.  
(VR 60.35 – 60.37)

Nathan returned to the wartime theme he started the session with. Things were rationed, and he had lived with rations. Planned contact time with his mum was rationed. Emotional neglect had meant the attunement he had received in the first three years of life had been severely rationed. His birth parents may have experienced similar emotional rationing in their childhoods. He had been given unlimited possibilities in the art therapy space, which he used intuitively to develop emotionally and socially, learning from new experiences. Julia had held Nathan in mind, and he knew this implicitly. She knew implicitly that art therapy processes can bring healing (McNiff, 1998, McNiff 2004; Adamson, 2014). Nathan was about to return to a different world. He was exiting the heterotopic space where reality and myth co-existed in a spaciousness and expansiveness and a Bakhtinian freedom. He was going back to the outside world.

#### **7.4.6 Ending the ending**

After Tina left, Julia and Nathan were alone, and they chatted about their shared experience with Tina. Nathan remarked how he had not felt self-conscious in front of the camera:

N: I hope the camera enjoyed it! Who do you think enjoyed it more, the table or me?  
J: (Julia smiled) How'd that go?  
N: Great.  
J: You did really well. Really well. I'm very impressed. I'm very proud of you. Particularly the bubble gum!

N: Normally I can't like do like do anything when there's a camera watching me, but with a microphone that's even more.

J: And amazing that your volcano, is it one of your best?

N: I think that was better than my very first one, wannit?

J: It's different, quite different. That's great. Thank you

N: Thank you

(VR 62.30 – 63.20)

Ending the conversation, Julia wished him a good holiday, and he reassured her that he would not get buried in the sand. He offered to clear up, as he remembered he had done sometimes. They referred to the character in *The Lord of the Rings*, searched for and never found. Then, they started to leave the room physically. The boundary of this heterotopic space was the door. But before they reached it, Nathan noticed the taped marking the technician had put on the floor to indicate the research recording boundary:

J: Have a really good holiday and don't get stuck in the sand.

N: Don't worry, I'll do it right at the edge of the beach not near where the tide is. Shall I sort this out?

J: It'll be alright. Unless you want to

N: I always help don't I?

J: I don't know where Gollum got to! We'll probably find him now won't we!

N: Right at the end when we could have done with him before...

J: Great. Let's go and find Mrs ...

N: Oh What's this tape?

J: To stop the chair going over, cos if it did it would be out of the camera

N: Aah, a blind spot!

J: Exactly.

N: Bye bye!

(VR 63.25 – 64.40)

Nathan and Julia left the research site to return to the 'real world' outside the room, as they had done after weekly art therapy sessions. The experience seemed to have enriched him. He left the space he and Julia knew so well, taking with him the knowledge that Tina had experienced it too and had seen him within it. Nathan showed Tina how Julia's work was the missing piece in the jigsaw of nurturing his inner world with creative and imaginative opportunities. Julia, the materials, and the art therapy room held the possibility of transfiguration. Over the weeks and years, Nathan had learned to figure things out in new ways. Tina had witnessed 'the magic of imaginative and creative living' (Winnicott, 2005, p. xvi) that he had experienced. She had participated in it, too.

## 7.5 What Nathan said about the fruits of art therapy in behavioural terms

This final section examines Nathan's voiced perspective on the benefits of art therapy for him. He reported that art therapy could be challenging; it was both 'hard and fun'. He also showed Tina that art therapy helped him better manage difficult emotions and his relationships with others. He could not say how, but he knew it had helped him.

### 7.5.1 Is art therapy 'hard' or 'fun'?

Early in the hour, Tina referred to the special times Nathan had had in the room, asking him more:

T: It sounds like you've had some amazing times in this room Nathan. Has it been hard work at times as well?

N: Yeah

T: Or has it always just been fun?

(VR 08.38 – 08.47)

While Tina spoke of 'amazing times in this room,' Nathan nodded vigorously. After inviting him to reflect on whether it had been 'hard work at times' or 'just been fun', Nathan paused to think about how to answer the question. He seemed to ponder his sensory and art-making experiences and what was difficult in terms of working with materials and techniques:

N: Well, it's been fun and hard! Cos Sometimes, with the double-sided sticky tape you can't like get it off, the back of it, but it always gets into my nails. It cuts underneath my nails sometimes. Whenever I can't get it off, and I dig in too hard, it cuts some of my nails - so that bit's hard (pause)

(VR 08.48 – 09.07)

Nathan said that the material he loved, the tape, could be both resistant and fun. It could become too clingy; breaking free from its stickiness was hard work. This was an uncomfortable sensory experience. To be(come) separate, standing on his own, was hard. Julia responded to Nathan's interpretation of the word 'hard' with a knowing smile. She understood his perspective on what was hard in the context of his relationship with materials: their contingent difficulties and joys. She was also aware of the meaning from a therapeutic point of view; working with one's emotions can be hard. Nathan paused to think further and then gave Tina another example of what was 'hard'. This involves the sensorimotor experience of pouring water:

N: er... not putting too much water in the sand tray

T: How to restrain yourself from just throwing everything in  
N: I just put the water in so it'll fill... so it'll still stay built after I've built something  
(VR 09.10 – 09.30)

It was hard to judge precisely how much water was required when making something out of sand. Tina and Nathan had already discussed the dry and wet properties of sand. Tina may have been referring to Nathan's increased ability to self-regulate emotionally, learning to restrain himself. Nathan had gradually learned how to control materials, symbolic of his management of emotion, during his time with Julia. Julia and Nathan had worked hard together on containment, and Nathan demonstrated his restraint, as Tina inferred. Here is an example of how the material Nathan used, in this case, the 'too muchness' of water, may parallel the 'too muchness' of complex emotion that Nathan found hard to contain. Julia helped him with both through the art therapy processes described in this chapter. Since this conversation occurred early in the research hour, another possibility is that Nathan may have been thinking about what he would make later. The proportion of water to sand was critical to building the volcano and ensuring its stability. In this light, his statement seems logistically and metaphorically profound.

The following extracts illustrate Julia's psychoeducational work with Nathan. In the first extract, Nathan spoke about a collection of three books he made with Julia to reflect on his week in the playground and school outside the art therapy room (Lopez Fernandez Cao and Jimenez, 2021). His drawings in these books recorded his feelings. In the second extract, Tina reflected on how she perceived his participation in his PEP (Personal Education Plan) multi-agency meetings. Examples follow of how Nathan managed to organise himself at the end of the research hour, his approach to the technical equipment, and his improved concentration in class that Tina noticed.

### **7.5.2 The good, the bad and the ok**

Nathan talked spontaneously about the books he made in art therapy:

T: So I'm interested in this relaxation. So that's one of the things you say that's helped you in art therapy

N: Yeah...(pause) Oh, and we made these little books, didn't we (turning to Julia), that had stuff that I've done bad, stuff that I've done good and stuff that I've done ok, and I don't know how that helped me, but it did.

(VR 12.21 – 12.36)

Again, Nathan turned to Julia, showing trust and confidence in her, remembering the books. He could not explain *how* making them helped him, but he knew it did. He revealed that he could reflect on and categorise different experiences. He gained some distance by externalising thoughts and feelings into visual forms and writing, creating an opportunity to see them outside himself in a new light. In art therapy, he could creatively explore what might underpin or lead to 'stuff' he had done that was 'good, bad or ok'. These explorations included expressing and discussing complicated, mixed feelings, as well as unpacking and deconstructing them. Working creatively with emotions, with or without words, helped to integrate new learning and self-perceptions.

As stated earlier, Nathan was referred to art therapy to help him with complex emotional states made manifest in unacceptable behaviours in school. Interestingly, Nathan recognised the books' categories as his definitions. He took responsibility for his actions and for considering their consequences. He did not see the categories as imposed upon him by someone in authority or as labels that stuck to him and held him under hostile judgment. Making the books and learning to reflect helped Nathan self-regulate in a meaningful way. Julia accepted him non-judgmentally, knowing how to contain painful and difficult feelings. Also, feelings of joy and achievement. Her gentle, humorous acceptance and respect helped Nathan develop a sense of self-worth and value.

Tina affirmed Nathan's words, appreciated his insights and intuitively understood the difficulty of explaining the complex process outlined above. She asked an interesting question, similar to her earlier one, about what was hard and easy in art therapy. As a teacher, her role was to assess Nathan's knowledge and whether a task was too easy, too hard, or pitched at the right level:

T: But you identified it was helpful. (Nathan nods) What was the easiest thing to put into those books, what was the easiest things to remember, the good, the bad or the ok things to remember

N: The good (said without hesitation)

T: Sometimes it's a challenge to face the things that we've not done so well, isn't it? (Nathan nods)  
(VR – 12.37 – 12.55)

That the 'good' things he had done were the easiest to remember suggests that the 'bad' and 'ok' things were more challenging or complex to acknowledge or speak about.

### **7.5.3 Tina's caring responsiveness to Nathan: Rapport and reflection**

When discussing the three books, Tina touched on what a 'challenge' it was sometimes 'to face the things that we've not done so well'. Nathan nodded in agreement. This was a sufficient response for Tina to know that he had listened, understood, and acknowledged how hard it is to face some of the things we have done. She did not dwell on the negative and skilfully deflected from anything he could perceive as shaming. Swiftly shifting to hopeful thoughts, she focused on the positive way he actively participated in his Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings. These multi-disciplinary forums are part of the statutory framework for supporting the educational attainment of Looked After Children.<sup>63</sup> Tina wondered if the work with the books helped Nathan reflect on 'what's going well' and 'not going so well': here, she did not use the word 'bad'. He was interested in the connection that Tina made between how he talked about the books and how he spoke in the meetings:

T: When we do your PEP work, I always think that you're really good at that, Nathan. (Nathan is sitting very still) Maybe that's something it's helped you with. Because when we talk about what's going well and what's not going so well, you can usually tell me that quite well. (Nathan nods) That always impresses me... when we have those meetings...those conversations that we have. They're quite adult really, the way that you tackle that. And your thought processes, and when I'm saying 'so what's going well'. (Tina uses her hands to express herself) And you say "I've done really well with that" When I say what do we need to work on? ... you identify that. Maybe that's helped you with that? I don't know.

N: Well it has, yes (pauses) I've never noticed that.

T: Have you not?

(VR 12.55 – 13.40)

In this extract, Tina gave Nathan thoughtful feedback. She commended his maturity and their conversations, which were 'quite adult really'. Nathan was familiar with how these meetings operated and the nature of the processes involved. He concurred that working with Julia had helped,

---

<sup>63</sup> See Chapter Three for legislative information, policies and procedures concerning the education of Looked After Children.

and said that the connection between his books and his thinking about his PEP was a new insight for him. Tina wondered if Nathan might notice this in his next PEP meeting, which would be after the summer holidays. The mention of this triggered Nathan's imagination, evoking what he would soon be doing. Images flooded his mind, and the holiday stories mentioned earlier blossomed.

#### **7.5.4 Tina learns to see Nathan as Julia sees him**

While Nathan was absorbed in his work, Tina reflected on his level of concentration:

T: You're concentrating really well on this.... Do you feel that working on things like this, Nathan, and developing your concentration on things like this help in class? Can you see a relationship between that or not?

N: Helps me concentrate maybe

T: Yeah, Remembering how to be determined on things that you enjoy doing cos I'm just thinking back to maybe a couple of years ago, eighteen months ago Nathan perhaps when you were finding being in class quite difficult, concentrating in class was quite difficult and I'm looking at you now, how focused you are on this, and thinking 'massive improvement there'.

N: Yeah, it always used to fall down whenever I did this in the past. Dinnit? It never used to work ... very well.

J: Yes, it's working well

T: It is working well

(VR 37.52 – 38.50)

Tina was impressed by Nathan's ability to concentrate on the construction task he had set for himself. She saw his perseverance and commitment to working things through. He understood and agreed that working on his art-making might have helped develop his concentration. When Tina remarked on his 'massive improvement', he equated this improvement with the latest version of his volcano, which was going well. This reference to art-making challenges echoed the earlier conversation, in which Nathan interpreted the 'hard' things in art therapy as practical difficulties posed by specific materials. Here, he interpreted improvement as related to his artwork rather than his concentration or behaviour. Thus, Nathan and Tina thought differently about ways to improve: art therapy allows for this plurality of meaning and indirect, sensitive interpersonal communication.

#### **7.5.5 'Everyone listened and I won – our team won!'**

Tina initiated a conversation with Nathan about how he felt after his successful intervention in a school lesson. Again, she saw a parallel between his concentration then and his present

concentration as she watched him create his sculpture. She gave him feedback on what she witnessed. He remembered the situation clearly:

T: D'you know, this problem-solving that you're doing Nathan, when I was watching you the other day with the school of military guy, seeing how you were working with the rest of your class, you really held your cool when the others (pause) You knew or you thought you knew the solution to the problem.

N: Well, I did

(VR 39.43 – 40.06)

Tina described in detail the scenario, the relationships between the children and the visiting teacher, and between Nathan and the other children, praising him for how he handled the situation:

T: I knew, you were nearly there on your own ... (N inaudible) ... I noticed the other children weren't really listening to you. Now 12 or 18 months ago you would have lost your rag really easily at that. I was really really impressed that you didn't. You persevered, you looked to the adults to just give you a little bit of help in getting your point across, getting people to listen and then what happened when they did?

(VR 40.07 – 40.32)

Nathan continued working while also listening and responding. He remembered how he had felt at the time. He worked on his sculpture, relaxed yet alert, as he had been in class. His reason for how he felt was interestingly connected with the team effort rather than individual pride:

N: Everyone listened! And I won, - our team won!

T: Yeah, yeah. Was it a good feeling? How did it make you feel?

N: Oh, well, it felt good 'cos our team actually won!

(VR 40.33 – 40.50)

Nathan raised his head from his work and looked directly at Tina – their eyes met. He saw her seeing him. He felt he belonged to the team, he had contributed successfully to it and had a place in it:

T: You really impressed me. It wasn't the fact that your team won that impressed me. It was the fact that you'd problem solved and then you'd got your point across really well without getting agitated,

(VR 40.55 – 41.08)

Tina insisted on giving him credit for his self-regulation, and while his head was down again working, he added a crucial insight into his personal management of emotion:

N: or angry

T: without getting cross, and angry exactly, because you've talked to me quite a few times about the fact that you needed to work on your anger, and I think you've been really successful with that, haven't you?

N: Yeah

T: You have the odd hiccup, don't you? But generally, you're a lot calmer now, a lot more focused. When we look at the way that you're making progress in class with the other things, that's coming on, you identify that yourself, don't you, in the PEP meetings?  
(VR 41.09 – 41.43)

Tina reflected Nathan's achievements to him. She wanted to help him develop an awareness of how it might be possible to feel satisfaction and pride in his own abilities. This was not a new dialogue situation; Nathan had periodic conversations with Tina, especially before meetings. However, in the art therapy room, he was communicating with her about feelings on a deeper level.

### **7.5.6 Management of resources**

When Nathan accidentally spilt a little sand on the floor, he was worried, but Tina reassured him that the school staff would help clean the room later. Nathan was interested in the people in the school's wider networks, whom he had not considered.

N: Oops.

J: That's alright.

T: Don't worry. We sort it after. We'll speak nicely to Mr Smith.

N: Is that who tidies this room?

T: Yes Mr Smith and a team of cleaning staff who make our school look beautiful.

(VR 49.20 – 49.40)

The research resources included the recording equipment. The camera and tripod were freestanding at a little distance behind the table. The tape recorder was on the table. Nathan was concerned, firstly, whether the tape recorder would pick up his voice when he went across to the material table, and, secondly, when he accidentally flicked some sand towards it. Tina pointed out that it was more the water that could have been problematic:

N: Oh

T: That's ok it's not touched the microphone.

N: Oh good huh! Thought it'd break the mic then!

T: I think it's just if it gets a bit wet

(VR 54.10 – 54.30)

During the transcription, it transpired that Nathan was right. The microphone did not capture Julia's and Nathan's voices clearly when they spoke near the materials table while searching for figurines.

## 7.6 Collage of the 'research hour'

I visually mapped objects seen or mentioned in the video recording onto a circular 'hour' of the dialogic encounter. I became aware of the pattern formed by the clusters of objects, replicating the passage of time in a therapy hour. First, there is usually an initial chat and settling-in period (here, this includes the storytelling images: 1 pm to 5 pm). Then absorption in the making and silences, and objects/artwork emerge (7 pm to 10 pm). Finally, an ending process transpires (11 pm, the bubble gum). Technical equipment necessary for recording is visible at the top and bottom of the collage: a microphone, camera, tripod, and tape on the floor, indicating the 'blind spot', as Nathan correctly called it, beyond which participants would be off-screen. The next chapter brings new perspectives on the 'research hour' as Tina and Julia share their thoughts in their interviews.



*Objects in Time*

## **8.0                    CHAPTER 8 – The Interviews with ‘Tina’ and ‘Julia’**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter analyses the interviews with Tina and Julia, in which they reflected on their experiences of the research encounter. These interviews, conducted after the event, gave each participant the opportunity to share any observations or concerns the research raised. Tina and Julia each chose when and where their interviews would take place to suit their heavy work schedules, be as least burdensome as possible, and mark a clear end to their formal participation in the research.

Interviews with participants after their involvement with the research are ‘important contributions to understanding’ (Edwards, 1993, p. 193). Interview quotations are followed by the name (T or J) and the line number of the respective transcription. For example: (T/22-23) for Tina and (J/5) for Julia.

First, I discuss the main themes from Tina’s forty-five-minute interview, then Julia’s.

### **8.2 Reflective interview with Tina**

Tina’s choice of when to be interviewed reflected the pressures in her work. Finding time for the hour-long dialogic encounter had been challenging for her. Due to urgent matters requiring attention, the date had to be changed a few times. Once the date had been fixed and all relevant communications had been made with Nathan’s class teacher and foster parents, Tina came to the art therapy room well-prepared, carefully considering the research aims outlined in the earlier information. She entered the art therapy room ready to share her personal experiences, not only those arising from her formal roles in school. Tina chose to be interviewed immediately after the encounter in the art therapy room while her thoughts and feelings were still fresh. If she wanted to discuss anything later, she could talk to Julia, who continued working in the school or contact me.

The prospect of participating in the research had not caused Tina any anxiety. She anticipated it with enjoyment: ‘When you’re on a one-to-one with [‘Nathan’], he’s an absolute joy to be with, so I knew it would be pleasurable’ (T/13-14). She knew how motivated he could be in certain situations:

'I know he likes to make things. I know that he thinks things through, he's an entrepreneur is our Nathan' <sup>64</sup> (T/27-28). Tina embraced uncertainty and was open to whatever might occur:

Well, I didn't know what to expect really..., I read all the information..., I came in very open-minded... it was just a case of see what happens, wasn't it? (T/2-5)

Periodically, Tina had read Julia's reports prepared for review discussions. Nevertheless, meeting Nathan in the encounter revealed much more. Being in his presence for that hour, she had the space and time to feel and reflect whilst seeing him working in the art therapy heterotopic space: 'I've seen what he's done, it's different to having it described to you' (T/224), it was 'a real experience, for me, today' (T/228). Tina's choice of the word 'real' resonates with Bergson's concept of the subjective experience of time: *durée*. Watching Nathan, she was 'the witness of an attentive consciousness', and maybe felt moved by how Nathan showed his 'inner dynamism as a fact' (Bergson, 1910 [1889], p. 171). Tina became attuned to Nathan's response to texture, soft and hard materials, warm and cool, and his movements as he handled and sculpted the sand. As a researcher-observer, like her, I observed his effort through muscular tension and the sounds of his utterances: Stern's 'forms of vitality'. These 'spoke' of his perceptions, attentiveness, and absorption: signs of him experiencing his *durée*. This may have been what Tina noticed when she commented on Nathan's concentration.

Tina spoke in her interview about Nathan from the perspectives of her different professional roles, which she combined holistically. She usually saw Nathan one-to-one when either 'he's having a bit of a crisis' (T/9) or when she was 'gathering information for his PEP paperwork' (T/10). She referenced Nathan's Personal Education Plan (PEP), which has already been mentioned: a practical, dynamic system that operates regularly to ensure constructive and collaborative school support for looked-after children. Tina touched on the challenges that school staff sometimes had, saying that Nathan 'can be difficult in a group'(T/13). Therefore, his additional needs included support for social communication with his peers. He needed help expressing his ideas and managing his feelings when interacting with others. Tina recalled the occasion when Nathan had solved a problem by thinking 'in

---

<sup>64</sup> In Tina and Julia's interviews, the child's real name was, of course, used. Here I use the pseudonym, 'Nathan'.

a different way to the other children' (T/132). Once arriving at the answer: 'He just needed to learn how to relay that to everyone else, that he'd got it' (T/132-133). She appreciated his learning style.

Some of the experiences of talking with Nathan during the encounter were quite familiar to Tina and similar to conversations with other children. However, throughout the encounter, she also felt a strong sense of pride in Nathan. She noted 'how far he's come... because he's come a really long way' (T/32-33). There was an emotional connection with him: Nathan was a child she cared about. She knew him as an individual child on a different level from many of the children in the school. Her senior and pastoral roles in school contributed to this. One of the areas in which he had 'come a long way' (T/33) was managing his feelings when trying to communicate. He said he managed not to get 'angry' (VR 41.10) on the occasion recalled. He often struggled with relationships with his peers, but in this instance, he recognised that he had handled a difficult situation well.

Tina knew that Nathan 'had a lot of upset and trauma in his life' (T/127) and 'the people in his life have not always been stable' (T/146). She and the school's pastoral staff provided a safe base of adults who knew Nathan well, cared for him, and tried to understand him. They had been trained in 'attachment-friendly' theory and knew Nathan was 'attention-needing' rather than deliberately 'attention-seeking'.<sup>65</sup> Meaningful attachments were vitally important to him, more so than personal academic success. Nathan felt the pastoral staff understood him, as demonstrated by Tina's explanation of what he said he liked about school. She said that Nathan

... struggled with attachments. He has got strong attachments with certain members of staff in school... He loves coming to school. I talked to him the other day... If you ask him, he talks about the good things at school; he'll mention, in a roundabout way, the relationships he's got with staff... He tries you out. I'm expecting a bit of a testing time with his new teacher in September because he will test out: 'If I push you this way are you still going to be there for me?' But he knows Julia will (T/140-147).

---

<sup>65</sup> This distinction helps shift the view of the child as being a problem, which has been termed a 'child-deficit' approach, to an approach that understands the psychological need of the child for reparative relational help. The school staff, led by Tina, had been trained in trauma-informed and attachment-friendly approaches in schools, as noted earlier.

Tina understood that children with abusive interpersonal past experiences may be vigilant and need to verify the safety and reliability of adults they meet in school before they can trust them.<sup>66</sup> She understood the special ('amazing') relationship Nathan had with Julia and how vital this was for their work together. This is significant given research findings that parents and teachers may not recognise the complex interplay between the child and the art therapist (Deboys *et al.*, 2017, p. 127-128). For instance, one research participant in Deboys *et al.*'s study did not see this interplay and thought that 'art-making rather than the therapist was key to the successful outcome' (2017, p. 127).

Tina observed how Nathan went about his art-making: 'What did surprise me was how few resources he actually needed, very selective' (T/24-25). Nathan had listed several of his favourites when Tina asked him about them. In his art-making, Nathan made deliberate choices about the materials he wanted to use and how to work with them. This was related to his previous art therapy experiences, which Tina was unfamiliar with. She noticed his deep absorption, remarking on his 'good concentration' (T/17). She had considered him a creative thinker before, but the research space provided an opportunity to witness Nathan's thought process unfolding moment by moment, alongside his actions. She remarked on the brightness of his motivation: 'that real creativity, his mind's firing off all the time' (T/130); 'the creative thinking' (T/131). This chimes with Bergson's 'continuous creation of unforeseeable novelties' (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 73) available to all persons when tapping into their *durée*, and also to his notion of intuition that is seized from within.

Tina understood the intercultural dynamic between education in school and art therapy well. She knew that Julia was working with complicated emotions and needed privacy when working with Nathan: 'Obviously, Julia, she doesn't overly share. It's Nathan's own personal time, isn't it, and confidential to a point' (T/21). By using the nuanced phrase 'to a point', Tina indicated her understanding of the limits of confidentiality and the calibrated balance between what Julia could

---

<sup>66</sup> Chapter Three explains how art therapy builds epistemic trust through three communication processes recognised to be inherent in all effective psychotherapy, regardless of modality (Fonagy and Alison, 2014). The third process transfers the benefits gained through the trust built within the therapy room and therapeutic relationship into the outside environment, if it is 'benign' enough. Tina and the pastoral staff collaborated to create a nurturing, 'benign' environment in the school.

relay to others and what she had to keep close and private. If any concerns indicated harm to Nathan or anyone else, these matters were not confidential and were shared with her and the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Tina knew that Julia had explained this to Nathan at the beginning of therapy. She understood the need for guaranteed uninterrupted time for Nathan in his art therapy sessions, and that the artwork created during these sessions needed to be kept safe and viewed only by Nathan, Julia, and, at times, Julia's supervisor. Tina knew that this confidentiality and containment of Nathan's work helped him to feel confident about expressing sometimes powerful, conflicting, tentative, mixed and complex feelings in the heterotopic art therapy space. As Tina commented, when Julia prepared reports, she did not 'overly share'. She carefully decided what to communicate, on a need-to-know basis, to convey her understanding of how Nathan perceived the world, his concerns, any progress he had made, and any concerns she may have had. Therefore, most interactive, sensory, and artistic processes occurring in sessions, while forming and informing the therapy's internal processes, inevitably remained unseen to people outside the sessions. This is one of the reasons why Tina had such an unusual experience.

Tina had never seen what it might feel like for Nathan to be in his art therapy room, with the freedom to experiment and create, to be in control of decision-making and follow through on his observations, his ideas as an 'inventor' and his imaginative storytelling. With the memories still fresh, Tina recalled saying to Nathan during the encounter, 'It's a real privilege to see inside the room - all these things' (T/85-86). She perceived the level of trust between Nathan and Julia and understood Nathan's need for it, noting how between them, 'the unspoken word' was understood (T/180). This phrase was hers, and she defined its origin:

I think you get that because it's that undivided attention. You can have a really good relationship with your class teacher – which Nathan does – but that class teacher has another twenty-nine children. So attention is divided... but in this room he's taking the lead, he's in control' (T/192-196).

Tina's observations about 'undivided attention' leading to the 'unspoken word' were crucial to Nathan's attachment relationship with Julia. The reader may be reminded of the three

psychotherapy communication processes discussed in Chapter Three, which ultimately lead to an expansion of trust. If a child knows the therapist's mind to the extent that they feel they are recognised and understood, via 'the unspoken word', they can accept new knowledge from the person whom they have come to trust epistemically: a new phase of super learning starts. It can lead to the third communication process, extending trust to persons outside the therapeutic relationship.

Tina knew Nathan well enough to know that Julia was working with his deep-rooted needs, and this meant working with his need to test adults out for safety, as mentioned earlier:

I imagine there must have been challenges, but she's so calm, isn't she? I think he will have pushed at times to see what the response was but the response will have always been a considered and calm one. That trust there... He knows what he's going to get inside this room, he knows what response he's going to get (T/155-158).

Nathan knew Julia would still be there for him even if he 'will have pushed at times to see what the response was'. Tina recognised the art therapy space's boundaries and that there were limits, but there was flexibility, too. She was aware of the physical safety boundaries and that they had been discussed with Nathan at the start of therapy, including safeguarding requirements, in a manner he could understand and appropriate to his age and stage of development. She recognised the careful underpinning of a stable and predictive structure and the relational consistency Julia provided:

I suppose you're in a constraint in this room as well. But I think all the time by the way that she'd responded, no doubt skilfully, the way she would have added a phrase I'm sure she'd have used, when she gave him his evil ones to add to the panic room situation, whatever it might have been, I'm sure he would have just thought 'She just knows' (T/199-203).

Tina thinks about Julia's 'knowing'. As we saw in Chapter Three, art therapy's triangular relationship and communication complexities yield conscious and non-conscious knowledge. In everyday art therapy practice, after each session with Nathan, Julia reflected on the micro-moments, his image-making, and what might be significant, considering both literal and metaphorical levels; sometimes she discussed her ideas with him in later sessions, and sometimes she did not. This reflexivity took time, a form of doing that produced new knowledge. Tina had noticed Julia's 'knowing', which exists between trusted people in families and among colleagues. It takes on special relevance in the

therapeutic situation. It can be considered 'implicit relational knowing,' which results from an intuitive understanding and attention paid to the dynamic forms of vitality that Julia observed in Nathan's art-making and experienced in their interpersonal communications, whether verbal or not.<sup>67</sup> Tina commented that in a busy school, there was little time to reflect on what was happening at a deeper level. The research experience had shown her something very different from what she knew about art therapy from reading Julia's reports. She knew it was necessary to take time to reflect, and she appreciated her conversations with Julia:

You need time to reflect. You don't get the opportunity to sit down very often. Obviously, I have with Julia. I completely understand it, for all the reasons I've said, it has to be that closed space, but maybe because I've seen what he's done, it's different to having it described to you (T/222-224).

Aware of the difference in her training as a teacher and Julia's as an art psychotherapist, Tina was uncertain about the relationship between feeling and the creative expression of feeling and how an art therapist works with a child's representations through art-making:

This is what I don't understand: how you can know or strongly suspect that what a child is representing is a creative representation of their feelings. That's the bit I don't know how it works, what they feel. I'm not trained, and I haven't had much experience of it (T/71-74).

Tina's epistemological thinking addresses art therapy theory, which is multi-faceted and multi-levelled, working with conscious ideas and nonconscious awareness. As already mentioned, the triangular relationship in school art therapy between the child, art and therapist is complex.

Representation of feeling has many aspects, as the last chapter showed, in the discussion of Nathan's images. In connection with a child's representation, Tina discussed the origin of Nathan's idea to create a volcano. She thought Julia had encouraged the decision by bringing the sand tray to the table. Video microanalysis revealed that this was not the case. Nathan's reflexive decision-making process regarding what he wanted to create, examined in Chapter Seven, was complex. Julia refrained from guiding him. She let him decide, patiently waiting and supporting him, just as she would in her art therapy practice. With Julia's undivided attention in the art therapy space, which

---

<sup>67</sup> Daniel Stern's concept of 'forms of vitality', dynamic experiences in the arts (Stern, 2010) are mentioned in Chapter Two of this thesis, and, like 'implicit relational knowing' (Stern, 2004, p. 242) are explained in Chapter Three.

Nathan was aware of, he became engrossed in attending to his feelings and thoughts in the present moment. An internal verbal and/or nonverbal conversation unfolded. He was intrinsically motivated. In this 'safe enough' environment, there was space and time for thinking and experimenting for himself in his *durée's* flow, without instinctively being unsettled and alert to potential danger.

Tina felt the 'doing' released Nathan, allowing him to: 'focus on something, put his mind into something else, perhaps that's it – I think that's it' (T/65-66). She appeared sure about this, believing that absorption in creativity was important. Although Tina had no formal training in the therapeutic use of art, she was interested in creativity and its healing potential, as many school staff are, and deeply respected Julia's work and thoughtful presence in the school. Tina shared her belief in the power of creativity in recovery from trauma:

Do you think there's a link between people who perhaps experience mental health issues and are in recovery from that, post-trauma or that sort of high emotion, and their ability to be more creative afterwards? I do. (T/96,97)

Tina wondered about 'doodling' (T/117) and mindfulness activities, 'where you had to look at intricacies' (T/120), which seemed to help people during and after a severe and prolonged illness. Compelling studies exist on mindfulness-based stress reduction as an effective mental health intervention (Kriakous *et al.*, 2021), and, more specifically to art therapy, evidence is growing for integrated art therapy and mindfulness, including for school children (Bokoch and Hass-Cohen, 2021).

Tina and her pastoral team sought to solve problems in school before they escalated. They had the authority to make decisions around behavioural management and provision for children with social, emotional, and mental health needs. Their headteacher supported the staff well. Tina said: 'Got a great headteacher - great leader' (T/262) and said of Nathan: 'I'm not sure he'd see him as a senior teacher. I don't think the children are like that here; we're not hierarchical' (T/206-207). The pastoral team worked closely together to ensure each child received appropriate support. For children with 'additional and complex needs', external support was required. Tina reflected:

I think within the constraints of the school, we're lucky here. Some of the school pastoral staff are excellent, really good at this sort of thing. But there comes a point when your teachers have done everything, you've got to look externally at what's available (T/243-245).

As Tina said, most support for children with social, emotional and mental health needs was provided through the expertise of school staff - teachers and trained teaching assistants. Regularly monitoring the effectiveness of Nathan's support and tweaking behaviour interventions and management systems resulted in Nathan being happier. Tina expressed her commitment:

You've got to do what's right for the children. This could be the thing... you've got to try everything, haven't you? When you think you've tried everything, there's always something else to try (T/240-241).

The pastoral team knew Nathan needed more than in-school support when, having tried everything, Nathan had a crisis resulting in a brief, fixed-term exclusion. Art therapy was recommended by a new teacher at the school, as it had been successful in their previous school. Nathan's school made the moral and financial decision to seek out and to fund art therapy for Nathan:

He did need a lot of 'different to' provision at that point, and he's got an EHC Plan [Education, Health and Care Plan]. But the art therapy is in addition. He's got extra. The number of hours in his EHCP (is for) what he needs to manage in school in the classroom. But I think the fact that he had this over and above what is suggested there (in the EHCP) has kept him grounded (T/41-45).

The school cared about Nathan and wanted to avert further exclusions, which could eventually lead to permanent exclusion. Tina and the school did not give up on Nathan and tried everything possible for him. She and others knew him as a lovely, curious child with a vivid imagination and a distinct, vibrant personality who was also 'a child dealing with trauma with significant mental health issues' (T/232-233). As Tina said, art therapy had kept Nathan grounded.

Tina gained a better understanding of Nathan's art therapy experience by seeing him in action. This experiential learning engages the emotions, not just the conceptual ideas and theory. Tina described the response to Nathan's art therapy support from the school's point of view:

We, as a school, and especially the pastoral team, when we talk, we feel the art therapy was a really big contribution to keeping him in school, because there was a time when he was at risk of permanent exclusion. Well, he'd had a fixed-term, and if things hadn't changed, I don't know how we'd have continued to manage his needs in school (T/38-41).

Tina's statement about the hopelessness the staff would have felt without the art therapy support for Nathan, 'I don't know how we'd have continued to manage his needs in school', is a clear testimony to the effectiveness of the work Julia and Nathan did together. As the risk of Nathan being excluded decreased, the school came to feel that, in the interest of fairness, other children should also be entitled to the benefits of the art therapy provision. This was not an easy decision, and with regret, Nathan's sessions had to come to an end. The school was obliged to make a moral judgment about the collective versus individual good:

I hate to talk about money when you are talking about children's little lives, but ultimately, the cost involved in everything you do, is over and above what we get for Nathan's special provision. So if you're looking at it, if you're taking all the emotion out of it, which you can't and say actually there are other children that need to dip into that to make it fairer... (T/51-55).

Tina went on to say that the school had earlier resisted curtailing Nathan's therapy, despite the financial problem, because of the apparent benefits for Nathan and the possible negative consequences if Julia's support were to stop. Tina reflected: 'But we must have felt that it was giving him something extra, it was important, for not giving (it to) another child (earlier)' (T/55-56). Tina felt conflicted that Nathan's therapy had to be rationed due to the budgetary constraints of living in 'the real world' (T/216 and 218). She said she would recommend art therapy to her leadership peers in other schools, with the caveat about the financial implications: 'If the funding is available, without a doubt' (T/218): in fact, 'If money wasn't an issue, you'd have a lot more of it' (T/221).

### **8.3 Reflective interview with Julia**

Julia wanted time to think things over before her interview. Reflexive practice, including creating 'response art', was embedded in Julia's role as an art psychotherapist (Fish, 2012), sometimes involving psychodynamic processing or 'digesting' emotionally charged experiences (Bion, 1994 [1962]). Julia reflected on the metaphors that took shape, the unfolding art-making, and her visceral responses to what had happened. This 'digestion' enriches the analytic processes involved. The project design set a maximum of a fortnight between the encounter and the interviews to ensure that a formal ending was not unnecessarily prolonged. Julia decided to meet one week later.

In her interview, Julia spoke about Tina's attentive presence in the art therapy room research site. Despite the pressure of 'a lot of meetings to go to and child protection meetings' and having 'to get everything finished for the end of term' (J/40-41), Tina was 'very, very present there' (J/42). Julia noticed the ease with which Tina responded:

Right from the very beginning of the interview, she put energy into it. There was no kind of hesitancy; she went straight in there. I think Nathan perhaps wasn't expecting that, but then he went with it (J/42-44).

Julia's reflexive practice as an art therapist involved thinking, writing, and drawing, and she used these methods to reflect on her research experience and on Nathan's art-making in the research hour. There were many ways they had found to communicate with each other over the time they had worked together. These provided an extensive catalogue of possibilities, and Nathan drew on some of them, as shown in his references to materials and later in his extended, volcanic metaphor. He seemed secure in his knowledge of these things and his capability to share them. Crucially, Julia thought Nathan communicated to Tina that a meaningful connection was an essential aspect of what art therapy meant to him:

We'd usually have something in the session that would bring us back to connect with each other again. So in a way, in this interview, he was showing little bits of that, I think, of 'I've made these connections before'. So I think in the interview it was 'tell me a little bit about what happens in art therapy' and then he was doing exactly that (J/102-105).

Julia recalled how her work with Nathan changed as he developed confidence and felt more comfortable in the space, with the materials and with Julia. She remembered his vivid imagination and how he talked of fantastical realities in the first year she worked with him, in Year Two:

So in the early days, he'd be talking about something, and I'd be thinking, 'Oh my gosh, this is fantastical, it's unreal, and it was unreal. It was his imagination, and it was very hard to know what he was talking was real and not real, and that's where I feel he's come on a long way, because actually he is much more present now rather than in his fantasy world (J/282-285).

Like Tina, Julia remarked on how 'far Nathan had come' developmentally. During his therapeutic relationship with Julia, he had benefited from sensory opportunities that helped him to feel more grounded, as Tina had noted. Julia explained that the sticky tape 'was quite a significant part' (J/71) of the initial phase of their work. She reflected on the in-betweenness of tape as a material to work

with: it was 'maybe a bit of a necessary in art' (J/56): it held things together, was versatile and had many functions:

For him, it was so important; we used it so much, whether to attach things together, like junk modelling, or to put a sign on the door when it needed new tape. We got through a lot of tape, and it was a bit of a joke, 'Have you got enough tape today, Julia?' he'd literally wrap things up, ... That seemed to have stayed with him... So there's something about security and safety of taking the stuff home, and then it feeling safe at home (J/56-66).

Nathan used the tape abundantly in the first phase of their work. It was not rationed. He expressed himself by 'doing' and using as much as he needed. This helped with small incremental steps towards feeling safe with Julia in the room, gradually building trust. In recent times, the tape had been used, 'but not to the same level as when he first met me' (J/64-65). In the second year of working together, when the volcano began to emerge, it was as if Nathan's interest in and possible attachment to tape, which holds things together, moved into a new phase. I conjecture that perhaps, psycho-dynamically, there was a shift from being merged (sticky tape) towards a healthy separation and reconnection (working with clay). This progression can also be understood as a transition from 'being' to 'doing' (Winnicott, 2005, p. 176). Once Nathan was familiar with the materials and with creating his artworks, they took on meanings he could explore through his own work of 'doing'. Julia observed 'Nathan has always preferred to be in the life of the metaphor that he was creating' (J/281-282). Rather than discussing his work, he thought about what he was doing and how he was doing it.

In other instances, what Nathan said during the encounter connected to the verbal content from previous art therapy sessions. For example, Julia wondered about Nathan's conversation about guns:

(he) brought in about different kinds of guns, and the names and numbers that they have. I remember him bringing that up in probably one of our sessions. I remember at the time, in the interview, thinking: I wonder why you're bringing this into the interview, really, and I was wondering about what Tina was thinking about that (J/45-49).

It is possible that the conversation about guns at the beginning of the research encounter helped Nathan introduce himself as knowledgeable and perhaps powerful, in a world where he may have felt powerless. Julia reflected on the links with his interests and his active mind:

But he is a hive of information, and quite different information that you don't always expect, so it was interesting to see that he was bringing that to Tina, as well as he brought that to me in the therapy sessions (J/49-51).

Moving on to Nathan's volcano image, Julia remembered how, in the past, after a period of working with this image, the outer structure had become strong enough to hold an additional one within it. She held the volcano while he made it more secure, and then Nathan introduced the panic room. During the research hour, 'He just seemed to wedge everything in the right place and he was pleased with that' (J/116-117). There could be many interpretations of what was happening. Perhaps Nathan was demonstrating how capably he had learned to manage panic. He constructed his sculpture with confidence, and Julia noted how he used the sticks to create scaffolding, strengthening the structure. She emphasised Nathan's openness in sharing his personally significant metaphor, the panic room:

I felt the volcano he made, using the little bits of wood and the brown like a sort of scaffolding ... I thought it was a very successful volcano, probably actually his most successful, and it was quite robust. It was getting quite a lot of abuse as well, and how open he was about 'I'm creating my panic room' (J/106-108).

Julia witnessed Nathan bringing some of the 'doing' of former sessions into the present moment of the research interview and found herself reflecting particularly on one of these sequences. This was when Nathan was constructing the tunnel through the volcano while Tina supported the structure:

I was on the side-lines watching in, but it was as if I was watching myself, there, you know, because...Tina was holding the volcano just like I would have done. And I've held the volcano on probably about six occasions, just holding it while he would drive, it looks like a stake down the middle, or come in from the side (J/82-85).

This can be understood as a 'parallel process', a term used in psychotherapy supervision and reflexive practice. It refers to the reoccurrence of an expression that can be reflected upon to identify the possible origin and function of the pattern; it can link to schemas of 'being with', familiar patterns of people being together (Emde, 2017, p. 217). Julia had supported Nathan as he worked on the risky procedure of driving stakes through the volcano and, like Tina, had felt anxious at times: 'I said similar things to her: 'Is it going to be alright? Is it going to hold?''(J/85-86). As Julia demonstrated through her reflexive art below, drawn four days after the encounter, she was struck by Nathan's vivacious energy employed in sculpting. She uses vivid metaphors of surgery and excavation:

But also, when I look back at the drawing that I have done here, I felt some sort of major surgery was going on, some excavation going on, and Tina was amazed how he managed to work down and across and for it not to collapse (J/115-119).



*Julia's reflexive drawing before her post-research interview (Coloured pencils)*

The experience was poignant for Julia, laden with emotional resonance, as she had worked to 'hold' Nathan's story in its complexity and nonverbal richness. She seemed to be 'reeling under the force of the event' (Stern, 2004, p. 170), even in the memory of the moment of meeting (connection) that she had experienced, and Tina then did. The poignancy seems to be about a meeting point between her and Nathan, now extended to Tina and Nathan:

I felt quite (pause), yes, I had to kind of hold myself a bit at that point. I felt quite emotional about it, really, that something that we worked on over quite a time, and I think somewhere where we met, was now being re-enacted in another way with someone else. But that's ok (J/87-89).

Julia had to 'hold' herself and her own emotions. Her work with Nathan required intricate mirroring and reflection, moment by moment, resonating with what he might be feeling and then responding in a way that made sense to him, in a fluid, intuitive process.

Julia did not claim to be able to interpret what the panic room meant for Nathan, but she had some ideas about it and wondered 'whether the meaning changes over time' (J/142):

He never verbally, specifically said what that panic room was to me. But he did sort of hint it was possibly a place of safety away from panic or a place where he went to, where there was a lot of panic from the past. I'm not quite sure what it represented when he was making this with Tina, what the panic room meant then (J/134-138).

Unless Nathan used words, what he was thinking was unknown, and even words may not have conveyed his emotions. It seemed to me that the volcano may be a metaphor for Nathan's self; he had been enabled to locate the support he needed and use it well. Julia explained how important the panic room was for Nathan. He worked creatively from a space within himself, in his inner world that he could not articulate in words. This was a highly personal art-making process and metaphor that he shared comfortably in his art therapy space with Julia, and now shared it with Tina as well. The trust between him and Julia extended to Tina:

I remember when he first introduced the panic room, I had a real sense that he was bringing something to the space, something that he could not verbalise. And it was very serious. The work that he was doing here was very serious work (J/147-149).

Julia felt Nathan did serious work in his art therapy sessions; this recalls Nathan saying that for him, art therapy was 'hard and fun'. In Chapter Three, we considered how play is children's work for learning, social and emotional development, and for joy. Julia trusted the art therapy process, with its integral play and creativity, as she facilitated Nathan's nonverbal work.

### **8.3.1 The mirrored 'shared feeling voyage'**

In her interview, Julia reflected on the significance of the moment when Nathan and Tina caught each other's eye through the tunnel. It was a strange experience for Julia as she watched them doing what she and Nathan had done. During this simple action, each was attuned to the other in a reciprocal movement: a sort of dance that Julia was so familiar with. This momentary interaction can be understood as a moment of meeting or a 'shared feeling voyage' (Stern, 2004, p. 173). A moment of meeting is where 'Intersubjective 'fittedness' is sought, where both partners share an experience, and they know it implicitly' (Stern, 2004, p. 168). The creation of the volcano, its tunnel and the

meeting of their gazes through it, was an experience Julia knew well, and she observed Tina, invited into the art therapy space, doing the same thing, unaware of the patterning this represented for Julia. The whole creative endeavour was slightly different each time.

Stern explains the 'shared feeling voyage' as a 'kind of journey, lasting seconds, taken by two people, roughly together through time and space' (Stern, 2004, p. 172). In this research, I describe Julia and Nathan's original 'shared feeling voyage', observed by Julia in this new context, as a 'mirrored feeling voyage'. Tina played a crucial role in enabling a mirroring of the shared-feeling voyage Nathan had experienced with Julia. Maybe Tina's mothering intuition had played a part in this; she had earlier shown spontaneous mirroring, with hand gestures, when Nathan mimed the volcanic explosion. Julia interpreted Tina's connection with Nathan, as Tina and Nathan enacted the mirrored feeling voyage as a good sign for Nathan's future in school:

We always used to bend down, level with the volcano, look through the hole, and catch the other person's eye, and I was waiting for that. I thought, 'Is it going to happen?' and it did, you know, when they were looking at each other through the hole. I thought that was absolutely brilliant because now, there's another year of Nathan being in the school, under the support of Tina (J/89-95).

Julia reflected on how this enactment had become a means to reconnect:

Nathan and I first did that kind of enactment, I suppose, if you look at it like that, when he was in about Year Three, and it would happen every so often. He did like to have things we had used before, to bring connection back, especially if it was a session where he had visited lots of different materials and perhaps appeared a little bit out of synch (J/98-102).

Through the continuity of art therapy with the same therapist, patterns of 'knowing' (and, in Tina's words, the 'unspoken word') develop naturally, serving many functions for the child. Connecting with Tina's gaze, Nathan possibly helped her understand some of his experiences through her own sensory and bodily experiences, whether consciously or not. He wanted and needed a positive connection with others, and here he recreated the one he had experienced with Julia. This shows the transferability of the 'knowing' pattern if the environment is conducive and benign.

Now that the art therapy sessions had ended, Julia could no longer serve as an intermediary to advocate for Nathan. She knew Tina's support was vital to ensure Nathan felt heard. She hoped that

the connection he had with Tina at this meeting point would serve as a conduit for Tina to represent Nathan's interests in the multi-agency group that looked after Nathan's well-being and educational needs. The people they were connected to could influence how systems viewed Nathan throughout his school career. Years later, he might need advocates in the public 'space of appearances' to open good opportunities for him or to support him in other ways:

... because she's chairing the PEP meetings, and the meetings with the social worker and the psychologist and everyone, and with his foster carer, she's kind of holding that together. So that's what I thought about when they were looking at each other as if: 'we're making a connection' (J/95-98).

Julia recognised Tina's key role in 'holding' the Personal Education Plan processes together, keeping Nathan at the core of discussion and decision-making. Tina was 'holding' Nathan's story alongside Julia in a different way. Nathan's 'full humanity' was visible to both of them and, through their advocacy, to others who could, though less directly, still 'hold his story'. Julia also appreciated the school's attempt to meet his attachment need for relational consistency by assigning him the same class teacher: 'his class teacher knows him very well, having been with him for two years' (J/222).

In the broader network of professionals, it was not easy for all involved to be so child-centred; however, they had the opportunity to learn from Julia's reports and her input at meetings, when invited and when she was available. Communication is challenging if the professional network is not aware of the goals and purposes of art therapy and how these align with educational and other objectives. Julia reflected on one multi-agency meeting, which 'was quite difficult. There was a lot of tension in the room about who was responsible for what, and quite difficult decisions about what was best for Nathan' (J/212-214). Julia knew how much Tina cared about Nathan, and recognised the strain and complexity of coordinating the support, which could leave Tina 'quite worn out' (J/215) after meetings. Julia understood that Tina had 'real hope for him but also quite a lot of worry for when he gets older and bigger... somebody could get very hurt and what would happen to him then?' (J/217-218). Julia appreciated the commitment Tina expressed to Nathan's well-being in the future, long after he had left the primary school.

### 8.3.2 Feeling comfortable

Julia explained that Nathan preferred to talk, 'in the context of what he was making. That's where he felt more comfortable' (J/293): he preferred to 'be in the life of the metaphor he was creating' (J/281). Metaphors offer rich opportunities to gather feelings and concepts into a word or image. Julia mentions that Nathan's imagination resonated with the 'stroking the horse's mane' Tai Chi movement, 'because it's obviously a metaphor, an image that he could link in with. Maybe quite soothing' (J/168-169). Julia could connect with Nathan's imaginative world through shared images. This can be understood as 'mentalising', a process by which 'we make sense of each other and ourselves, implicitly and explicitly, in terms of subjective states and mental processes. It is a profoundly social phenomenon' (Bateman and Fonagy, 2013, p. 595). In his artwork, Nathan used various metaphors. Some were embodied in his images, such as the volcano and panic room; some were found in materials, such as tape, which made precious things safe and secure. Others were corporeally embodied in movement, such as the horse's mane, which relaxes, and the act of leaning down to catch an eye and connect; or in fantastical, imaginative stories that expressed something ineffable – whether his own story or re-telling parts of his favourite epic film, *The Lord of the Rings*. All these metaphorical utterances or visual creations came and went during the therapy and likewise the research hour. Leaning on Winnicott again, these were Nathan's transitional phenomena, a unique combination that cannot be pinned down or categorised in any definitive classification. The meaning is nuanced, for it remains ultimately in the nonverbal domain, arising from Nathan's *durée*. As Julia said, there was hope in Nathan's creativity and the confidence he had developed in it; how he knew he needed scaffolding, and how he knew the way to source it. He had a supportive, flexible, and responsive network around him. There were signs of hope even in the delicate tension of heightened feeling when, as Nathan said, the lone figure was perched 'on the edge' of the volcano. In a sense, Julia saw Nathan as keeping Tina on edge. She reflected on Nathan's growth in confidence and how the 'holding' he had received helped him 'to hold himself more':

He kept her on the edge there a little bit. Tina was more anxious about it, but Nathan actually had the confidence to hold it; So at the beginning of the interview, at the beginning of this making, she was holding the volcano for him; but actually as time went on, in a way, he was holding it in his own right. He had the confidence; and I wonder if that's part of the hope for the future, that he will be able to hold himself more and, you know, when she's supporting him a lot, but, as time goes on, he'll be able to have the resilience to (J/337-342).

At the end of the hour, Nathan and Tina had coordinated their actions to lift the upper part of the volcano off. They were joyful about their 'teamwork' (VR: 58.10). Nathan had used new tools in the art therapy room since his sessions had ended, and Julia saw this also as a sign of adaptability and hope that he would be able to use new materials available to him in the future to progress. Feeling comfortable is crucial for expressing oneself without anxiety and, hence, for good mental health. Julia had not probed Nathan with questions in her sensitive work with him. Rather, she had enabled him to express himself as he wished, and his work in art therapy sessions evolved at its own pace.

Other materials also held powerful metaphorical possibilities for Nathan:

I think he showed a part of his art therapy experience. There were lots of other things really. When I think back; you know, he was so adept with lots of different materials really, I mean we could have had another interview where maybe he could have got the junk modelling bag and tipped it up over the table and thought, 'Right! what are we going to make today'. It would have been another experience that he would be sharing, or the work he has done with clay (J/232-236).

Sometimes a particular material took on special meanings for Nathan and became an important vehicle for expressing feelings. He had a very special and sensitive connection with clay:

And when I talk of clay I connect it, isn't that interesting, I connect it straight to his mother, because he's made a lot of things out of clay for his mother... (J/236-237)

In the research, Nathan did not talk about the clay artworks he made for his mother, but at the end of the research hour, he talked about the materials he had selected to make her a gift:

He showed Tina, there was like a heart, a glass heart that he showed her, and he said it was like that... I remember it, and he decorated a box for it. But he described to Tina, 'I wanted to make this for my mum and she's got it now' (J/237-240).

Nathan had spent several sessions deciding what to make for his mother and thought about the decision outside the art therapy sessions. One day, he had come into the room and announced his decision. By sharing references to the materials, he could talk with Tina about his sensitive feelings:

I thought it was lovely that he brought that to Tina's attention, his fondness and holding his mum close, which, sometimes it might be quite hard for him to express that, and I'm sure his carers are very sensitive to that, that he has his mother still very much around. But he may not feel able to sometimes, but he was able to here (J/245-248).

Nathan only spoke about his mother near the end of the hour. She was so important to him, but perhaps it was hard to find the right time for words. Handling endings is a critical question in art psychotherapy and any therapeutic work. Abrupt endings in art therapy can be damaging (Uttley *et al.*, 2015) and psychologically painful. They can amplify previous bad endings in life. Nathan needed attuned preparation for ending at the close of each therapy session. A good ending was also vital at the end of the research hour. Julia reflected that while constructing the volcano together and as Nathan tolerated the anxiety of potential collapse in their therapy sessions, 'there was always that sense – how is this going to end?' (J/336). Similarly, the question arose of how the research hour would end. Nathan needed to re-enter his school day, and Tina needed to continue with the day's work after her interview. Julia helped Nathan think about how he would like to end, and they eventually decided on their familiar bubble-gum mime game, including Tina in it. Julia felt this was another instance of Nathan showing how important connection was to him:

how he could really come back, we made the connection coming back. The whole point is, that we always had (J/180-181).

Understanding the connection between Nathan and Julia, the 'unspoken word' (T/180), Tina gave them space to talk together at the end. In her interview, Julia appreciated Tina's gesture of leaving them together after she had gone 'to have just a bit of time' (J/183). Julia ascertained how Nathan felt about participating in the research: he had enjoyed it. She felt his participation in the research was positive for him 'It was so worthwhile that he went through that experience, and it complemented the ending we had already had; it further secured it' (J/34-36). The study's method, embedded in the performative research paradigm (explained in Chapter Three), allowed Nathan to exercise agency, demonstrate his competencies, and feel the power of his own creative process through authentic spontaneity and improvisation. At the end of her interview, Julia said that the dialogic encounter had been 'kind of a performance in a way' (J/352).

#### **8.4 Tina and Julia put themselves in each other's shoes,**

Tina tolerated 'not-knowing' precisely what happened in Nathan's art therapy sessions, appreciating that Julia did 'not overly share'. She understood that the therapy space was private, a time set apart for Nathan. She also tolerated not knowing what would happen exactly in the research; she trusted the process. Her confidence sprang from her trust in Julia's knowledge of a process unfamiliar to her, but in which she was interested. She noticed the time for reflection during the research hour and the interview. The research allowed her to 'put herself in Julia's shoes' and appreciate Julia's work on a deeper level. Tina had long recognised that Julia's work with Nathan was not about waving a magic wand to achieve change, but rather a process that needed time. She knew that Julia and Nathan's relationship gave him a secure enough base to process emotions and express his inner world. As Tina said, Julia and Nathan understood each other with the 'unspoken word'. Julia's reliable relationship with Nathan was stabilising for him, and Tina knew it. Likewise, the network that supported Nathan and shared details on a need-to-know basis, providing a lively, warm, personalised safety net in which Nathan and some staff felt safe sharing feelings with one another in meaningful ways.

Julia also put herself in Tina's shoes and those of other staff. She empathised with them, writing in her notes that, at times, they were 'exhausted'. As Tina said, with a classroom of around thirty children, teachers found it hard to divide their attention amongst the children. Julia had worked with three teachers and teaching assistants over the three years. Aware of the class teacher's difficulties in managing Nathan's behaviour, Julia helped devise behavioural strategies for Nathan and provided reflective coping strategies for him to use. She introduced new art-based techniques to support Nathan's teacher assistant in her person-centred work with Nathan (Romano, 2021). This helped Tina indirectly by supporting her staff. Julia took a practical approach. First, she observed Nathan in the playground. Initially, this surprised him, but she explained the reasons. Together, they devised a way to note his feelings through drawing or writing in the three small books he had told Tina about. He kept these in the classroom and brought them to his art therapy sessions each week to discuss. This

activity and reflective process helped Nathan name, differentiate and reflect on his behaviours in the playground. It was a cognitive-behavioural technique embedded in drawing and mark-making, delivered through art therapy. In doing this, Julia extended a process familiar to Nathan in the art therapy room, adapting it for use in another environment. Involving the class teacher and teaching assistant linked her work to the whole school system and the school's behaviour policy.

Tina and Julia worked together, respecting each other's professional identities and needs, and developing interdisciplinary trust. They each knew their own and the other's roles, as well as their limitations and expectations. They discussed new ideas to support Nathan and others in the school, demonstrating 'intangibles such as good communication, trust in relationships, responsiveness and flexibility' that are vital for creating an environment that manages the multiple demands on schools well (Eisold, 2009, p. 138), and are qualities also essential in Integrated Care (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022). Tina and Julia's professional relationship integrated systems to serve Nathan's educational and emotional needs, facilitating a warm, practical school climate adept at 'individual, interpersonal and organisational transformative processes' (Cohen, 2009, pp. 99-100), such as implementing school art therapy with 'the least fuss and disruption' (Weare, 2015, p. 6). In Nathan's school, systemic transformative processes included practicalities such as allocating a budget, securing a dedicated room with physical resources, and staff time to liaise, meet, discuss, and review strategies. Nathan showed Tina transformative processes, both personal and interpersonal, through his art therapy experiences with Julia and in wider relationships with peers and staff.

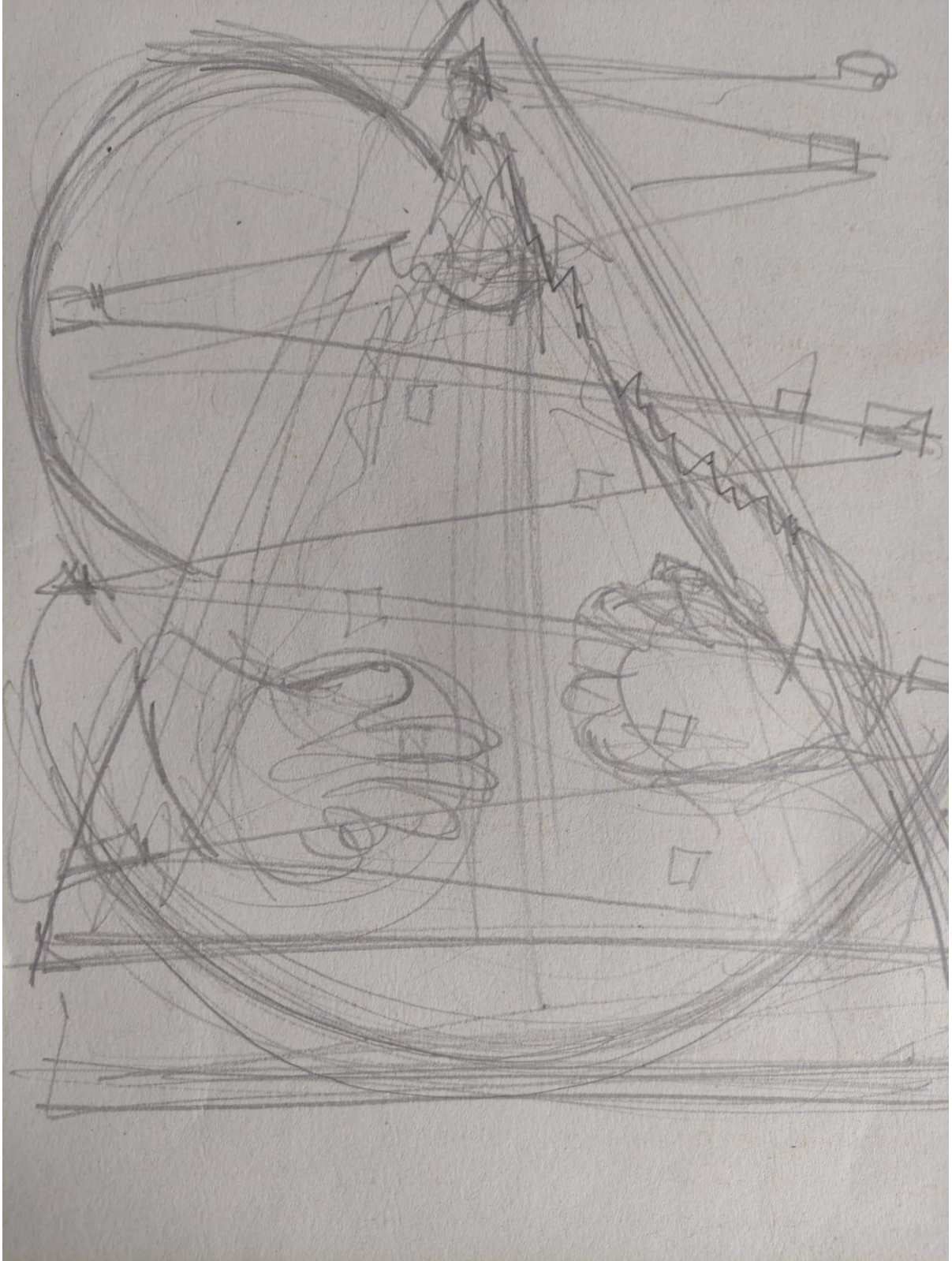
The reader is reminded that Nathan was in multiple categories of children disproportionately affected by school exclusion. He was a looked-after child, a boy; he had an Education, Health, and Care plan for social, emotional, and mental health needs, and many care placements. In one school calendar year, during therapy, he had three changes of foster placement (See timeline chart in Chapter Six). According to the Children's Commissioner's Office, 'even moving from one care placement to another in a year led to a higher-than-average rate of not being in school' (Children's

Commissioner, 2023, p. 31). Nathan's school adopted a trauma-informed, attachment-friendly approach to understanding the causes of his behaviour. Even when he 'transgressed' the behavioural rules, the dynamic school environment could reframe the situation, laying the path for new learning for him and others. Once stabilised, he felt understood, not blamed, and had the confidence to start talking about feelings in the present moment: he began a new pattern, asking for 'a little bit of help' (VR 40.15-19). This showed him shaping his thinking before reacting, slowing down his impulsive responses. He believed asking for and receiving help was possible; he believed that he was worthy.

Nathan's heterotopic Winnicottian 'safe enough' space for self-discovery and creativity led to transformative processes that helped him. Julia was a bridge from the heterotopic space of the art therapy room to the public place of 'shared speech and action - the construction and sharing of meaning' outside (LaMothe, 2014, p. 307). Nathan's voice was heard through Julia being 'seen' in the public space: her insights on how he learned best were welcomed. This representation of Nathan within the broader multidisciplinary framework facilitated effective communication across systems and advocacy for his needs. Julia's art therapy and Tina's management jointly supported Nathan in his external and internal worlds. Tina and Julia's partnership showed the intrinsic value of co-production in mental health and well-being (Slay and Stephens, 2013).

In line with honouring participants' interest in the research outcomes, I sent 'Julia' a draft copy of this thesis and invited her to provide feedback. With her comments, she included two 'response art' images, reproduced in the thesis with her permission. Her initial response art (shown below) was a 'quick pencil drawing of the main forms that stuck with me'. The second image is a pastel drawing, shown at the end of the thesis. Julia compared these two images to her drawing, reproduced earlier in this chapter on p. 255:

Perhaps there are inevitably similarities with the drawing I did previously. This time I was thinking more about the held (egg shape-like) space, lines of start and finish, 'Nathan's' mountain with Frodo on top, with Nathan behind within the spaces of time and environment variables taking place around and within. The zig-zagging lines were about connections between moments in time.



*Julia's Response Art 1 - after reading the draft thesis (Pencil) June 2025*

This research aimed to investigate how school-based art therapy makes a difference. In this chapter, I bring together and discuss the research findings. I begin with three charts that demonstrate key findings from the video microanalysis conducted in this study. I then present a series of Venn diagrams that serve as conceptual maps, chronologically illustrating the development of processes across the five phases of the dialogic encounter: the ‘research hour’. These echo the rhythms of an art therapy hour. This is a crucial finding because it suggests that the research revealed much more than a single individual's story. In the second half of the chapter, I discuss in detail the findings that address each research question, restated here for the reader:

- How does art therapy ‘make a difference’ to children in the school context?
- What can we learn from children about their experiences with school-based art therapy?
- What dynamics are involved when art therapy is provided in schools?
- How can a Bergsonian-Foucauldian philosophical framework illuminate time and boundaries in a child’s art therapy experience?
- How can an art-based research approach offer insights through interrogating the dynamics of a child’s art therapy experience?

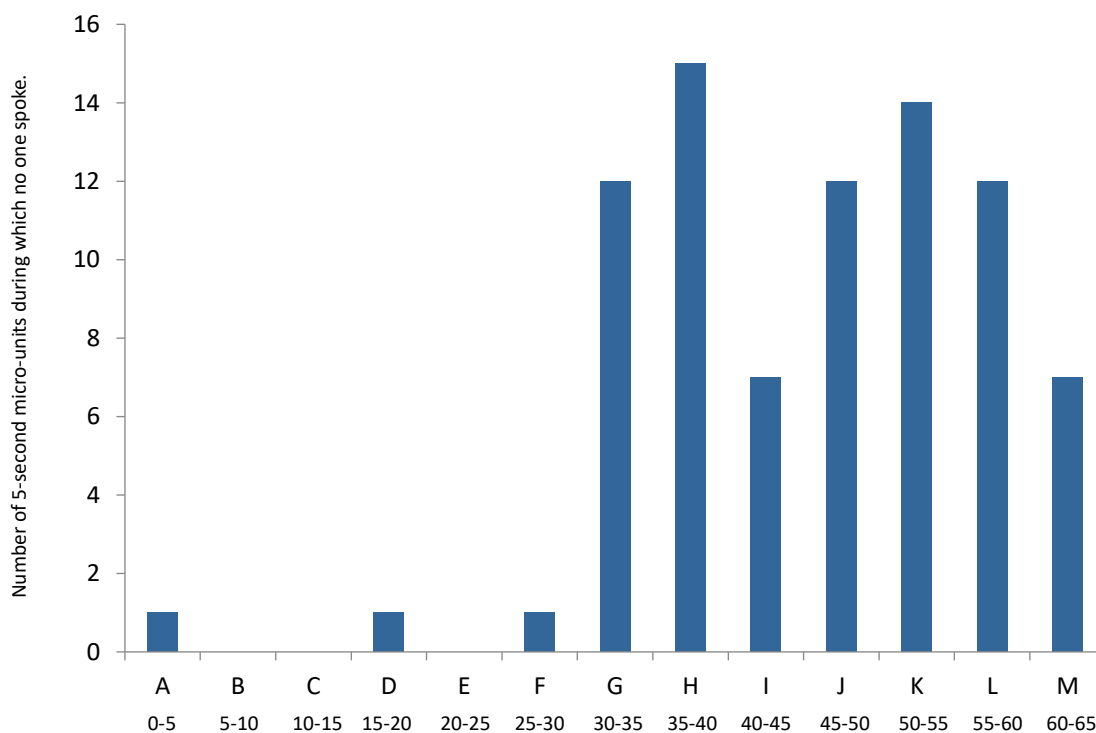
### 9.1 Charting the Video Microanalysis Results

The research project generated a 65-minute video of the conversation (or dialogic encounter) between ‘Tina’, the deputy headteacher, and ‘Nathan’, the child, in the presence of ‘Julia’, the child’s art therapist. The reader is reminded that the participants' names have been changed to protect their anonymity. When first viewing the video, I was struck by Nathan's absorption from around halfway and the ensuing quiet. The graph below shows the quantity and distribution of micro-units of time when no one spoke. The horizontal axis indicates the 13 five-minute segments which constitute the 65-minute video (A-M). The vertical axis shows the number of 5-second micro-units during each 5-minute unit of time, in which no one spoke. The graph demonstrates the steep increase in quietness, defined here as the absence of a human voice, in the middle of the video, and

its continuation as the hour progressed. Initially, I used the term ‘silence’ rather than ‘quietness’, but these moments were not always silent. Transcribing the audio recording, I heard sounds, including breathing and the sound of hands working with materials. When I returned to the video, I observed Nathan thinking, feeling, and working at his own pace as he interacted with materials and with Tina and Julia. His absorption in a world of ideas and creativity was apparent. His inner world seemed to drive his creativity. Tina and Julia were sensitive to the sustained energy that Nathan was visibly expending and did not interrupt him. Thus, he showed Tina vital aspects of his creative process.

Diagram 10

*Bar chart: Quantification of silence/quietness in the dialogic encounter*



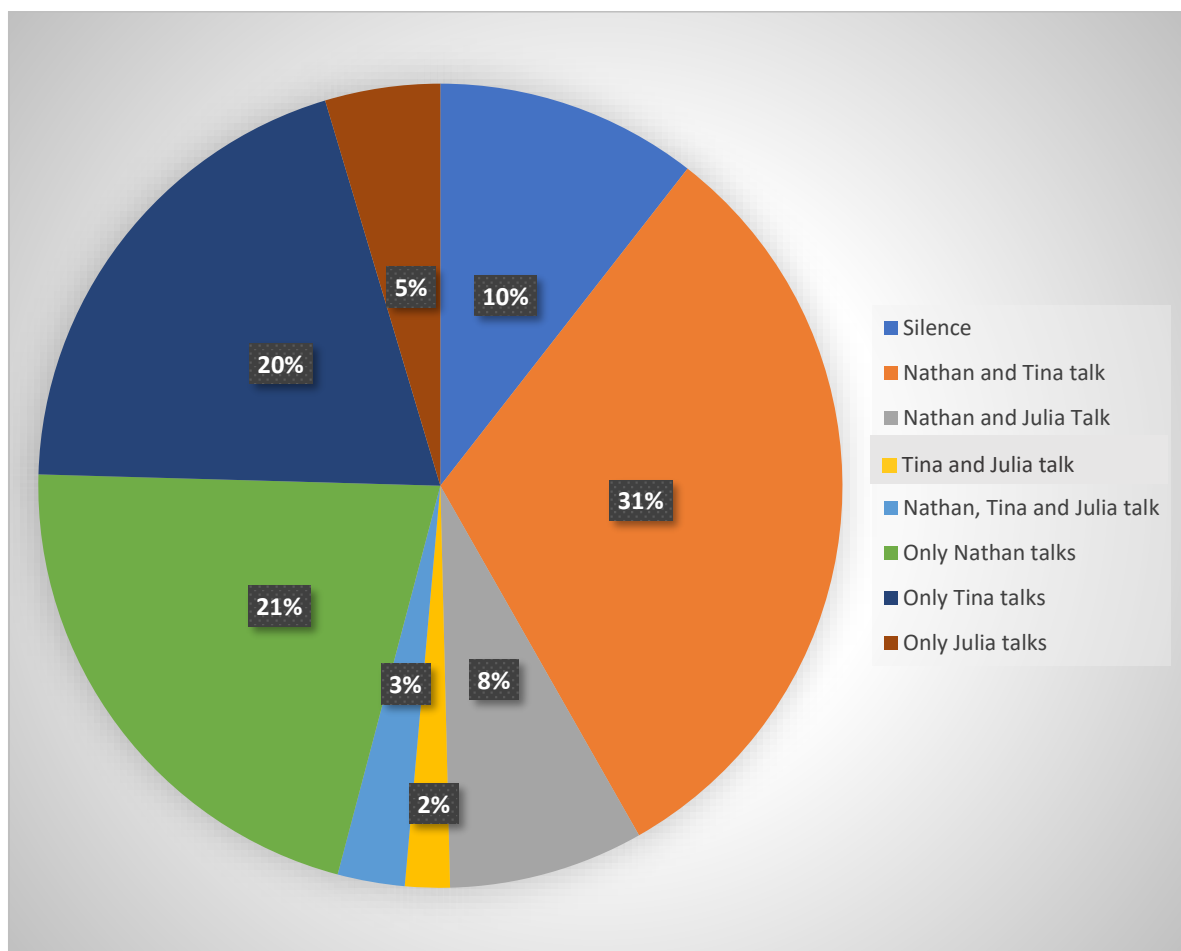
A to M = 13 days: Each day, 5 minutes of the video were analysed. For example, Day A focused on minutes 0-5. The numbers on the horizontal axis indicate the minutes of the video studied on the corresponding day.

‘Silence’ was one of eight components observed and recorded during the microanalysis; the other seven were when Nathan, Tina, and Julia spoke independently or in various permutations. All eight components are shown in the legend of the pie chart below, which illustrates the percentage of the entire video that each component claims. What is remarkable here is the extent of Nathan's agency.

He speaks independently, with Tina, with Julia, or with both Tina and Julia in 63% of the dialogic encounter. This accounts for nearly two-thirds of the hour. When we add to this the quiet time while working or deciding what he wants to do (10%), Nathan can be observed exercising agency for almost three-quarters of the hour. This sense of agency will be discussed in greater detail later. A counterpoint to the expanse of Nathan’s agency is the brevity of the two adults, Tina and Julia, speaking together. They took his lead as much as possible during the hour. In Bergsonian language, this pie chart is derived from the concept of time as space. We can see the entire ‘research hour’ set out in front of us as a whole, and divided into sections.

Diagram 11

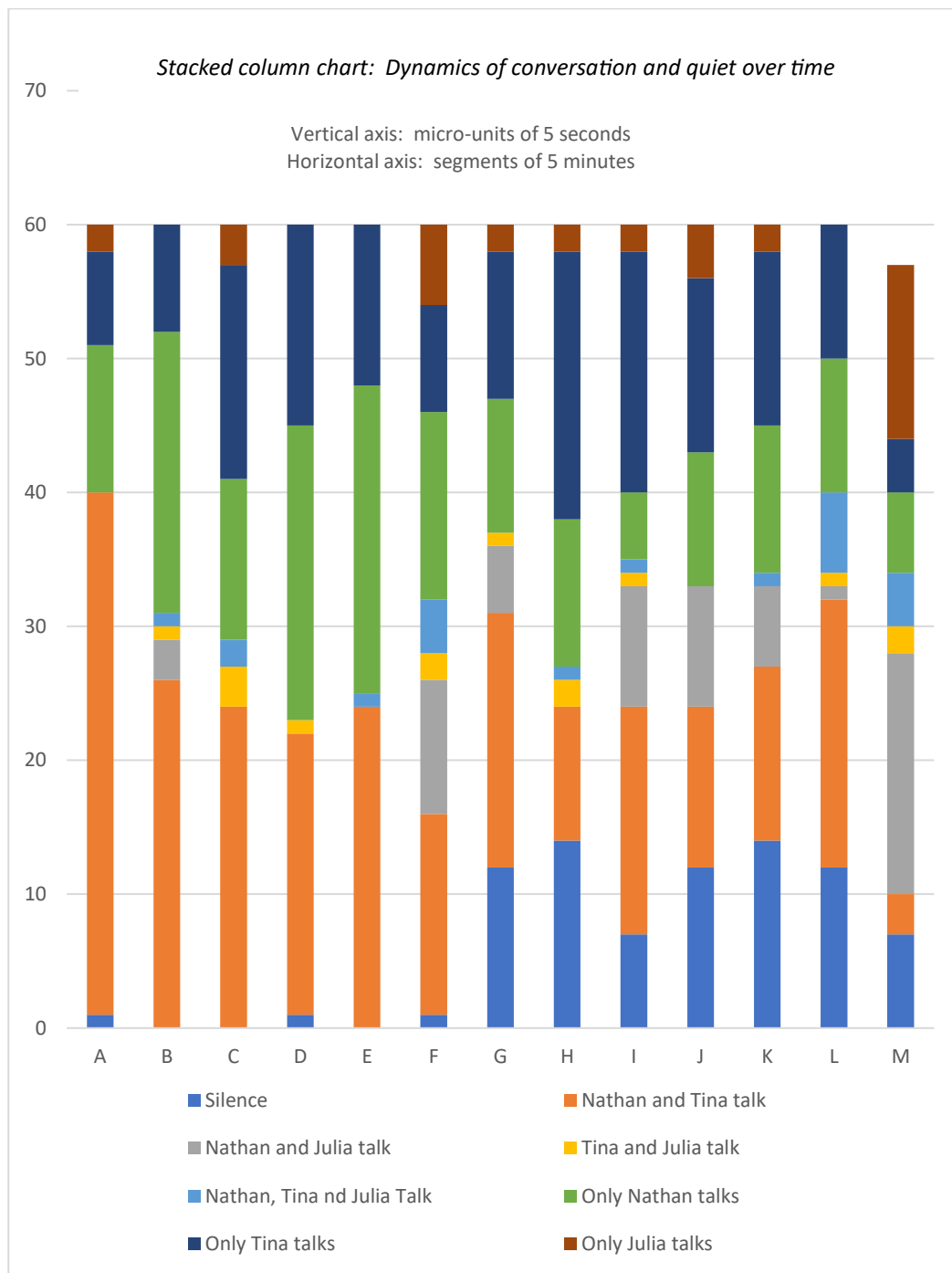
*Pie Chart: Quantification of verbal communication and quietness in the dialogic encounter*



The stacked column chart below illustrates the distribution of the same components and their temporal evolution. Each column represents a 5-minute segment of the 65-minute video, as in the

first bar chart on quietness. Overall, the chart combines eight bar charts that were previously produced separately. The eight bar charts are combined here for two reasons. Firstly, to economise on space, showing all eight would require several pages. But secondly and more importantly, to illustrate how their aggregate composition changes over time. It shows the proportion of time in each segment (A-M) that participants speak on their own, with others, or not at all.

Diagram 12

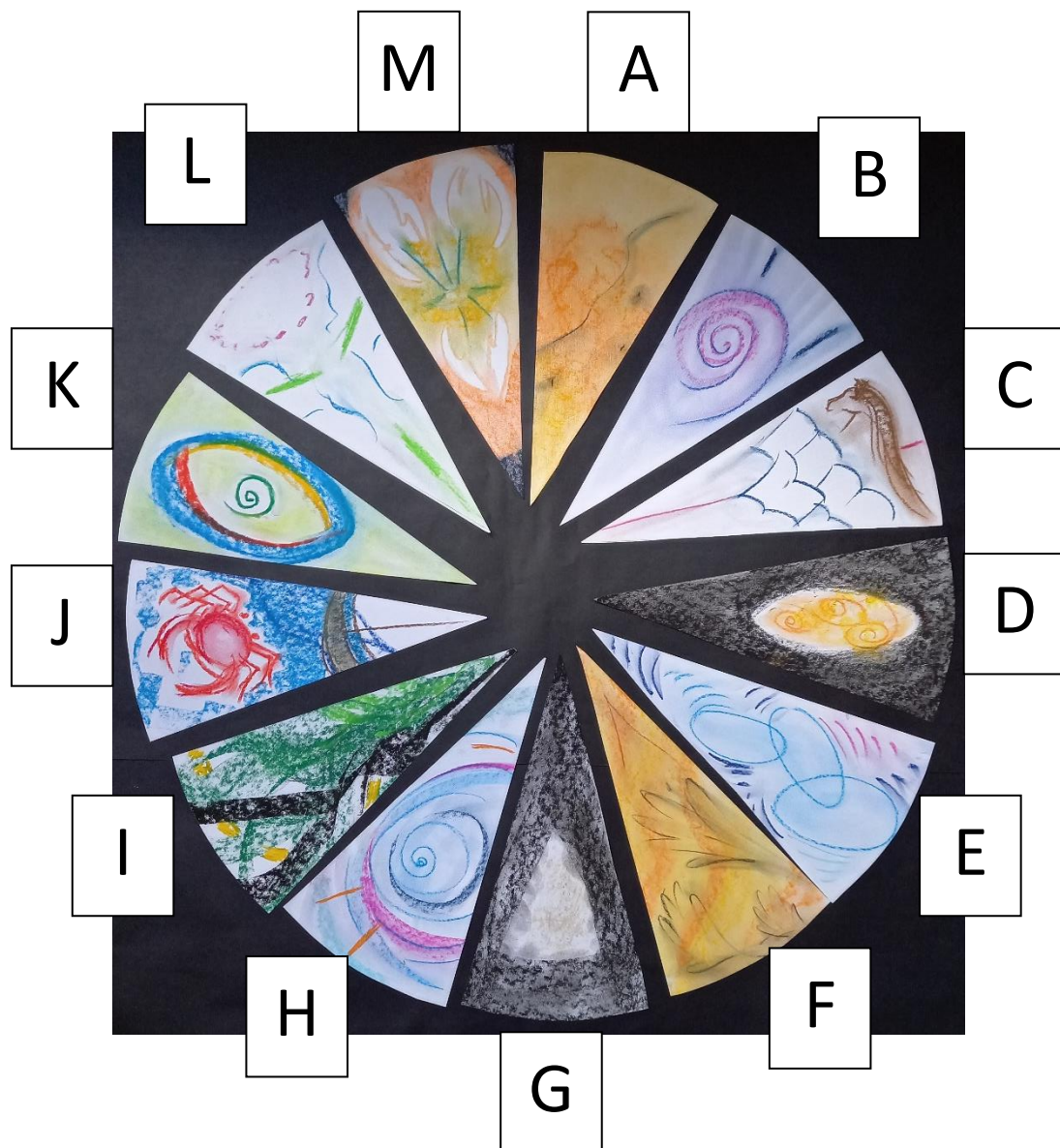


This stacked chart holds complex data. The maximum value on the vertical axis is 60, corresponding to 5 minutes of 5-second units. The final thirteenth segment ended 10 seconds early. Whereas the pie chart summarises the total for each component as part of the whole, this chart decomposes each component across the whole, thereby clarifying communication dynamics over time. For instance, it reveals the predominance of Tina and Nathan's discussion (orange) at the beginning of the hour. Halfway through, as we saw earlier, silence/quietness appears (the darker blue), signifying Nathan's art-making processes, and immersion in his *durée*. As anticipated in the research design, Nathan relied on Julia's support. She spoke very little initially, waiting until Nathan indicated that he needed support. The time during which Nathan and Julia talked (grey), and Julia talked only (brown), increased toward the end of the hour.

Findings from the video microanalysis presented thus far illustrate how the components of quietness and talking evolved over the course of the hour. As noted, the analysis revealed patterns of communication, including a marked increase in quietness from halfway, when Nathan began making art and showed Tina how he worked in art therapy. Integral to the systematic analysis of video data was an accompanying art-based approach: I made spontaneous pastel sketches daily, which I will return to. As detailed in Chapter Five, I also employed other methods of video microanalysis, drawing on Stern's concept of the 'present moment' and its derivatives: now moments, vitality affects, forms of vitality, moments of meeting and shared feeling voyages. Selecting brief sequences, I examined communication and imagination observable in the video. I found Stern's cluster of concepts to be highly effective for exploring what is occurring in art therapy at the micro-interactive level. Since implicit relational knowing is beyond language, I used these concepts to describe phenomena such as emotional expression, sensory experience, and symbolic awareness. I will return to this later, when I address the research questions. Before I do that, I show how the art-based approach during the video microanalysis led to the identification of five phases in an art therapy hour. These five phases create a structured framework, recognisable across different types of art therapy sessions. Because this is generalisable and distils complexity, I call it a schema.

## 9.2 Video microanalysis art responses and depiction of the schematic hour

Art-making was integral to conducting the video microanalysis. Each morning, after reading my end-of-day summary of the previous day's systematic analytical work, I created a response artwork and wrote a few words. These contained my reflections and emotional responses to the 5 hours spent interrogating that 5-minute segment. After completing the 13-day study, I assembled the pastel drawings as shown below. The image seemed to echo my earlier *Objects in Time* collage. Though different, they are both circular and encompass the whole hour. I wondered whether I might find here, too, the rhythm of the hour that I had discovered embedded in the collage.



*The Whole and the Parts in Colour with Analytical Days (Pastels and digital graphics)*

As I contemplated the parts (A to M) and the whole, I identified a sequence I termed 'Flow of five phases': the beginning settling-in phase (10 mins); the explorations around what happens next 'getting somewhere' (15 mins); the central phase 'engrossed' (20 mins); the gradual movement towards an ending (10 mins) and finally, the ending itself (10 mins). I was intrigued to know what I could construct from this visual data. Guided by Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022), I started by examining each of the five phases separately, using the entire text in minutes as the dataset for that phase. For instance, for 'Beginning', I used the first 10 minutes of the transcript.

Diagram 13

*The flow of the five phases of the schematic art therapy hour*



### 9.3 Venn Diagrams for the Flow of Five Phases

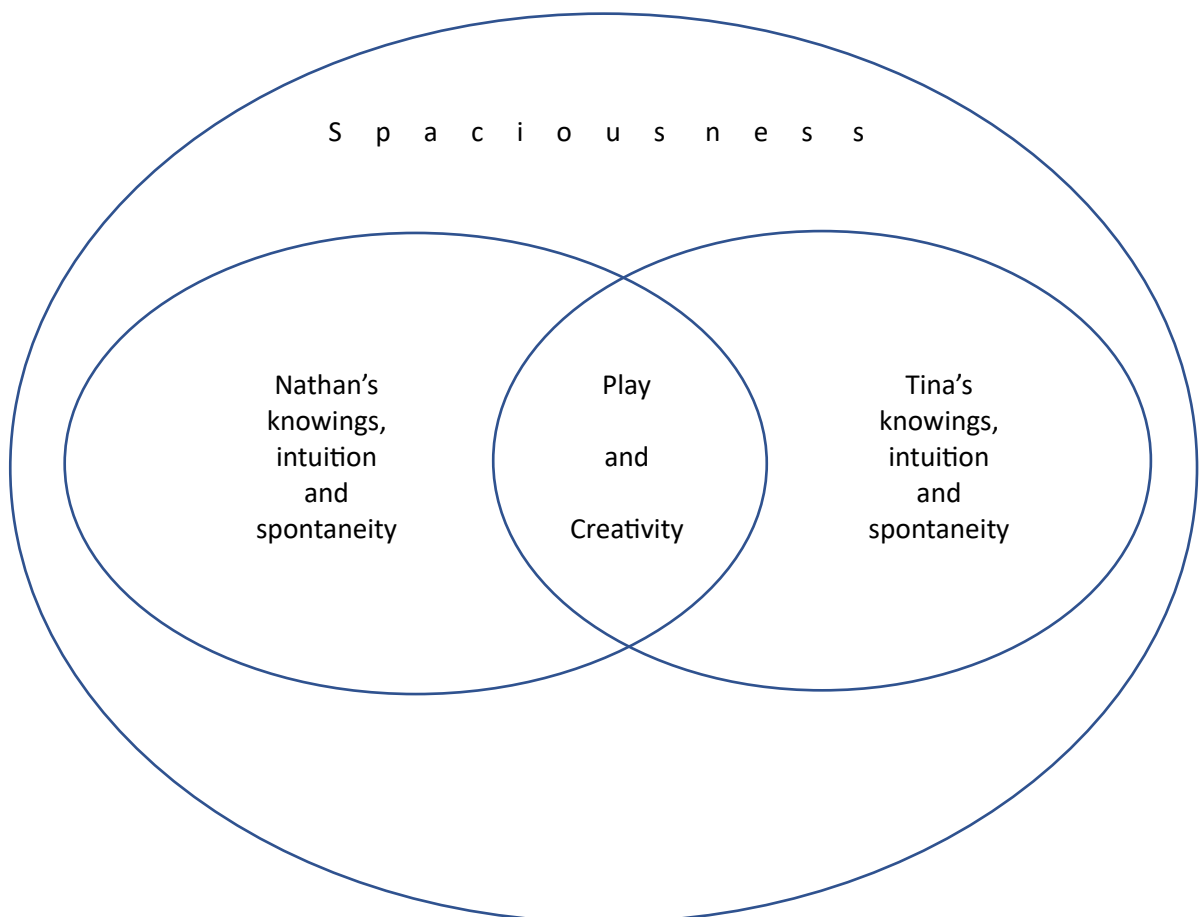
Reflexive Thematic Analysis yielded Venn diagrams that served as conceptual maps for each phase.

#### 9.3.1 First Phase: Beginning

Tina was struck by the difference between the art therapy space and the other rooms in the school. It was furnished with art materials that they surveyed, glanced at, and discussed. Nathan identified the materials he liked best and two images that were important to him. He discussed the creative process involved in making artworks based on these images. He also told Tina about a relaxation technique he learned from Julia. There was a sense of spaciousness as the three participants settled into the beginning of this encounter, freely exploring the terrain. Tina and Nathan interacted through their knowing: intuitively and spontaneously, playfully and creatively. Julia's quiet presence held the space and its potential for multiplicity as she had done routinely over the past three years.

Diagram 14

*Conceptual map for Phase 1: Beginning*



### 9.3.2 Second Phase: Getting Somewhere

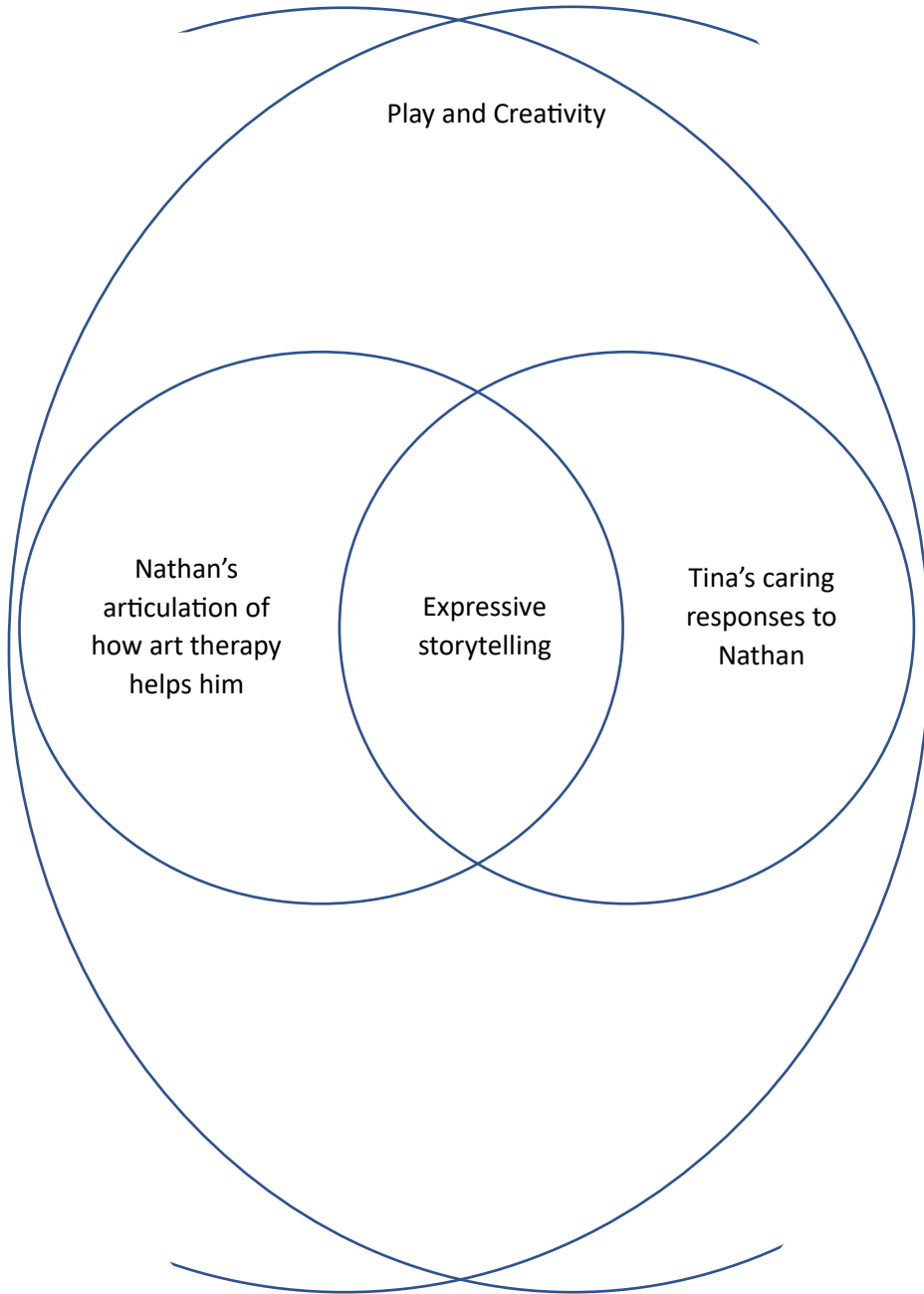
In this phase, there was a sense of getting somewhere. The destination was unclear, but this was fine: it was the journey that counted. The spaciousness of the art therapy room facilitated playful creativity as Nathan and Tina explored what supported Nathan in art therapy. The video revealed verbal and non-verbal ways of conveying meaning, including bodily movement. Nathan remembered 'relaxation bits' that he had learned with Julia. This was important because understanding what facilitates relaxation is key to positive mental health. Past traumatic experiences can lead to a constant state of alertness to protect oneself from perceived or actual danger. Tina asked him what was involved in the 'relaxation bits' he had done with Julia. He explained through bodily movements.

Later, Nathan recalled another aspect of his art therapy that had helped him: the creation and reflective use of handmade books. Discussing both relaxation and the books evoked vivid images that sparked associations and fired Nathan and Tina's imaginations. In this safe space where creativity and playfulness flourished, their minds interacted fluidly, sharing narratives of direct experiences, challenges and triumphs. Tina's caring responses encouraged and enabled Nathan to articulate his ideas. She spoke with different voices: the public, private and personal, which wove together throughout this phase of the hour.

The conceptual map for this phase, shown below, zooms into the first phase's map. Spaciousness, and Nathan's and Tina's knowings are still implied, though not visible in this diagram. The larger almond-shaped element, representing play and creativity, is an enlargement of the central shape in the conceptual map for the first phase. Within this almond shape, Nathan's articulation of what helped him in art therapy and Tina's caring responses to him overlapped. Their stories came to life. Expressive storytelling occupied the space between them, occurring in their shared mind space. Their narratives wove real-life events at home and on holiday, with humour and imagination. Finally, Tina asked Nathan whether the act of storytelling itself had been helpful for him. He provided additional details about the story, which may have answered Tina's question in the affirmative.

Diagram 15

*Conceptual map for phase 2: Getting Somewhere*



### 9.3.3 Third Phase: Engrossed (or Absorbed)

Nathan's internal dialogue was, of course, inaccessible, but tangible evidence can be found in his visible creative decisions and actions. In this third phase, moments of silence were augmented, and as Nathan became increasingly absorbed in his work, he showed his implicit artistic knowing. His work developed chronologically under the four headings below:

**Nathan's decision-making:** No specific brief was given, so Nathan was free to choose what he wanted to do and how to spend the hour. The spaciousness of the art therapy room and the creative expressiveness shared up to this point facilitated openness to possibilities. Nathan experimented with different ideas in his decision-making process. He asked for and received support.

**Intentionality:** Nathan articulated his intentions and prepared himself for his self-set task. Form gradually emerged, and Nathan, immersed in his *durée*, engaged with 'deep mind knowing'; silences increased. Deep mind differs from the 'self-conscious' mind: it 'makes unexpected connections; it knows intuitively when an insight is correct' (Ross, 2017, p. 57). Nathan followed his intuition.

**Response to collapse:** Nathan demonstrated that he had learned to address the potential collapse of his sculpture and to work with it to rebuild. We also observed Tina providing feedback to Nathan as he focused on problem-solving. We saw that creative acts do not always proceed smoothly. Art-making offered opportunities to experiment with feelings of failure and difficulty, as well as joy and delight.

**Nathan storied his artwork:** Nathan searched for figurines of characters from his favourite epic story, *The Lord of the Rings*, to develop his art. He had worked with the story in past sessions with Julia. Thus, he synthesised his experiential knowledge in art therapy with his experiences of the broader world of popular culture and the arts. He showed skills in creative adaptation and empathy.

Diagram 16

Conceptual map for Phase 3: Engrossed - Figure 3a

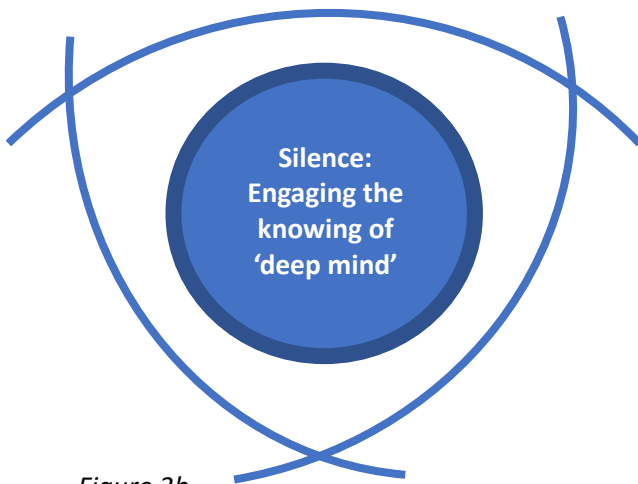
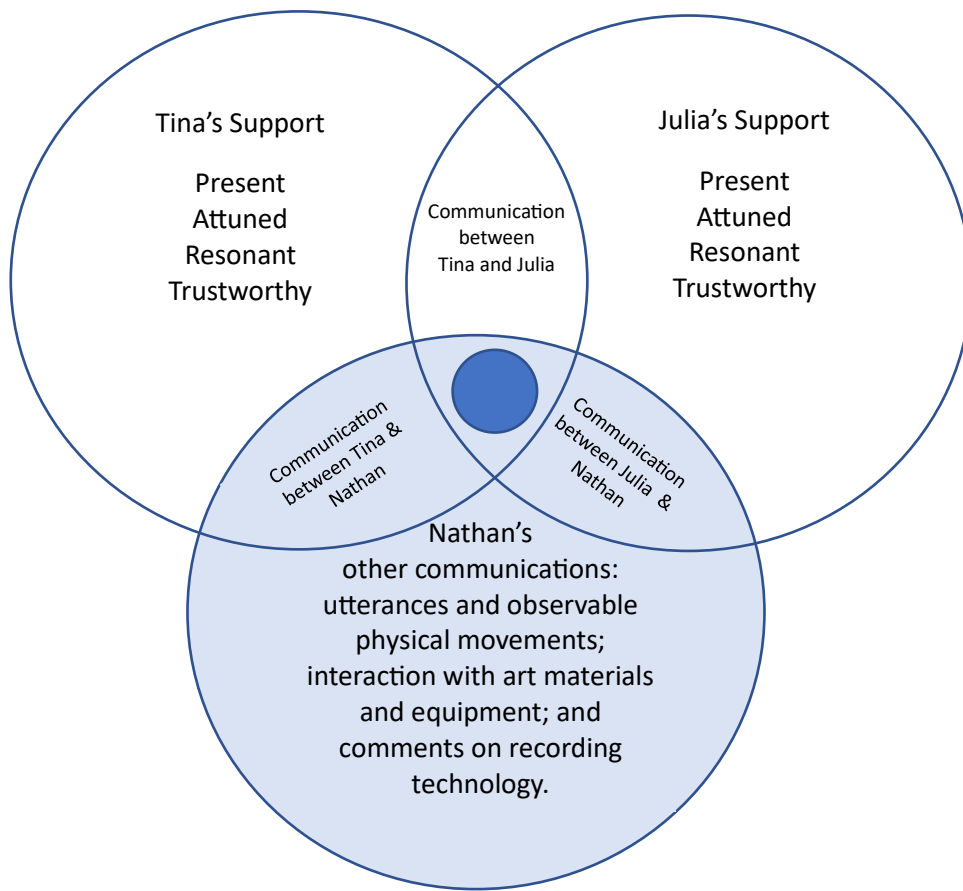


Figure 3b

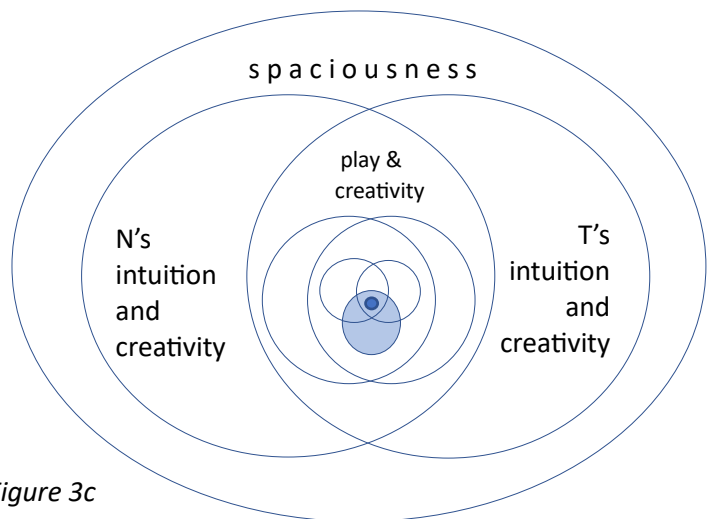


Figure 3c

Figure 3a indicates communication patterns between Nathan, Tina and Julia. There are no 5-second moments when all three participants verbalise. So, there are no audible voices in the central 'shield' shape. Within this shield shape (at the centre of fig. 3a and enlarged in fig. 3b), lies a circle. This represents silence when Nathan appears to be engaged with what has been described as the knowing of 'deep mind' (Ross, 2017, p. 26). Figure 3c locates the map for this phase within the conceptual maps for the first and second phases.

#### **9.3.4 Fourth Phase: Towards Ending**

The video revealed Nathan's intuition and creativity. In the 'spaciousness' of the art therapy room, he interacted confidently and imaginatively with Tina, supported by Julia's presence; she knew him well. Nathan, who had been familiar with the space the three of them occupied for an hour, decided to show Tina the volcano he had previously constructed.

At the beginning of this phase, Tina and Julia, with their gentle, interested attitude, jointly facilitated Nathan's imaginative work, respecting his ideas. There was a sense of bonding and communication through the shared sensory experience of the sand's texture as Nathan continued working on his creation. Tina helped when he requested.

The matter of time management eventually beckoned. It was time to think about the ending. The allotted time was nearly over, and it was necessary to devise a way to exit and return to everyday life. This required gentleness and skill from the art therapist, as Nathan was deeply engaged in his work and play. Tina intuitively understood the significance of this and took Julia's lead, reminding Nathan that there were just a few minutes left, without hurrying him.

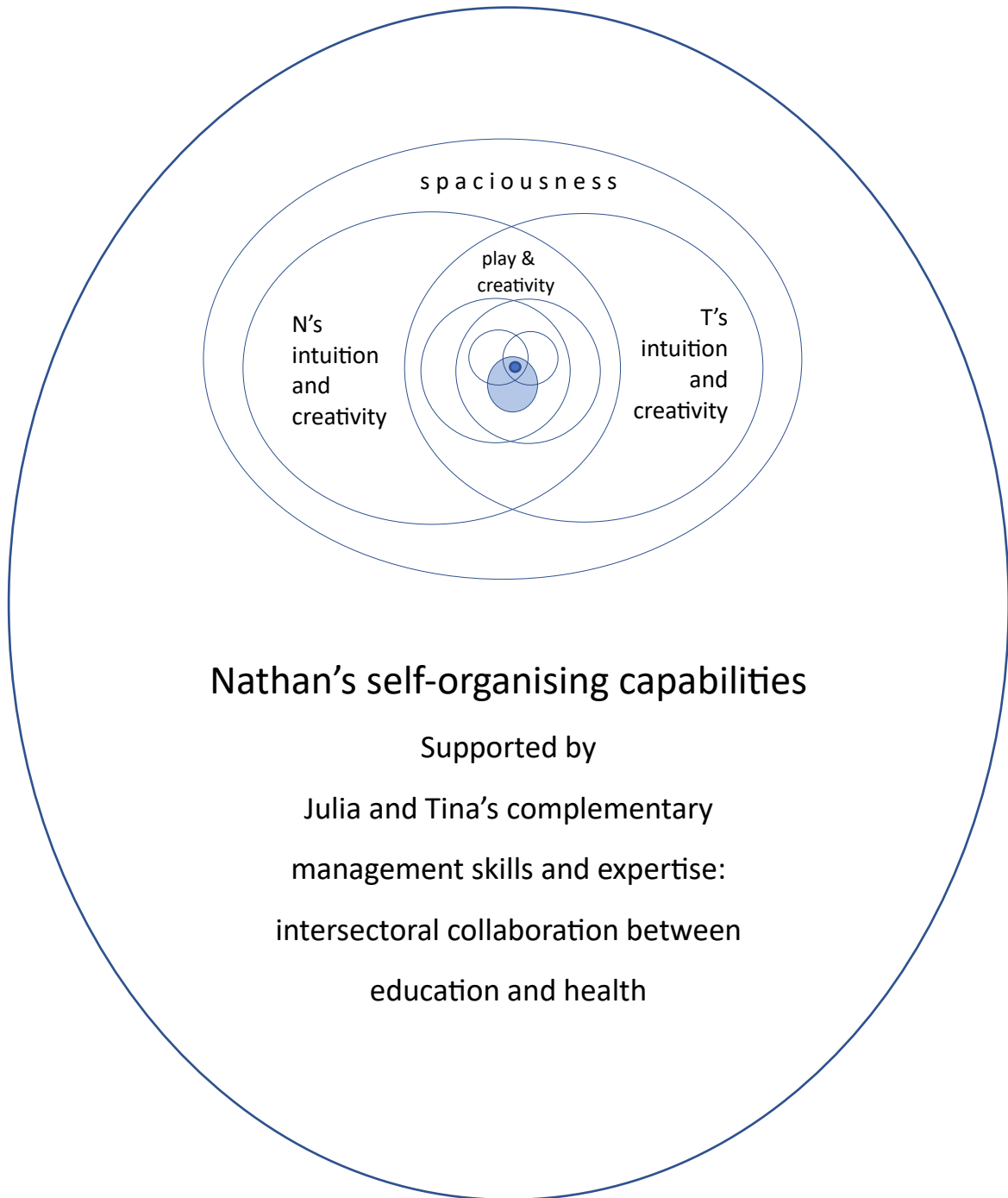
References to the microphone on the table brought the wider reality of the research world into focus. What was happening in the heterotopic space had significance beyond the room. Tina referred to the broader school structures, including the cleaning staff who help maintain the school's appearance. Preparations were underway for re-entry into that world.

**Nathan's self-organising capabilities:** 'Now all I need to do is...'

The conceptual map below illustrates how the previous phases led to this point, at which Nathan was directing the final part of the session, under time constraints and using available resources to complete his self-set task. Tina and Julia supported him by drawing on their professional knowledge and life experience. Tina, from a pedagogical perspective as a teacher, Julia, from a psychological health perspective as an art therapist, and an Allied Health Professional. But they were far more than their professional roles. They also drew on their unique personal qualities.

Diagram 17

Conceptual map for Phase 4: Towards ending



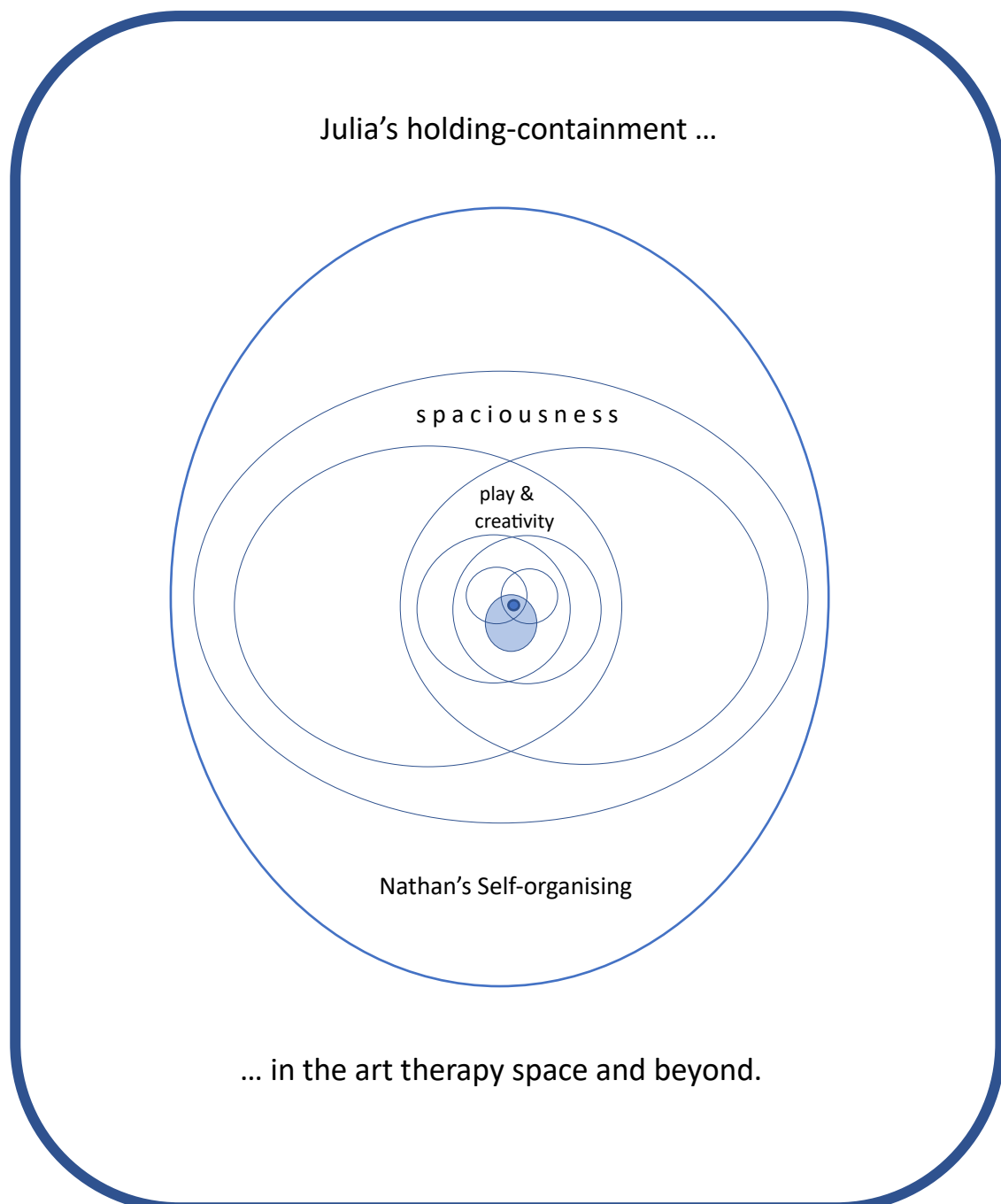
This Phase Four conceptual map indicates that, towards the end of the session, Nathan's self-organising skills came increasingly to the fore. Leaning on Bergson's concept of *durée*, (which integrates multiplicity into unity), all that had gone before (in life, in previous art therapy sessions, and in the first forty-five minutes of the research hour) had contributed to the quality of the current moments. Therefore, the maps of the first three phases lie within the framed oval shape, which represents what could be observed of Nathan's self-organising capabilities. The latter were evident in the video, owing to his agency, Tina's and Julia's support, and the careful, caring actions and intuitions of all those who had supported him throughout his life and school journey.

### 9.3.5 Fifth Phase: Ending

A good ending was enacted, using a shared ending game and humour. This final conceptual map illustrates the safe, containing art therapy space that Julia created with and for Nathan over time, which provided an enabling environment for the research. Nathan showed Tina how Julia saw him and 'held' his 'stuff'. Maybe he was showing Tina that she, too, could see him as Julia saw him.

Diagram 18

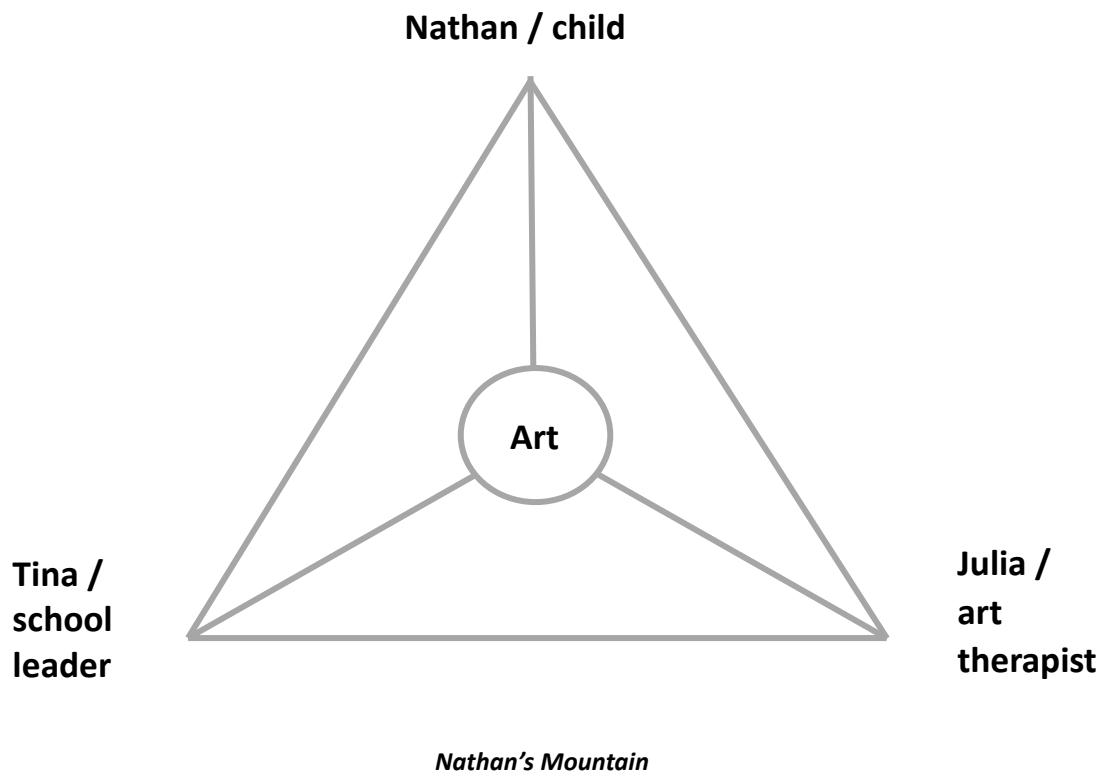
*Conceptual map for Phase 5: Ending*



#### 9.4 Main research question: How does school art therapy make a difference for children?

To examine how art therapy makes a difference, this research was structured around a single transdisciplinary case study of school-based art therapy described above. The research model was developed to privilege the child's perspective, with the aim of empowering the child to exercise their agency and competencies. A new method and epistemology for understanding school art therapy emerged through the interrogation of artistic and interpersonal phenomena. Systematic and imaginative engagement with the data and associated research processes extended the triangular relationship, a long-established construct in art therapy practice and theory, and produced a model for systemic research (shown below). This conceptualises and operationalises the case study method used in this research, which enabled a deeper examination of what occurs and why in school art therapy. I now explain this tripartite model and, through a Sternian lens, demonstrate how the observations it facilitates link to existing theories of moments in time and psychotherapy.

Diagram 19



*The tripartite triangular relationship in systemic school-based art psychotherapy research*

The basic art therapy triangular relationship, as explained in Chapter Three, appears on the right of the diagram above, though tilted. It is the relationship among Julia, Nathan, and art, developed over the three years of their collaboration. I use the word 'art' as shorthand for all art-based processes and image-related activities or discussions. Echoes of this art and their shared interest in artistic processes reverberated during the research hour as Nathan revealed to Tina facets of his relationship with Julia, including the acquisition of new skills and the development of emotional regulation abilities. The triangle on the left indicates the relationship between Nathan, Tina, and what he chooses to show Tina of his artistic knowing and processes developed during sessions with Julia. The third and final 'part' in this tripartite model is the triangular relationship at the bottom, between Tina, Julia and the art. Julia's presence was crucial: she helped Tina understand something of Nathan's art, his relationship with it, and thus, to some extent, with himself. As Nathan worked during the research hour, Tina's and Julia's gazes were focused on him and on how deeply he engaged with the materials and his art-making.

This research demonstrates that the three triangular relationships (which together make a whole, the tripartite model) could be observed simultaneously when a trusted person ('Tina') was invited into the heterotopic art therapy space by the child ('Nathan'), in the presence of his art therapist ('Julia'). Art was at the centre of the relationship among the three participants: working with images in the imagination, interacting with art materials, engaging in art-making processes, and creating artworks. The axes of the three interconnected triangles were variously activated at different points in the research hour. For instance, during the silences when Nathan was absorbed in his *durée*, the axis between him and art was strongly activated. His metaphorical thinking had developed through earlier images and stories, as evidenced by secondary data on the material presented during the research hour. Nathan demonstrated how he had learned to manage frustration and the challenges posed by materials' resistance. In the heterotopic art therapy space, supported by Julia's presence and reliable trustworthiness, his mind developed in new ways at his own pace while actively 'doing' things.

The research revealed notable events in brief moments during the research hour. Stern's concept of present moments in psychotherapy, in which significant interpersonal communication happens, was visible and audible. The 'shared feeling voyage' of implicit relational knowing, described in Chapters Seven and Eight, an experience that Julia and Nathan had shared in therapy sessions, as they glimpsed each other through the aperture in the sculpture in a moment of connection, was mirrored by Tina and Nathan. Julia thus observed what I call a 'mirrored feeling voyage'. By this, I mean that the shared feeling voyage experienced in the therapeutic context was reenacted with Tina, as Julia said in her interview. Zooming out from the tripartite model to include myself as observer-researcher, I secondarily observed Julia as she observed the mirrored feeling voyage. This creates a fascinating palimpsest that emerged from the research. These resonances, which demonstrate the 'shared feeling voyage' extending beyond the period of art therapy sessions, clarify an important relational aspect of how art therapy makes a difference: new implicit 'relational knowing' patterns can emerge, reenacting and transferring into another relationship.

Exploring how art therapy in schools makes a difference prompted additional questions, which are condensed into the four sub-questions below. The study's results are interwoven and emphasise the multiplicity inherent in the phenomena of creativity and the school's social context. Typically, school staff will have exhausted all individual and group support mechanisms that have been successful for other children before referring a child to an art therapist. Since art therapy relationships comprise a partnership between artistic and interpersonal phenomena, there are myriad ways, rooted in the vitality of creative processes, through which individual art therapists work with individual children. Therefore, it is impossible to generalise about how art therapy makes a difference for all children. However, the tripartite model and the systematic study of the particular yielded important generalisable findings about the structural and experiential realities of school art therapy. The complexities of the situations some children face, outlined in Chapter Three, call for support that is adaptable and creative, which art therapists provide through blended psychotherapeutic and creative processes, as Julia did, using verbal and nonverbal means to engage the child.

### **9.5 What can we learn from the child about their experiences with school-based art therapy?**

Nathan was invited to participate in the research as an expert on his experience of art therapy, and he was enthusiastic about the opportunity. He was invited to exercise his agency through the dialogic encounter: a conversation with the deputy headteacher at his school, whom he knew well, in the familiar environment of his art therapy room. He contributed to the decision to conduct the research in his art therapy room. He had told Julia which materials he would like available for use during the research hour. Nathan demonstrated that, given creative opportunities and a warm, interpersonal environment, he was capable and intuitive, and that he wanted to share his experience of art therapy, both in what he said and in what he did. Nathan implicitly demonstrated his understanding of heterotopia, a concept developed by Foucault, whose unpublished introduction to his radio broadcast on heterotopia declared that: *'les enfants les connaissent'*, children know perfectly what heterotopias are because they create them. Nathan knew all about heterotopias.

As a research participant, Nathan demonstrated agency and competency, enjoyment and the thrill of discovery. Salient features that struck me when I began studying the data were, on the one hand, his own reporting of positive behavioural outcomes and, on the other hand, the creation of his principal image. These initial observations reflected my professional interests in both behavioural outcomes and a well-known associated metaphor. As the study progressed, more complex insights emerged from Nathan's sharing. Nathan showed Tina what he could do with the time and space allocated to him to express himself and how he could reflect with her on what had helped him.

Far more than simply supplying evidence of strategies and techniques he had found helpful, Nathan showed how his knowledge of and commitment to materials generated energy and passion, in himself and in others. He demonstrated the value of absorption in the creative process. He showed how his imagination, experience, and artistic knowing were projected onto materials, and how he adapted his ideas and narrative as the materials responded to his touch and movements. Thus, he

demonstrated the reciprocity between himself and the art materials in art therapy. All this occurred within the context of his art therapy relationship with Julia, epitomised, as Tina said, by their shared understanding of the 'unspoken word'. Nathan developed emergent lines of thinking in response to the materials and shaped the content of the hour, as he had shaped earlier art therapy sessions, exhibiting auto-organisation. None of this is easily measurable. Such a process is full of surprises and discontinuous leaps, requiring the art therapist to respond creatively. Julia was familiar with how these dynamics played out, and, in Julia's presence, Tina was also confident in responding to Nathan flexibly and creatively. Thus, Nathan felt comfortable sharing his experiences.

Sometimes, as McNiff suggests, we must celebrate the fact that 'There is an inherent magic or enchantment that is basic to creative arts therapy practice', and despite all our diligence and systematic professionalism, 'the unexpected and unpredictable moments of magic are fundamental qualities of the enterprise' (McNiff 1998, p.43). While the question of images as dynamic, ever-developing phenomena remains inherently mysterious, Nathan demonstrated that his personal connections to his images had power and meaning. Definitive interpretations of his metaphors and imagery were not the aim. The aim of art therapy was to give Nathan space for creative freedom to grow and develop in his own way and style, and to gain insights for himself. Nathan taught us that working with art-based approaches and their 'magic moments' is fun, exciting and meaningful. The longitudinal nature of the data in the current research facilitated a deeper understanding of the intrinsic value of his relationship with art materials and his images over time.

Nathan showed how the vitality of the creative process propelled him, how ideas emerged and combined, and how emotions affected him. He showed confidence in his actions and thoughtfulness in his responses. He expressed joy upon discovering something new. His inventiveness and aesthetic sensibility were evident in his sensitivity to material properties, his attention to their qualities, and his ability to design, construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct. He demonstrated his emotional resilience when the structure he was building collapsed and his empathy when Tina expressed

anxiety about the sculpture's fragility. He showed the emotional maturity he had gained in the art therapy room. An example of this is that he relaxed, worked, sought help when needed, and completed the task he had set for himself. He demonstrated intrinsic motivation and all four purposes of art-making discussed in Chapter Three. Echoing another art therapist's phrasing, he showed how 'implicit experiences are bodily expressed during material handling and manifest concretely in artwork' (Rankanen, 2021, p. 147).

Nathan's agency of speech and action was remarkable. As seen above in the pie and stacked charts, he spoke for a total of nearly a quarter of the hour on his own. He and Tina talked together for almost a third of the hour, indicating that he was either speaking alone or conversing with Tina for more than 50% of the time. Of course, since it was an interactive encounter, the fact that each participant sometimes spent time talking 'alone' means that they were sustaining their thinking and speaking in the company of others, rather than speaking in a void 'on their own'. In the silence, too, Nathan was visibly thinking about or working on what he wanted to do. Julia's role as a resource and support for Nathan meant she spoke very little initially and waited until Nathan indicated he needed the support. Towards the end, she talked more, and at the end, she and Nathan spent time talking together when Tina had left. This ensured Nathan was comfortable with the ending. Nathan expressed satisfaction at the end of the hour and stated that he had enjoyed the experience.

Ensuring that Nathan felt respected and comfortable throughout the project and afterwards was vital to facilitate his teaching and, therefore, our learning. He needed to feel comfortable enough in the unfamiliar research environment. Because the research project was conducted within the familiar relationships generated by a well-established professional art therapy practice at his school, these relationships and facilities were available to ensure his well-being during and after the dialogic encounter. The study revealed that a child research participant can teach us much about their particular experience in art therapy, and that it is crucial to help the child feel comfortable during the research process and to ensure that the child's unique personality is respected.

## **9.6 What dynamics are involved when art therapy is provided in schools?**

Inviting a school leader to participate in this research on school-based art therapy implicated institutional power dynamics within the school system. I had hypothesised that the results of the conversation might elucidate aspects of a senior staff member's and a child's experiences. Previous art therapy research has primarily, though not exclusively, conducted interviews with children and their therapists, or with researchers and children, parents, teachers, or other teaching staff, to establish children's behavioural change resulting from their art therapy experiences. This is, of course, vitally important to explaining the benefits of art therapy. I was, however, curious whether conversations between children who had received art therapy support and their headteacher, or someone in a school leadership position, might yield fresh insights into systemic processes in schools, from both perspectives. In a school setting, complex dynamics surrounding meaning and control can arise when behaviour that is difficult for the school to cope with surfaces.

The research revealed that the child's positive experience of their own power can be harnessed in art therapy through imagery work within the therapeutic relationship. The school leader directly observed the depth of mutual understanding between the child and the art therapist. She termed this phenomenon 'the unspoken word', conveying her powerful insight into the quality of nonverbal communication shared by the therapist and the child. She recognised that this had led to significant changes in the child's behaviour beyond the art therapy room, to the extent that the child was no longer at risk of permanent exclusion. Deeply ingrained drive to harm others, rooted in early trauma survival responses to abuse and powerlessness, for which a child cannot be blamed, had been transformed into developmental, emotional growth. This requires patient relational work, careful handling and clear boundary-setting regarding safety issues. The research demonstrates this is possible through the thoughtful planning and implementation of a school art therapy intervention. The research project provided an accepting, free, and safe-enough environment for spontaneous interaction between a senior teacher and a child who had received medium- to long-term art therapy

support: a child whose previous behaviour patterns had led to the original art therapy referral. The challenges of representation and how to empower child participants to express their thoughts, views, and actions to a person in authority required careful consideration of potential power imbalances. The art therapist's presence addressed this problem, providing support for Nathan. Unexpectedly, Julia's presence also served as a channel for revealing realities that resonated with the child's prior experiences in the art therapy room, realities usually inaccessible to researchers.

The research revealed the complex dynamics of school-based art therapy, which operates at the intersection of multiple systems. The case study demonstrates how the art therapist helped the child access their inner creative world and artistic knowing through art-making and the creation of something new. How the work developed and how the child's emotional growth continued outside the art therapy room depended on multiple factors, including the child's interests, the therapist's training, supervisory relationship, ongoing professional development, the school environment and the way that the therapist communicated with school staff. Optimal conditions also included the school's understanding of child development, the effects of early relational trauma, the time required for a child to engage with art therapy (as initial trust must be built), and how to support the art therapist in their work. Consideration of all of the above features was observed at the school where the research took place. The research participants, Tina and Julia, had already collaborated with other school personnel to create the conditions for interdisciplinary understanding. A practical example of this is respect for the art therapy space and time. Julia and Nathan posted a notice on the door: no one was to enter while a session was in progress. This may seem like a small detail, but it was crucial to creating a safe space for Nathan and the work. When such a notice is respected, the resulting understanding engenders positive dynamics. At a wider systemic level, the research found that keeping the child at the centre of the multi-agency deliberation process enabled coordinated interdisciplinary efforts that aligned the aims of education, health, and care. Clear communication processes that value each person's knowledge, tailored to the child's individual situation, could, it was observed, lead to positive progress. Although the dynamics of school-based art therapy are

complex, this complexity can be harnessed to address children's problems if the interdependencies among all involved and the sensitivities of each are appreciated.

The introduction of art therapy into the school where the research took place involved a careful process. The social constructionist cyclical approach to meaning-making is relevant here. The cycle begins with routine practices and procedures and proceeds through a coordination phase, during which new beliefs and practices can be introduced to reshape how things are done, creating new patterns which then become embedded: a new cycle of meaning-making emerges<sup>68</sup>. In schools, the SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator), supported by their headteacher and senior management team, can introduce system changes to improve children's learning experiences by integrating in-school and/or external support for individual children and small groups. This support is regularly reviewed and evaluated, including by the child. Small but significant system changes are required when art therapy is integrated into the school system. With supportive conditions in place, art therapists can work creatively with children, teachers, other professionals, and families to develop communication strategies and channels and foster creative activities and problem-solving approaches in school that support children's individual needs.

Art psychotherapy, while situated at the intersection of multiple agency systems that generate complexity, is itself dynamically complex, as this thesis and earlier sections in this chapter have shown. The research found that interdisciplinary frameworks, the complexity of art psychotherapeutic processes, the uniqueness of each human adult or child, and the inevitable existence of power relations collectively shape the dynamics of art therapy in schools and, consequently, the extent to which art therapy makes a difference for children. Furthermore, the research identified core concepts central to school art therapy, prompting me to examine the philosophical dimensions of time, space, and power. I needed to deepen my understanding of these to address the first three research questions more fully.

---

<sup>68</sup> McNamee (2014), cited and applied to school art therapy in McConnell (2021, p. 309).

## 9.7 How can a Bergsonian-Foucauldian philosophical framework illuminate time and boundaries in a child's art therapy experiences?

The question of deconstructing our habitual understandings of power, time, and space that dominate our planning in schools became a research imperative to illuminate the child's art therapy experience. In answering the first three questions, among other things, we established the multiplicity of possibilities inherent in art psychotherapy in the school setting. Bergson helps us reflect on the nature of time and its relationship to multiplicity. Our usual concept of time is linear and associated with calendars and diaries. We habitually use this to communicate, to organise our lives with timetables, and to organise our thinking with timelines. We need to carve out time for various purposes, and often this requires clear edges around the short-, medium-, or long-term time frame. However, Bergson insists that this is a spatialised, measurable concept of time, and that it is not actually time at all; rather, it is space. His concept of real time encapsulates the time we experience in our subjective life, which he calls our *durée*. Whatever language we use to describe them, distinguishing between these two types of time can help everyone in the school community value the time they spend together and apart, wherever they are in the school building.

So, *durée* is Bergson's principal idea of what time is. He sees it as the flow of subjective experience that aligns with and draws upon 'the continuous creation of unforeseeable novelties', creative evolution. Multiplicity is at the heart of *durée*, but also, paradoxically, is a unity. Creative processes are present and ever-evolving in our subjective experience, our *durée*, from which our intuition springs. Bergson describes what occurs in the present moment: emotions burgeon from the past into the present and transform as the future approaches and becomes present. His acute awareness of the immediacy of experience and the arts' capacity for expression resonates with what unfolds in the art therapy session. For instance, when a child becomes engrossed in their work, immersed in their *durée*, powerful sensory experiences can foster new propensities for apperception and creativity within the art therapy relationship. The impact of these experiences cannot be overstated: 'shared

feeling voyages' can be transformative. The art therapist's accompaniment of and attunement to the child during these moments are crucial. Conceptualising the creative flow of experience in this way may help those outside the art therapy relationship to better understand it.

I now turn to how Bergson's and Foucault's ideas fit together in the context of school art therapy. Foucault's concept of heterotopias, as distinct from 'other spaces', provides a firm spatiotemporal framework that delineates the boundaries of school art therapy. The allocation of a real room, on a real timetable, aligns with Bergson's idea of time as measurable space: this unusual counterspace occurs with predictable regularity. The clockwork scheduling of art therapy sessions over weeks, months, and even years provides a child with protected time and space for fresh and exciting play and for work with the art therapist in the heterotopia they create together. The child is welcomed as they are, with their range of emotions and thoughts, their imagination and their creativity. Immersed in their *durée*, the child interacts freely with materials, using their imagination in creative discovery, undisturbed, accompanied by and interacting with an attuned adult whom they know.

The six heterotopic principles, examined in Chapter Four, explain the art therapy space well. The heterotopic frame emphasises the importance of: the openings and closings of the space; its versatility; its relevance to and differences from other spaces; its relation to power dynamics; and its capacity to address what has occurred elsewhere. Space and time are at a premium in schools, and it is often challenging to integrate art therapy into school structures through the everyday constraints of timetabling and room allocation. Yet the heterotopic parameters reveal important aspects of why art therapy makes a difference for children. This robust spatiotemporal structure reverses power relations and welcomes the imagination. The heterotopic framework optimises the value of the art therapy experience for children. It delineates a potential space for exploring Winnicottian transitional phenomena, allowing children to experience their own power through imaginative play, storytelling, imagery, and more. These experiences can cancel out other negative experiences, as Foucault aptly stated, and as trauma-focused work shows (van der Kolk, 2015).

Establishing the spatiotemporal boundaries of the art therapy room by designating it as a heterotopia emphasises the heightened sensitivity of the artistic and interpersonal work that takes place therein. Questions about inner-life patterns of relating to objects, art materials, other people, and the world can be explored in a safe environment, supported by both nonverbal and verbal communication processes that foster epistemic trust. In the heterotopic space, the therapeutic relationship unfolds, powered by the creativity of the child and therapist and myriad forms of vitality: interpersonal happenings of ‘implicit relational knowing’ (Stern, 2010, p. 111), or, as Tina said, ‘the unspoken word’. Emotional patterns and artistic knowing are integrated and honoured.

The Foucauldian heterotopic principles provide an in-depth definition of the art therapy space in the school, which is both a real place and a space for the mythic, for work with the imagination. As noted, Foucault argued that children already know what heterotopias are; therefore, working within this framework is natural to them. Using this framework, therefore, advances a child-friendly construct of experience which adults are invited, through this research, to incorporate into the school environment. Dovetailing Bergson’s and Foucault’s concepts deepens our understanding of what occurs in the art therapy space and provides language to describe the qualities of this important, creative, and healing counterspace for children in school. These philosophical ideas, which might sometimes be considered abstruse, came to life in reference to art-making processes and art therapy with children. The Foucauldian-Bergsonian philosophical framework illuminates time and boundaries in the child’s art therapy experiences. It explains the importance of distinguishing between the two types of time. While clock time is important for delineating the beginning and end of sessions and the intervention cycle as a whole over months or years, considering only this type of time risks denying children opportunities to engage uninterruptedly in their life flow, their personal creative process, and their creative evolution. For some children, due to past experiences, this delicate and highly nuanced process requires a protected space for playful, imaginative, creative and healing therapeutic work. In different ways, both philosophers prioritise power and the human imagination. I now turn to imaginative art-based approaches used in the current study.

## **9.8 How can an art-based approach offer insights through interrogating the dynamics of a child's art therapy experiences?**

Art-based research is process-oriented; it involves multiple possibilities and surprises. It is based on generating images that hold ongoing creative power and developing imaginative relationships with them. This is exciting but can also be confusing: certainty rests on trusting the unfolding creative process rather than on predetermined procedures. Recognising the need for a sense of security and constancy in art-based research, Shaun McNiff advises that artist-researchers adopt a method that has a clear structure: 'Since the fruits of the creative process tend to arrive unexpectedly, it is essential to establish a methodological structure which will define and contain data within a purposeful context' (McNiff, 1998, p. 147). In the current research, the transdisciplinary case study provided a robust method without being restrictive. This structural framework served as an 'experiential bedrock of inquiry' (McNiff, 1998, p. 146) from which ideas emerged. The process of trusting the experiential inquiry and emerging ideas and images required a significant amount of time, which I had in abundance, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Art-based approaches opened up new areas of inquiry that could not have been conceptualised theoretically without physical contact with paint, water, paper, pastels, scissors, glue, and other art materials. The work was intuitive, rooted in my lifelong belief that art-making can foster greater understanding, and grounded in the case study's 'purposeful context'. Numerous drawings and sketches during the research proposal phase, and later, the use of various other media, were effective for expressing and integrating my thoughts and feelings at different stages. Art-based processes enabled fluid movement between expressing my emotional responses to data, in form, analysing it by amplifying it, taking a new look, and then responding again. The table of datasets and associated artistic processes presented in Chapter Five demonstrates how each analysis shaped the next one. A cyclical rhythm of 'express, look, discover, define' developed, in an ongoing process, until meaning was coherent, and enough searching had been done. I now provide a narrative of what is happening in five artworks that were crucial to the research.

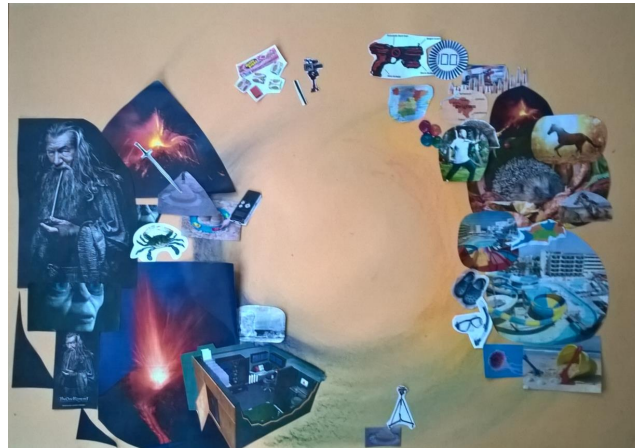
### **9.8.1 Artwork Narrative 1: An Embryonic Idea**

After seeing the video of the dialogic encounter for the first time, I made a small circular sketch in my research diary. It also recorded what I had noticed: metaphors, images, my feelings and thoughts, words, bodily responses, movements, and eye contact. It was an overambitious attempt to summarise everything, so I forgot about it. Only later, when consulting my research journals, did I realise that this early sketch and what I also wrote above it: 'Had an idea to do a circular report' represented an embryonic idea that later reappeared and then underwent repeated reshaping.

### **9.8.2 Artwork narrative 2: *Word Pools***

After transcribing the video's audio recording by hand, I mapped keywords and phrases from the text onto a large clock face, creating a visual representation I termed a Word Pool (explained and reproduced in Chapter Five). At the time, I had been inspired by Mary Ellen Solt's Concrete Poetry, which uses language and its physical properties, such as letters, sounds, and spacing, in new ways. I spaced selected words evenly across each 5-minute segment of the large clock face. This process isolated the words by extracting them from the transcription and assigning them importance as they swam within their 5-minute watery triangular segment. After completing the entire 'clock', I decided to categorise the words according to themes. To do this, I made three photocopies of the Word Pool, highlighted themes and noticed patterns associated with their temporal placement on the clock. Later, I created a double border around the main Word Pool, adding wooden numbers to emphasise the image's importance. As a visual summary, it organised a large amount of data, a pool from which to draw. Having worked extensively with words, distilling analytically significant keywords and phrases, I felt strongly that I wanted to take a break from words for a while. I decided to work purely with images. In one Word Pool, there were two themes related to 'objects': physical things and characters. These were definable 'concrete' entities. I imagined I could find a picture of each in a magazine or online. I thought that references to the theme of the therapeutic relationship, for instance, would be translated more slowly into an image.

### 9.8.3 Artwork narrative 3: *Objects in Time*



*Objects in Time*  
Collage

(See Chapter Five p. 170, or Chapter Seven p. 241 for a larger version)

The image above and the next are reproduced again to facilitate reading the narrative. I gathered images of all the 'objects'. The design process began. It was exciting. First, I drew a large circle in soft pastels at the centre of a large, sand-coloured sheet of paper. It was not a clear, precise line, but rather a swirl of energy in a blend of blue, green, yellow, and orange. Mirroring the Word Pool, I placed each object at the point on the circle/clock that corresponded to when it was mentioned or touched during the research hour. A sense of spaciousness appeared around '5 o'clock'. This period of quiet was when Nathan was absorbed in art-making. Having completed the collage, I was struck by the patterns of density and sparseness, of the objects' and characters' size and shape, and by how they related to one another. The images themselves were not direct research data. They were selected through the imaginative screen I had devised to find images for words denoting 'objects'. I was astonished to find that the basic structure of a therapeutic hour was revealed. The way the rhythm of the research hour closely mirrored that of an art therapy session, in which the same events occur in broadly the same pattern, was striking. There was the conversation at the beginning about many 'things', a silent period of absorption in art-making, the emergence of imagery connected to the artwork, and, towards the end, references to things in conversation as the hour ended. Each of these phases has its own poignancy. Thus, unexpectedly, this image not only visually encompassed the single-case study research hour but also, albeit with different images, any art therapy session with a child, as I experienced in my practice. Thus, the image functioned as a schema

for an art therapy session. This image kept me grounded during the long research period. Like the main Word Pool, I kept it visible in my studio and returned to it many times. In hindsight, the collage served as preparation for the 13-segment pastel drawing *Whole and Parts in Colour*, which revealed the five phases of a session (as shown earlier in this chapter and in the appendix).

#### **9.8.4 Artwork narrative 4: *The Focused Hour***

I was unsure what to do next. The energy emitted from the collage was powerful and exciting. Later that day, after creating the collage, I chose to work with paint. I thought of Action Painting, rejecting the compulsion to create an image of all the remaining themes in the Wood Pools, which would be too complicated. I strove for simplicity. I knew I needed to trust the creative process: I needed to relax, prepare materials, clear my mind, clear a workspace, and then wait. Eventually, with energetic, broad brushstrokes in large circular arm movements, I created a gold circle surrounded by different colours. My arm movements echoed those I had made with pastels as I began making the collage. The functions of the creative process in this painting were threefold. Initially, the process slowed me down and required me to pause in the act of preparation and waiting. Secondly, the image began to draw me in as I worked energetically, immersed in the visceral experience of handling paint and observing colour transformations. Its creation released a great deal of emotional energy and was deeply satisfying. Thirdly, this image, *The Focused Hour*, allowed me to behold the whole research hour aesthetically, in colour, and retain it in my mind.



(See Chapter Two p.51, or Chapter Five p. 170 for a larger version)

*The Focused Hour*

I was immersed in the multiplicity of the data at this stage, its stories and my own. The creative process I was researching, as evident in the video, was also the means by which I conducted the research. I was both using and investigating the creative process. A few days after painting *The Focused Hour*, it occurred to me, as I journaled in my research diary, that my arm movements had paralleled Nathan's gesture of the 'whole'. I was reminded of his declaration, in his circular gesture sweeping around the three-dimensional form he had created, that the mountain was a summary of the epic story Tina did not know, as he explained it to her. The process of 'relating to an image is kinetic' (McNiff, 1998, p.182): my actions creating the image echoed Nathan's gestures, and my image now transmitted a new energy. On the surface, the content of this painting was simple, and it was created on light-weight paper that buckled when dry. However, like the collage and the Word Pool, it kept me company for seven years. It was a reminder of the fresh liveliness of the research data, its kinetic energy: an inspiring wellspring of hope and resource. Art-based research methods sustain interest and energy during periods when systematic research may exact considerable effort.

#### **9.8.5 Artwork narrative 5: *Whole and Parts in Colour***

I now turn to what became the visual 'circular report' for the thesis, which was unknowingly conceptualised at the start of the research in the small, forgotten sketch. I refer to the 13-segment pastel image reproduced earlier in this Chapter. Undertaking the video analysis engaged me both cognitively and emotionally. Before starting the next day's analysis, I spent five minutes each morning creating a quick pastel drawing and a few words summarising the previous day's work. Why did I use triangular paper? Since I was working during each day with the roundness of the clock and focusing on a five-minute segment, it seemed logical to use the triangle of a 'five-minute' segment as a template for the pastel sketch for the corresponding time period. Each day, I cut out the segment for the next day, so I did not have to think about it in the morning and could proceed directly into the response artwork with pastels. I allocated only five minutes to ensure my attention and energy were focused and to elicit memory through brief kinetic interaction with the materials. On an A4

sheet, in free calligraphy, I also wrote a few words reminiscent of a haiku that accompanied the drawing. I later sprayed the drawings to prevent unintentional smudging. Each morning, once I had finished, I stored them in A4 wallets and put them away as I began the new day's work.

In these response art images, I used soft pastels because of their versatility. They can be smudged and rubbed to blend colours and cover large areas quickly; they can provide bold, intense marks when used along their edges; they are not water-based, but they can still have a fluid quality when used with light hand movements. They range from the darkest to the most vibrant colours, and their hue and tone can be readily modified by mixing. When I chose to use soft pastels to express my feelings and thoughts after a day of microanalysis, I was not considering how to report the work. I was thinking: how do I organise this task of reflecting on multiplicity in a manageable way so that I can hold the large numbers and my emotional state simultaneously? How can I use art-making to help process my thinking? When I interacted with the art materials with a curious, enquiring mind and worked intuitively, holding the previous day's work in mind, the drawings flowed naturally. It is as if the pastels and their colours, and the triangular shape of paper, led me. Relaxed, my mind open and enquiring, having prepared the space, my actions and thoughts combined to produce something new, deeply connected to feelings about what I had heard and seen the previous day. This process tapped into my inner life's creative flow, my *durée*, which exists in all of us.

Four days after completing the thirteen days of analysis, and reflecting on the process as a whole, it struck me that I had seen a dramatic play being enacted. Maybe Julia's comment at the end of the interview that the encounter was 'a kind of performance in a way' influenced me. Responding imaginatively to the video and the research to date, I wrote a play, using the thirteen drawings and the calligraphy as springboards for the text. They visually indicated who entered the stage, what happened, who exited, and why. The child's artwork was the fourth participant; it evolved, took form, and responded to touch and movement. In creating this 'Little Book of Fullness', as I called this work, I focused on each of the thirteen 5-minute segments of the video separately, identified

themes, and found ways to link them. After completing this little book, it occurred to me that I could assemble the thirteen segments into a circle representing the entire 'hour', as an illustration for the beginning of the book: the circle would serve as a visual summary of the content. Interestingly, when I placed all the segments on a large piece of black card, a star shape formed in the centre because thirteen is not twelve. This created a dynamic sense of space and movement at the centre.

Overall, this image, *Whole and Parts in Colour*, summarised and incorporated all the preceding data analyses. I noticed that arranging the thirteen visual art responses in a circle echoed the circles of the *Word Pools* and the *Objects in Time* collage. As with the *Word Pool*, content was distributed evenly across all the segments. Despite the difference between words and mark-making (in symbols, lines and colours), the importance of some definition being given to every moment during the hour was highlighted in both works. By contrast, in the collage, there was spaciousness at 5 o'clock and no detail (precisely because there was spaciousness). I had studied the silence, Nathan's art-making processes, and his artwork, and the pastel segments displayed what I had found in the spaciousness. Reflecting on the *Whole and Parts in Colour*, there seemed to be something that resonated with what I had noticed in the collage: the rhythmic pattern of 'starting, engrossed and towards the end'. Then, I noticed that the whole fell quite naturally into five segments, forming the same pattern within the hour but defining the phases more precisely than I had intuited in the collage. I decided to write five chapters on data analysis, one on each phase. The image, *Whole and Parts in Colour*, and a version depicted as a diagram (the flow of five phases), are shown earlier in this chapter.

Variations on the idea of a circular report had emerged during the research process, as I have explained, culminating in the *Whole and Parts in Colour* materialising organically in the later stages of the research. The unexpected outcome of producing this image stunned me. I had finally created the 'circular report' I had dreamt of, four years earlier, when I wrote that I wanted to 'get a sense of the circular nature of time and experience'. It seemed mysterious, even magical. This was a startling discovery that demonstrates the power of the creative, expressive process.

In the artworks I have explained above, form and content are inextricably linked. In art, the art-making method itself becomes replete with visual data: form is synonymous with content. If the form is changed, it becomes a different artwork. By contrast, the numerical data at the beginning of the chapter can be presented as a bar chart or a pie chart; the various charts emphasise different meanings, but the form does not alter the data. The *Whole and Parts in Colour* artwork collates a vast range of emotional and artistic data gathered through an experiential process that is essentially nonverbal. This visual summary of the entire process provided momentum to return to the video transcript data for deeper analysis of the newly identified five-phase flow.

I used Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021, 2022) in conjunction with art-based approaches to examine the five phases of the hour as represented in the final circular report, *Whole and Parts in Colour*. This led to the construction of a corresponding Venn diagram for each phase. The Venn diagrams were effective for condensing data, exploring overlaps, and integrating data in new ways for each phase. They contained circles and curves: each phase's diagram was built on the previous ones. Bringing the phases together as a linear chronological sequence of Venn diagrams revealed how rich and precise the definitions of the progressions within the hour had become. I had similarly combined words and shapes in my initial research process using Word Pools, but the creative process had expanded substantially. I also noticed that, had I not discovered the concept of the basic flow in the hour, generated by the collage, and had that not later been confirmed by the final, circular report, I likely would not have considered undertaking and presenting the RTA results in a phase-by-phase sequential analysis using diagrams. Later, I used RTA again, distilling my learning from the five Venn diagrams, to condense five draft chapters into the current Chapter Seven.

So far, I have mentioned artworks that were my response to data and the data analysis processes I undertook. Art-making was also crucial to exploring the philosophies of Foucault and Bergson. I utilised time and space during the COVID-19 pandemic, directly linking my experiences of them to these thinkers' spatiotemporal philosophies. This involved art-making as described in Chapter Two.

Bergson's two concepts of time (clock time and the subjective experience of time, *durée*) and Foucault's concept of heterotopia became integrated, underpinning the entire research endeavour. Artwork created during lockdowns remained a powerful creative influence throughout the research: the paintings, photography, and mandalas helped me internalise the philosophical concepts and apply them in practice. Artworks analysed and brought the datasets together, as I alternated between examining the parts and the whole, in a continuous toing and froing between differentiation and integration.

As I reflected on the power of art-making, I decided to include a personal artistic background in my thesis to convey my positionality regarding art. This became the autoethnographic writing in Chapter Two. Art-based processes during the research period were personally, professionally and academically significant to me. They culminated in holding a solo month-long exhibition titled 'Heterotopia: Moments in Art', which drew around 200 people. A discussion on Heterotopia and Bergson, attended by 20 local artists and members of the public, was chaired by artist David Gledhill, who holds a PhD in social-historical painting and is a director of Rogue Artists' Studios.

Pursuing art-based research meant trusting the creative process itself. I learned that if my intention was to follow inner artistic knowing while advancing research in the art therapy area I was focused on, something new and valuable would eventually emerge. It was not a linear process. Much of the work was undertaken alone in a home research and art studio, as I made art and wrote in my journals. It was also important to seek feedback and critique from others, to test my research ideas by presenting papers and delivering workshops at symposia and conferences, and to learn from others' research. Those I sought out included arts therapists, researchers from other academic fields and practitioners. Theodor Adorno's notion of 'reflexively relational immanent critique' (cited in Parker, 2005, p. 28) captures the relational immediacy of the encouraging and challenging interactive moments I experienced during the research journey as I experimented, played and explored the research questions.

## CHAPTER 10 – Conclusion

### 10.1 A new epistemology

This practitioner research is both interdisciplinary, as it integrates theories and methods from different disciplines, and transdisciplinary, as it collaborates with non-academic stakeholders. It provides a comprehensive explanation of how art therapy can be implemented in the school context. Integrating various disciplines and fields of interest, it produces a new overall epistemology: it creates a new understanding of how we know what we know about school-based art therapy. As explained in Chapter Three, school art therapy is often situated where financial constraints operate at multiple levels of society. Severe socio-economic realities affect the resources available to children and families in schools and at home. Teachers face enormous pressures, and many children live in deprivation. Heterotopias and the experience of time described in this thesis are not accessible to some young people and children in ways that help them develop their imaginations, agency, and competencies. Data analysis in this research shows that more than the sum of the parts can be achieved through an innovative partnership between a teacher and an art therapist. A child's inventiveness and creativity, supported by an art psychotherapeutic intervention in the art therapy heterotopia in school, shine through.

The research facilitated a 'dialogic encounter' between a deputy headteacher and a child who had received art therapy support. Using a secure and participatory framework, the research respectfully engaged with the child's knowledge, employing appropriate creative methods to facilitate the child's agency and expression of competencies. From what the child said and showed, the senior teacher gained insight into the child's thoughts and feelings about art therapy. Unexpectedly, the research also elucidates the nature of the relationship between the child and his art therapist, who was present to support him as needed. The value of nonverbal creative processes, evident in the video recording of the encounter, was examined through systematic qualitative analyses. Interviews with the deputy headteacher and the art therapist about their experience as research participants enhance understanding of the video data.

The 'dialogic encounter' alters the usual power dynamics in the school; the child takes the lead and interacts spontaneously with the teacher. This highlights heterotopic aspects of the art therapy room: a space set apart that is both real and mythical, where concrete materials meet imaginative possibilities. Entry and exit are foretold by clock time, but those within the space experience a different, subjective time: their *durée*. The child's autonomy, competence and relatedness, basic psychological needs (Ryan and Deci, 2000), are satisfied. Video analysis revealed a tripartite model for systemic research in school art therapy. Art-based approaches employed during the systematic video microanalysis shaped the direction of the research. Combined, these elements offer insights into school art therapy as a robust specialist intervention for children with complex and additional needs. I now turn to the contributions to knowledge that the research makes for people in diverse roles - practitioners, teachers, art therapists, researchers, and policymakers.

## **10.2 Contributions this research makes to different stakeholders**

### **10.2.1 The contribution of the thesis to practitioners**

In Chapter Three, I mentioned the growth in literature on the value of the arts for health and well-being, including studies from physiological and scientific perspectives. One hopeful development is social prescribing, in which doctors recommend that patients engage in creative activities for personal and social health benefits. Underpinning the current research, Bergson's concept of *durée*, each person's subjective experience of time, adds weight to contemporary ideas, providing a fresh understanding of the creative process as the 'continuous creation of unforeseeable novelties' (Bergson, 2007 [1934], p. 73).

Bergson emphasises that the creative process is universal, yet unique to each person. If we understand art as comprising multiple possibilities and wide-ranging practices, then self-expression, mark-making, and other art-related activities become highly meaningful. Practitioners know this intuitively. A rare radio recording of Henri Bergson's voice offers insights into his motivational speaking on the power of creativity and the democratisation of art:

What is the purpose of art? If reality directly impacted our senses and our consciousness, if we could communicate immediately with the essence of things and with ourselves, I imagine art would be unnecessary or rather that we would all be artists, because then our soul would vibrate continually in unison with nature.

(Radio de France, 1948, original in French, translated by the author)

Henri Bergson's work is relevant to practitioners from all backgrounds, encouraging the active use of the senses in creative work, paying attention to the present, and discovering the flow of the creative life. Self-care is vitally important; it helps practitioners help others. Self-care could include allocating time and space to discover and express oneself in new ways through art-related activities, trying new artistic media, to get to know one's own creative process.

There are many resources available to help practitioners encourage others' creativity; here, I mention two. Mariann Liebmann's book (1986) of art-based games and exercises brims with ideas for group work that foster fun, growth, and social and emotional understanding. Margot Sunderland's book (2017) offers a range of helpful drawing exercises for individuals to explore emotional growth. Both publications provide ideas for preparing and delivering structured activities to support arts-based work and to unlock creativity. It is advisable for practitioners to explore and experience such resources first for themselves, before using them with others.

### **10.2.2 The contribution of the thesis to teachers**

This research shows that collaborative understanding between teachers and an art therapist created systemic conditions that enabled the child to transfer insights gained in art therapy into the school environment. It provides teachers with a clear picture of how art therapy can be practically implemented in the school context, foster interdisciplinary understanding, and benefit the school as a whole. This research contributes to teachers by providing an analysis of a school leader's perspective on school art therapy, based on her interview with a child expert on his art therapy experience. As a deputy headteacher and the school's designated teacher for looked-after children, the teacher whom I call 'Tina' (not her real name), was responsible for developing trauma-informed and attachment-friendly approaches across the school. She knew that the child, 'Nathan'

(pseudonym), 'had a lot of upset and trauma in his life', and she knew his personality and his learning style: 'I know he likes to make things. I know that he thinks things through.'<sup>69</sup> Nathan could 'be difficult in a group' yet 'when you're on a one-to-one ... he's an absolute joy to be with'.

'Nathan's' needs will sound familiar to many teachers. The analysis of data in this study shows how the art therapist worked with the class teacher and teaching assistant to develop art-based strategies he could use, at his own pace, between his weekly art therapy sessions. This helped the benefits of his relationship with his art therapist 'Julia' (pseudonym) permeate the classroom and playground, as he worked on his sketchbooks, dealing with how he felt about 'things I've done good, bad and ok'. He told Tina this had helped him. His class teacher supported him with encouragement, and he would then take his work to discuss with 'Julia'. Art therapy provided a regular, predictable, contained time and place in the week that he looked forward to. It affected the rest of his week.

The analysis showed a high level of understanding and collaboration across the school. Tina understood how Nathan's class teacher felt: 'You can have a really good relationship with your class teacher – which Nathan had – but that class teacher has another twenty-nine children. So attention is divided'. Tina understood that Nathan 'struggled with attachments', and as a result would test staff out, 'I'm expecting a bit of a testing time with his new teacher in September because he will test them: "If I push you this way, are you still going to be there for me?" But he knows Julia will'. Tina understood that Julia was working with Nathan's trauma responses and past, manifesting in the present, and that when they were working together, the art therapy room was unavailable to others: 'it has to be that closed space', because it was Nathan's 'own personal time,... and confidential to a point'. Tina appreciated that the artmaking and psychotherapeutic processes happening in the art therapy room would largely stay, with very few exceptions, between Nathan and Julia: 'Obviously, she doesn't overly share'.

---

<sup>69</sup> In this section, text with inverted commas are quotations from the interview with 'Tina' (a pseudonym). I have omitted the line reference numbers for ease of reading. To locate where the quote is in the interview, see Chapter Eight, where each quotation is annotated with a line reference number.

Tina described how being in the art therapy room with Nathan had been a stark contrast to reading reports about the art therapy work: 'I've seen what he's done - it's different to having it described to you'. For her, the immediate experience of seeing his motivation was vivid and energising, and she described it as 'a real experience, for me, today'. Witnessing Nathan working, she could see 'real creativity, his mind's firing off all the time'. She could see his 'creative thinking'. Although she knew before the research that Nathan 'likes to make things' and that he 'thinks things through', the experience she had during the research was different. She also remarked: 'What did surprise me was how few resources he actually needed, very selective', and also, following on from his ability to select what he needed very precisely, she was surprised at the effort and extent of his 'good concentration'. Importantly, she noticed that 'in this room he's taking the lead, he's in control'. This is a situation in which Nathan knew what the art therapy space was about and how to make the most of the creative possibilities. He was confident in his own creative process.

Tina reflected that, as in any context, 'I suppose you're in a constraint in this room as well'. Sometimes, the pressure on teachers is so great that they may have certain feelings when comparing their own situation of working with thirty children to that of a therapist working with only one child. However, Tina recognised the challenges of and demands on both types of work – they are simply different. She could deduce evidence from how Nathan was in the room with Julia, of the work that had been done prior, 'I think all the time by the way that she'd responded, no doubt skilfully ... whatever it might have been, I'm sure he would have just thought "She just knows"'. Nathan and Julia shared, she said, 'the unspoken word', an understanding that had grown from the 'undivided attention' that Julia had given Nathan. Tina described what she thought was important from what she had witnessed in the art therapy space: 'That trust there... He knows what he's going to get inside this room, he knows what response he's going to get'.

This research has shown how a deputy headteacher, Tina, along with her staff and Julia, an art psychotherapist, worked together to support a child, Nathan, in maintaining his mainstream school

placement, when he had been on the verge of permanent exclusion. This new information will hopefully help other teachers as they seek ways to support children with complex trauma needs in school. Teachers have unique opportunities within the school's organisational structure to facilitate children's creativity and transformation. There are many ways for class teachers to incorporate art-based learning into their lessons. Whether in early years, primary, secondary, special schools, pupil referral units or other educational settings, teachers work with educational models. Lesson plans detail teaching methods and learning objectives. Creativity and art-based skills span the thinking and feeling domains and often engage pupils well. As we saw in Chapter Three, art-based education research has identified a range of educational benefits of drawing. Like speech and writing, drawing has different functions.

The 'Four Purposes' of drawing - Perception, Communication, Invention, and Action – each equip the child with distinct cognitive and emotional learning opportunities to develop skills, abilities, and emotional awareness. Drawing requires minimal equipment and, with some imagination, can be easily integrated into the wider curriculum. The 'Four Purposes' are also relevant to other art media, such as painting, junk modelling, sculpture, and printing. These require more materials and equipment but are worth the effort and offer educational opportunities for growth across the curriculum as well. The analysis of data in the investigation found that creativity, when framed as a school resource, can serve as a meeting point for communication among individuals and groups. As the research shows, interdisciplinary dialogue between an art therapist and school staff can elicit creative ideas that benefit individual children and the school. As well as contributing to the school's flexible, effective, well-coordinated direct pastoral support, art therapists' work in school can help relieve staff stress and build relationships among children, families, and the school.

### **10.2.3 The contribution of the thesis to art therapists**

This research shows how, as part of the internal supervisory process, art-based reflection can be helpful in exploring and examining experientially two concepts of time: *durée* and clock-time.

Together, these provide a frame for accessing the creative process in a healthy, time-managed way. The heterotopic-*durée* framework outlined in this research may also help art therapists when communicating about art therapy practice in schools. It offers a new way to describe and explain containment, providing a philosophical rationale for time and space boundaries, rooted in concepts deeper than those in everyday use, for instance, in timetabling. This is not to undermine the difficult and sometimes exasperating job school staff face when scheduling rooms and times in busy schools. As explained in Chapter Four, Bergson's concept of *durée* resolved the pre-Socratic (Heraclitus versus Parmenides) debate about whether change exists<sup>70</sup>. This has practical relevance to art therapy: change is often nuanced and subtle. We may see micro-incremental changes during the course of an art therapy intervention that others do not see due to the confidential nature of the work. We know from experience that small changes may indicate a potential upward trajectory in the child's future. Reflecting on Stern's various kinds of 'present moments' and 'vitality forms' that occur in a session may help define the artistic and interpersonal phenomena, showing how change can occur, without disclosing the child's confidential material. In this way, art therapists can convey the spatial-temporal complexities of art therapy through generic terminology. Children referred to art therapy need to feel confident and safe in their heterotopic space. Building safety and epistemic trust may be a long and slow process<sup>71</sup>. Explaining the different 'present moments' and how these, combined with Bergson's and Foucault's concepts of *durée* and heterotopia, can help children, may assist communication with staff about the reasons for and importance of clear space-time boundaries.

The research model emphasised competence, autonomy and relatedness, as empowering the child to speak his authentic words to the deputy headteacher, an authority figure in his school life, who was, however, an approachable and caring professional. Self-determination theory postulates that these three innate psychological needs - competence, autonomy and relatedness – when fostered

---

<sup>70</sup> This debate relates to whether one can step in the same river twice (see Chapter Four).

<sup>71</sup> See chapter Three for an explanation of the three communication processes involved in building epistemic trust (Fonagy and Alison, 2014).

and satisfied, lead to optimal living (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The same empowerment framework that privileges the child participant's speech and actions in the research dialogic encounter also applies to art therapy sessions. The robust containing space, as we know, is needed in everyday art therapy practice, to enable the child to speak freely from their own sense of inner power. The Bergsonian-Foucauldian conceptual framework offers terra firma: solid ground for art therapists to stand on, from which to speak and act in daily practice and when advocating for the child.

#### **10.2.4 The contribution of the thesis to researchers**

The contribution this study makes to researchers is the invitation to children to serve as research participants and to share their knowledge of arts therapy with a known senior teacher with whom they have a good relationship. This study's approach could usefully inform research in schools, since it emphasises the agency and competencies of child research participants and trusting relationships with staff. Practitioner research is particularly valuable as school educators know children well (Urbino-Garcia *et al.*, 2022, p. 23). The psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness, essential for optimal human performance, are all fostered and satisfied in the research design. Inviting a child to participate can thus have a positive impact, enhancing their well-being. Future art psychotherapy research using processes similar to those detailed in this study would enable others to understand art therapy's transformational or preventive potential for different children referred to art therapists in school. For example, children with specific learning difficulties, social, emotional, and mental health needs, on the autistic spectrum, diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, suffering bereavement or loss; child witnesses of community unrest, such as gun violence, or child witnesses/victims of political violence, as refugee children or children seeking asylum. Art therapists have worked with children in all these situations and more.

This research took place in a primary school. Further research could be conducted in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units. In terms of institutional hierarchy dynamics, the current research examined systemic aspects of school art therapy through the lens of the

relationship between a senior teacher and a pupil. Research using the dialogic encounter model, in which a child engages in dialogue with a school governor, who also plays a role in decision-making about children's mental health interventions in their school, could yield new insights. Art therapists could utilise the project design, involving a child and an adult, with the art therapist present to support the child if needed. The research would aim to learn from a child's perspective on school-based art therapy, unfolding a creative process through blended art-based approaches and systematic analysis, applied to an area of inquiry and a research question. The experiences and personalities of the child, the adult, and the art therapist would all be variables of worth and interest. The research framework can be constructed ethically and securely within a research-practitioner's schoolwork environment, taking account of the school's ethos.

Researchers could develop the Word Pool method of analysing data in their own way. This is a visual method, shown in Chapter Five, for linking significant words or phrases from the text of the hand transcription of the encounter's audio recording, to time location on a clock face. Researchers might use response art to interpret data, manage the emotional intensity they feel conducting the research, calibrate the large numbers involved, or a combination of all these. The non-linearity of the creative process means that it is essential to keep a track of what happens. A research journal which is sewn at the centre so pages do not fall out ensures the preservation and chronological accuracy of the notes and serves as a resource for tracking the evolution of thought, experience, and decisions. Experimenting, holding the tension of not knowing, and tolerating ambiguity are familiar to us in our art therapy practice, and we can use these same processes in research.

While exciting to undertake, the method of school-based research using the dialogic encounter, as in this research, places a considerable onus on the art therapist, who becomes a repository (conscious or not) of the theoretical epistemology for communicating complex theories in accessible language, including nonverbal art processes. Trust and mutual respect, in a collaborative spirit, make this possible. In the current research, the art therapist adopted an open, receptive listening stance,

thereby supporting the child. It was the same stance she had held during therapy with the child, and the child was familiar with this. Her knowledge of the theories, even if deeply embedded and not consciously thought through in the immediate moment, unconsciously guided the practice and the research. The tripartite triangular model can be used to analyse the gathered video data. Using the 'social microscope' of video microanalysis, the tripartite model can help art therapists observe complexity: interactions among participants, and different forms of the present moment. Analysis of micro-interactions might shed light on art-making, silences, and the emergence of symbolic images, while respecting participants' agency and spontaneous creativity. Reflecting on the participants' interactions may reveal systemic aspects of art therapy practice in school, organisational elements, interdisciplinarity, and communication.

Dramatherapists, music therapists, or dance movement psychotherapists working in schools could also replicate the research design. Again, the research would yield different results, given the individuality of participants, their personalities and the reasons for the child's referral. The tripartite triangular model might have creative media at the centre, related to the particular art form. For example, a child might want a range of favourite objects they worked with, such as fabrics, masks, drums, scarves, puppets, and musical instruments. Like art, these can be seen as Winnicottian transitional phenomena. Stern's present-moment concepts could be described and conceptualised, leading to generalisable results.

In an interesting report on research in educational settings, the absence of practitioner-led research on systemic work and on specific interventions was noted (Loveridge, 2010). Although this review, undertaken for the New Zealand government, does not address the UK situation or mental health in schools, the education research landscape in the UK could be similar. The current research addresses all three noted areas of lack: it is practitioner-led, it explores systemic issues, and it examines a specific intervention, art therapy. Education researchers in fields outside the arts therapies might be interested in adopting the epistemological stance employed in this research.

### **10.2.5 The contribution of the thesis to policymakers**

Government guidance and advice can be seen as policy and can function as such. This practice-based research, grounded in complex real-life problems, has implications for government guidance and advice on children's mental health in schools. I suggest three areas that merit review of existing policies. The first concerns expanding advice on professional therapeutic interventions in schools; the second addresses wider interdisciplinary working and the current integrated care agenda. The third, already mentioned in Chapter One, concerns advice for schools on behaviour, mental health and exclusions issued by the Department for Education.

The first policy area concerns non-statutory advice given to schools on professional counselling services to support children's mental health. Departmental advice for school leaders and counsellors was first issued in a *Blueprint for the Future* in 2015 and updated the following year (Department for Education, 2016). The guidance recommends incorporating the counselling profession into school structures. It provides valuable advice on effective partnerships between school leaders and counsellors, aiming to create conditions that optimise outcomes of school-based counselling. This guidance was welcomed by practitioners and schools.

However, pupils who do not wish to, or are unable to, talk about what is troubling them may find it difficult or even impossible to access counselling services. These pupils may benefit from art therapy, as the current research shows. Therefore, guidance on collaboration between school leaders and art therapists could usefully build on the *Blueprint* guidance on collaboration between school leaders and counsellors in schools. Evidence cited in this thesis supports this policy recommendation. For example, the National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence (2013) details the clinical benefits of art therapy for children and young people suffering from psychosis. Art therapy can meet mental health needs at different levels due to its flexibility and adaptability. Systematic reviews of art therapy have revealed a wide range of benefits and outlined the areas where quality assurance is needed to guard against potential harm (Uttley *et al.*, 2015; Scope *et al.*, 2017).

Professor of Education Katherine Weare recommended targeted responses in schools for children with serious mental health needs (Weare, 2015), as has the National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence (2022, pp. 1-4). Professor Weare defined the qualities of good mental health interventions in schools: they are part of a whole-school approach, they effectively help pupils reshape their thinking, they are of good quality, fit the context, and are implemented with conviction (Weare, 2015, p. 12). The current research shows that a specialist, three-year art therapy ‘targeted intervention’ for a child with ‘complex and additional’ needs met these criteria. It has increased our understanding of how and why school art therapy makes a difference to a child’s mental health, their ability to process previously traumatic experiences, thus leading to changes in behaviour and changes to self-understanding. Given the recognition that counselling has gained as a precedent for therapeutic work in schools, and the scope that arts therapies provide in working with nonverbal means with children affected by trauma, government guidance on art therapists working in schools would be a step in the right direction for improving children’s mental health. This could include the other arts therapies in the same or separate documents. Recognising the arts therapies professions in this way, and developing the ‘intercultural encounter’ between education and therapy healthily, grounded in respect and mutual support, brings us to the second area of policy concern, which relates to wider government departmental policies.

Mandatory obligations are set out in the statutory guidance, *Working in partnership with people and communities* (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022). This guidance, underpinned by legislation and the merging of the Health and Social Care departments, promotes joint working. Schools are very much part of communities. A review of how art therapy, as both a psychological and an allied health profession, is integrated into care in schools and other educational settings would be helpful. Benefits of sensory-based, non-verbal, trauma-informed approaches integral to the arts therapies cut across all the subdivisions of mental health support. The arts therapies can help children in schools, at universal, targeted, and specialist levels (in other words: all children, children with identified needs, and children with complex needs).

Art therapy as specialist support is equivalent to interventions provided by the NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice and its associated legal process, initiated in 2014 to promote children's rights to education, health, and care, raised expectations that children's needs would be met through a process that could be legally challenged. Lack of official recognition of arts therapies interventions in schools as an option for local authority case workers to recommend in Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs) means that opportunities for children to be effectively supported in mainstream schools, 'with the least fuss and disruption' (Weare, 2015, p. 6), are being missed. A considerable backlog of EHCPs exists. This problem has received widespread media coverage.<sup>72</sup> Children's emotional needs in school will remain unmet unless an emotionally supportive ethos pervades a school and support for children in serious distress is available. If support is lacking, unresolved 'low-level behavioural disruption' may gradually escalate into a crisis, and eventually exclusion (Graham *et al.*, 2019, p. 34). This brings me to the third recommendation for government policy review.

In Chapter One, which introduced the context for this research, I discussed the mismatch between, on the one hand, the Department for Education's guidance on school exclusions, and on the other hand, two documents that advise schools on behaviour and mental health. While the exclusions document states that it may be necessary to exclude some children for whom behaviour management strategies prove ineffective, it fails to recognise the pastoral and support approaches outlined in the other two documents on children's social, emotional and mental health needs beyond educational goals. Research indicates that permanent exclusion can affect children's long-term well-being and future life opportunities, incurring high costs for individuals, society, and the economy.<sup>73</sup> Permanent school exclusions in the UK are a cause of urgent concern at various societal levels, from children and their families to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education.<sup>74</sup> This

---

<sup>72</sup> For example: Turner, A. (2024).

<sup>73</sup> For a real-life example of financial savings when a child with complex needs received art therapy, see Chapter Three.

<sup>74</sup> See Chapter Three for statistics and research on school exclusions. The high number of UK school exclusions, which do not exist in other European countries, has been argued to be due to successive UK government policies (Dorling, 2023, p. 156).

study explicates the art therapy counterspace in schools and how it addresses general and complex child mental health problems, providing a safe outlet for expressing powerful emotions and potentially avoiding school exclusions.

This study also demonstrates how a fixed-term exclusion can provide time and space to generate solutions to a child's problems, involving all parties, including the child, without severing all the child's links with their school, and throwing them into a crisis where their sense of belonging is shattered. Analysis of the data shows that, in light of the effects of trauma, a child whose behaviour was rooted in past maltreatment was unable to adhere to behaviour management techniques that relied predominantly on verbal interactions. However, the child engaged in art therapy. The investigation found that providing art therapy as a specialist mental health support intervention in school, as part of a whole-school approach, is a plausible alternative to exclusion.

The present study shows that current public policies are not aligned with social realities and the everyday experiences of some children, families and schools, with severe consequences for some children's lives. In summary, three recommendations to policymakers arise from this research. Firstly, guidance should be developed for school leaders and art therapists on introducing art therapy into schools. Secondly, a review of art therapy in educational settings, as a psychological profession (with the status of a registered Allied Health Profession) that delivers integrated care, should be conducted. Thirdly, the Department for Education's advice to schools on exclusions should be reviewed in light of the Department's advice on behaviour and mental health in schools.

### **10.3 Limitations of the study**

Limitations were imposed on this research due to the unprecedented disruptions to life caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing requirements and subsequent school closures prevented the planned replication of the research project in three to five additional schools. I adapted to this situation and, rather than undertaking the planned comparative study, I decided to examine the single case study in more depth. Although the study does not offer a standard solution to the

problems found in young lives, it provides a useful explanatory discussion that offers a perspective valuable to all the staff identified here. It also suggests that further research from this epistemological stance could be worthwhile and in the interests of elaborating the uses of art therapy in schools. The study focuses on children's complex needs resulting from early relational trauma and the issue of permanent school exclusions. There are, however, many other reasons for children's referrals to art therapy in school that have not been addressed; some are suggested above in the section on researchers. This research focused on art therapy in a primary school setting. Pastoral support systems and school life vary greatly from school to school and even more between primary and secondary education sectors. Future research could possibly be conducted in secondary schools. The discussions in this research focus on art therapy, but could inform research in the other arts therapies: they, too, blend 'creativity' and 'psychologising' using verbal and nonverbal forms of creative expression to help children with a broad range of reasons for referral to therapy. This research examined solely individual long-term art therapy. It did not investigate children's experiences with art therapy as a brief intervention or in a group context.

The research site was chosen due to the school's positive approach to art therapy. It could be argued that conducting research in a school that is unfamiliar with the proper implementation of art therapy would yield valuable insights. However, as I have shown in Chapter Three, some research has already highlighted art therapists' difficulties in schools that are unfamiliar with effective interdisciplinary communication. It was innovative to conduct research in a school where child-centred attitudes embraced art therapy processes, and staff were committed to sharing ongoing learning. Indeed, the school enabled an analysis of optimal conditions for school art therapy.

From an arts-based research perspective, there is a limitation in that the art therapist's response art, made after reading the draft thesis, has not been examined. In line with respect for the participant in qualitative research, the art therapist was invited to read the draft thesis if she wanted to. She was keen to read it and, afterwards, spontaneously created two images in response. She was willing to

have these, along with a few words, included in the thesis. Future research could explore art therapists' participant response art, thereby continuing an iterative research process - using an arts-based research method to examine an arts-based phenomenon.

#### **10.4 The power of an art-based approach**

I embarked on this research to better understand how art therapy delivered in school 'makes a difference'. I had seen many children who lacked the emotional support they needed, sometimes with tragic consequences. I had also seen positive transformations in the mental health of many children who had received art therapy. Framed at the intersection of the Arts and Humanities Faculty and the Social Sciences Faculty, the research aimed to better understand the transformative power of art therapy. This transdisciplinary research contributes to academic developments that bring insights from the arts and humanities and the social sciences together (Nowotny *et al.*, 2003)<sup>75</sup>.

I planned to engage with the data generated by the research project, reflecting on my assumptions and recognising my analysis as subjective and interpretive. It soon became clear that thinking in words alone would not be sufficient to analyse the data thoroughly. I needed to use means other than linguistic to access my felt, embodied experiences and responses to the data. Using art-based approaches opened up possibilities to use creativity to better understand creative processes. In my journal, I described 'putting words on paper, then jiggling them around, sloshing stuff down and scraping off the excess', reflecting that 'I suppose I'm in the middle of a creative process with lots of half-baked ideas floating around and evolving'. The relationship between writing and art-making was fluid. Sometimes I did both, at other times one or the other. Art-making and sentence-making processes intersected. Reflexive writing and art-making helped me gain a deeper understanding of the data and, importantly, kept me grounded over a long research period (Malis, 2021; Partridge, 2021).

---

<sup>75</sup> An approach to 'the role of the humanities in the production of knowledge' in transdisciplinary research (see p. 188).

Another reason I used art-based approaches is linked to awe. I have often felt wonder at what can emerge from the seeming simplicity of an art therapy session, and children's astoundingly creative imagination as they interact with materials, whatever is going on in their lives and minds. This experience of awe merited attempts of every manner, however messy and inarticulate they may have felt during the process, before moving towards an evolutionary something that emerged and helped create new meaning. It made sense to use creative, dynamic processes to explore and understand other instances of such processes, even, or especially, at times when both realms were entirely nonverbal. An art-based researcher's descriptions are not only of what she sees, but also 'what she experiences somatically, and how that experience of embodied self intersects with her experience of the other, the object and subject of her research' (Landy et al. 2012, p. 56). Sometimes images appeared which seemed to have metaphorical significance; the language of metaphor can help find words, but not always. There are inherent uncertainties and ambiguities. Holding the uncertainty of 'not knowing' was important; tolerating ambiguity was vital. Using dynamic art-based research to examine dynamic art therapy mirrors the 'benefits and difficulties of the process being studied' (McNiff, 1998, p. 38).

The discoveries emerging through the research would not have been possible without art-making. Art-based processes birthed the tripartite triangular model, through a sequenced process as I pieced things together, at ever deeper levels. I would not have conceived of the circular report or the schema for art therapy sessions. These findings were midwived by a slow yet dynamic creative process: the art-making in art therapy research 'amplifies the resonances of emotional and sensory affect' (Michaels, 2024). The art I made, engaging with the practitioner research process, was part of a shared reality emerging from the ideas and practicalities. The creative process was 'a living force from which outcomes emanate in unpredictable ways' (McNiff, 1998, p. 79). To use Bergsonian language, this living force is a 'continuous creation of unforeseeable novelties'. When immersed in it, the whole body is involved. Trusting the felt sense in art-based research, artistic expressions serve to 'explicate our felt sense – or embodied knowing' and artistic enquiry can be understood 'as a

doorway to felt meaning' (Rappaport, 2013, p. 97, p. 98). Doorways opened as I explored the whole and the parts of the research data. I created images, responded to them, and returned to the data in a continual oscillation: 'Art making can be both content (raw data) and process (analysis), in art-based research' (Brown, 2013b, p. 118). Art-making helped me navigate a 'deconstruction and recontextualization process', in which I discovered and clarified what I wanted to look at (Brown, 2013b, p. 119). At times, the process felt very uncertain, but as things became clearer, I became more confident. I hope that this research, and my honesty and transparency in revealing the art-based processes that contributed to the analysis and discussion of the data, might encourage others undertaking similar research and offer some ideas for engaging in such processes.

### **10.5 'Nathan' continues to teach**

This thesis aims to convey the inspiration drawn from Nathan's (pseudonym) speech and actions to begin to fashion responses to the overarching questions investigated in this study. It argues that art therapy can be successfully offered in schools to children who need specialist mental health support. The analysis of data in this investigation shows that creativity within the art therapeutic relationship generates a special contribution that 'makes a difference'. Nathan's inner world found outward expression through his interaction with art materials, as emotions and ideas flowed, changed, and developed within the 'holding' of his therapeutic relationship with Julia. Rehearsed in the 'rudimentary space of appearances', Nathan's speech and action could be practised in the heterotopia and later in the playground, in meetings with Tina and others in the rest of the school. Nathan's voice did not stop there. His voice gained wider recognition through this research, conference presentations and publications. His voice entered the public space of appearances, where it was heard, welcomed, and elicited stimulating questions.<sup>76</sup> In the writing phase of this study, it

---

<sup>76</sup> From 2017 to 2025, I presented the research/delivered workshops annually at conferences organised by the North East Arts Therapies <https://www.mapthy.com/neat>. Delegates from arts psychotherapies of all modalities (art, dance movement, drama and music) challenged, extended and amplified my thinking. I also presented at three international conferences: in London (*International Art Therapy Practice/ Research Inaugural Conference* July 2019, organised by the British Association of Art Therapists and the American Art Therapy Association, at Queen Mary University), in Verona, Italy (*Evil and the Child Interdisciplinary conference* organised by Progressive Connexions in July 2019) and in New York (*Arts,*

became possible to translate Nathan's speech and actions and to represent his ideas in an academic language understood in the agora, the meeting place of broader educational and socio-political institutions. His voice and actions, along with the accumulation of other voices—researchers, others, and mine—may contribute to informing public policy, whose twilight falls on the intimate and domestic worlds of children and those with whom they live and learn.

There is an urgent imperative to listen to what Nathan tells us - it makes ethical, economic, social and political sense. He teaches that understanding children's creative languages can inform how to work with their 'complex and additional needs'. He shows we can learn from children's innate intelligence, inventiveness, worthiness and creativity. This thesis calls for respecting Nathan's and other children's inner and outer life experiences and treating them compassionately within the school context, a convenient venue for problem-solving. Rather than detracting from academic standards, child-centred, good relational management in schools can enhance them – for all children.

In the heterotopic art therapy room, children can experience their *durée* by tapping into the 'continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty', within an authentic art therapy relationship. Art therapy can offer children in crisis the opportunity to be heard and begin, form, and maintain good, healthy interpersonal relationships. Thus, the threats and the realities of permanent exclusion, and all that follows, may dissolve.

Of course, Nathan must have the last word.

When Tina asked Nathan about how his art therapy with Julia had helped him, his eyes immediately lit up with joy and enthusiasm. After some moments had passed, he said thoughtfully:

'I don't know *how* it helped me, but it *did!*'

---

*Creativity and the Global Crisis: Reimagining Identity, Otherness and the Possible*, organised by The Pratt Institute New York; Brunel University London; Edge Hill University, Liverpool; New York University; NHS: Central and NW London; ICAPT International Centre for Arts Psychotherapies. October, 2019). I authored a chapter in a post-conference publication: McConnell, D. (2021) 'A quiet revolution: School-based art therapy transforms lives and unlocks creativity', in Huet and Kapitan (eds.) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The emerging picture*. UK: Cambridge Scholars.



Julia's Response Art 2 - after reading the draft thesis (Pastel) June 2025

## References

- Adams, E. (2002) 'Power drawing', *The international journal of art and design education*, 21(3), pp. 220-233. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5949.00319>
- (2017) 'Thinking drawing', *The International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 36(3), pp. 244-252. doi: <https://doi:10.1111/jade.12153>
- Adamson, E. (2014) *Art as healing*. Written in 1984. London: Coventure. Republished by the Adamson Collection Trust.
- Adamson, P. (2007) *Child Poverty in Perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. [Research report. Innocenti Report Card, vol. 7. Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy]*. Available at: <https://eprints/whiterose.ac.uk/73187/> (Accessed: 20 June 2022).
- Adoni-Kroyanker, et al. (2019) 'Practices and challenges in implementing art therapy in the school system', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 24(1), pp. 40-49. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2018.1536726>
- Adshead, G. (2024) *The Reith Lectures 2024: Four questions about violence*. BBC Radio Four. November - December. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1hQF5SLbjPBb8sDr9zHDbKX/bbc-reith-lectures-2024-four-questions-about-violence>
- Allen, M. (2017) 'Adapting to working in schools with the Family Futures' Neuro Physiological Approach', in Henry, A. and Hasler, J. (eds.) *Creative Therapies for Complex Trauma*. London: Jessica Kingsley, pp. 200-218.
- Anderson, M. et al. (2020) 'Toward defining healthcare simulation escape rooms', *Simulation and Gaming*, 52(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878120958745>
- Anderson, S. (2000) 'William James and 'Vicious Intellectualism' in psychology', *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 20(1), pp. 61-75. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0091215>
- Apland, K. et al. (2017) *A review of evidence on the subjective wellbeing of children excluded from school and in alternative provision in England*. Available at: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2017/11/CCO-Childrens-Voices-Excluded-from-schools-and-altprovision.pdf> (Accessed: 10 January 2024).
- APPG (2017) *Creative health: The arts for health and wellbeing*. All-Party Parliamentary Group. Inquiry report. UK government. Accessed 14/11/19 [https://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative\\_Health\\_The\\_Short\\_Report.pdf](https://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_The_Short_Report.pdf)
- Apple, M. (2013) *Can education change society?* New York: Routledge.
- Arendt, H. (1998 [1958]) *The Human Condition*. USA: University of Chicago.
- Ariel, J. (2010) *Volcanoes and the unconscious mind: A case study*. USA: Brown University. Available at: [https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky\\_Institute/courses/underthevolcano10/files/12129463.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/underthevolcano10/files/12129463.pdf) (Accessed: 17 February 2024).

Association for Play Therapists (2020) *Why play therapy is appropriate for children with symptoms of PTSD: 6 reasons why play therapy is an effective treatment choice for children with trauma.*

Available at:

[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.a4pt.org/resource/resmgr/publications/why\\_play\\_therapy\\_is\\_appropri.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.a4pt.org/resource/resmgr/publications/why_play_therapy_is_appropri.pdf) (Accessed 12 September 2024).

Bachmann, C. *et al.* (2016) 'Trends and patterns of antidepressant use in children and adolescents from five western countries, 2005–2012', *European Neuropsychopharmacology*, 26(3), pp. 411-419. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroneuro.2016.02.001>

Ball, B. (1998) *I, you and the art: The interactive space in art therapy with children*. PhD Thesis. New York University. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses ISBN: 9780591858358

Ball, S. (2003) 'The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity', *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), pp. 215-228. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065>

Barker J. *et al.* (2010) 'Pupils or prisoners? Institutional geographies and internal exclusion in UK secondary schools', Royal Geographical Society, *Area*, 42(3), pp. 378-386. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2009.00932.x>

Bateman, A. and Fonagy, P. (2013) 'Mentalization-based treatment', *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 33(6), pp. 595-613. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07351690.2013.835170>

Bearn, G. (2017) 'Careful becomings: Foucault, Deleuze, and Bergson', *Human Affairs*, 27(4), pp. 400-415. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/humaff-2017-0033>

Beebe, B. (2017) 'Daniel Stern: Microanalysis and the Empirical Infant Research Foundations', *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 37(4), pp. 228-241. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07351690.2017.1299498>

Beebe, B. *et al.* (2010) 'The origins of 12-month attachment: A microanalysis of 4-month mother–infant interaction', *Attachment and Human Development*, 12(1-2), pp. 3-141. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616730903338985>

Belity, I., Regev, D. and Snir, S. (2017) 'Supervisor's perceptions of art therapy in the Israeli education system', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 22(3), pp. 96-105. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2016.1245766>

Bennett, D. *et al.* (2020). 'Trends in inequalities in Children Looked After in England between 2004 and 2019: a local area ecological analysis', *British Medical Journal, Open*, 10(11), e041774. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-041774>

Bergson, H. (1910 [1889]) *Time and free will: An essay on the immediate data of consciousness*. Bergson's PhD thesis, originally published in French: *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*. Translation by F. Pogson. UK: Swan Sonnenschein.

--- (2023 [1907]) *Creative evolution*. UK: ZincRead. Originally published in French: *L'évolution créatrice*. Translation by A. Mitchell, first published in 1911.

--- (2007 [1934]) *The creative mind: An introduction to metaphysics*. [Collection of essays] USA: Dover Publications. Originally published in French: *La Pensée et le Mouvant*. Translation by M. Andison was first published in 1946, New York, Philosophical Library.

Bertrando, P., and Lini, C. (2021) 'Towards a systemic-dialogical model of therapy', *Human Systems*, 1(1), pp. 15-28. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/26344041211003853>

Berry, J. (2009) *Ritual making women: Shaping rites for changing lives*. London: Equinox.

Bettleheim, B. (1976) *The uses of enchantment: the meaning and importance of fairy tales*. USA: Knopf.

Bianco, G. (2011) 'Experience vs. Concept? The Role of Bergson in Twentieth-Century French Philosophy', *The European Legacy*, 16(7), pp. 855–872. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2011.626183>

Billington, T. and Pomerantz, M. (2004) 'Resisting Social Exclusion', in Billington and Pomerantz (eds.) *Children at the margins: Supporting children, supporting schools*. UK: Trentham books, pp. 1-13.

Bion, W. (1994 [1962]) *Learning from Experience*. London: Jason Aronson, Inc.

Black, A. (2022) "But what do the statistics say?" An overview of permanent school exclusions in England', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 27(3), pp. 199-219. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2022.2091895>

Bokoch, R and Hass-Cohen, N. (2021) 'Effectiveness of a school-based mindfulness and art therapy group program', *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 38(3), pp. 117-126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2020.1807876>

Bonaime, R. (2023) 'Earth Mama review: Savannah Leaf's debut is a heartbreaking look at mothers', *Collider Review*, 4 August. Available at: <https://collider.com/earth-mama-review> (Accessed: 6 March 2024)

Brandoff, R. (2021) 'Complicated grief and art therapy', in Huet and Kapitan (eds.) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The Emerging Picture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 304-311.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021) 'Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches', *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 21(1), pp. 37–47. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12360>

--- (2022) 'Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and becoming a knowing researcher', *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 24(1), pp.1-6. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597>

Bringuier J. (1980) *Conversations with Jean Piaget*. USA: University of Chicago Press. Originally published in French in 1977. Translated by B. Gulati.

British Association of Art Therapists (2019) *Code of ethics*. Available at: <https://baat.org/about/code-of-ethics/>

--- (no date) *Art therapy in schools: A guide for professionals in education*. Available at: <https://baat.org/publications/public-documents/> (Accessed: 3 November 2025)

Brown, Catherine (2013a) *The concept of vulnerability and its use in the care and control of young people*. PhD Thesis. University of Leeds. Available at: <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/4433/1/KB%20Thesis%20FINAL.pdf> (Accessed: 10 January 2023).

- Brown, Corinna (2013b) 'Capturing the transient', *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, 4(1), pp. 117-124 doi: [https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.4.1.117\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.4.1.117_1)
- Browne, B. (2004) 'Imagine Chicago: A methodology for cultivating community', *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 14(5) pp. 394–405. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.795>
- Cameron, J. (1992) *The artist's way: A spiritual path to higher creativity*. London: Routledge.
- Canales, J. (2015) *The physicist and the philosopher: Einstein, Bergson, and the debate that changed our understanding of time*. USA: Princeton University Press.
- Canning, N. (2007) 'Children's Empowerment in Play', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15(2), pp. 227-236. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930701320966>
- Carpenter, B. (2020) *Think piece: A recovery curriculum: Loss and life for our children and schools post pandemic*. Available at: <https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/> (Accessed 30 October 2020).
- Case, C. (1987) 'A Search for Meaning: Loss and Transition in Art Therapy with Children' in T. Dalley et al. (eds) *Images of Art Therapy: New Developments in Theory and Practice*. London: Tavistock, pp. 36-73.
- (1990) 'The triangular relationship (3): Heart forms – the image as mediator', *Inscape: The Journal of the British Association of Art therapists*, Winter, pp. 20-26.
- (2006) 'Observations of children cutting up, cutting out and sticking down', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 11(1), 42–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454830500382820a>
- Casement, P. (1985) *On learning from the patient*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cassoni, E. (2007) 'Parallel process in supervision and therapy: An opportunity for reciprocity', *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 37(2), pp. 130-139. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/036215370703700205>
- Caslin, M. (2019) "'I have got too much stuff wrong with me' – an exploration of how young people experience the Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) label within the confines of the UK education system', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 24(2), pp.167-180. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2019.1587899>
- Centre for Social Justice (2018) *Providing the alternative: How to transform school exclusion and the support that exists beyond*. Available at: <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Providing-the-Alternative-Final-V.pdf> (Accessed: 30 March 2025)
- Children Act* (1989) UK Government. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents> (Accessed: 4 November 2019).
- Children and Young People Now (2025) 'Groundbreaking' case paves way for pupil exclusion appeals. News item. 14 February. Available at: <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/content/news/groundbreaking-case-paves-legal-aid-path-for-pupil-exclusion-appeals> (Accessed: 30 March 2025)
- Children's Commissioner (2012) 'They never give up on you': *Office of the Children's Commissioner school exclusions inquiry*. Available at: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/They-never-give-upon-you-final-report.pdf> (Accessed: 30 March 2025)

---- (2013) *'They go the extra mile': Reducing inequality in school exclusions*. Available at: [https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2017/07/They\\_Go\\_The\\_Extra\\_Mile-.pdf](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2017/07/They_Go_The_Extra_Mile-.pdf) (Accessed: 30 March 2025)

--- (2017) *Briefing: Falling through the gaps in education*. Available at: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2017/11/BRIEFING-Falling-through-the-gaps-in-education-CCO.pdf>. (Accessed: 30 March 2025)

--- (2023) *Looked after children who are not in school*. London: CCO. Available at: <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2023/05/cc-lac-not-in-school.pdf> (Accessed: 15 October 2023).

Chong, C. (2015) 'Why art psychotherapy? Through the lens of interpersonal neurobiology: The distinctive role of art psychotherapy intervention for clients with early relational trauma', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 20(3), pp. 118-126. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2015.1079727>

Churcher, J. and Scaife, M. (1981) *How infants see the point*. Course material. Manchester University and Sussex University. Published the following year as a chapter in G. Butterworth and P. Light (eds.) *Social cognition: Studies of the development of understanding*. UK: Harvester Press, pp. 110-136.

Cohen, J. (2009) 'Transforming school climate: Educational and psychoanalytic perspectives', *Schools: Studies in Education*, 6(1), p. 99-103. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/597659>

Cohen-Liebman, M. (2021) 'Drawing to disclose: An art therapy-based investigative interview process for children', in Huet and Kapitan (eds.) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The Emerging Picture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 77-85.

Cohen-Yatziv, L., and Regev, D. (2019) 'The effectiveness and contribution of art therapy work with children in 2018: What progress has been made so far? A systematic review', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 24(3), pp. 100–112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2019.1574845>

Cohn, J. and Tronick, E. (1988) 'Mother-infant face-to-face interaction: influence is bidirectional and unrelated to periodic cycles in either partner's behavior', *Developmental Psychology*, 24(3), p. 386-392. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.24.3.386>

Cole, S. et al. (2005) *Helping traumatized children learn: supportive school environments for children traumatized by family violence*. USA: Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School. Available at: <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/tlpi-publications/download-a-free-copy-of-helping-traumatized-children-learn/> (Accessed: 10 May 2018).

Coles, A. (2014) 'Being Time': An exploration of personal experiences of time and implications for art psychotherapy Practice', *International Journal of Art Therapy: Inscape*, 19(3), pp. 71-81.

Collins, H. (2000) 'What is tacit knowledge?' Chapter 7 in Knorr-Cetina et al., eds. *The practice turn in contemporary theory*. Oxford: Taylor and Francis Group.

Collinson, P. S. (2020) 'When the body makes its presence felt: Somatic-informed movement practice as an integral part of the hospital care team', *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, 12(2), pp. 289-302. [https://doi.org/10.1386/jdsp\\_00029\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jdsp_00029_1)

Connor, C. (2012) *The influence of attachment experiences and mental health issues on offending behaviour of young people in residential care*. PhD Thesis. University of Salford. Available at: ProQuest Dissertations and Theses ISBN: 9798352655290 (Accessed: 15 February 2025)

Connor, C. (2025) Personal communication.

*Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (Accessed: 27 October 2020)

Cozolino, L. (2013) *The social neuroscience of education: Optimising attachment and learning in the classroom*. New York: Norton.

Christensen, P. (2004) 'Children's Participation in Ethnographic Research: Issues of Power and Representation'. *Children and Society*, 18, pp. 165–176. Published online in Wiley InterScience ([www.interscience.wiley.com](http://www.interscience.wiley.com)). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/CHI.823>

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2018) 'Deer, chicken, hunting dogs, and the future of humankind', in Marks-Tarlow, T., Solomon, M. and Siegel, D. (eds.) *Play and creativity in psychotherapy*. London: Norton.

Cummins, F. (2014) 'Agency is Distinct from Autonomy', *AVANT*, 5(2), pp. 98–112. doi: <https://doi.org/10.12849/50202014.0109.0005>

Curtis, P and Benjamin, A. (2006) 'Councils fund 'panic rooms' for domestic violence victims', *The Guardian*, 22 February. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2006/feb/22/socialcare.politics> (Accessed 13 February 2024).

Dalley *et al.* eds. (1987) *Images of Art Therapy: New Developments in Theory and Practice*. London: Tavistock

Damarell, B. (2007) 'The supervisor's eyes', in J. Schaverien, and C. Case (eds). *Supervision of art psychotherapy; A theoretical and practical handbook*. London: Routledge, pp. 31-44.

Danieli, Y. *et al.* (2019) 'Suitability of the art therapy room and changes in outcome measures in the education system', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 24 (2), pp. 68-75. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2018.1564778>

*Dante (1904 [1310]) The De Monarchia of Dante Alighieri*, ed. with translation into English and notes by A. Henry. New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company. Available at: <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/reinhardt-de-monarchia> (Accessed: 1 March 2025).

Dante (1996 [1310]) *Monarchy*, (tr. and ed.) by Prue Shaw. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Deboys, R., Holttum, S. and Wright, K. (2017) 'Processes of change in school-based art therapy with children: a systematic qualitative study', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 22(3), pp. 118-131. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2016.1262882>

Department for Education (2011) *Teachers Standards* [One page overview] Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a750668ed915d3c7d529cad/Teachers\\_standard\\_information.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a750668ed915d3c7d529cad/Teachers_standard_information.pdf) (Accessed: 6 May 2020)

--- (2016) *Counselling in schools: A blueprint for the future. Departmental advice for school leaders and counsellors*. Available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/497825/Counselling\\_in\\_schools.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/497825/Counselling_in_schools.pdf) (Accessed: 2 February 2018).

--- (2018a) *Mental health and behaviour in schools. Departmental advice for school staff*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1069687/Mental\\_health\\_and\\_behaviour\\_in\\_schools.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1069687/Mental_health_and_behaviour_in_schools.pdf) (Accessed: 10 May 2020)

--- (2018b) *The designated teacher for looked-after children and previously looked-after children*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a901d6ce5274a5e67567fc1/The\\_designated\\_teacher\\_for\\_looked-after\\_and\\_previously\\_looked-after\\_children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a901d6ce5274a5e67567fc1/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf) (Accessed: 10 May 2020)

---(2018c) *Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children: statutory guidance for local authorities*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/683556/Promoting\\_the\\_education\\_of\\_looked-after\\_children\\_and\\_previously\\_looked-after\\_children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf) (Accessed: 10 May 2020)

--- (2023) *Children looked after in England, including adoption*. National statistics. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2022-to-2023> (Accessed: 4 October 2024).

--- (2024a) *Behaviour in Schools: Advice for headteachers and school staff*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ce3721e1bdec001a3221fe/Behaviour\\_in\\_schools\\_-\\_advice\\_for\\_headteachers\\_and\\_school\\_staff\\_Feb\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ce3721e1bdec001a3221fe/Behaviour_in_schools_-_advice_for_headteachers_and_school_staff_Feb_2024.pdf) (Accessed: 3 March 2025)

--- (2024b) *Keeping children safe in education 2024: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges*. Available at: [Keeping children safe in education 2024](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education-2024) (Accessed: 3 March 2025)

--- (2024c) *Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66be0d92c32366481ca4918a/Suspensions\\_and\\_permanent\\_exclusions\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66be0d92c32366481ca4918a/Suspensions_and_permanent_exclusions_guidance.pdf) (Accessed: 15 September 2024).

Department for Education and Department for Health (2015) *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years - Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25> (Accessed:10 October 2023)

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Every Child Matters*. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c95a4e5274a0bb7cb806d/5860.pdf> (Accessed 6 October 2018).

Department of Health and Department for Education (2017) *Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: A green paper*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a823518e5274a2e87dc1b56/Transforming\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_s\\_mental\\_health\\_provision.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a823518e5274a2e87dc1b56/Transforming_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_provision.pdf) (Accessed 1 February 2018)

Department of Health and Social Care (2022) *Working in partnership with people and communities: Statutory Guidance*. London: NHS England. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/B1762-guidance-on-working-in-partnership-with-people-and-communities-2.pdf> (Accessed: 15 March 2024).

Dewey, J. (1897) 'My pedagogic creed', *The School Journal*, 54(3), pp.77-80. Available at: <https://la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/330T/350kPEEDeweyPedagogicCreedTable.pdf> (Accessed: 4 April 2023)

----- (1934) *Art as experience*. London: Perigee. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/deweyjohnartasanexperience/mode/2up?view=theater> (Accessed 2 May 2023).

Dickinson, E. (1986) *The complete poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas Johnson. Boston and London: Faber and Faber. First publ. by Faber and Faber in 1970. This edition first publ. in 1975.

Dorling, D. (2023) *Shattered nation: Inequality and the geography of a failing state*. UK: Verso.

*Earth Mama* (2023) directed by S. Leaf [Film] USA: A24, Film4, Academy Films and Park Pictures.

Eaton, L, Doherty, K. and Widrick, R. (2007) 'A review of research and methods used to establish art therapy as an effective treatment method for traumatized children', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 34(3), pp. 256–262. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2007.03.001>

Edwards, D. (1999) 'The role of the case study in art therapy research', *Inscape*, 4(1), pp. 2–9. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454839908413068>

Edwards, R. (1993) 'An education in interviewing: Placing the researcher and the research', in C. Renzetti, and R. Lee (eds.) *Researching sensitive topics*. London: Sage.

Edwards, A. and Talbot, R. (1999) *The Hard-pressed Researcher: A research handbook for the caring professions*. UK: Longman.

Eisner, E. (1981) 'On the differences between scientific and artistic approaches to qualitative research', *Educational Researcher*, 10(4), pp. 5–9. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X010004005>

--- (2004) 'What can education learn from the arts about the practice of education?', *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, 5(4). Available at: <http://www.ijea.org/v5n4/index.htm> (accessed: 2 January 2020)

Eisold, K. (2009) 'The school as an organization', *Schools: Studies in Education*, 6(1), pp.138-142. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/597663>

Elefant, C. (2010) 'Unmasking hidden resources: Communication in children with severe developmental disabilities in music therapy', in V. Karkou (ed.) *Arts therapies in schools: Research and practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. pp. 243-258.

Ellins, J. *et al.* (2023) 'Early evaluation of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Trailblazer programme: a rapid mixed-methods study', *Health Social Care Delivery Research*, 11(8). doi: <https://doi.org/10.3310/XQWU4117>

Emde, R. (2017) 'Remembering Daniel Stern (1934–2012): A legacy for 21st century psychoanalytic thinking and practice', *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 37(4), pp. 216-219. DOI: 10.1080/07351690.2017.1299481

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2023) *Ensuring children have the support to challenge discriminatory exclusions from school*. Legal action. Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/legal-action-search/ensuring-children-have-support-challenge-discriminatory-exclusions> (Accessed: 30 March 2025)

Fancourt, D. (2026) *Art cures: The science of how the arts transform our health*. London: Penguin.

Fancourt, D. and Finn, S. (2019) *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing? A scoping review*. Health evidence network synthesis report 67. World Health Organisation – European Region. <http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019> accessed 03/12/19

Felitti, M. *et al.* (1998) 'Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), pp. 245-258. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0749-3797\(98\)00017-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0749-3797(98)00017-8)

Fielding, M. (2000) 'The person centred school', *FORUM University College London*, 42(2), pp. 51-54. Available at: [https://journals.lwbooks.co.uk/pdfs/forum/42/forum\\_42\\_2.pdf](https://journals.lwbooks.co.uk/pdfs/forum/42/forum_42_2.pdf) (Accessed: 3 February 2024).

--- (2006) 'Leadership, personalization and high performance schooling: Naming the new totalitarianism', *School Leadership and Management*, 26(4), pp. 347-369. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430600886889>

Fish, B. (2012) 'Response art: The art of the art therapist', *Art Therapy*, 29(3), pp. 138-143. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2012.701594>

--- (2013) 'Painting research: Challenges and opportunities of intimacy and depth', *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, 4(1), pp. 105-115. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.4.1.105\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.4.1.105_1)

--- (2019) 'Response art in art therapy: Historical and contemporary overview', *Art Therapy*, 36(3), pp. 122-132. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2019.1648915>

Fonagy, P. and Alison, E. (2014) 'The role of mentalizing and epistemic trust in the therapeutic relationship', *Psychotherapy*, 51(3), pp. 372–380. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036505>

Foucault, M. (1966) *Les hétérotopies* and *L'utopie du corps*. Paris: France culture station, radio conferences prod. Valette broadcast on 7 and 11 December, 1966). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxOruDUO4p8> (Accessed: 13 January 2019).

--- 1984 [1967]) 'Des espaces autres. Cercle d'études architecturales', [Lecture 1967] Publ. in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, 5, pp.46-49. trans. by Jay Miskowiec: *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, pp. 1-9 Available at: <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf> (Accessed: 13 January 2019).

Frankl, V. (2006) *Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy*, Boston: Beacon Press. (Originally published in 1946 as *Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager*, 'A psychologist experiences the concentration camp'. Translated into English in 1959).

Freitas, M. (2000) 'Dickinson's A STILL—VOLCANO—LIFE—', *The Explicator*, 58(4), pp. 200-203. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00144940009597044>

Fusch, P., Fusch, G. and Ness, L. (2018) 'Denzin's Paradigm Shift: Revisiting triangulation in qualitative research', *Journal of Social Change*, 10(1), doi: <https://doi.org/10.5590/josc.2018.10.1.02>

Gabora, L. and Saab, A. (2011) *Creative interference and states of potentiality in analogy problem solving*. Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society (pp. 3506-3511). Houston TX: Cognitive Science Society.

Gazeley, L. (2010) 'The role of school exclusion processes in the re-production of social and educational disadvantage', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 58(3), pp. 293-309. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071000903520843>

Geddes, H. (2003) 'Attachment and the child in school: Part I', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 8(3), pp. 231-242. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632750300507021>

--- (2005) 'Attachment and learning: Part II', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 10(2), pp. 79-93. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363275205054161>

Graham, B. et al. (2019) *School exclusion: A literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/800028/Timpson\\_review\\_of\\_school\\_exclusion\\_literature\\_review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800028/Timpson_review_of_school_exclusion_literature_review.pdf) (Accessed 5 September 2020)

Grbich, C. (2013) *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction*. London: Sage. First ed. publ. 2006.

Greenboim-Zimchoni, A. (2024) 'Exploring relationships through art therapy for children with specific learning disabilities', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2023.2295925>

Greenwood, L. (2018) *Adults' and children's views of a sense of belonging and how this can support atypical school transitions for children in care*. PhD Thesis. Manchester University. Available at: ProQuest eTheses Number 27678888.

Grey, P. (2021) *Co-created serious youth violence animation*. [Blog] Children and young people Now. Available at: <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/content/blogs/co-created-serious-youth-violence-animation/> (Accessed: 1 May 2025)

Grey, P., Smithson, H and Jump, D. (2021) *Trauma city: A tale of SYV*. [Research Video Animation] Available at: <https://vimeo.com/551504469> (Accessed: 1 May 2025).

--- (2023) *Adverse childhood experiences and serious youth violence*. UK: Bristol University Press.

Gyateng, T. et al. (2014) *Young People and the Secure Estate: Needs and Interventions*. Project Report. Youth Justice Board. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7d5c1ee5274a2e711b67b2/young-people-secure-estate.pdf> (Accessed: 2 November 2019)

Hackett, S. S., Ashby, L., Parker, K., Goody, S. and Power, N. (2017) 'UK art therapy practice-based guidelines for children and adults with learning disabilities', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 22(2), 84–94. <https://doi-org/10.1080/17454832.2017.1319870>

Hallett, F., and G. Hallett (2021) 'Disciplinary Exclusion: Wicked Problems in Wicked Settings', *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 21(S1), pp. 8–16. do: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12541>

Halliday, D. (1987) 'Peak experiences: the individuation of children', in T. Dalley et al. (eds) *Images of Art Therapy: New Developments in Theory and Practice*. London: Tavistock, pp. 128 -156.

- Haraway, D. (1988) 'Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), pp. 575-599. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>
- Haring, U., Sorin, R., and Caltabiano, N. (2020) 'Exploring the transformative effects of flow on children's liminality and trauma', *Art Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, 5(1), pp. 16–46. doi: <https://doi.org/10.18432/ari29492>
- Harré, R. (2004) 'Staking our claim for qualitative psychology as science', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1(1), pp. 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088704qp002oa>
- Harris, A. and Sheikh, Q. (2023) *Legal update: Advocacy and school inclusion*. [Website feature]. Available at: <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/content/features/legal-update-advocacy-and-school-inclusion> (Accessed: 30 March 2025)
- Harris, E. et al. (2025) *Who is losing learning? Finding solutions to the school engagement crisis*. Institute for Public Policy Research. Available at : [https://ippr-org.files.svdcn.com/production/Downloads/Who\\_is\\_losing\\_learning\\_solutions\\_March25.pdf?dm=1742212659](https://ippr-org.files.svdcn.com/production/Downloads/Who_is_losing_learning_solutions_March25.pdf?dm=1742212659) (Accessed: 2 April 2025).
- Harwood, D. (2010) 'Finding a voice for child participants within doctoral research: Experiences from the field', *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(4), pp. 4–13. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911003500402>
- Harwood, M. (2018) *Participatory research with Looked After Children: Factors which support meaningful engagement*. PhD Thesis, Manchester University. Available at: [https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/127943536/FULL\\_TEXT.PDF](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/127943536/FULL_TEXT.PDF) (Accessed: 8 November 2019)
- Havsteen-Franklin, D., de Knoop, J., Agtarap, T., Hackett, S. and Haeyen, S. (2023) 'Evaluation of an arts therapies approach to team development for non-acute healthcare teams in low control and high-pressure environments', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 83, pp. 1-13. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2023.102003>
- Hayes, D. (2024) *Exclusions rise adds impetus for change*. Children and Young People Now. Available at: <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/content/analysis/exclusions-rise-adds-impetus-for-change> (Accessed: 30 March 2025)
- Hayes, A. and Andrews, L. (2020) 'A complex systems approach to the study of change in psychotherapy', *BMC Medicine*, 18(1), 197, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-020-01662-2>
- Health Equity North (2024) *Children in care in the North of England: A report prepared for the Child of the North All-Party Parliamentary Group*. Available at: <https://www.healthequitynorth.co.uk/app/uploads/Children-in-Care-Report-2024-FINAL-2-1.pdf> (Accessed: 10 August 2024).
- Health and Care Professions Council (2018) *Professions and protected titles*, [Webpage]. Available at: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/about-us/who-we-regulate/the-professions/> (Accessed: 4 September 2023)
- (2024) *Revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics*. Health and Care Professions Council. Available at: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org.uk/standards/standards-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics/revised-standards/> (Accessed: 15 October 2024).

- Heron, G. (2019) *Reconceptualising protective factors in response to risk with dangerous children leaves little scope for evil*. University of Strathclyde, Scotland. Paper delivered at 1<sup>st</sup> Global Conference on *Evil Children: Children and Evil*. Progressive Connexions. Verona, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> July 2019.
- Hill, V. (2013) 'The medicalisation of childhood', *The British Psychological Society's (BPS) Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP), Debate* 1(149), pp. 4-5. doi: <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsdeb.2013.1.149.4>
- Hinds, R. (2024) 'An exploration of the role of mess-making in art psychotherapy', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 30(2), pp. 102-112. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2024.2434471>
- HM Government (2023) *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023: A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e7501ab418ab055592a7b/Working\\_together\\_to\\_safeguard\\_children\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e7501ab418ab055592a7b/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023.pdf) (Accessed: 4 February 2024)
- Hobson, R. (1987) *Forms of feeling: The heart of psychotherapy*. 2nd edn. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Hodge, N. and Wolstenholme, C. (2016) 'I didn't stand a chance': how parents experience the exclusions appeal tribunal', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(12), pp. 1297–1309. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1168875>
- Holmqvist, G., Roxburg, A., Larsson, I. and Lundqvist-Persson, C. (2019) 'Expressions of vitality affects and basic affects during art therapy and their meaning for inner change', *International Journal of Art Therapy: Inscape*, 24(1), pp. 30-39. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2018.1480639>
- Holttum, S. (2015) 'School inclusion for children with mental health difficulties', *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, 19(4), pp. 161-168. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/MHSI-08-2015-0030>
- Hopkins, S. (2019) 'The school to prison pipeline', *The Guardian*, 25 June. *Australian edition*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/jun/25/the-school-to-prison-pipeline-how-the-criminal-justice-system-fails-at-risk-kids> (Accessed: 5 September 2019)
- Hosea, H. (2006) 'The brush's footmarks': Parents and infants paint together in a small community art therapy group', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 11(2), pp. 69–78. doi: <https://doi-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/17454830600980317>
- Houghton, R. and Beebe, B. (2016) 'Dance/Movement Therapy: Learning to look through video microanalysis', *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, 38, pp. 334–357. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10465-016-9226-0>
- Hughes, S., Pennington, J. and Makris, S. (2012) 'Translating autoethnography across the AERA standards: Toward understanding autoethnographic scholarship as empirical research', *Educational Researcher*, 41(6), pp. 209–219. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12442983>
- Hunter, K., Francis, B. and Fitzpatrick, C. (2023) *Care experience, ethnicity and youth justice involvement: Key trends and policy implications*. Manchester Metropolitan and Lancaster Universities. Available at: [https://www.adruk.org/fileadmin/uploads/adruk/Documents/Policy\\_Briefings/Policy-briefing-Katie-Hunter.pdf](https://www.adruk.org/fileadmin/uploads/adruk/Documents/Policy_Briefings/Policy-briefing-Katie-Hunter.pdf) (Accessed: 17 January 2024)

Ide, W. (2023) 'Earth Mama review: Savannah Leaf's outstanding debut about single motherhood'. *The Observer*, 9 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/dec/09/earth-mama-review-savanah-leaf-tia-nomore> (Accessed: 9 January 2024).

Isserow, J. (2008) 'Looking together: Joint attention in art therapy', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 13(1), pp. 34–42. <https://doi-org/10.1080/17454830802002894>

James, W. (1890) *The principles of psychology*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.

--- (2001 [1899]) *Talks to teachers on psychology: and to students on some of life's ideals*, Dover Publications. Written in 1899. Chapter 14: *Apperception*. Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20071230060830/http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/tt14.html> (Accessed: 15 January 2023).

Joseph, A. and Crenna-Jennings, W. (2024) *Outcomes for young people who experience multiple suspensions*. Education Policy Institute. Available at: <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/outcomes-for-young-people-who-experience-multiple-suspen/> (Accessed: 15 January 2023)

Jung, C. (1965) *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (English trans. from German). New York: Random House.

Kapitan, L. (2025) *Introduction to art therapy research* (third edition). UK: Routledge. First publ. in 2010.

Karkou, V. ed. (2010) *Arts therapies in schools: Research and practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Karkou, V., Fullarton, A. and Scarth, S. (2010) 'Finding a way out of the labyrinth through dance movement psychotherapy: Collaborative work in a mental health promotion programme in secondary schools', in Karkou, V., ed. *Arts Therapies in Schools: Research and Practice*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishing, pp. 161-175.

Kennedy, H., Landor, M. and L., Todd (2011) *Video Interactive Guidance: A relationship-based intervention to promote attunement, empathy and wellbeing*. UK: Jessica Kingsley.

Klein, M. (1975) *The collected works of Mélanie Klein. Volume I: "Love, Guilt and Reparation" and other works 1921 – 1945*. UK: Hogarth Press.

Klorer, G. P. (2005) 'Expressive therapy with severely maltreated children: Neuroscience contributions', *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 22(4), pp. 213–220. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2005.10129523>

Knight, L. *et al.* (2015) 'Intergenerational collaborative drawing: A research method for researching with/about young children', *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 40(4), pp. 21–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911504000404>

Knorr-Cetina, K., Schatzki, T. and von Savigny, E. (2000) *The practice turn in contemporary theory*. Oxford: Taylor and Francis Group.

Kriakous, S. *et al.* (2021) 'The effectiveness of mindfulness-based stress reduction on the psychological functioning of healthcare professionals: a systematic review', *Mindfulness*, 12(12), pp. 1–28. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-020-01500-9>

- Kulz, C. (2015) *Mapping the Exclusion Process: Inequality, Justice and the Business of Education*. Communities Empowerment Network. Available at: <http://cenlive.org/download/10/mapping-the-exclusion-process-christy-kulz> (Accessed: 3 March 2025).
- LaMothe, R. (2014) 'Winnicott and Arendt: Bridging potential and political spaces', *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 101(2), pp. 289-318. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1521/prev.2014.101.2.289>
- Laming, H. (2003) *Report of the Inquiry into the Death of Victoria Climbié*. London: HMSO Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c5edeed915d696ccfc51b/5730.pdf> (Accessed: 30 March 2019)
- Lammy, D. (2017) *The Lammy review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System*. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a82009040f0b62305b91f49/lammy-review-final-report.pdf> (Accessed: 31 March 2019)
- Landy, R., Hodermarska, M., Mowers, D. and Perrin, D. (2013) 'Performance as arts-based research in drama therapy supervision', *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, 3(1), pp. 49-58. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.3.1.49\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.3.1.49_1)
- Lansdown, G., Jimerson, S. and Sharoozi, R. (2014) 'Children's rights and school psychology: Children's right to participation', *Journal of school psychology*, 52(1), pp. 3-12. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2013.12.006>
- Lavelle, D. and Hattenstone S. (2023) 'Childhood in care raises risk of entering English youth justice system eightfold', *The Guardian*, September 21. Available at: [https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/sep/21/care-experienced-children-eight-times-more-likely-enter-youth-justice-system-england?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/sep/21/care-experienced-children-eight-times-more-likely-enter-youth-justice-system-england?CMP=share_btn_tw) (Accessed: 3 March 2024).
- Lawlor, L. and Moulard-Leonard, V. (2022) 'Henri Bergson', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/bergson/> (Accessed: 3 February 2025).
- LeDoux J. (1998) *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life*. UK London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Le Vu, M.N. et al. (2022). 'A Review of the Effectiveness, Feasibility, and Acceptability of Art Therapy for Children and Adolescents during the COVID-19 Pandemic', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(18), pp. 11612-11618. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191811612>
- Levine, S. (2013) 'Expecting the unexpected: Improvisation in art-based research', *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, 4(1), pp. 21-28. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.4.1.21\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.4.1.21_1)
- Lewer, D. et al. (2020) 'The ACE Index: Mapping childhood adversity in England', *Journal of Public Health*, 42(4), pp. 487-495. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdz158> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).
- Liebmann, M. (1986) *Art Therapy for Groups: A Handbook for Themes, Games, and Exercises*. UK: Brookline Books.
- Local Government Association (2017) *Corporate parenting resource pack*. Available at:

[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/15.74%20Corporate%20parenting\\_05\\_web.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/15.74%20Corporate%20parenting_05_web.pdf) (Accessed: 27 May 2024).

Lopez Fernandez Cao, M. and Peral Jimenez, C. (2021) 'Finding new self-narratives through the artist book and life story in cumulative interpersonal trauma', in Huet and Kapitan (eds.) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The Emerging Picture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 47-58.

*Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001) [film] dir. by P. Jackson. USA: New Line Cinema.

*Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002) [film] directed by P. Jackson. USA: New Line Productions.

*Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003) [film] directed by P. Jackson. USA: New Line Cinema.

Loveridge, J. ed. (2010) *Involving Children and Young People in Research in Educational Settings*. Victoria University report to the Ministry of Education. New Zealand, Ministry of Education. Available at: [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/Chapter\\_1](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/Chapter_1) (Accessed: 3 August 2025).

Lowenfeld, V. (1951) 'Psycho-aesthetic implications of the art of the blind', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 10 (1), pp. 1-9. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/426783>

Lundy, L., Orr, K. and Marshall, C. (2015) *Towards better investment in the rights of the child: The views of children*. [Report] Queen's University Belfast: Centre for Children's Rights. Available at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforChildrensRights/filestore/Fileupload,496273,en.pdf> (Accessed: 3 December 2024).

Lundy, L. and O'Lynn, P. (2019) 'The Education Rights of Children', in: Kilkelly, U. and Liefaard, T. (eds.) *International Human Rights of Children. International Human Rights*. Singapore: Springer. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4184-6\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4184-6_11)

Maceira, D. and Topp, S. (2024) 'The puzzle of intersectoral collaboration and health: Revisiting implementation research', *Health Policy and Planning*, 39 (2), pp. i1-i3. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czae075>

Maclagan, D. (2001) *Psychological aesthetics: Painting, feeling and making sense*. UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Madsen, W. (2009) 'Collaborative helping: A practice framework for family-centred services', *Family Process*, 48, pp. 103-116.

Malchiodi, C. (2020) *Trauma and expressive arts therapy: Brain, body and the imagination in the healing process*. USA: Guildford Publications.

Malis, D. (2021) 'Hidden gems: Art as an active bridge in data analysis', in Huet and Kapitan (eds.) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The Emerging Picture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 304-311.

Mann, P. (1984) *Children in care revisited*. London: Batsford Academic and Educational.

Mannion, G. (2007) 'Going Spatial, Going Relational: Why 'listening to children' and children's participation needs reframing', *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 28(3), pp. 405-420, doi: <http://doi.org/10.1080/01596300701458970>

- Mannoni M. (1999) *Separation and creativity: Restoring the lost language of childhood*. The Lacanian Clinical Field series. New York: Other Press.
- Marmot, M. (2020) 'Health Equity in England: the Marmot Review 10 years on', *British Medical Journal*, 368, pp. 1-4. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27233046>
- Marks-Tarlow, T., Solomon, M. and Siegel, D. (2018) *Play and creativity in psychotherapy*. London: Norton.
- Markland, F. (2011). *Effectiveness of school based art therapy for children who have experienced psychological trauma*. PhD Thesis. University of Manchester. Available at: <https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/effectiveness-of-school-based-art-therapy-for-children-who-have-e> (Accessed: 2 July 2020).
- Mason, B. (1993) 'Towards positions of safe uncertainty', *Human systems: Therapy, Culture and Attachments*, 2(2), pp. 54-63. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/26344041211063125>
- Mathelin, K. (1999) *Lacanian psychotherapy with children: The broken piano*. Written in 1994 in French. The Lacanian Clinical Field series. New York: Other Press
- McLeod, J. (2006) *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. London: Sage.
- McConnell, D. (2007) 'Out of the lion's mouth': *A report on the work of the Emotional and Trauma Support Team. July 2006 – June 2007*. [Project annual report] The International New Arrivals Partnership: Children's Fund and Manchester City Council.
- McConnell, D. (2012) *The dome and the cave - safe enough spaces for transformative creativity: A study of how a project sustained itself through economic crisis*. Unpublished MA in Art Psychotherapy Research. Leeds Metropolitan University.
- McConnell, D. (2019) 'Slices of time: Heterotopia and counter-space in art therapy', *Track Changes, Postgraduate Journal for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. University of Sheffield*. Issue 12, September. <https://trackchangesjournal.wordpress.com/archive/issue-12-utopias-dystopias-and-heterotopias/slices-of-time-heterotopia-and-counter-space-in-art-therapy/>
- McConnell, D. (2021) 'A quiet revolution: School-based art therapy transforms lives and unlocks creativity', in Huet, V. and Kapitan, L (eds) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The Emerging Picture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 304 – 311.
- McConnell, D., Brown, K., Garcia, Y. and Stephens, J. (2019). 'Aligning with the chaos and navigating through the trauma', in Gallard, D., Evans, K. and Millington, J. (eds.) *Children and their education in secure accommodation: Interdisciplinary perspectives of education, health and youth justice*. Oxon. Routledge, pp. 162 – 177.
- McCullough, C. (2009) 'A child's use of transitional objects in art therapy to cope with divorce', *Art Therapy, Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 26(1), pp. 19-25. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2009.10129306>
- McDonald, A. and Drey, N. (2018) 'Primary-school-based art therapy: a review of controlled studies', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 23(1), pp. 33–44. <https://doi-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/17454832.2017.1338741>

- McDonald, A., Holttum, S. and Drey, N. (2019) 'Primary-school-based art therapy: an exploratory study of changes in children's social, emotional and mental health', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 24(3), pp. 125-138. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2019.1634115>
- McFerran, K. and Stephenson, J. (2010) 'Facing the challenge: A music therapy investigation in the evidence-based framework', in Karkou (ed.) *Arts therapies in schools: Research and practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 259-270.
- McGilchrist, I. (2012) *The master and his emissary: The divided brain and the making of the western world*. 2nd edn. London: Yale University Press.
- McNamee, S. (2004) 'Commentary - Imagine Chicago: A methodology for constructing community social construction in practice', *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 14, pp. 406-409
- (2014) 'Research as relational practice: Exploring modes of inquiry', in G. Simon and A. Chard (Eds.), *Systemic inquiry: Innovations in reflexive practice research*. USA: Everything is Connected Press, pp. 74-94.
- McNamee, S., Rasera, E. and Martins, P. (2023) *Practicing therapy as social construction*. USA: Sage.
- McNiff, S. (1998) *Art-based Research*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley.
- (2004) *Art heals: How creativity cures the soul*. USA: Shambala Publications.
- ed. (2013) *Art as research: Opportunities and challenges*. UK: Bristol: Intellect.
- Mercieca, D. (2011) *Beyond conventional boundaries: Uncertainty in research and practice with children*. Netherlands, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Meyeowitz-Katz, J. (2003) 'Art materials and processes – a place of meeting art psychotherapy with a four-year-old boy', *International journal of art therapy*, 8(2), pp. 60-69. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454830308414055>
- Michaels, D. (2024) 'Mourning lost parts: An art-based response to experiences *in/of* a neurorehabilitation day service', *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, 15(3), pp. 309–19. doi: [https://doi-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/10.1386/jaah\\_00174\\_3](https://doi-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/10.1386/jaah_00174_3)
- Milner, M. (1950) *On not being able to paint*. London: Heinemann.
- Mylonakou-Keke, I. (2015) 'The emergence of 'Syn-epistemic wholeness' from dialectic synergy of disciplines: A transdisciplinary social pedagogic model', *Creative Education*, 6, pp. 1890-1907. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ce.2015.617195>
- NHS (2005) *Working in systems: Process and systems thinking*. NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/improvement-hub/wp-content/uploads/sites/44/2017/11/ILG-2.4-Working-in-Systems.pdf> (Accessed: 4 April 2024)
- NHS Confederation (2021) *Reaching the tipping point: Children's and young peoples mental health*. London: National Health Service Confederation (Charity). Available at: <https://www.nhsconfed.org/system/files/2021-08/Reaching%20the%20tipping%20point%20Final.pdf> (Accessed: 22 June 2022).

National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence (2013) *Psychosis in children and young people: recognition and management: NICE Clinical Guideline [CG155]* National Institute for Clinical Health and Care Excellence. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg155/chapter/Recommendations#possible-psychosis> (Accessed: 2 May 2022)

--- (2017) *Child abuse and neglect: NICE guideline [NG76]* Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng76/chapter/Recommendations#therapeutic-interventions-for-children-young-people-and-families-after-child-abuse-and-neglect> (Accessed: 2 May 2022).

--- (2018) *Therapeutic interventions after abuse and neglect*. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/about/nice-communities/social-care/quick-guides-for-social-care/therapeutic-interventions-after-abuse-and-neglect> (Accessed 3 April 2025)

--- (2019) *Child abuse and neglect: NICE: Quality Standard [QS179]* Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs179> (Accessed: 2 May 2022).

--- (2021) *Looked-after children and young people: NICE guideline [NG205]*. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng205/chapter/Recommendations#learning-and-education> (Accessed: 2 May 2022).

--- (2022) *Social, Emotional and Mental Wellbeing in Primary and Secondary Education NICE Guideline [NG223]* Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng223/chapter/Recommendations#targeted-support> (Accessed: 6 July 2022).

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004) *Young children develop in an environment of relationships*. Available at: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/working-paper/wp1/> (Accessed: 13 September 2021).

Nowotny, H., Scott, P. and Gibbons, M. (2003) 'Introduction: 'Mode 2' revisited: The new production of knowledge', *Minerva*, 41(3), pp. 179–194. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41821245>

O'Brien, F. (2004) 'The making of mess in art therapy: Attachment, trauma and the brain', *Inscape: The Journal of the British Association of Art Therapists*, 9(1), pp. 2-13. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02647140408405670>

Ottarsdottir, U. (2010) 'Art therapy in education for children who have experienced stress and/or trauma', in Karkou, V. (ed.) *Arts Therapies in Schools: Research and Practice*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing, pp. 145-160.

--- (2024) Personal communication.

Panksepp J. (1998) *Affective neuroscience: The foundation of human and animal emotions*. Series in affective science. UK: Oxford University Press.

--- (2018) 'PLAY and the construction of creativity, cleverness, and reversal of ADHD in our social brains', in Marks-Tarlow, T., Solomon, M. and Siegel, D. (eds.) *Play and creativity in psychotherapy*. London: Norton.

Parker, I. (2005) *Qualitative Psychology: Introducing Radical Research*. UK: Open University.

Partridge, E. (2021) 'Bracketing the researcher: Art journal as research document', in Huet and Kapitan (eds.) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The Emerging Picture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 304-311.

Patton, M. (2002) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pavlicevic, M. (2007) 'The music interaction rating scale (Schizophrenia) (MIR(S)) microanalysis of co-improvisation in music therapy with adults suffering from chronic schizophrenia', in Wosch, T. and Wigram, T. (eds.) *Microanalysis in music therapy: Methods, techniques, and applications for clinicians, researchers, educators and students*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 174-185.

Peluso, R. (2021) 'Dante in the margins of Hannah Arendt', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 39, pp. 291-308. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27119832> (Accessed: 1 April 2025).

Perraudin, F. (2018) 'Use of isolation booths in schools criticised as 'barbaric' punishment', *The Guardian*, 2 September. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/sep/02/barbaric-school-punishment-of-consequence-rooms-criticised-by-parents> (Accessed: 15 January 2019)

-- (2019) 'Mother sues over daughter's suicide attempt in school isolation booth', *The Guardian*, 3 April 2019. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/apr/03/isolation-of-children-at-academies-prompts-legal-action> (Accessed: 1 June 2019)

Perry, B. (2009) 'Examining child maltreatment through a neurodevelopmental lens: Clinical application of the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics', *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 14(4), pp. 240-255. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325020903004350>

Public Health England (2019) *Collaborative approaches to preventing offending and re-offending in children (CAPRICORN)*. Available at: [https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/33984/1/CAPRICORN\\_resource.pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/33984/1/CAPRICORN_resource.pdf) (Accessed: 6 June 2020)

Phillips, A. (2011) *The faith of girls: Children's spirituality and transition to adulthood* [Series:: Explorations in practical, pastoral and empirical theology]. UK: Routledge.

Pillow, W. (2003) 'Confession, catharsis or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), pp. 175-196. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000060635>

Pirrie, A. and Macleod, G. (2009) 'Locked out: researching destinations and outcomes for pupils excluded from special schools and Pupil Referral Units', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 14(3), pp. 185-194. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632750903073343>

Pirrie *et al.* (2011) 'What happens to pupils permanently excluded from special schools and pupil referral units in England?', *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(3), pp. 519-538. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.481724>

Prigogine, I. (1993 [1977]) 'Biographical', in *Nobel Lectures, Chemistry 1971-1980*, [Web page] Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Forsén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore. Written in 1977. Translated from French. Available at: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/chemistry/1977/prigogine/biographical/> (Accessed: 8 August 2021)

Prokofiev, F. (2010) 'Give me some paper': The role of image-making as a stabilising force for a child in transition', in Karkou, V., (ed.) *Arts Therapies in Schools: Research and Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing, pp. 161-175.

--- (2013a) 'Allowing the artwork to speak: The use of a visual display as research method in a retrospective study of four years' artwork in art therapy with a four-year old boy', *ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine*, 4(1) doi: <https://doi.org/10.25602/GOLD.atol.v4i1.318>

--- (2013b) 'Visual display case study' [Video], *ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine*, 4(1) doi: <https://doi.org/10.25602/GOLD.atol.v4i1.317>

--- (2024) Personal communication.

Radio de France (1948) *Rare extrait d'une conférence donnée a la Sorbonne dont la date d'enregistrement est inconnue, diffusé dans l'émission 'La Radio écrit l'histoire'*. Henri Bergson. Video 1 minute 29 seconds: accessed 14.01.18. Rare extract of Henri Bergson speaking at a conference at the Sorbonne in Paris, unknown date, broadcast on the programme 'Radio writes history'. Translation online by the thesis's author, D. McConnell. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgnuZccKKJw>

Rankanen, M. (2021) 'An embodied, intersubjective and aesthetic view into the process of therapeutic change', in Huet, V. and Kapitan, L. (eds.) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The Emerging Picture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 140-148.

Rappaport, L. (2013) 'Trusting the felt sense in art-based research', *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, 4(1), pp. 97-104 doi: [https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.4.1.97\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.4.1.97_1)

Ridder, H. (2007) 'Microanalysis on selected video clips with focus on communicative response in music therapy', in Wosch, T. and Wigram, T. (eds.) *Microanalysis in music therapy: Methods, techniques, and applications for clinicians, researchers, educators and students*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 54-66.

Riessman, C.K. (1993) *Narrative Analysis*. London: Sage.

Rodman, R. (2005) 'Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition', in Winnicott, D. *Playing and reality*. London: Routledge. First edn. 1971 London: Tavistock Publications.

Romano, A. (2021) 'Using a person-centred approach in the instruction of diverse college learners with the aim of increased retention and better self-esteem', *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 8(5), pp. 49-63. <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0805007>

Ross, M. (2017) *Silence: A user's guide. Volume 1: Process*. London: Dartman, Longman and Todd Ltd. First published 2013.

Rothi, D., Leavey, G. and Best, R. (2008) 'On the front-line: Teachers as active observers of pupils' mental health', *Teaching and Teacher Education, Elsevier*, 24(5), pp. 1217-1231. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2007.09.011>

Rudova, L. (1996) 'Bergsonism in Russia: The case of Bakhtin', *Neophilologus* 80, pp. 175-188. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00212098>

Ryan, R. and Deci, E. (2000) 'Self-Determination Theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being', *American Psychological Association*, 55(1), pp. 68-78. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037110003-066X.55.1.68>

Sandseter, E. (2007) 'Categorising risky play – how can we identify risk-taking in children's play?', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15(2), pp. 237-252. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930701321733>

Sangarapillai, N., Wohr, M. and Schwarting, R. (2022) 'Appetitive 50 kHz calls in a pavlovian conditioned approach task in Cacna1c haploinsufficient rats', *Physiology and Behaviour*, June 1:250:113795. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physbeh.2022.113795>

Scarfe, N. V. (1962) 'Play is Education', *Childhood Education*, 39(3), pp.117-121. doi: <https://doi/abs/10.1080/00094056.1962.10726996>

Schaverien, J. (1987) 'The scapegoat and the talisman: Transference in art therapy', in Dalley, T. *et al.* (eds.) *Images of art therapy: New developments in theory and practice*. USA: Tavistock and Methuen, pp. 74-108.

--- (1990) 'The triangular relationship (2): Desire, alchemy and the picture: Transference and countertransference in art therapy', *Inscape: The Journal of the British Association of Art therapists*, Winter, pp. 14-19.

--- (1991) *The revealing image: Analytical art psychotherapy in theory and practice*. London Routledge.

--- (2000) 'The triangular relationship and the aesthetic countertransference in analytical art psychotherapy', in Gilroy, A. and McNeilly, G. (eds.) *The changing shape of art therapy: New developments in theory and practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley, pp. 55-83.

Scholz, J. (2007) 'Microanalysis of Interaction in Music Therapy (MIMT) with children with developmental disorders', in Wosch, T. and Wigram, T. (eds.) *Microanalysis in music therapy: Methods, techniques, and applications for clinicians, researchers, educators and students*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 67-78.

Schumacher, K. (2007) 'The 'AQR-instrument' (Assessment of the Quality of the Relationship) – An observation instrument to access the quality of a relationship', in Wosch, T. and Wigram, T. (eds.) *Microanalysis in music therapy: Methods, techniques, and applications for clinicians, researchers, educators and students*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 79-91.

Schweizer, C., Knorth, E. J., van Yperen, T. A. and Spreen, M. (2019) 'Consensus-based typical elements of art therapy with children with autism spectrum disorders', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 24(4), pp. 181–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2019.1632364>

Scope, A., Uttley, L. and Sutton, A. (2017) 'A qualitative systematic review of service-user and service provider perspectives on the acceptability, relative benefits, and potential harms of art therapy for people with non-psychotic mental health disorders', *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 90(1), pp. 25–43. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12093>

Sealy, J., Abrams, E. and Cockburn, T. (2023) 'Students' experience of isolation room punishment in UK mainstream education. 'I can't put into words what you felt like, almost a dog in a cage'',

*International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(12), pp. 1336-1350. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1889052>

Seligman, M., et al. (2009) 'Positive Education: Positive Psychology and Classroom Interventions', *Oxford Review of Education*, 35(3), pp. 293-311. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980902934563>

Sheller, S. (2007) 'Understanding insecure attachment: A study using children's bird nest imagery', *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 24(3), pp. 119–127. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2007.10129427>

Shotter, J. (1999) 'Life inside dialogically structured mentalities: Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's account of our mental activities as out in the world between us', in Rowan, J. and Cooper, M. (eds.) *The plural self: Polypsychic perspectives*. London: Sage, pp.71-92.

--- (2005) 'Inside processes: Transitory understandings, action guiding anticipations, and witness thinking', *International Journal of Action Research*, 1(2), pp. 157-189. Available at: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-383036> (Accessed: 5 May 2021)

--- (2014) 'Methods for practitioners in inquiring into 'the stuff' of everyday life and its continuous co-emergent development', in In G. Simon and A. Chard (Eds.), *Systemic inquiry: Innovations in reflexive practice research*. USA: Everything is Connected Press, pp. 95-123.

Sibbett, C. (2005) "'Betwixt and between': crossing thresholds", in Sibbett, C. and Waller, D. (eds.) *Facing death: Art therapy and cancer care*. UK: Open University Press, pp. 12-37.

Siegel, D. (2020a) *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are*. New York: Guildford.

--- (2020b) *The power of showing up: how parental presence shapes who our kids become and how their brains get wired – mindful parenting*. USA: Scribe Publications.

Simkiss, D. (2019) 'The needs of looked after children from an adverse childhood experience perspective', *Paediatrics and Child Health*, 29(1), pp. 25–33. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paed.2018.11.005>

Sinclair, M (2020) *Bergson*. London: Routledge.

Sipman, G. et al. (2019) 'The role of intuition in pedagogical tact: Educator views', *British Educational Research Journal*, 45(6), pp. 1186–1202. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3557>

Slay, J. and Stephens, L. (2013) *Co-production in mental health: A literature review*. London, New Economic Foundation. Available at: [https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/ca0975b7cd88125c3e\\_ywm6bp3l1.pdf](https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/ca0975b7cd88125c3e_ywm6bp3l1.pdf) (Accessed: 3 September 2023).

Social work today (2025) *Councillor removed after calling some children in care 'downright evil'*. 8th June. Online sector-specific space for social work information. Available at: <https://www.socialworktoday.co.uk/News/councillor-removed-after-calling-some-children-in-care-%22downright-evil%22> (Accessed: 1 July 2025)

Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1993) *Breaking out again: Feminist ontology and epistemology*. Second edition. London: Routledge. First published in 1983 by Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Stern, D. (1971). 'A micro-analysis of mother-infant interaction. Behavior regulating social contact between a mother and her 3-month-old twins', *Journal of American Child Psychiatry* 10(3), pp. 501-517. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0002-7138\(09\)61752-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0002-7138(09)61752-0)

--- (2004) *The present moment: In psychotherapy and everyday life*. London: Norton.

--- (2010) *Forms of vitality: Exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*. UK: Oxford University Press.

Stickley, K. and Wolf, D. (2021) 'Create, Destroy, Transform: A brain-based directive for trauma treatment', in Huet and Kapitan (eds.) *International Advances in Art Therapy Research and Practice: The Emerging Picture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 2-13.

Sunderland, M. (2017) *Draw on your emotions*. UK: Routledge.

Takeda, F (2010) 'The capacity for imagination: Implications for working with children with autism in art therapy', in Karkou, V. (ed.) *Arts therapies in schools: Research and practice*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. pp. 217-230.

Talwar, S. (2007) 'Accessing traumatic memory through art-making: an art therapy trauma protocol (ATTP)', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 34(1), pp. 22-35. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2006.09.001>

Tate, S. A. (2007). 'Foucault, Bakhtin, ethnomethodology: Accounting for hybridity in talk-in-interaction', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 8(2), doi: <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-8.2.247>

Taylor, C. (2007) *A Secular Age*. Harvard University Press: USA.

Taylor Buck, E., Dent Brown, K. and Parry (2013) 'Exploring a dyadic approach to art psychotherapy with children and young people: A survey of British art psychotherapists', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 18 (1), pp. 20-28. doi: <https://doi-org/10.1080/17454832.2012.749293>

Taylor Buck, E., and Hendry, A. (2016) 'Developing principles of best practice for art therapists working with children and families', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 21(2), pp. 56-65. doi: <https://doi-org/10.1080/17454832.2016.1170056>

Tempest, M. (2006) 'Kelly unveils 'safe room' plan to tackle domestic violence', *The Guardian*, 19 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2006/dec/19/immigrationpolicy.ukcrime> (Accessed: 13 February 2024)

Timpson, E. (2019) *Timpson Review of School Exclusion*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/807862/Timpson\\_review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf) (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Tolkien, J.R.R. (1995 [1954-1955]) *The Lord of the Rings*. London: Harper Collins.

Tomlinson, J. (2010) 'Music therapy for children with autism in an educational context', in Karkou, V. (ed.) *Arts therapies in schools: Research and practice*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 231-242.

Trevarthen, C. (2019) 'My psychobiological life story', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 65, pp.1-3. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2019.101598>

Turner, A. (2024) 'Hundreds of Norfolk children without school places', *The Guardian*, 12 March. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-68596971> (Accessed: 8 April 2024)

Twemlow, S. *et al.* (2001) 'Creating a Peaceful School Learning Environment: A Controlled Study of an Elementary School Intervention to Reduce Violence', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 158(5), pp. 808–810. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.158.5.808>

United Nations Children's Fund (2013) *The wellbeing of children: How does the UK score?* [Report card 11]. Available at: [https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ReportCard11\\_CYP.pdf](https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ReportCard11_CYP.pdf) (Accessed: 9 September 2019)

--- (2020) *For every child in danger: Worlds of difference, Understanding what shapes child wellbeing in rich countries.* [Report card 16]. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Unicef-UK-Briefing-UNICEF-Innocenti-Report-Card-16-September-2020.pdf> (Accessed: 4 November 2019)

United Nations General Assembly (2019) *Visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.* Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/39/Add.> (Accessed: 4 November 2019)

United Nations General Assembly (2024) *Right to development of children and future generations.* [Report A/HRC/57/43, of the Special Rapporteur, on the right to development, Sureya Deva]. 24 July. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5743-right-development-children-and-future-generations-report> (Accessed: 6 January 2025)

Urbina-Garcia, A., Jindal-Snape, D., Lindsay, A., Boath, L., Hannah, E. F. S., Barrable, A., and Touloumakos, A. K. (2021) 'Voices of young children aged 3–7 years in educational research: an international systematic literature review', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 30(1), pp. 8-31. <https://doi-org/10.1080/1350293X.2021.1992466>

Uttley, L. *et al.* (2015) 'Systematic review and economic modelling of the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of art therapy among people with non-psychotic mental health disorders', *Health Technology Assessment*, 19 (18), pp. 1-120, v-vi. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3310/hta19180>

van der Kolk B. (2015) *The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma.* UK: Penguin Books.

Varghese, R., Quiros, L. and Berger, R. (2018) 'Reflective Practices for Engaging in Trauma-Informed Culturally Competent Supervision', *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 88(2), pp. 135-151. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00377317.2018.1439826>

Vice, S. (1997) *Introducing Bakhtin.* UK: Manchester University Press.

Vogel, S. W., Mullins, K. L. and Kumar, S. (2024) 'Art therapy for children and adolescents with autism: a systematic review', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 30(2), pp. 113–122. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2024.2343373>

Waller, D. (2006) 'Art therapy for children: How it leads to change', *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 11(2), pp. 271-82. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104506061419>

Warren, S. (2006) 'An Exploration of the Relevance of the Concept of 'Flow' in Art Therapy', *International Journal of Art Therapy: Inscape*, 11(2), pp. 102-110. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454830600980358>

Watts, P., Gilfillan, P. and Hills de Zarate, M. (2018) 'Art therapy and poverty: Examining practitioners' experiences of working with children and young people in areas of multiple deprivation in West Central Scotland', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 23(4), pp. 146-155. doi:

<https://doi-org/10.1080/17454832.2017.1399920>

Weale, S. (2023) 'School suspensions rise sharply among disadvantaged children in England', *The Guardian*, 13 September. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/sep/13/school-suspensions-rise-sharply-among-disadvantaged-children-in-england> (Accessed: 2 January 2024).

Weisz, J., Kuppens, S., Ng, M., Eckstein, D., Ugueto, A., Vaughn-Coaxum, R., and Fordwood, S. (2017). 'What five decades tell us about the effects of youth psychotherapy: A multilevel meta-analysis and implications for science and practice', *American Psychologist*, 72 (2), pp. 79–117. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/A0040360>

Weare, K. (2015) *What works in promoting social and emotional well-being and responding to mental health problems in schools? Advice for Schools and Framework Document*. Available at: [https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/files/ncb\\_framework\\_for\\_promoting\\_well-being\\_and\\_responding\\_to\\_mental\\_health\\_in\\_schools\\_0.pdf](https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/files/ncb_framework_for_promoting_well-being_and_responding_to_mental_health_in_schools_0.pdf) (Accessed 20 July 2017)

Webber, A. (2017) *Breakthrough moments in arts-based psychotherapies*. London: Routledge.

Wengrower, H. (2001) 'Arts Therapies in Educational Settings: An Intercultural Encounter', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 28, pp. 109-115. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0197-4556\(00\)00091-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0197-4556(00)00091-5)

Whitaker, D. (2021) *The kindness principle: Making relational behaviour management work in schools*. UK: Independent Thinking Press.

Whitaker, P. (2005) 'Going through the motions: Improvisation and co-operative learning as ways of exploring contemporary subjectivity and social activism within art therapy practice', in *Arts – Therapies – Communication Vol 3: European Arts Therapy: Different approaches to a unique discipline opening regional portals* (eds.) Kossolapow, L., Scoble, S. and Waller, D. Germany, Munster: Lit Verlag.

Whitehouse, E. and Pudney, W. (1998) *A volcano in my tummy: Helping children to handle anger: A resource book for parents, caregivers and teachers*. UK: New Society Publishers.

Williams, J. (2025) 'UK faces terror risk from radicalised 'loners and misfits' warns Keir Starmer', *Financial Times*, 21 January.

Windle, J., Moyle, L. and Coomber, R. (2020) "'Vulnerable' kids going country: Children and young people's involvement in county lines drug dealing', *Youth Justice*, 20(1-2), pp. 64-78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473225420902840>

Winnicott, D.W. (1949) 'Hate in the counter-transference', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 30, pp.69-74. Available at: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1950-06381-001> (Accessed: 20 September 2022)

---- (2005 [1971]) *Playing and reality*. London: Routledge. First published in 1971 by Tavistock Publications.

Wolf-Branigin, M. (2012) 'Introduction to the mini special issue on complexity theory: A new research paradigm in social work', *Journal of Social Service Research*, 38(5), pp. 580-581. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2012.723977>

- Wood, C (1990) 'The triangular relationship (1): the beginnings and endings of art therapy relationships'. *Inscape: The Journal of the British Association of Art Therapists*, Winter, pp. 7-13.
- (1999) 'Gathering evidence: expansion of art therapy research strategy', *Inscape: The Journal of the British Association of Art Therapists*, 4(2), pp. 51-6.
- (2011) *Navigating art therapy; A therapist's companion*. UK Hove: Routledge.
- Woolley, A. (2019) *Women choosing silence: Relationality and transformation in spiritual practice*. UK: Routledge.
- Wosch, T. and Wigram, T. (eds.) (2007) *Microanalysis in music therapy: Methods, techniques and applications for clinicians, researchers, educators and students*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Wright, S. and Liddle, M. (2014) *Young offenders and trauma: Experience and impact*, [Practitioner's guide]. Available at: <https://www.beyondyouthcustody.net/wp-content/uploads/BYC-Trauma-experience-and-impact-practitioners-guide.pdf> (Accessed: 2 February 2015).
- Yardley, L. (2000) 'Dilemmas in qualitative health research', *Psychology and Health*, 15(2), pp. 215–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08870440008400302>
- Youth Justice Board, (2017) *In-brief: Trauma-informed youth justice*, Available at: <https://dcdhub.org/wp-content/uploads/formidable/83/Trauma-informed-practice-YJB.pdf> (Accessed: 2 February 2018).
- Zimmerman, B. (2013) *Embracing complexity, connectivity and change*. [Lecture, Stanford University] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F310ieRmd3U> (Accessed: 10 April 2024).

## **APPENDIX**

a little book of fullness  
or  
how bewildering yet how utterly pleasurable life can be



here are 13 segments

each represents  
the experience of a day  
spent analysing five minutes of  
the visual/auditory data from  
the research project  
video recording

## Contents

	Page
Prologue	351
The Whole and the Parts	352
Who is on the stage and when?	354
Epilogue	372

## Prologue

### *A brief reflection*

I have watched an amazing film over these 13 days.

Stories evolved and disappeared, materials responded to hands and the movements of those hands.

Different segments required different types of researcher response. Some moments needed repeated re-winding, others, listening to the voices emanating from the materials.

The dance between the characters is engaging, fun and deep.

Stories of destruction, disappointment, challenge and love. Stories of thoughtfulness, kindness and nurturing.

“We did well” Nathan said at the end.

What is it that he set out to do?

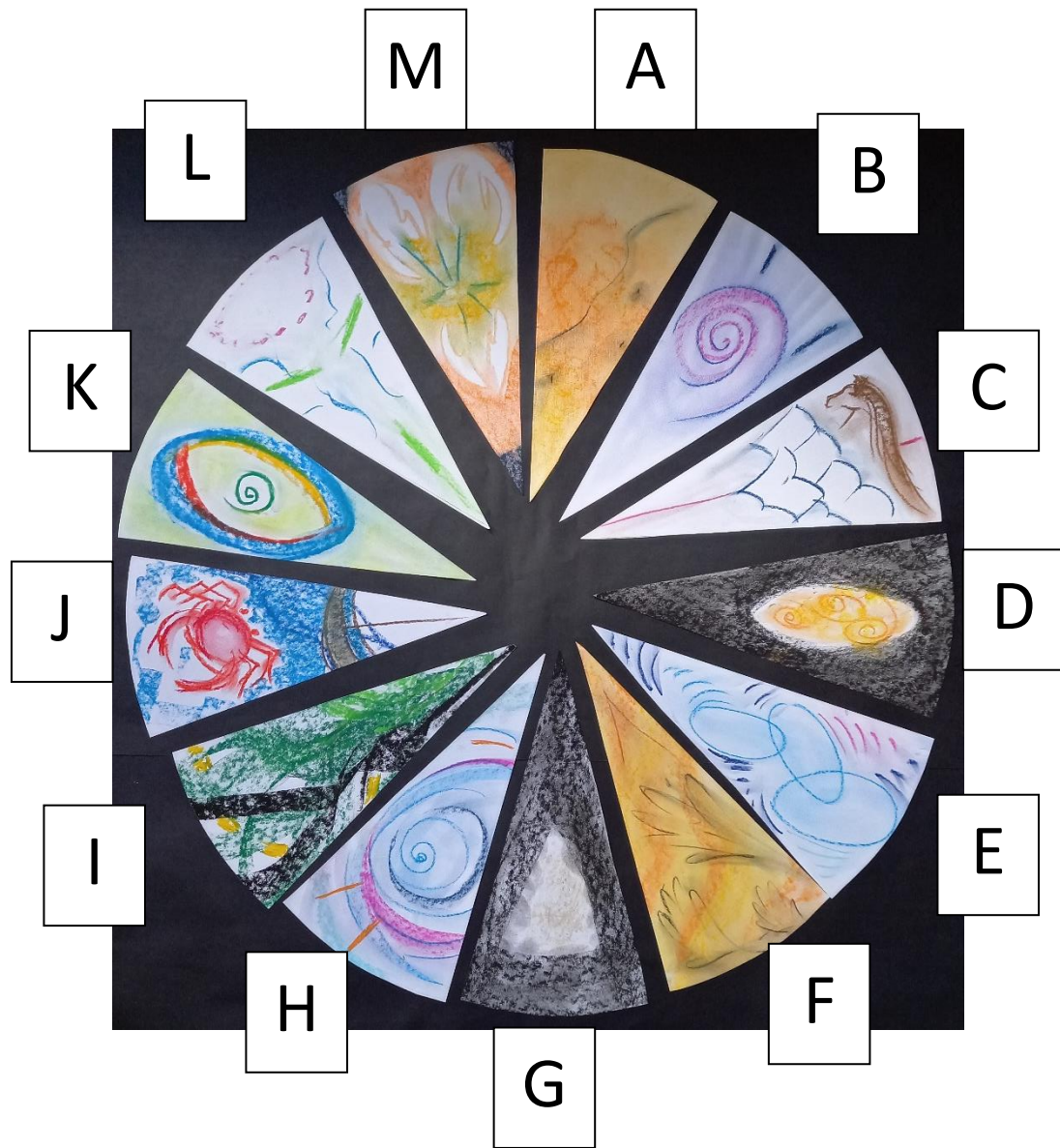
He knew from the inside, and demonstrated the process of art therapy: the free association of ideas, the creation of powerful images and structures, pride and the ability to work things out for himself – and respond, react safely, in his own way. His experience being valued.

His experiencing, within the context of attuned adults’ attention centre-ing on him, recognising his creative ability and his potential.

Relationality: How did the art therapist create such a calm, gentle and humane relationship, along with the materials?

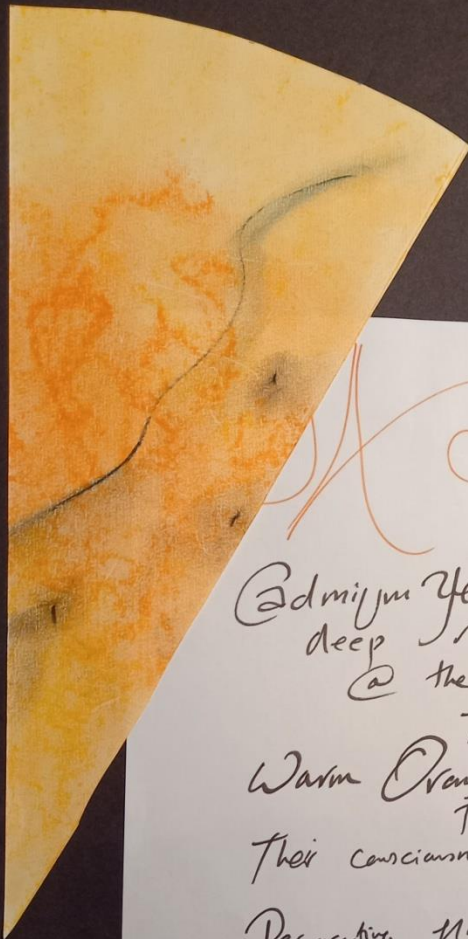
How do materials make a difference to verbal therapies/ counselling? What role do they have in supporting the development of the therapeutic relationship?

How is Nathan, the inventor, represented? by himself, by others?



The Whole and the Parts:  
the research hour and the analysis days A to M

So, we start the journey from A and travel clock-wise to M



*Admiring Yellow*  
deep rich  
@ the core...  
The Child...  
Warm Orange - the  
Tender  
Their consciences blend  
& shine  
Permeating, flowing outwards to  
fill the segment  
Strong midnight blue flowing  
line of the  
Therapist's presence. From  
Before...  
little black bullet dots....

A

# Who is on stage and when?

## The research video as a Performance

**Day A (see image and words above)**

### **WE START WITH EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS**

[Note: the introductions to each day were written four days after finishing the 13 days of analysis].

All three participants already know each other. The tone of the segment is warm. Orange and yellow colours symbolise Nathan and Tina and permeate across the segment. There is a dynamic thread of dark blue, Julia's presence. The beginnings of images and content appear.

*[Note: Italic sections were written at the end of each analysis day]*

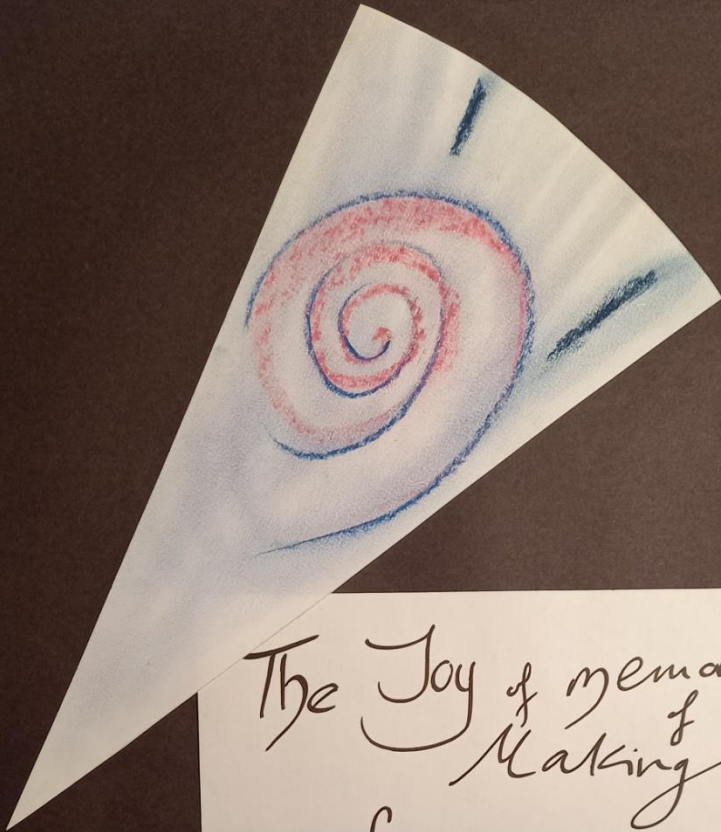
*Of course, the 'present moments' did not fit neatly into each 5-second frame. I didn't expect them to. I was tempted to alter time segments when the boundary fell in the middle of a sentence, but I decided not to. It would become too confusing. It was useful to have records from Phases 1 and 2 of the data analysis to hand. I marked the 5-second intervals on the script as I was going along.*

**Day B (see image and words below)**

### **MAGIC OF MATERIALS: THE JOY OF ART-MAKING MEMORIES**

Nathan's beaming smile accompanies his recollections. The pink and blue spiral represents Nathan and Tina. The bullets have grown in significance. No disorder.

*I used pastels, made a 5-minute segment, and wrote a short poem. This helped because the whole data is about emotion/colour, etc., whereas I'm currently doing a clinical piece of rigorous analysis! Will I be able to keep up this momentum? At the end of the day, I prepared 5 X 12 sheets for tomorrow — Day C. There was a great mirroring moment, a "fizz" of hands in the air, imagining the volcano exploding. I noticed several glances at the camera that I hadn't noticed before.*



The Joy of memory  
of Making

---fizzzzz---

Happiness...

beaming face

Carrying alarm...

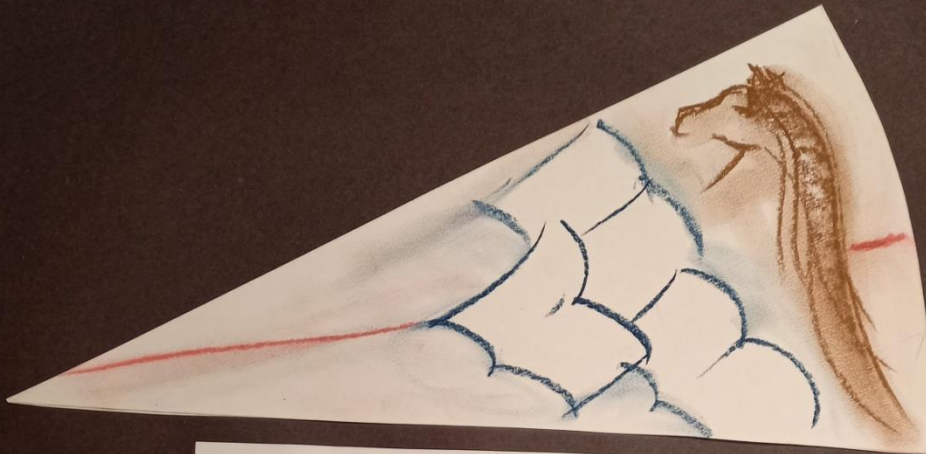
shock near  
revelled...

but contained...

to grow understanding

In the garden of the Soul...

B



Thrill & Danger...  
'Thrown off' -  
'massive drop' -

links with

flowing  
mane  
Relaxation

& Making books to  
contain the form Bad & U... no  
& ok...

C

## Day C (see image and words above)

### STORIES CRESCENDO IN EXCITEMENT: INTRODUCTION OF OUTCOMES DISCUSSION

There is a sense of drama and the thrill of danger in a safe environment. There are links with the ancient body movement practice of Tai Chi, as seen in the image of *Stroking the Horse's Mane*. Nathan recollects relaxation methods and a behaviour management technique, creating three books.

*I saw a complex series of movements – hand gestures, a Tai Chi move – that communicated and explained. Tina invites Nathan to explain and congratulates him. Nathan demonstrates dramatic content – horse-riding and water parks – with his hands. Tina is thoughtful about his ability to concentrate and communicate. Julia facilitates communication around emotion.*

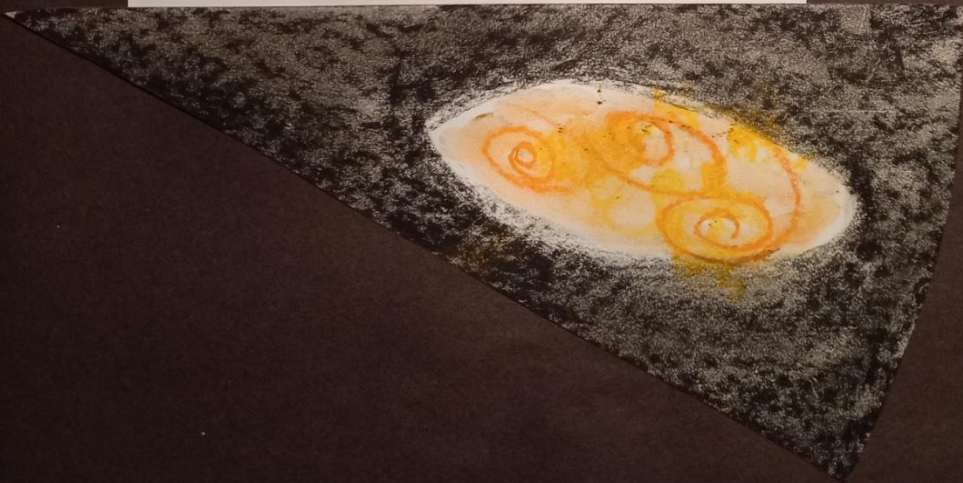
## Day D (see image and words below)

### FIRST 5-SECOND SILENCE ENTERS

Three minds whirling to understand the images visiting them – each comes from their own personal experience of beach water parks. Three spirals, each has its own definite trajectory, but the ideas and feelings are interrelated. The same colours as in segment A —orange and yellow —are now generic and include the art therapist. The dark surrounding is a positive blackness – the unknown, the immense possibilities ... what the three spiral participants are doing is shifting possibilities to probabilities, and searching for a common understanding. A natural and gentle process.

*Jotted down my own eye actions → time on screen/paper/clock. The average of 5 minutes per 5 seconds seems okay. Sometimes I'm ahead of myself. Sometimes behind. I make sure I keep moving. Wondering about coding for eye movements, I started using Feynman's light-arrows! Aware of Julia's gentle presence, witnessing, eye contact, and keeping Nathan connected to her presence. Utterly attentive to him. There is humour and laughter, and Tina's dramatic expressions as she communicates with Nathan, waiting for him to process his thoughts. Seriousness of survival issues.*

1<sup>st</sup>  
5  
Seconds  
of  
Silence  
3  
Minds  
Working.....



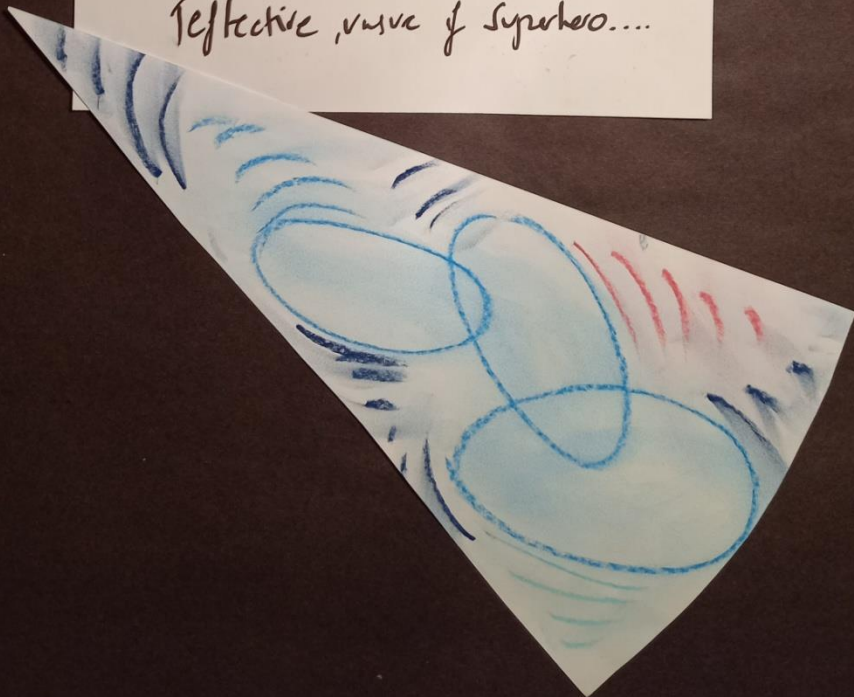
D

Shaking  
with  
laughter

Defying  
death. Gory, Disgust,  
fear, shock -

Farcical  
Comedian Carnival  
holding attention  
Reflective, reuse of Superhero....

Empowerment



E

## Day E (see image and words above)

### DEEP BELLY LAUGHTER ENTERS

The three participants shake with laughter – their whole bodies. Death-defying horror story! It is farcical! They share the same theme-thoughts, a matrix of intersubjectivity, helped by explanatory actions. The comic movement marks are smudged – they give off energy.

*By now, I'm getting used to the rhythm of eye, hand, and mind coordination. The 5-second moment is manageable, but I have to keep alert. It's good I have a good self-care and nutrition routine in the morning! Eyes: to screen in seconds, set a mark in the script, keep an eye on the clock time – then off we go. I notice each morning it takes me 10 minutes to get into the swing of it. Today I worked out that I could sing when I'm preparing the record sheets for tomorrow, using a ruler to create the columns (with a pen). It's an automatic thing. But I can't sing when I'm inserting the date and time frames, codes and initials for participants: Nathan, Tina and Julia.*

## Day F (see image and words below)

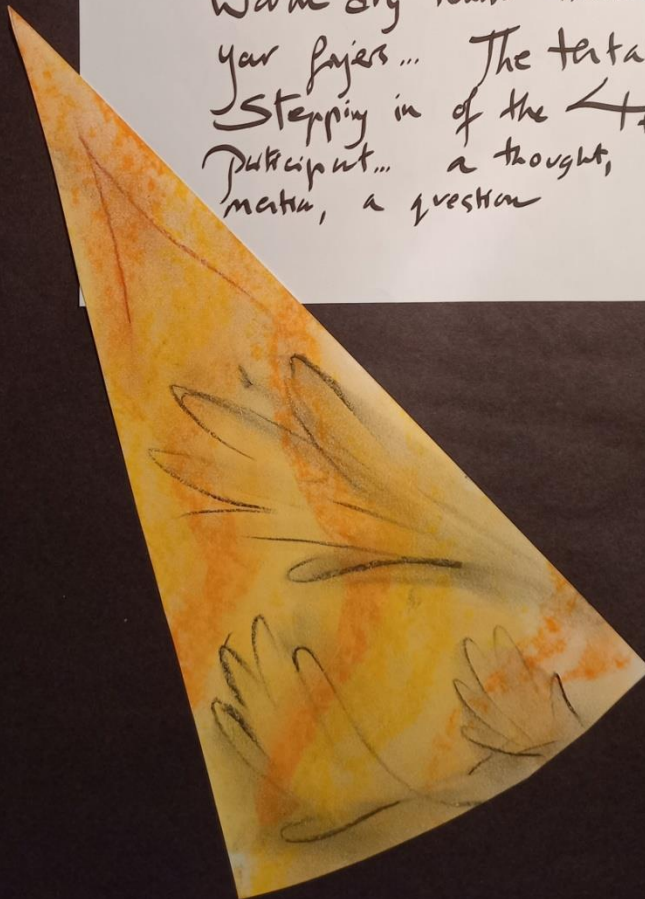
### THE CENTRAL IMAGE ENTERS

Here the colours are warm, the same as the first colours of yellows and oranges on day A. The colour links literally with sand: the first material invited to come on stage by Nathan. Nathan's two hands and Tina's one hand touch the sand, enjoying its sensory qualities: it's dry and warm. The undulating lines are the marks made in sand by lapping water, or perhaps of gentle touch. The central image of the volcano tentatively enters, as indicated by the apex.

*The creative act in action. The sand is in Nathan's hands. Julia judges how best to support him. It is his decision what to make. The gazes of all three coalesce onto the form/ the artwork. Joint attention, focused energy. A silence of concentration, no talking. The material has a will of its own. Nathan knows its properties and explains them. It seems that I need to create other categories on the record sheet: materials/equipment/image/ shape/ form...*

Waves  
&  
Sand...

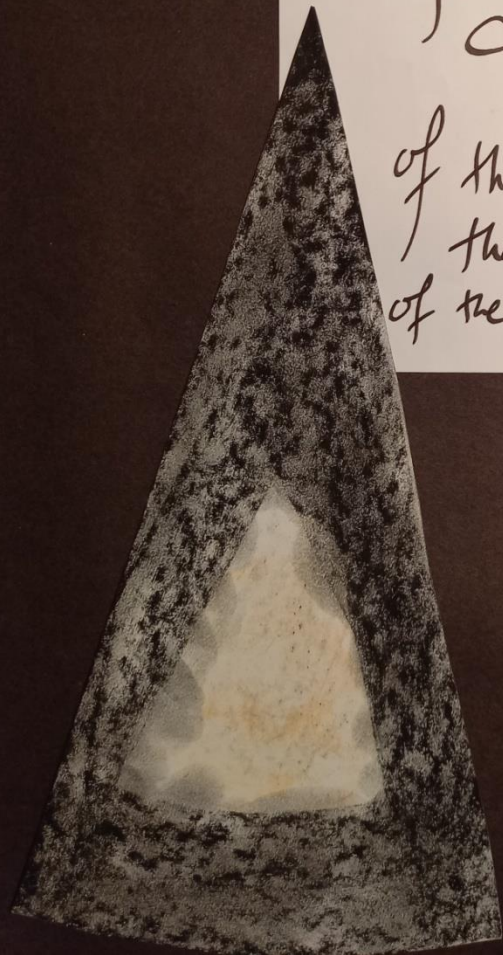
the feel of wet sand  
warm dry hands between  
your fingers... The tentative  
stepping in of the <sup>the</sup> participant... a thought, a  
motion, a question



F

Embodied,  
handled,  
constructed,  
de-constructed,  
Becoming.....

Becoming visible  
Under the moving, flexing,  
Pushing, patting, flicking,  
Carefully controlled  
Hands, eyes, body  
of the young Creator...  
the shape, the form  
of the Image starts to emerge...



G

## Day G (see image and words above)

### THE YOUNG CREATOR - IN ACTION - AT WORK

The sand's yellowy grey colour is defined against the dark area. The edges of the triangle are easily visible, but fingerprints mark the edges—the form is touched and changed. A living, breathing, dynamic artwork comes into life. It withstands all the force of energy wreaked upon it. Patiently moving, re-forming, persistently existing as it metamorphoses...

*Yesterday I did not prepare today's boxes. After a walk several times round the park I decided to add a fresh row and keep the columns the same. The awe deepens. The image seems to be like a participant, with a voice, a life of its own. The silence are increasing and some have stretched over 2 segments. Julia's and Tina's gentleness is palpable, their patience and respect. Nathan's intelligence and ability shine through, on several levels.*

## Day H (see image and words below)

### THE FOURTH PARTICIPANT'S VOICE ENTERS

Nathan's swirling energy is now directed at creating his artwork. A centrifugal focus: a process of absorption. As this absorption increases, so does silence. Since my method was to spend five minutes on each five-second micro-fragment of time, I stayed faithful to it. My attention turned from participants' verbal expressions and bodily movements to listening to the voice of the materials and the image. The voice spoke, I listened and wrote. The orange marks are small wooden tools.

*"I'm not fighting time... I'm working with it": these words came to me after breakfast. Respecting the clock time keeps me on track. We are dealing with something visceral here, a shadow, a shape, a form, a mystery, a daemon? This is coming from the deep connections, embodied thought and feeling, coalescing, forming, emerging. A day of construction! Julia knows what is going on and what Nathan is capable of. Relaxed, interested, and encouraging, she comments on how he is doing well and how empathic he is towards Tina. The teacher enters into the space of creative mystery, patiently watching him work. She formulates questions for him and gives him her feedback. The image seemed to come alive today. This is what can happen with art.*

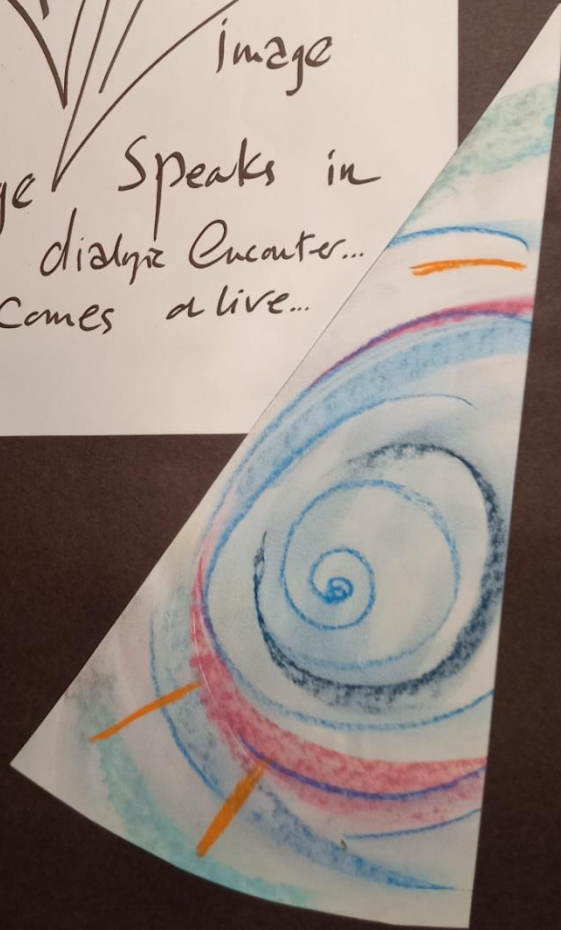
All gazes  
Absorbed

hands &  
mind

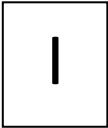
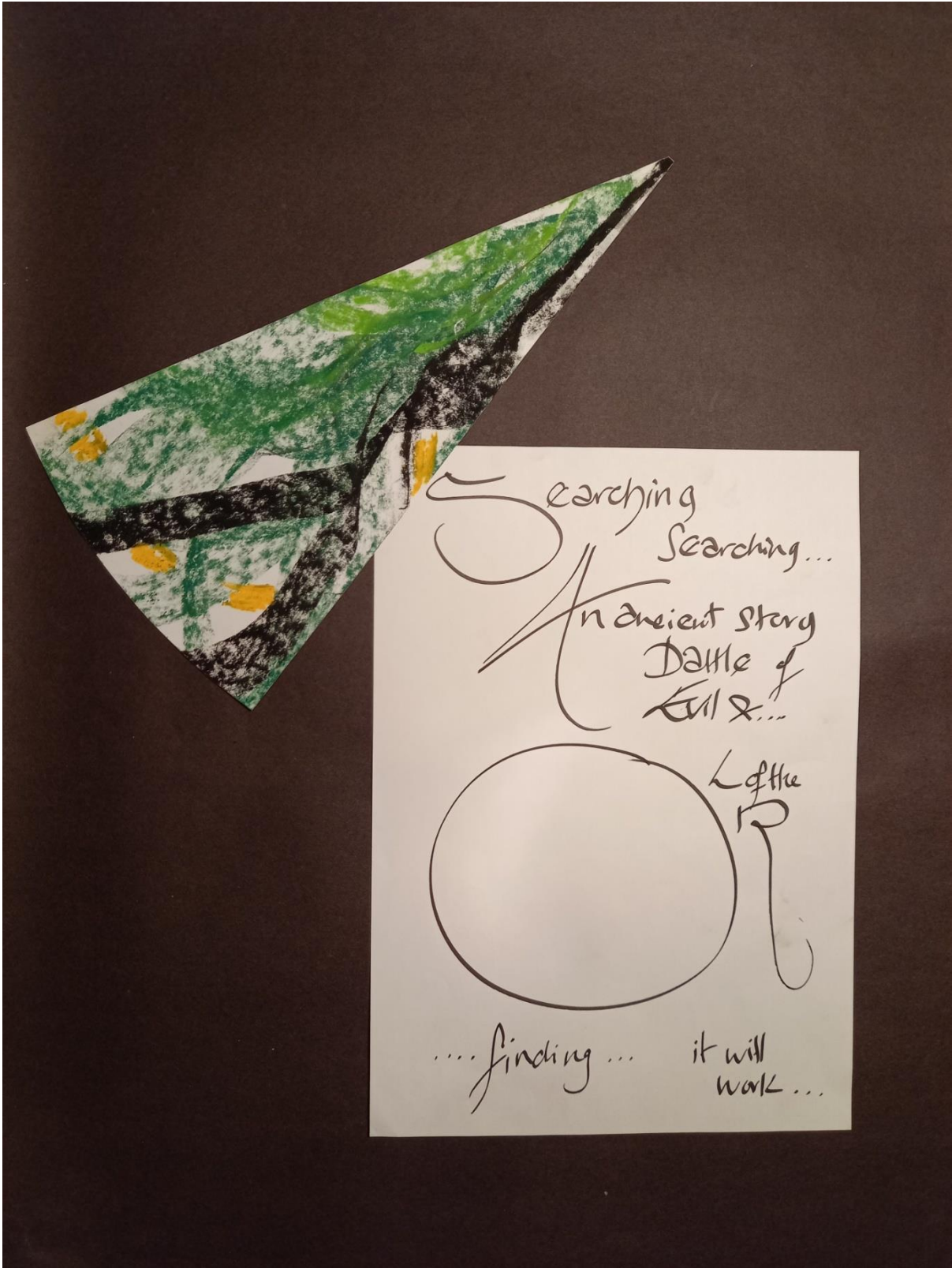
Creating

image

Image Speaks in  
this dialogic Encounter...  
Comes alive...



H



## Day I (see image and words above)

### ARCHETYPAL MATERIAL FROM CULTURE AND THE ARTS ENTERS

From the canon: Nathan introduces us to characters from *The Lord of the Rings*. The greens in this segment are the forests of Middle-earth, representing the wisdom of trees. He mentions the Evil One, and we know of the cosmic battle of Evil and Good. The Ring is in the drawing, in golden yellow. This segment is also about resolving to search for what is lost, needed now.

*I thought of untangling. This data work is like untangling threads. Sometimes, the previous and next mini-5-second segments contain an overflow of the current one I am looking at. The need to really focus and be crystal clear in setting boundaries for time. Sometimes I have to rewind the border of the segment many times.*

## Day J (see image and words below)

### THE LINK IMAGE – THE CRAB ENTERS

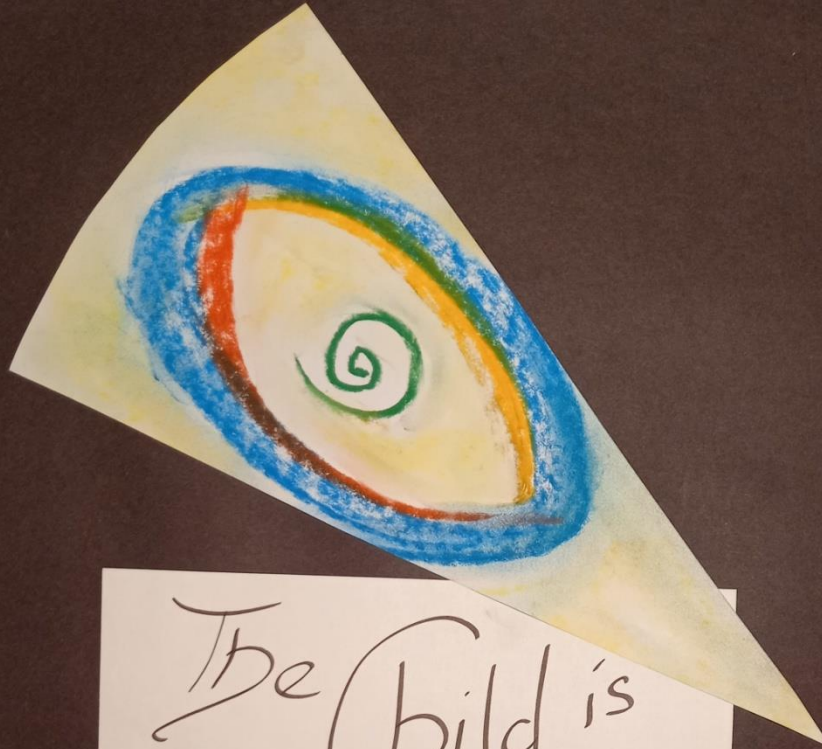
The figurine of a creature, a crab, connects a memory the Teacher has as a teacher with Nathan's experience of a beach. The link expands to encompass more water imagery, such as a moat or the sea. Diverse options exist in the art-making environment, where anything can happen. There's talking and constructing. There are links with previous conversations. Crab and boat figurines are welcome to join the central image and determine its growth.

*Gollam, Gandalf, the crab and the boat. Searching and rummaging amongst the art materials provides a studio-type environment. Constructive work comes naturally to Nathan. The first three segments today were silent. I could have skipped through them, but decided to spend the same amount of time. Unlike yesterday, the silence wasn't directly about working with the embodied image but was indirect as the searching was happening. Again, as on other days, there were times when I was exhausted – but kept going. Lovely mirroring and reflecting, shared images and shared joy. There is a reference to time – the lost figurine may appear in 200 years. The first mention is made of the hour coming to its end. It has seemed a very long time to Nathan so far.*



A living Creature jumps  
into the fray  
And links  
& Too deep  
from each's Personal  
memories... a crab  
usually crawls but here, flies!  
The image is pend too & too between  
them and influences further the  
new emergent environment - water -  
Sea ... or Moist ... likely the form  
in, too. Constructive happy Simultaneous  
L.S.

J



The Child is  
With dealing  
the transference  
"Hlin"  
Primary colours of it all  
Sea... or moat... image  
flexibility... breathes  
All breath & Gasp & cry <sup>of endings...</sup>  
out! ... & relax. beginnings

K

## Day K (see image and words above)

### NATHAN SUMMARISES THE STORY

Primary colours – they express the fundamental nature of what is going on: simplicity, three people. The green spiral is Nathan's circling hand movements as he summarises the whole story for Tina, with one gesture of 'All in'. The blue is also the sea or moat. The energy, in green, spreads beyond what is happening to the edges of the segment.

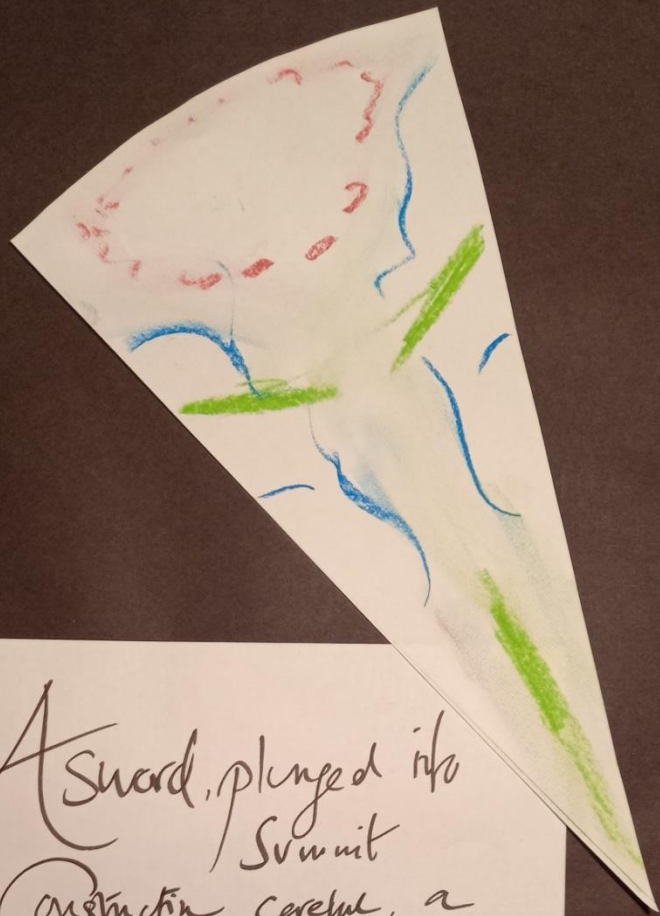
*I was thinking about spaciousness after a trip to the sea at the weekend. There is a spaciousness here. Time and space. Tina and Nathan work on the moat, building, clearing, and reinforcing. Risky business developing the central part of the sculpture with its vertical and horizontal tunnels. The microphone seems vulnerable. Would a camera high in the corner of the room be better? But this is maybe better. The microphone, video camera and tripod are silent witnesses that are visible. Julia again mentions time, and says they've been there 'Just over an hour'. Tina also says there are 'a few minutes left.'*

## Day L (see image and words below)

### THE IMPORTANCE OF KINDNESS ENTERS

A green plastic clay tool is a plunging sword Nathan drives into the volcano / mountain top. Two more clay tools are used as supports. A tender relationality breathes through this segment. Two profiles are drawn, the necklace gift is indicated: the kindness of giving and sharing materials is highlighted. The heartfelt reality of Nathan bringing close relationships outside school, into the space.

*It felt very laden with metaphor today: the falling apart, deconstruction of the image, the fabulous 'teamwork' and joint understandings emerging. Tina and Julia check with Nathan on the most comfortable way for him to end the time together. Nathan's sense of 'authority' and 'knowing'. He works with both hands in the sand. Talk of doing well. He remembers the gift he made for his mother, the necklace. There is a sense of calm and gentle management at the end of this research session. Julia has already mentioned that endings can be hard. Tina gently signals that the time to end has come, 'that's pretty good now', signalling how impressed she is with his work- this work of effort and this creation. It is not only the artwork she refers to, but the whole experience of joint adventure, exploration, and spaciousness. Momentarily, she has been by the seaside today.*



A sword, plunged into  
Summit  
Construction, careful, a  
Game.

Kindness  
Relationality as  
gentleness & care  
Credibly approaches - Gift from the heart

L



Detailing Sadness  
& Hope, of  
endings

Y-mour  
Shared action

... In delicious  
rhythm of  
Breath.

Resonates  
mirrors  
reciprocates...

Full Circle - each  
goes back to own life from  
this new temporary group...

Refreshed, lightened, with joy  
& success. **HOWEVER**  
to speak of this wonder?

M

## Day M (see last image and words below)

### THE ENDING PROCESS ENTERS

Three cupped hands hold the imaginary balloons that burst. Humour mitigates what could be sadness at the ending. Shared movements of Nathan, Tina and Julia's hands and bodies mirror and resonate. Shared inhalation and exhalation of breath unify. A lively concentration game with the green tools sprouts up. A circle of positive energy is created, and a sense of circularity is created. Each participant will return to their own life after this experience, with joy and a sense of success. A warmth of experience takes them out into the unknown.

*A sense of completion, denouement. The figurines are de-rolled. Tina takes her leave. Appreciation and affirmation were given to each other after ending the game. Tenderness and humour. Some tinges of sadness, but this is gently held, with calm, practical endings at Nathan's choice and pace. Continuity of care. He is delighted that Tina will see him later in school. So, the plan of what happens next is a positive, fruitful 'next-ness'.*

*The whole dataset: Universal themes come over strongly: loss and searching; finding and joy; risk and humour; joking and in-knowledge. The external world comes in, in images. A deepening sense of presence and interpersonal communication progress through the hour. Verbal stories and banter are exchanged for stories from the materials. The ways things are done in school, the routine and pattern of the day, enable a swinging door end: the session ends, and Nathan is into the next activity. But not before the opportunity to gently de-brief.*

## EPILOGUE

### The iterative reflection process - research method

I woke daily at 5.30 am, had a healthy, nourishing breakfast and routine, including meditation at the start of each day. Then, I worked for five hours micro-analysing the research video: from 7.30 am to 9.30 am; 10 am to 12 noon; and 1 pm to 2 pm. Each hour was dedicated to one minute of video data. Within that hour, each five minutes was devoted to analysing five seconds of video data. A large clock helped me to keep time, as the second hand rotated fast and the minute hand rotated slowly. As I analysed, my eyes flickered between four locations: the wall-clock, the screen time on the video recording, the script where I marked the 5-second interval for future ease of reference and finally the record sheet next to me, which I used to record significant details.

At 2 pm. each day, I summarised my experiences, aiming to capture something of that day's work during which I had analysed the allocated five minutes of the research video. The text sections in italics above are excerpts from these end-of-day writings. Sometimes this analytical process was exhausting, but the delight of seeing and hearing what was unfolding renewed my energy.

Finishing at 2 pm meant I could turn to other things in the late afternoon and evening. I created a bit of distance from the intense analytic process and let my reflections rest in my mind overnight.

\*\*\*

Before starting the new day's analyses, I made a pastel sketch recalling the previous day's work. These pastel drawings were done on the triangular segments you see above. This captured energy and memories immediately through movement, colour, line, and symbol. I also created a 'calligraphy-text' springing from the art-making experience.

The process of drawing and writing/calligraphy took about 5 minutes.

\*\*\*

At the end of the 13 days, I wrote the brief reflection that appears at the beginning of this little book. I had seen, heard and felt - so many stories within stories.

Four days after completing the cycle of 13 days/segments, I again reflected on the whole. It seemed as if I had seen a theatrical performance. Different characters and elements appeared on stage in each segment as shown above.

\*\*\*

The beauty of art therapy with children is that we can work with difficult, even tragic material in a way that can feel alive and sometimes full of joy.

As I wrote reflections on the video microanalysis process four days after completing it, I thought of this quotation - *'The whole world is a stage'* - from Shakespeare's play *'As You Like It'*. The Royal Shakespeare Company, in its online information about the comedy's plot, states that the play illuminates 'how bewildering yet how utterly pleasurable life can be'. This seems a fitting description of the research process, as I sometimes experienced it.