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Children giving accounts of their cultural and linguistic identities and experiences and perspectives of belonging and school inclusion – an arts-based study with children in primary schools in the North-east of England

by

Holly Bennion

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education

Durham University

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ABBREVIATIONS

EAL – English Additional Language

MFL – Modern Foreign Languages

NCS – New Childhood Studies

PE – Physical Education

SEND – Special Education Needs and Disability

UK – The United Kingdom

UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNESCO – United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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 ABSTRACT

This PhD thesis explores children's voices and experiences in two diverse primary schools in the North-east of England. It employs participatory, arts-based inquiry to investigate how children give accounts of themselves and their identities, related to their perspectives and experiences of belonging and inclusion in school and in their wider lives. In recent years, transnational flows of people, capital, technology, and materials, and high levels of migrant mobility associated with political instability and inequality, has increased the diversity of the UK's cultural, ethnic, and linguistic landscapes. This has coincided with anti-immigrant and anti-other rhetoric in political and social discourses. As such, questions about who belongs and who does not belong remain a contentious and ongoing subject for many people. However, the voices of children of primary school age in England remains under-researched in academic work at the intersections of education, identity, and inclusion. The project's main aim, then, is to investigate the interconnectivity in discourses on self-identification, otherness, belonging, and school inclusion - I am interested in how children experience, conceptualise, and contest these spaces.

The study answers three questions:

1. What are children's feelings and experiences of belonging and inclusion, in school and in their wider lives?
2. How do children give accounts of themselves and talk about their (linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural) identities?
3. Through their narratives of belonging and inclusion (RQ1) and accounts of their identity (RQ2), how do children articulate and experience otherness and differences in relation to school and their wider lives?

The theoretical framework, to help address these questions, is comprised of i) new childhood studies and child voice, ii) new materialism, and iii) Judith Butler's theorisation in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005). This theoretical perspective allowed for multiple levels of analysis, which positioned children's identities as inscribed with material, affective, and symbolic dimensions. This study is underpinned by a concept of childhood that is agentic and fluid, and the dynamic, collective, and unfinished forms of belonging and self-identification in the intercultural context.

A multi-methods approach was utilised, including focus groups, painting, drawing, collage, storyboarding, co-analysis pinboards, and dance and drama performances. At the heart of the methodology was a desire to stimulate discursive, participatory, and kinaesthetic forms of knowledge. The workshops took place over several months, one workshop per week, in two primary schools in the North-east of England. A total of 27 year 6 pupils (aged 10-11) took part. To make sense of children's voices, I employed a qualitative analysis and iterative coding process, including NVivo 12 software, memoing, and exploratory researcher poetry.

This research finds that children gave multiple and complex accounts of their cultural, religious, and linguistic identities and sense of belonging. School inclusion related to 'being included' in peer groups, and having meaningful relationships with teachers, as well as navigating school as a newly arrived learner. Participants spoke about their heritage language practices, and often positioned themselves, and others, as multilingual. Children spoke about perspectives and experiences of otherness and differences related to peer group relationships, school norms, and religious, ethnic and linguistic identities. Participants also shared their feelings of belonging related to 'home', migration and connections with their heritage countries.

This study contributes to pedagogical and educational literature on childhood, identities, intercultural encounters, and inclusion within the context of the UK. This thesis has strong methodological implications too, which allowed for active and reflexive thinking about the research questions. This study concludes that there is value in listening to the voices of children and involving them in research in creative and critical ways to further understand children's worlds and their situated experiences and perspectives of identity, belonging, and school inclusion.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore children's perspectives and experiences of belonging and inclusion, in school and in their wider lives. The study began from a commitment to listening to children's voices; it focuses on children's accounts of their identities (cultural, religious, linguistic) and their stories of belonging and inclusion, and identifies the complex, ambiguous and creative ways in which children navigate their lives.

This opening chapter introduces the study. The first section (1.1) presents the socio-political context, followed by a discussion of the research context (1.2), and the rationale for conducting this study (1.3). The key terminology used in the study is clarified (1.4), followed by an outline of the thesis structure (1.5).

1.1 Sociopolitical context

In 2023, the topic of immigration in Britain has continued to feature in the media headlines and political discourses. In November, the Prime Minister stated his efforts to 'do what is necessary' to reduce migration to Britain. In March, a tweet by Gary Lineker criticised the government's approach to the new asylum policy and prompted debate on the language used by politicians and the media when talking about immigration. Over the past few decades, high levels of migrant mobility across national borders, political instability and refugee movements, as well as technological advances and globalisation have increased the ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic landscapes in Britain and internationally. According to statistics from The Migration Observatory, "more than a quarter (3,839,000) of children under age 18 living in the UK have at least one parent who is born outside the UK" (Fernández Reino, 2022, p. 2).

These rises in immigration have sparked polarising debates in media and political spheres, with the meaning of the term 'migrant' in public narratives and media coverage being problematic, often ill-defined and conflated with issues of race, immigration status, national security, and economic concerns (Anderson & Blinder, 2019). In a further report by The Migration Observatory (2023), a poll on the public view on immigration in Britain showed mixed opinions as "33% view immigration as 'bad or 'very bad' for Britain, 31% view

immigration as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ for Britain, and 30% view immigration as ‘neither bad nor good’ for Britain” (p. 7). The EU Referendum and subsequent Brexit vote dominated political agendas with immigration being heavily part of societal discourses. Some academics have also discussed the impact of Brexit on children’s intercultural lives (e.g., Tyrell et al., 2018) and others suggest that anti-immigration and anti-‘other’ sentiments and the preservation of ‘Britishness’ and ‘Whiteness’ were the invisible drivers of Brexit (e.g., Virdee & McGeever, 2019). Indeed, imagined ideas of the ‘threatening other’ have engendered a hostile climate of nationalist, xenophobic, racist, and anti-immigrant discourses which raises notions of collective belonging, religion, ethnicity, religion, language as markers of otherness and citizenship.

Against this backdrop, in an era of mobility and interconnectedness, living together peacefully in local and global communities is a complex issue. The questions of identity and belonging are deeply intertwined with historical, cultural, and political spheres, and how individuals perform and embody their identities are key factors in determining their sense of belonging and otherness (Loader, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2010). Identity is about the performed stories people tell about themselves, and about others, and who they are not, or who they would like to be (Martin, 1995, cited in Yuval-Davis, 2010, p. 266). This presents challenging issues that are important to research and makes the exploration of children’s perspectives and experiences of belonging and identities in primary schools important. Education and schools have a crucial role to play in developing children’s identities, intercultural awareness and feelings of social and educational inclusion.

1.2 Research context

Schools have been identified as sites of promoting intercultural understanding and developing citizenship, through the ‘British Values’ (that is, schools are required to promote the British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs) and through a broad and balanced curriculum to promote the “spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society” (Department for Education, 2014a, p. 3). Schools are also required to foster inclusive approaches irrespective of country of origin, gender, culture,

ability, religion, ability, and ethnicity (Department for Education, 2014b). Thus, as Hanna (2020) states, “being ‘included’ appears to be viewed as key to children’s educational experiences” (p. 545). Schools by law must write and publish their inclusion policy, which is inscribed within a move away from integration and assimilation, towards that of inclusion and multiculturalism to promote equal opportunities and feelings of belonging in school. This might include, for example, celebrating different religious and cultural festivals in school, adapting school meal menus to provide halal food choices, and revising rules on school uniforms so that they are consistent with the requirements of different religions (Mason, 2018).

However, multiculturalism has also been criticised in recent years, in terms of the ways it has been promoted (superficially and vaguely) in schools (May & Sleeter, 2010; Welply, 2022). Research has raised concerns about tokenistic appreciation and celebration of differences through the veil of multiculturalism which may fail to recognise and address the deeply rooted inequalities and power relations related to race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Youdell, 2012). Some scholars also criticise multicultural policies for weakening social cohesion, particularly by encouraging migrant and refugee groups to maintain their cultural, linguistic and religious practices which may lead to deeply rooted perceptions of difference, stereotypes and social and cultural separation between majority and minority groups (Colombo, 2015; Joppke, 2004; Pakulski, 2014).

Regarding inclusion and immigration, language diversity in England has also received increased attention in educational policy and practice (Bailey & Marden, 2017; Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Dakin, 2017; de Oliveria & Jones, 2023; Demie, 2018; Foley et al., 2013; Oxley & de Cat, 2019; Weekly, 2020), and has been negatively framed in media, for example, alarmist notions of schools being “swamped” by English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners (The Guardian, 2002). More recently, newspaper headlines have claimed that ‘white British’ children now do worse in their GCSEs than pupils whose first language is English. Thus, implying an anti-immigration rhetoric that argues that white working-class pupils are being “left behind”, failed by a system that has seen an increase in migration and ethnic and linguistic diversity (Chalmers, 2018).

Despite these challenges, diversity arising from migration has been – and *should be* - recognised as presenting valuable opportunities to enrich teaching and learning (Holmes et

al., 2017; Pinsent, 2017). Studies suggest that belonging can be promoted through inclusive environments where pupils and their families are reflected in the values, beliefs and ethos of the school (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007), and, for example, through the use of multilingual resources in English language classrooms (Hirsch & MacLeroy, 2020). Therefore, this research context presents the need for researchers to engage with children directly to further understand their experiences of childhood and education, including issues of school inclusion and belonging.

1.3 Responding to the research context: rationale and aims

The field of childhood studies has seen recent developments highlighting the multidimensional nature of children's lives and their intersecting identities (e.g., Devine, 2009; Devine & Kelly, 2006; Mand, 2010; Moskal, 2015; Ní Laoire et al., 2010; Welply, 2022). In particular, recent research conducted in multiethnic school settings has shed light on the dynamics of childhood and identity formation. These studies, such as Welply (2022) and Hanna (2020), have revealed the complex attachments and positionalities that shape the way children negotiate their social environments. There is scope for further research to examine the experiences of children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds in England, as most studies have focused on older children or those entering adulthood.

Located in two multiethnic primary schools in the North-east of England, this study aims to investigate how children (from a range of migrant, immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds) conceptualise and experience belonging and their narratives on their self-identities and identifications of 'others'. I also aim to understand children's experiences and perspectives of school inclusion and differences in the primary classroom, including representations of moving to a new place or school (through art methods).

In essence, in this study, using multiple theoretical and methodological lenses, I interrogate the relationships between belonging, school inclusion and children's cultural and linguistic identities. The relationships between migration, young people's identities and experiences of belonging, has been afforded some attention amongst scholars, including hybridity (Harris, 2016), 'translocal' forms of identities and belonging (Moskal, 2015), and experiences of 'otherness' (Tanyas, 2016). However, research often focuses on individuals from particular

communities who are seen as part of the same ethnic, religious, national or linguistic groups (e.g., 'British-Bengali' and 'Turkish migrants'). As such, this study has been designed in a way that aims to explore children's perspectives and experiences from the rich plethora of backgrounds from within the primary classroom, giving rise to children's co-constructed, ambiguous and diverse accounts of themselves and others (discussed further in Chapter 2). This line of thinking has guided my study as it focuses on the children's voices and involves them in research in engaging, creative and collaborative ways. My choice of methods has produced multilayered data including children's artwork, dance and drama work, conversations between myself and participants and between participants, co-analysis, as well as non-verbal gestures and silences. The methods were chosen as they allowed the research to focus on children's narratives in creative, collaborative and imaginary ways, providing spaces for ambiguities, contradictions and clarifications to arise.

My interest in this topic is grounded in my master's research with explored children's voices and 'choices' related to literacy learning and reading for pleasure. The findings of this research suggested that young people, when asked about aspects of their education, their preferences and the challenges they face, are able to give reflective and insightful comments about their lives and the 'choices' and agency they have in their learning. In many ways, my master's research helped to foreground the research approach and methodologies for this study.

Additionally, my background as a primary school teacher also meant I was interested in the affordances and challenges of teaching in multiethnic schools and the approaches to inclusion. In Chapter 4.5.3, I continue to discuss my reflexive account and positionality as a researcher in this study.

Having presented the research context and rationale, I will now turn to the key terminology of the study, before outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.4 Terminology and key concepts

A salient dimension of this thesis is that it includes the experiences of children with varying degrees of migration and mobility as the schools involved were culturally diverse in terms of the pupil populations. Some participants were from 'migrant backgrounds' (children born in another country having recently moved to England), others were from 'immigrant backgrounds' (children born in English with at least one parent born outside England, or children born in another country who moved to England very young). Some participants were also from 'non-immigrant backgrounds' referring to children who did not have any history of family migration**.** I prefer these terms over other terms in the field, such as '1.5 generation' (which is more common in the United States) and 'first/ second generation immigrant' (for critique, see Schneider, 2016), as given this study focuses on children's voices and self-identifications, I felt that it was important to use terms that would most likely align with participants' narratives. In this study, I seek to explore children's experiences within multicultural school contexts, and how children from different trajectories of migration talk about their identities and experiences of belonging. As such, the terms 'migrant', 'immigrant' and 'non-immigrant', although not stable or all-encompassing categories, at this stage, do serve to highlight the diversity of the participants and the school context.

The concepts of 'difference' and 'otherness' feature prominently in this study and therefore require closer examination. Belonging is understood as a dynamic process, investigated through multiple theoretical lenses, and encompassing material, symbolic, and affective relationships between individuals, groups, places, and objects (Antonsich, 2010; Youkhana, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2010). Belonging assumes insiderness (by choice, by heritage, by peer-acceptance, etc.) in particular social groups or geographical spaces, and so belonging assumes shared or different characteristics (cultural, linguistic, religious). In this study, the question of identity is about opening the discussion on the relationships between the self and the 'other' - a sense of belonging and perceived differences are in existence with the shifting and symbolic boundaries of the self and the 'other' (Yuval-Davis, 2010).

The theoretical grounds of this research contest categories as unitary, stable and homogeneous, and emphasise the fluidity, multiplicity and symbolic dimensions of identities (discussed further in Chapter 2). Like identity, ‘differences’ and ‘otherness’ are far from neutral and objective categories, and are inscribed in wider historical, social, political and educational norms and values. In Britain, the division between ‘them’ and ‘us’ is historically and politically loaded in a colonial past marked by racial, gender, religious subordination and power relations. Yet, modern multicultural societies often seek to validate ‘difference’ and frame it positively (Anthias, 2002).

By ‘differences’, I refer to linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious differences. This term is underpinned by the notion that categories are fluid and multiple, and difference is not an objective category as what might be different to one person might not be to another person. Symbolic notions of difference are manifested through social and educational structures and values, such as beliefs about pedagogy and language, approaches to inclusion, teacher-pupil relationships, youth culture, school spaces and rules (Welply, 2022).

By ‘otherness’, I am referring to processes of similarities and differences between one another, determining fluid and ongoing degrees of separation based on personal characteristics and identities. Furthermore, otherness is positioned insofar as it contrasts with the dominant language and culture of the school. As such, otherness cannot be established as a unified, stable and definite process, but is situational and dependent on the social encounters and social actors involved (Castro, 2004; Welply, 2022). An important dimension of otherness is that it is not necessarily in opposition with belonging as forms of othering and a collective sense of othering might be used to establish, reject, reinvent belonging and boundary maintenance. For example, as Harris (2015) found, constructions of difference allowed young people to manage national hybridity and belonging in current times. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve deeply into the different theoretical positions of otherness and differences as they have been theorised from multiple philosophical and ontological lenses. Rather, this section outlined how ‘difference’ and ‘otherness’ are understood for the purpose of this study. Chapter 2 builds on some of these points when discussing the existing literature in the field of children’s identity construction and belonging. Central to the construction of difference and the process of othering in this thesis is that it relies on self-identification and identification of others, therefore, operating

within discourse, which is embedded in historical, socio-political relations and norms. While these terms are useful as a starting point, in this study they are to be challenged, reinvented, and reaffirmed through children's interpretations and narratives.

Furthermore, the terminology and complexity around language needs elaboration. I recognise that the term 'multilingual' is quite limiting as it suggests the notion of a named language in existence alongside other languages. Multilingualism is the knowledge of a number of languages or the co-existence of different languages in a given society, but it has a bounded and positivist tone, which denies the significance of the 'inter' aspect, as in 'interaction' and 'intercultural'. According to the Council of Europe (2001), "multilingualism may be attained by simply diversifying the languages on offer in a particular school or educational system, or by encouraging pupils to learn more than one foreign language or reducing the dominant position of English in international communication" (p. 4). Instead, they advocate the term 'plurilingualism' as it offers the potential to understand and use several languages to varying levels and for different purposes (Council of Europe, 2022). A key feature is that plurilingual competence presents itself as unbalanced, as language ability (spoken, written, oral) may be different from one language to another (Coste et al., 2009). Plurilingualism is not about "'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertoire, in which all linguistic abilities have a place" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5). However, although schools in Britain promote the concept, scholarship has questioned whether it leads to a deficit understanding of the dominant lingua franca and state-sanctioned language, English, and a devaluing of other languages, from different standpoints. For example, from the perspective of a migrant family, learning English may be seen as crucial for navigating the education system. Indeed, studies have shown that teaching for EAL learners is predominantly in English (Costley et al., 2020; Strand & Lindorff, 2021).

Instead, I prioritise the concept, 'translanguaging' which is about using the full available repertoires of communication that is affective, embodied, enacted, and expressed in multiple forms via multiple methods (such as through the creative arts). The methodology in this study links closely with the notion of translanguaging and draws on the creative and

performative arts as modes of self-expression and communication (Frimberger et al., 2018; Harvey et al., 2019). While plurilingualism focuses on "turning monolingual speakers into multilingual speakers, ensuring that speakers develop a 'repertoire of languages'", translanguaging stems from "working with bilingual students to ensure that they were able to perform their bilingualism in ways that reflected who they were as bilingual beings" (García & Otheguy, 2020, p. 24). The notion of translanguaging encourages thinking that goes between and beyond language in creative ways (García & Otheguy, 2020; Li Wei, 2018). That is, translanguaging "incorporates an understanding of how different modes, including our bodies, our gestures, our lives etc., add to the semiotic meaning-making repertoire that is involved in the act of communication" (García & Otheguy, 2020, p. 24). The individual's full linguistic repertoire and multimodal resources might involve gestures, verbal sounds, visual cues, human-technology (García & Otheguy, 2020).

In educational contexts, translanguaging is seen as an effective pedagogical approach when the school language is different from the languages of the pupils as it can reposition and decentre the imagined and ideological divides between native and immigrant, majority and minority, mother tongue languages and target languages (Li Wei, 2018, p. 15). Translanguaging, then, has the potential to transform approaches to teaching and learning, consider more child-led pedagogies and develop identity:

Throughout the thesis, I will be using the terms 'multilingual' and 'translanguaging' to emphasise different aspects of language. In this study, I am interested in the ways children navigate their language identities (amongst other identities) in terms of their narratives of belonging, inclusion and differences in the classroom. I aim to investigate how they experience, utilise, and conceptualise languages to help make sense of themselves, and others, in school, as well as the heritage languages of children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds (discussed further in Chapter 2).

1.5 Thesis structure

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 reviews the academic literature on belonging, school inclusion and identity and focuses on studies conducted with children in the UK. This chapter identifies gaps in knowledge and presents a critique of some of the theoretical and

methodology approaches. I finish by introducing and discussing the research questions that guide the study.

Chapter 3 turns to the theoretical underpinnings of the study, namely ‘child voice’ and ‘new childhood studies’ (e.g., Cassidy et al., 2022; Komulainen, 2007; James, 2007), Butler’s theorisation in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), and ‘new materialism’ (e.g., Wyn et al., 2020; Youkhana, 2015). Studies in child voice (specifically those that have taken a critical stance) and new childhood studies provide a lens to critically examine notions of listening to children’s voices. This lens helps to position childhood as socially embedded and children as ‘experts’ in their own lives. Butler’s (2005) theories of opacity, relationality, responsibility and agency enable a discussion into the performed, contested and reiterated nature of identity and the relationships between the self and the ‘other’. New materialism offers a perspective on the embodied and sensory relationships between objects, places, peoples, sounds, sensations etc., and recognises the significance of belonging and attachments to particular places, objects and the notion of ‘home’. All these concepts are important in my study as they enable me to develop a multifocal conceptualisation of childhood, and make sense of children’s experiences of belonging, as expressed in and through their own experiences and voices.

Chapter 4 outlines the qualitative research approach and methodology. I discuss the rationale for and approaches to the methods, analysis procedures and ethical considerations including positionality and trustworthiness. I also discuss how I accessed, listened to, and made sense of children’s voices, which included drawing from participatory research and arts-based methods.

Chapters 5 to 8 present the findings of the study. In Chapter 5, I discuss children’s perspectives and definitions of belonging and school inclusion through discursive and creative methods, interrogating the relationships between these terms, and exploring how children spoke about their experiences of inclusion in school, including as newly arrived learners. Chapter 6 examines the interactions participants had around language and what it meant for the specific context of the school. This chapter also explores children’s experiences and accounts of belonging and identity within notions of linguistic, religious and ethnic differences and otherness. Chapter 7 explores belonging through children narratives on ‘home’, their cultural identities (place of birth) and heritage countries. In Chapter 8, I

reflect on the processes of conducting arts-based, participatory research with children, and provide a researcher's account of the ethical and methodological issues involved in listening to children's voices.

Finally, the Conclusions chapter, Chapter 9, returns to and answers the research questions and outlines the contributions and implications (theoretical, methodological, pedagogic) of the research, and provides directions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter adopts a multi-disciplinary perspective, drawing on studies from sociology, education, geography, and psychology, among other fields, to review literature on belonging, school inclusion and identity in contexts of migration and education. As outlined in the Introduction, the UK's increased ethnic, cultural, and linguistic landscapes have prompted academic discourses on the educational and social experiences of different groups of people, which has coincided with anti-immigrant and anti-other rhetoric, in politics and media, which have labelled the 'other' as a significant 'threat' (Welply, 2022). Therefore, the rise in migration and diversity has led to a renewed interest and emphasis on topics related to belonging, identities and otherness as significant educational concerns. This context of increased migration and diversity has also promoted scholarship on inclusive education, beyond its roots in Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) provision (i.e., Mathias et al., 2015; McMahon et al., 2016; Prince & Hadwin, 2013; Robinson et al., 2018; Salmon, 2013; Shogren et al., 2015), to examine the situated experiences of inclusion and belonging for migrant and immigrant learners in the primary classroom (Devine & Kelly, 2006; Hanna, 2020; Hilt, 2017; McIntyre & Hall, 2020; Ritchie & Gaulter, 2020; Tajic & Bunar, 2023).

Qualitative empirical studies have investigated migration and education in the U.K., providing valuable insights into children's lives and experiences, including discourses on ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities and otherness (Evans & Liu, 2018; Ipgrave, 2009; Lewis & Demie, 2019; Welply, 2015, 2017, 2018; Zontini & Peró, 2019), inclusion (Hanna, 2020; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020) and 'translocal' identities (Mand, 2010; Moskal, 2015; Ní Laoire et al., 2010). Some studies have incorporated creative methodologies to explore children's voices and experiences, such as Ritchie and Gaulter (2018) who used dance methods to investigate and promote migrant pupils' sense of belonging in school. The richness of these areas provides fruitful grounds for discussion, but also points to complexities and theoretical shifts in the literature. My aim, here, is to identify gaps in current literature on the topic this thesis addresses and offer a discussion on why it is important these theoretical and methodological gaps are addressed.

Broader scholarship on migration and identity with older children and young adults (e.g., Colic-Peisker, 2005; Clayton, 2012; Faas, 2008; Giralt, 2011; Holmes & Peña Dix, 2022; Tanyas, 2016), from different methodological and ontological positions, have informed this thesis. This chapter, though, focuses on literature primarily conducted in the UK (and Ireland e.g., Devine, 2009) - the location of the fieldwork - pertaining to children's worlds and their experiences at the intersections of identity, otherness, belonging, and school inclusion. I will also draw from 'international' literature (e.g., Harris, 2016; Due et al., 2016; Dressler, 2014; Revilla et al., 2013) on childhood, education and identities, to show the international significance of the study in a broader academic field, even though I am focusing on the context of the UK.

Early theorisations on multiculturalism and multifaceted identities, such as, acculturation theory (Berry, 1997), social identity approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), hybrid identities (Bhabha, 1994), and biculturalism (Schwartz et al., 2010) have been criticised for unintentionally reinforcing essentialised identifications, and for requiring static and bounded categories as a starting point (Palmié, 2013). Coinciding with this criticism there is a growing body of literature that recognises the dynamism and unfinished forms of migration and self-identification, where people, including children, continually (re)define themselves in multiple and fluid ways that may transcend predetermined and politicised identity categories (Ní Laoire, 2016; Welply, 2022). This chapter discusses the existing scholarship on children's identities and experiences of belonging and inclusion in the intercultural encounter, which can be "imagined as rhizomatic" and encompassing symbolic, discursive, and material dimensions (Youkhana, 2015, p. 16).

This chapter begins with a short section on the notion of 'childhood' and my decision to focus on children's experiences (2.1). Following this, I will discuss the key studies on how children's identities are conceptualised in the literature (2.2), and then I will consider the relationships between belonging and identity, drawing on the multiple dimensions of belonging from different theoretical positions (2.3). Finally, I will review the literature on the school context of inclusion in schools, particularly in the context of culturally and linguistically diverse school communities and supporting children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds (2.4).

2.1 Focusing on the experiences of children

There has been a proliferation of research which explores, from different perspectives and ontologies, how children and young people navigate belonging and their cultural identities, for example, studies highlight children's active engagement in processes of migration, othering, and identification - performing identities in relation to the 'other' (e.g., Clayton, 2012; Devine and Kelly, 2006; Ipgrave, 2009; Welply, 2022). Children's worlds may differ from the adult perspective, and engaging their voices may provide a richer account of children's lived experiences, for example, Madeleine Hatfield's (née Dobson) study (2010) on children's experiences of return migration found differences between children and their parents, and how children expressed more mobile, transient, and smaller-scale homemaking practices.

The value of listening to children's voices has been well established in the past decades; it draws on the idea that children are competent social actors and there is much to learn from listening to their voices, an idea that is at the heart of 'new childhood studies' (Clark, 2001; James, 2007; James & Prout, 1997). In this view, children are capable of actively shaping things affecting their lives, such as their identities, socialisation, learning and participation in research (e.g., Stokes, 2019). Despite this, children's voices and experiences remain underrepresented in certain areas. There remains limited understanding of the experiences of children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds in the U.K., as most studies have focused on older children or those entering adulthood. Nonetheless, when children do get involved in studies, they are often grouped together with secondary school pupils or young adults in further education, and the terms 'children', 'young people', 'youth' and 'young adults' are often used interchangeably or, at the least, collectively with a range of participants from across these socio-cultural age brackets, for example, Giralt (2015, p. 3) worked with "children of 8-18 years of age", also describing them as "young people". Erel's (2013) study included "children's views" on migration and ethnic identities in London with participants aged 12 to 18. Therefore, studies have amalgamated children into a 'young people' label, and other studies tend to refer to older children and teenagers as 'children'. Therefore, this raises political and philosophical notions about what counts as a 'child'. These authors, to their credit, are likely following legal categorisations of 'childhood' - such as the UNCRC definition (1989) – which is understood as any child between 0-18 years of age. While it is beneficial to provide comparisons and understandings across age ranges, the

terms ‘child’, ‘childhood’, and ‘children’s experiences’ become conflated, creating difficulty when searching for literature on primary school aged children.

Developmental psychology studies show that childhood is a unique period marked by socialisation (James, 2013), moral, linguistic, and cognitive development (Jenks, 2005) and with a strong disposition for play and imagination (Kushnir, 2022). Childhood is also related to notions of agency, independence/dependency, and physical limitations, such as, the socio-cultural and political spaces children occupy, or are perceived to occupy, which is often determined by schools, parents, and cultural norms. As such, the experiences of children may differ from the experiences of older children and young adults, however, this distinction is also quite debated in the field of childhood studies. For some scholars, the distinction between child and adults creates false dichotomous categories that build on socially homogenous and essentialist notions of childhood (Ansell, 2009; Tisdall, 2012).

2.2 Examining how children’s identities are conceptualised in research

Current research on identity has been dominated by post-structuralist perspectives in sociology and education fields, which reject essentialist notions of identity as stable, self-evident, and homogenous, in favour of an ontology that positions cultural boundaries and identity as dynamic and fluid – as Hall (1992) puts it, identity is never “fully unified, completed, and secure” (p. 227). Hall (1996) points out the relationships between culture and identity, which relates to shared cultures, histories and norms that come together to form solidarity and imagined homogeneity – who belongs and who is ‘othered’ in certain spaces. For Hall, the power of identity lies in the capacity to imagine ‘differences’, in other words, identities become legitimised through their capacity to ‘exclude’.

Quantitative studies on identity often point out developmental stages, such as Phinney’s (1993) three-stage model of ethnic identity formation in adolescence, or Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial model of identity based on age that refers to personal uniqueness and sameness. Further, in light of increased diversity and migration, social psychology studies have been levelled at notions of ‘biracial’ identity development in children and young people (e.g., Phinney, 1993). Some psychology studies that rely on questionnaires may present challenges when it comes to identifying participants. For example, in a study conducted by

Rivas-Drake et al. (2017), pupil surveys were administered, and participants were asked to self-identify their 'ethnic-racial' label. “From these responses, ethnic-racial categories were identified that corresponds to six categories available in the US Office of Civil Rights 2011-2012 report of school demographics” (p. 714). The authors added a seventh category, “Other”, to “accurately reflect student’ self-identification” (p. 714). However, it could be argued that attempts to categorise, and manage children’s self-identifications into predetermined categories, as well as the nameless label of “Other”, might present hierarchical and oversimplification sentiments. While useful in identifying large scale trends and understandings, developmental models with scientific rationales perhaps do not capture the situated, multiple and ambiguous nature of children lives and identities; sometimes narratives of the ‘self’ cannot be fully captured and articulated (Butler, 2005), which is a point I return to in the Theoretical Framework Chapter. It is worth noting here, though, that different ontological understandings of the self, shape research about identities, for example Butler (2005), a poststructuralist, in response to biological and pre-determined ideas of identity, proports the view of identity as fluid, socially constructed, and styled acts of repetition through discourse and society.

Furthermore, the notion of ‘cultural hybridity’ has been widely theorised in cultural studies and migration studies. Homi Bhabha (1994) initially conceived of it as a ‘third space’ in the postcolonial context, and described how individuals navigate cultures and identities formed through the possibilities of a ‘third space’ – or ‘in-betweenness’ – which collapses the neat distinctions between two distinct cultures or social positions, such as the coloniser/colonised, black/white, subject/object. Bhabha’s (1994) theory favours hybrid forms of representations, embracing the possibilities that individuals’ develop new identities whilst also stemming from the histories, cultures, and heritages they might originate from. Bhabha writes that, “we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (1994, p. 2). More recently, Harris (2016) found that migrant youth viewed hybridised identities as a “normal and productive” reality of living in “multicultural Australia” (p. 364). However, Zontoni and Peró (2019), exploring migrant children’s experiences in the UK post-Brexit, found that children in their study adopted an ‘either/or’ discourse, claiming that hybrid identities were difficult to foster and maintain. They rarely

saw themselves and others as having hybridised national identities, which was associated with Brexit and reinforcing of national boundaries (physical and symbolic separation).

Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybrid identity stems from a specific time and place, and whilst helpful, has also been critiqued for remaining somewhat essentialist, for instance, "hybridity has frequently been used in postcolonial discourse to mean simply cross cultural 'exchange'. This use of the term has been widely criticised, since it usually implies negating and neglecting the imbalance and inequality of the power relations it references" (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 136). Bauhn and Tepe (2016) add that, some critique has been levelled at the idea that hybridity will not be empowering unless it is "recognised and respected" (p. 353). Bhabha developed the notion of hybrid identities in a postcolonial context in 1980/90s, which was part of wider literary and cultural movement of second-generation immigrants questioning their identity, which until then had been very unitary and 'national'. This thesis is located at a different time, where the notion of fluid, multiple and contested identities is well-established, but a time of resurgence of national boundaries (e.g., closing of borders during Covid), national discourses which emphasise a unitary form of belonging, and a post-Brexit UK where the idea of European integration is challenged and identities may be uncertain (Tyrell et al., 2018; Zontoni & Peró, 2019). In light of this, questions are raised about how children might talk about their identities and belongings that go beyond/ within/ between hybridised identities, in specific ways, at different times and contexts.

Having highlighted some current theorisations on identity, I will now discuss some relevant empirical studies conducted with children in the UK on their identities, pointing out trends and gaps in the literature and potential theoretical and methodological approaches. Following this, I suggest that there could be value in developing research approaches that avoid focusing on specific social locations and groupings (ethnicity, religion, nationality, migrant status, for example) in order to better understand the voices of children and represent the multiple and ambiguous nature of children's lives and intersectional identities.

Firstly, studies in this area often focus on ethnic identity, for instance, Devine (2009) explored the views of migrant children in Ireland and found that children spoke of 'difference' in terms of a deficit - and "for migrant children positioned as the ethnic 'other',

their coping strategies involved a considerable degree of ethnic self-monitoring, which centred on minimising embodied aspects of cultural difference related to accent, dress, and diet" (p. 527). When friendships were established, Devine (2009) found that differences were navigated and included 'forgetting' or 'ignoring' ethnic differences among peers. Welply's (2018) study in England, on the other hand, found that children's similarities and differences determined separation and friendships between peers – i.e., children perceived friendship groups as the result of 'sticking together' based on skin colour or religious identity.

Ethnicity has also been studied in relation to other social locations, particularly at the intersections of linguistic and religious identity. Welply (2018) investigated the intersecting narratives of otherness towards Muslim children in school and found "tacit forms of stereotyping and discrimination towards Muslim children, located at the intersection of race, religion, language and national identity" (p. 377). Welply (2018) found that some participants used discursive strategies such as 'indirectness' to distance themselves from any racist connotations in their views, or 'discursive buffers' to semantically frame implicit racism as casual and non-offensive.

However, Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008), used participatory theatre methods to explore identity with refugee community groups in London, some of which were from youth groups, and they found that narratives of otherness and differences were not always about reducing all 'others' to the 'other'. They found that in daily interactions, people's social worlds incorporated a range of relations from collective identity and close identification to indifference, to stereotyping and rejection. Central to this finding was drama methods as a research tool for exploring identity construction: they conclude that being 'in and out' of role, being 'me and not me' enabled reflection and imagination when navigating accounts of oneself and one's identity. Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008) note that the stories of identity in each group were constructed as part of a collective process, related to each other, build on each other as well as prompted through discourses of difference. Therefore, this study shows that imagination plays an important role in identity construction, not just the imagined homogeneity and collectivity that shape identity boundaries (e.g., Hall, 1996), but also the capacity to invent how things are, should be, or could be (e.g., Greene, 2001). Greene writes that:

> imagination [allows] us to move into the 'as-if' – to move beyond the actual into the invented, to do so within our experience. To enter a created world, an invented word, to find new perspectives opening onto our lived worlds, the often taken-for-granted realities of everyday. (2001, p. 81-82).

In Greene's work, imagination is the view that "we can re-create the world by both becoming uncomfortably disturbed by the status quo, and by being stimulated and pushed to envision a better society" (Abowitz, 2016, p. 12). Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008) use art methods – or "the potency of the arts" (Greene, 2000, p. 196) – to represent participants' collective and individual stories and discourses on identity, being both 'in and out' of character, complicating notions of the 'self' and the 'other'. This has led me to consider a research approach that highlights the possibilities of imagination and art methods when exploring children's identity constructions.

In a similar vein, Welply (2015) investigated how children engaged with imagination (or 'global imaginaries') to express and navigate their perspectives on belonging and otherness. This paper reported on the findings of a cross-national ethnographic study with immigrant background children in two primary schools: one in England and one in France. Welply (2015) found that:

> The local tended to confirm the construction of Otherness as separation since immigrant-background and non-immigrant children lived in different areas and did not see each other outside school; whereas future projections drew on forms of global imaginary to create representations of Otherness as cosmopolitanism and belonging to the world, rather than separation and exclusion. (p. 445)

Welply (2015) utilised multiple methods, include group and individual interviews and dairies, and a visual method of 'map activity' which was "more helpful in encouraging children to talk about Otherness in their own terms" (p. 437). Children commented that they wanted to live in different countries because of their friends, and there were sentiments celebrating differences, positioning themselves as global and mobile, which enabled them to navigate and develop friendships and intercultural exchanges. As Welply (2015) puts it, "these imagined global connections participate in constructing a sense of belonging through Otherness" (p. 444). Interestingly, Welply (2015) found that only children from immigrant-

backgrounds expressed global, cosmopolitan imaginaries – the non-immigrant children imagined themselves living somewhere in England in the future. This raises interesting points for my study in terms of how children might talk about their identities and belonging in local/global ways, reflecting Ansell's (2009) caution about looking beyond the immediate environments that affect children's lives to the symbolic and material connections to near and far.

Furthermore, Moskal (2015) and Mand (2010) found that migrant and immigrant children play an active role in maintaining 'translocal' relationships and identities, as they navigate local/global constructions of home through a sense of geographical and symbolic proximity and absence. In the literature on 'translocal' identities and migration, a central focus has been on individuals' practices and ideas of home and sense of belonging (Fog-Olwig, 2003; Ní Laoire et al., 2010). Anthias (2008) writes about 'translocal positionality', whereby belonging is located at the interface between the local and the global. Antonsich (2010) also highlights dimensions of identity and spatiality of belonging as symbolic and material localities and territorialises – these aspects of identity and belonging will be revisited in the next section.

Mand's (2010) study explores experiences of home for British-born Bangladeshi children. Mand (2010) reveals that children's ideas of home and identities centred on kinship and materiality:

> These British-born children feel a sense of belonging based on kinship and ancestry which is embodied by houses in Bangladesh, and, at the same time, home is also in London. Identifications with and notions of belonging to places are linked to social relations, whether these are of the past, in the present or imagined. (p. 284)

Mand (2010) argues that the children's experiences highlight the importance of materiality ('homemaking' practices, houses, buildings, environments) which should continue to occupy notions of home and belonging in the wider literature. Similarly, Moskal (2015) worked with Polish families and children in Scotland and found that, by drawing on narratives, drawings and maps with children, "'homes' extend beyond single localities because they are involved in transnational networks" (p. 151) and patterns of translocal identities emerged through connections to family members in the country of origin through internet, phone calls, and

frequent visits. Moskal (2015) found that "children's imagination of going home to the old, familiar things and people can be abstract, as they acknowledge that things may have changed, and that people may have moved on" (p. 150).

In this section (2.2), the argument has moved from arts and imagination (Greene, 2001; Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008) to imaginaries and the interplay between the local/global: the material/symbolic (Welply, 2015) to the notion of 'translocal' identity and 'place' (Mand, 2010; Moskal, 2015). These different perspectives have enabled me to think about identity for young children from different frames of reference, such as the interconnections of research methods and imaginaries, as well as the social, geographical and embodied nature of children's identities.

The final aspect discussed here is that of heritage language and language practices. The term 'heritage language' in this study is associated with cultural and family backgrounds and denotes those born in households where language(s) other than English is spoken at home, and where individuals are living in a society where the language(s) spoken at home and among family members is not the dominant one (Bayona & García-Martín, 2023). Like other aspects of self-identification, the term 'heritage language' is under contestation; it is not a static nor agreed-upon category (Blackledge et al., 2008). The majority of studies on heritage language and language identities have been conducted in the United States, for instance, Doerr & Lee's (2013) study with Japanese heritage learners in US schools, Helmer's (2020) study of Mexican-origin students' engagement and Spanish as a heritage language, or Bayona & García-Martín (2023) study with heritage language learners in 'mixed classrooms' in the US. Fewer studies have focused on children's views on their language identities and practices in England, such as Evans & Liu (2018), Mills (2001), and Welply (2017). Studies have focused on migrant and immigrant children's language identities in terms of pedagogy and interventions (de Oliveria & Jones, 2023; Oxley & de Cat, 2021), policies (Costley, 2014; Foley et al., 2013) and the attainment of these learners (Demie, 2018). As such, studies often focus on teacher's perspectives of language diversity (e.g., Bailey & Marden, 2017; Dakin, 2017; Weekly, 2020). What differentiates my study from the large body of work in this field is that it explores children's views on language identities and practices in school, including the relationships they have with heritage language in school and at home, and how this

shapes – and is shaped by – other aspects of their identities, differences and otherness to capture the fluidity and multiplicity of children's lives in intercultural classrooms.

Two qualitative studies are worth noting: Welply (2017) and Mills (2001) explored children's perspectives of language practices and identities. Welply (2017) found that, despite the multilingual ethos and policies of the school in England, children were unsure about the place their heritage languages have in the classroom, and, therefore, viewed school spaces as implicitly monolingual and monocultural. Other studies have found that monolingual ideologies in England are deeply ingrained in education (Bailey & Marden, 2017; Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Cunningham, 2019). Welply recommends that celebrating heritage languages and cultural diversity in the classroom, reflected in the curriculum and resources, would recognise and value children's skills in their heritage languages, helping to address tensions of legitimising certain languages over others, which can be beneficial for all learners (Welply, 2017). Mills (2001) conducted interviews with immigrant-background children ("third generation Asian children") in the UK on their languages and cultures and found that children valued their heritage languages as a way of being close to family and cultural heritage, but also, as a site of tension as most of them expressed that their abilities in their heritage languages were quite restricted. Mills (2001) also found that children made "a judgement as to what was the appropriate language for particular people" (p. 395). This meant drawing from their linguistic repertoires, be that Punjabi and English, for example, based on the context and people they were addressing. Mills' (2001) study differed from Welply's (2017) in that it was conducted outside of school spaces, and, therefore, participants did not speak of hierarchies, legitimisation, and heritage language practices in school settings. However, both studies shed light on language as a site for belonging and otherness, and the linguistic repertoires children draw on in their daily lives.

Having reviewed the literature, I have noticed that studies often focus on specific localities and groupings. Qualitative empirical studies with children tend to focus on, for example, specific national or ethnic identifications (e.g., Erel, 2013; Katartzi, 2017; Tanyas, 2016; Faas, 2008; Lewis & Demie, 2019), diasporic communities (e.g., Giralt, 2015), or specific language identities and heritage languages (e.g., Helmer, 2020). Quantitative studies, for example, have researched developmental models of identity, such as 'biracial' identity, which relies on

seemingly distinct categorisations for formulating frameworks (Phinney, 1993). Of course, I do not want to devalue the importance of recognising children's situated experiences based on specific categories – be that nationality, ethnic, religious, linguistic identity – which may differ from the experiences of others. For example, Clayton's (2012) study documenting young people's views on race and racism in Leicester, England found that there was particular animosity towards the Somali community compared to other groups. Thus, I appreciate the situatedness of people's experiences based on occupying particular social locations, or, indeed, multiple locations, ascribed by them or to them, and the implications of power and privilege that are associated with particular identities and affiliations. I also recognise that categories used by researchers often match those used by participants themselves (usually older participants though) which is therefore valuable and appropriate.

However, I believe there is something missing in current literature, and that is there is something distinct and valuable in research contexts that involve 'all' children to understand the dialogic, co-constructed and contested spaces in which identities and belonging emerges. Children's lives, their accounts of themselves and others, do not happen in a vacuum, and I am interested in what children in the presence of each other say, and how they act and behave. Thereby enabling wider, richer discourses to emerge, that do not revolve around tightly defined lines of identification and by me assuming children's backgrounds (from information provided by teachers).

Given that this study took place in schools, as opposed to specific community groups for example, isolating and withdrawing certain migrant, ethnic, or religious groups to take part in the workshops would have gone against the schools' inclusion policies, and perhaps gone against how the children saw themselves; they may not define themselves in such ways. This also raises some possible tensions and paradoxes, for example, schools' inclusion policies have been criticised for being neoliberal, 'colourblind' and not focusing enough on specific ethnically minoritised groups (especially since the abolition of stipulated funding offered by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant in 2011, which aimed to raise the achievement of minority ethnic groups who are at risk of underachieving), which has led to a neoliberal regime in which the individuals are responsible for 'managing' diversity (Welply, 2022) and emphasises the self and self-oriented identities (Dunne, 2009). School inclusion policies have also been buttressed by 'multicultural' ideologies, which have also received a fair share of

criticism (discussed in Chapter 1). Therefore, in a way, disrupting the schools' inclusion policies by focusing on specific categories could have been seen as a worthwhile endeavour for research.

However, there is an ethical issue in differentiating children based on pre-established categories, which might not correspond to the way they view themselves and others, or to the way social relations exist within the schools. Thus, I would run the risk of perpetuating further differences or straining relationships. Therefore, I sought to destabilise categories, informed by the participants' voices and self-identifications, which began in the planning and recruitment stages. Like other studies who have adopted this approach (e.g., Welply, 2015, 2017, 2018), I invite possibilities, ambiguities, multiple positionings within lived experiences. I believe this is particularly powerful when working with methods that facilitate imagination (Greene, 2001; Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008).

In sum, this section has discussed some theories regarding identity and self-identification and reviewed existing empirical studies with children on their views and experiences of identity in diverse, intercultural spaces. Having familiarised myself with the literature, I believe there is scope for developing creative research approaches that are attentive to the symbolic and discursive dimensions of children's lives, including avoiding pre-determined social locations and categories. As such, this project focuses on children from 'different' trajectories of migration to explore the interconnected experiences and perspectives of identity, belonging, differences, and inclusion in school and in their wider lives.

2.3 Reviewing literature on belonging

> Gone was my confidence that I belonged in the world […] in a world where I did not belong, I struggled to find strategies for survival. (hooks, 2009, p. 218)

Described above as 'strategies for survival', belonging is often viewed as a dynamic and fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and an important factor of children's sense of identity and how they perceive themselves and others. Through a theoretical lens, put broadly, belonging can be understood as a dynamic process - multidimensional and

multiscalar (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2010) - encompassing material, symbolic, and affective relationships between individuals, communities, places, objects, or institutions. Often entangled within ideological and political discourses (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2010), belonging – individual and collective – denotes membership to, or investments in, particular social positionings, identities, or geographical spaces, such as 'nation-states'. As such, belonging assumes shared characteristics (be that cultural, linguistic, religious etc.) as signifiers of shared membership and boundary maintenance. The idea of sense of self is closely associated with feelings of otherness and belonging – the ongoing self-identifications, and identifications by others, over who 'belongs' in certain social, political, cultural, and educational spaces. Or, as Loader (2006) puts it, the question 'Who am I?' cannot be detached from the other important question 'Where do I belong?'.

This paragraph focuses on the distinctions and interconnections between belonging and the concept of identity. As suggest above, belonging is often defined as processes in which individuals construct affiliations and conformity with other people, with groups, communities, places, material objects. Scholars in the social sciences and cultural studies commonly emphasise "experience and its emotional and affective dimensions" (Maine et al., 2021, p. 10) as a way of separating belonging and identity. For example, for Anthias (2008), identity is about "individual and collective narratives of self and other, presentation and labelling, myths of origin and myths of destiny with associated strategies and identifications". Belonging "is more about experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion" (Anthias, 2008, p. 8). Belonging has often been used in association with identity, as well as citizenship (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Yuval-Davis' (2006) suggests that people belong through with identity categories (such as race, nationality, religion) and their social locations (local/global spaces) which are constructed along multiple lines of differences. People also tend to belong in ways that go beyond social identity categories e.g., hobbies, jobs, or personality traits. So, the complex ways in which we define ourselves, and others, go into the processes of belonging and feeling "part of the social fabric" (Anthias, 2008) whereby the boundaries of who belongs and who is 'othered' are fluid, situated and socially and historically embedded. This is not to say that I am pre-empting that children will articulate belonging along lines of cultural, religious, ethnic identities etc., but for the

purpose of this thesis, these two concepts can be experienced in a myriad of interconnected and unexpected ways.

I will spend the next three paragraphs discussing some dimensions of belonging: firstly, "belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 645); secondly, belonging as a discursive and politicised construct that creates, justifies, resists forms of inclusion/otherness – i.e. politics of belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006); and, finally, belonging as having important material dimensions, including embodied relationships between people, material objects, space, physical landscapes (Ros i Solé et al., 2020; Youkhana, 2015).

Firstly, belonging often relates to strong emotional and affective feelings. According to Antonsich (2010), "to belong means to find a place where an individual can feel 'at home' (p. 646). 'Home', here, may be conceptualised as a domestic, material space associated with family, but also 'home' can represent the symbolic spaces of familiarity, comfort, safety, and emotional attachment (hooks, 2009). As such, belonging is often associated with 'rootedness' and sense of place (hooks, 2009; Lovell, 1998). This emerges clearly in the account of bell hooks (2009) who discusses her journey, her life-long search, for belonging as she leaves and returns to her home in the Kentucky hills in America. Within this perspective, the notion of 'longing' is frequently discussed in literature. Belonging captures a desire for attachment, an emotional investment, in which individuals must navigate who they are but also who they desire to. Probyn (1996) writes, "individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning rather than positioning of identity as a stable state" (p. 19). As such, perhaps belonging is something we must perform and contest; a person "does not simply or ontologically 'belong' to the world or to any group within it" (Bell, 1999, p. 3). Antonsich (2010) also emphasises the significance of the spatiality of belonging, which can be understood in geographical sense and a symbolic space e.g., familiarity, comfort, and security.

Secondly, belonging, feeling 'at home' in a place, be that a community group, school, with friends, family, is not just a personal endeavour, but a political one too. Antonsich (2010) writes that, "one's personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place should always come to

terms with discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion ⁄ exclusion at play in that very place and which inexorably conditions one's sense of place-belongingness" (p. 649). This is what Yuval-Davis (2006, 2011) calls the 'politics of belonging'. The politics of belonging relates to the discursive processes of how social locations, identities and emotional attachments are "assessed and valued by the self and others" (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 18). Therefore, 'belonging' relates to deeply ingrained social and institutional practices and norms, hierarchies of identity, which are often inscribed in lingering national and postcolonial memory that contributes to processes of 'othering' and polarisation of 'us/them' (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Ladson-Billings (2005) writes from within Critical Race Theory (CRT)/ a decolonial perspective, and, without dwelling too much on CRT, this relates to the politics of belonging because "even in its most stable 'primordial' forms, however, belonging is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity, which is only a naturalized construction of a particular hegemonic form of power relations" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 199). In other words, belonging, often in the form of national identity and citizenship, only comes into effect through hegemonic forms of power and difference and distinctions between 'us/them'.

Finally, studies of migration, materiality and belonging that have been important for this thesis. In a 'material turn', scholars have focused on the materiality of belonging and the intersections and interactions of people, places, and 'things' in identity construction (e.g., Burrell 2008; Feely, 2020; Ferri, 2020; Friedemann et al., 2022; Lytra & Ilankuberan, 2020; Macleroy & Shamsad, 2020; Ros i Solé et al., 2020; Youkhana, 2015). Identities and experiences of belonging are shaped through material objects, places, people, animals, communities, sensations in children's experiences and identities. Macleroy and Shamsad (2020) explored young people's vibrant identities and attachments as British Bangladeshis and the interactions with materials, artefacts, monuments, and digital stories in their intercultural encounters – they explored outdoor spaces and community histories. Macleroy and Shamsad (2020) found that:

> The girls re-imagine, re-mediate and re-present this struggle for their mother tongue in creating their digital story and uncover profound stories of their cultural heritage and the hard lives of ordinary people. Their understanding of language becomes multisensorial as they touch, feel, and frame their heritage culture. (p. 491)

Youkhana (2015) builds on belonging and the 'politics of belonging' in migration studies and incorporates the analytical category of 'space' that "crosscuts established categorisations such as race, class, gender, and stage of the life cycle, and integrates a material semiotic perspective more systematically into the study of social relations" (p. 10). Youkhana's (2015) concept of belonging ("space-sensitive") considers the "complex relations that individuals have with other people, circulating objects, artefacts, and changing social, political, and cultural landscapes, thus mirroring both the material conditions and the underlying power relations" (p. 10). Although this is not totally novel in that post-structuralist and social constructivist studies have highlighted that belonging comes into being through people and wider society, environments and institutions, Youkhana (2015), amongst other theorists, would argue that material dimensions of belonging particularly emphasise a more fluid and less bounded conception of belonging that "can be imagined as a rhizomatic and chaotic network composed of multiple attachments" between human and non-human entities (p. 16). Thereby bringing into frame notions of new materialism – which I discuss in Chapter 3.

The ways in which individuals belong to a certain group or community, relating to political, geographical or social dimensions, have also influenced the theories of school belonging. These theories have explored the ways in which children navigate their sense of belonging in school environments, which is often shaped by discursive and political constructs surrounding interpersonal relationships and notions of differences, and efforts of improving educational achievement. In the context of schooling, several studies have found that a sense of belonging with school is related to positive outcomes, including academic achievement, wellbeing, and social engagement (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Chen & Schweitzer, 2019; Gere & McDonald, 2010; Goodenow, 1993; Osterman, 2000). According to a recent study by Riley et al. (2020) with several primary and secondary schools across England, school belonging is demonstrated through the quality of relationships and communication between staff and students. Belonginess is promoted when everyone in the school environment, including children, "are heard and seen for who they are" (p. 4). Goodenow's (1993) definition of school belonging is a well-cited one and is still relevant today. Goodenow (1993), suggests that school belonging refers to "the extent to which

students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment" (p. 80).

By exploring different theorists, and by locating the concept of belonging at the interface of different categorisations (social, cultural, geographical and political) that produce emotional and material attachments and otherness, I have been able to consider an intersectional analytical approach to understanding children's belonging and identities. In sum, then, children's accounts of belonging are not constrained by a single, static reality (Halse, 2018), but rather enmeshed in multiple and affective relationships with people, places, materials. In this thesis, the concept of belonging is understood through multiple lenses, including affective, discursive, and material dimensions, inscribed within political, educational, and social discourses that interact with children's lives and identities.

2.4 Reviewing literature on inclusion in schools

The final section of this literature review focuses on inclusion and inclusive education, which is another key concept that I discussed with participants. Inclusion is generally understood as removing barriers to learning and increasing participation for *all* learners regardless of cultural background, ethnicity, religion, language, economic status, gender, and so on. The UNESCO (2005) definition understands inclusion as "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education" (p. 13). For Black-Hawkins et al., (2007), inclusion involves 'access' and 'being there' – being able to access the physical classroom spaces as well as symbolically feeling 'part of' the class, being involved in peer groups, and being able to access the resources and curriculum. The principle of inclusion is about encouraging children and young people from range of cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds to fully participate in school, peer-relationships, society, which builds on the premise that 'difference' should not framed in negative, othering or deficit way (Welply, 2020). Teacher-pupil relationships have also been highlighted as an important factor of school inclusion (Pedlar, 2018; Shaw, 2019; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020), for instance, Pedlar (2018) found that 'caring' environments and teachers'

sensitivity and enthusiasm for pupils' wellbeing and inclusion was central to positive outcomes.

Some scholars have argued that belonging is a central construct at the heart of inclusive education (Allen et al., 2022; Vandenbussche & Schauwer, 2018; Hall, 2010; Prince & Hadwin, 2013). This relatively new and novel perspective argues that "inclusion can never truly be achieved without the presence of belonging" (Allen et al., 2022, p. 271). School inclusion without belongingness may risk superficial participation in learning, representations, and friendships. The way that inclusion is often described in the literature is as several moving components – organisation goals, set of practices, set of relationships etc. (Allen et al., 2022). Inclusion is the "legal obligation" related to policy, guidelines and practices, and belonging is the "'how' in transforming inclusion from a requirement to a practise" (Allen et al., 2022, p. 280-281). This line of thinking provides an avenue to consider how theorisations of belonging can impact and work together with inclusion – which will be discussed in Findings chapters.

Overall, studies show that inclusion and belonging is associated with positive outcomes for school improvement, pupil achievement, wellbeing and engagement (Allen et al., 2022; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ostermann, 2000). However, inclusion, especially when intersected with migration, is a concept that is somewhat debated. As discussed in Chapter 1, migration has brought new societal and educational challenges, raising questions about how we can promote inclusion within contexts of increased diversity, and reduce the multiple barriers to inclusion. Welply (2020) writes:

> On the one hand, schools' failure to be fully inclusive of new forms of diversity is decried as a cause of violence and fragmentation in society. On the other hand, schools are invested with the role of including and socialising individuals from diverse backgrounds for future participation in society. (p. 1)

The UNESCO definition above (2005) emphasises the importance of inclusion, quality education for all, and fostering good relationships among individuals with different genders, religions, cultures, and languages. While global policies can provide a robust framework for thinking about inclusion and migration, as Welply (2020) points out, national frameworks

and collective histories and social attitudes often shape immigration and education policies, which might not always align with the wider global ideas of inclusion.

Studies have approached inclusion debates from different lenses. Some studies have examined the systematic and tacit forms of othering, discrimination, stereotyping that can undermine inclusion efforts (Welply, 2022; Youdell, 2012) and deeply ingrained monolingual ideologies and forms of cultural value in the English education system (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001, Welply, 2022). Other research has looked at use of inclusive resources and pedagogies for migrant pupils (Due et al., 2016; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Hirsch & MacLeroy, 2019). Some scholarship has highlighted the challenges of representations and ethnic inequalities in the teaching workforce in schools relating to issues of inclusion (Demie et al., 2023). Some studies have examined attitudes, experiences and beliefs towards inclusion of different stakeholders (teachers, students, parents) (Bailey & Marden, 2017; Dakin, 2017; Weekly, 2018; Hanna, 2020; Evans & Liu, 2018; Mills, 2001; Welply, 2017), and the intersections of categories of 'difference' such as race, ethnicity, language, or region (Devine, 2009; Youdell, 2012; Welply, 2018). Despite this proliferation in research on migration and inclusion, there remains gaps specifically in the literature on children's voices at the intersections of inclusion and belonging and self-identifications in primary schools in the UK. Thus, I reassert Ainscow (2020) and Messiou's (2006, 2019) argument that there is value in listening to the voices of children in developing and re-assessing inclusive practices.

2.5 Conclusion and research questions

This chapter has reviewed the existing literature on three interrelated dimensions, concerning the topic this thesis addresses children's cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities (2.2), dimensions of belonging and identity (2.3) and school inclusion (2.3). This chapter has identified some trends and tensions in the literature, as well as theoretical and methodological gaps worth addressing.

Firstly, the voices of children, including those from migrant and immigrant backgrounds, are often under-represented, and most studies focus on older children and young adults. When children's voices are included, they are often conflated with other terms such as 'young

people', 'youth' or 'teenagers'. This study explores how children in diverse primary schools conceptualise and narrate their identities and experiences of belonging and school inclusion.

Secondly, this literature review raises questions of de-stabilising determined categories and notions of homogenous childhood, and the intersectionality cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities and lived experiences (Devine, 2009; Welply, 2015; James, 2007). Many studies have focused on specific social locations, for instance, 'Muslim children', 'Polish migrants'. I argue that there is particular scope for developing a creative and innovative research approach that incorporate the voices of 'all' children in diverse settings, going beyond specific categories, to explore children's intersectional, multiple, and dynamic narratives more adequately.

Thirdly, having presented research that suggests that belonging operates within notions of self-identification and distinctions between the 'self' and the 'other' (e.g., Yuval-Davis, 2006), I am interested in understanding more about the relationships between belonging, school inclusion and children's cultural and linguistic identities, in school and in their wider lives.

Thus, the issues and interrogations in this chapter has helped framed the following research questions:

1. What are children's feelings and experiences of belonging and inclusion, in school and in their wider lives?
2. How do children give accounts of themselves and talk about their (linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural) identities?
3. Through their narratives of belonging and inclusion (RQ1) and accounts of their identity (RQ2), how do children articulate and experience otherness and differences in relation to school and their wider lives?

The next stage of this thesis builds on this review of literature to consider the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter details the theoretical framework in my thesis. The chapter begins by introducing ‘new childhood studies’ (NCS) and ‘child voice’ theories, which is followed by a discussion of Judith Butler’s concepts in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005). To explore how children talk about themselves and their experiences of belonging and inclusion, I have implemented NCS and (critical) child voice theories to interrogate the notion of ‘childhood’ and ‘giving voice/listening to’ children. This lens positions children’s voices as socially embedded, shifting, and agentic. My study is also situated within Butler’s theorisations (2005) of responsibility, agency, and opacity of the self to explore the performed, contested, and reiterated nature of identity, and the relationships between oneself and the ‘other’. Additionally, I incorporate 'new materialism' to consider the embodied and sensory relationships between objects, people, places, sounds, sensations, and meaning making beyond and between languages, which may be relevant when working with arts-based methods with children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds. In this chapter, I will discuss why I have selected these three theories, and how they have enabled me to critically explore and respond to my research questions.

3.1 New childhood studies and children’s voices

The theorectically innovative paradigm, NCS, that came to dominate childhood studies in the 1990s (Ansell, 2009) is foregrounded by two key ideas: childhood as a sociocultural construct and children as social actors. The former idea prompted researchers to deconstruct homogenous notions of childhood and explore differences in sociospatial and discursive co-constructions of childhood (James, 2007; James & Prout, 1997). For instance, Matthews et al. (1998) researched how local neighbourhoods are constructed as spaces of childhood and the ‘micro-geographies’ of young people. The second notion, children as social actors, has also been widely researched, largely espoused by the ‘United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’ (UNCRC) (UNESCO, 1989). The view here is that children are seldom passive recipients of culture, identity, and socialisation but subjective beings actively shaping and re-shaping their own geographies. For Clark (2001), children are “active learners

engaged in the process of constructing meaning rather than being filled with knowledge" (p. 334), and, consequently, "children have a great deal to teach us about their everyday experiences" (p. 333). A central point here, then, is that children's worlds may differ from the adult perspective, and engaging children's voices may provide a richer account of their lived experiences. NCS galvanises child-focussed research and practice, positioning children as "subjects rather than objects of research" (James, 2007, p. 264), whereby children have a right to be heard when exploring "what is going on in their lives" (p. 261). This has demarcated a transformative, theoretical shift away from research *about* and *on* children, to research *with* and *by* children - a point I will elaborate on in Chapter 4.

There is also a rich body of work conducted in the UK that comes from pedagogical research and highlights the positive and powerful outcomes of consulting with children and young people for improvements in teaching and learning, educational outcomes, and pupil well-being and engagement (Fielding, 2001; Flutter, 2007; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Messiou & Ainscow, 2015; Robinson, 2014; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007; Rudduck et al., 1996). More widely, for example, there has also been a wealth of 'student voice' studies coming from America, which have focused on students as agents of school and policy change, emerging from reform movements (Cook-Sather, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2009). Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) found that 'meaningful' pupil voice can increase pupils' self-esteem through feeling valued and respected by practitioners. Demetriou and Wilson (2010), in a study with newly qualified teachers, found that engaging in pupil voice strategies in order to understand pupils' thoughts and feelings could help improve teaching and learning. It is important to note that the terminology of 'child voice' and 'pupil voice', although drawing from similar theoretical principles, are slightly different as 'pupil voice' comes from pedagogy and practice referring to the ways in which pupils are encouraged to express their ideas and preferences in matters of teaching and learning. The term 'child voice' is commonly used to refer to the concept of childhood and the voices of children, in educational settings, research spaces, and in broader social and cultural contexts.

Cook-Sather (2006) defines voice as "having a legitimate perspective and opinion, being present and taking part, and/or having an active role" (p. 362). Cassidy et al., (2022) adds that voice is about individuals "express[ing] who they are" (p. 10). Britzman (1989, cited in Thomson, 2008), suggests that voice encompasses 'literal, metaphorical, and political

terrains': voice represents literal speech, dialogues between people, expressions of ideas; in the metaphorical sense, voice includes inflections, tone, accent, qualities conveyed; and, politically, voice relates to the right to speak, to express oneself, to be represented. Other scholars have discussed the notion of voice beyond verbal utterances, such as emotional elements and non-verbal forms of meaning, such as behaviours, pauses, silences, movements, artistic expression (Cassidy et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2019; Thomson, 2008).

I came to be interested in theories of 'child voice' in terms of critical analysis of the types of knowledges and approaches that are produced and valued in research, policy, and schools. For example, Thomson (2008) points out that, feminist scholars have argued that the perspectives of women have been large ignored from discourses, and post-colonial scholars have argued that ethnic minority voices and subjugated knowledge should be heard. NCS has been a useful and powerful tool in bringing the 'silenced' voices of children into the frame (Lewis, 2010; Thomson, 2008). The traditionally silenced and disempowered social position of children, including those from migrant and minority backgrounds, and the ongoing social justice narratives for inclusive education further "adds a moral imperative to the cause" of child voice (Spyrou, 2011, p. 152). This is what Lewis (2010) calls 'a moral crusade' (p. 15), which emerged as a counter-paradigm, and was critical of what had come before it: children as 'mini adults', to be 'seen and not heard'. In other words, child voice and childhood studies required – and continues to require – a reconstruction of children and marginalised groups in society (James & Prout, 1997). James (2007) writes that:

> Listening to the voices of children has become a powerful and pervasive mantra for activists and policy makers worldwide. Recited now by politicians as well as practitioners, the voices of children have become a symbol of the modern welfare state's commitment to the values of freedom, democracy, and care. (p. 261)

Therefore, child voice as a framework enables me to consider the historical and ethical positioning of childhood and conceptualise child voice as about "express[ing] who they are" through verbal and non-verbal forms of meaning, and emotional and embodied elements (Cassidy et al., 2022). However, despite – perhaps because of - the keen interest in child voice, some studies fail to critically engage with issues to scrutinise the processes of children's narratives in research. There are, however, several notable scholars who have exercised critical and reflexive vigilance towards issues of voice in research and practice with

children, including Eldén (2012), Facca et al. (2020) Fairey (2018), Frimberger & Bishopp (2020), Graham & Fitzgerald (2010), James (2007), Komulainen (2007), Lewis (2010), Maybin (2013), Spencer et al., (2020), Spyrou (2011, 2016). Drawing on these scholars, the next section will discuss some critical caveats of child voice studies which are central to my positioning and approach to the research questions. These include notions of authenticity, messy and socially produced accounts, questions of 'who is listening' and 'who is heard', and silent voices.

3.1.1 Authenticity

The search for children's perspectives has been conceptualised in conjunction with a search for authenticity (Spencer et al., 2020; Spyrou, 2016). This includes the view that, by engaging the voices and participation of children in qualitative inquiry, researchers can tap into 'true' voices (Spyrou, 2016) and ascertain a more 'complete' and 'authentic' understanding of children's lived realities (Spencer et al., 2020). Thomson (2008), referencing Lather (2007, p. 136), suggests that qualitative researchers often become too focused with romanticing participants' voices, indulging in "confessional tales, authorial self-revelation … the inscription of some unproblematic real'. Instead, Lather argues for 'complexity, partial truths, and multiple subjectivities'" (Thomson, 2008, p. 3). Rhetoric such as 'to give children a voice' may be problematic as it assumes the researcher and the research context itself provides openings and opportunities for children to 'have a voice' – of course, in reality children are talking, listening, and making meaning all the time, beyond the confines of a research project.

Limitations of 'authentic' voice is not to say children do not speak their own 'truths' in some way, but I recognise that interpretations of child voice are rife with power imbalances, and simply 'listening' to children's voices (facilitated by child-centred art methods) does not automatically result in 'authentic' and 'complete' representations of children's worlds. This point is reflected on in Chapter 8 which discusses children's reflections as co-researchers doing arts-based research. What is key for the development of my theoretical framework is that children are agentic and capable of expressing voices on matters affecting them, but I avoid viewing childhood and children's voices on identity, belonging and inclusion as

something to be ‘found’, ‘retrieved’ and portrayed as ‘truth’ (James, 2007; Spyrou, 2016). So, children’s perspectives and experiences are situated within social contexts they emerge, inscribed with norms, power imbalances, agendas, policies etc. that shape and are shaped by voices. Therefore, problematizing the idea previously pushed in some research which says that children’s ‘authentic’ voices are there to be ‘retrieved and liberated’ (Mazzei & Jackson, 2017, p. 1091). This facilitated an active and reflective way of thinking about the research questions.

3.1.2 Collective, socially constructed and messy voices

Another aspect when critically thinking about children’s voices and NCS is the notion of collective voice and socially constructed accounts. For James (2007), the terms “‘voices of children’ and ‘children’s voices’ risks glossing over the diversity of children’s own lives and experiences […] such conceptualisations uncritically clump children together as members of a category” (p. 262). Alternatively, a singular ‘child voice’ implies a seemingly coherent, collective voice, irrespective of context and culture. Therefore, researchers should be attentive to and recognise the possibilities of hearing “children speaking as individuals” and collectively as members of “the social cultural, economic, and political space that in any society is labelled as ‘childhood’” (James, 2007, p. 262).

To probe this further, I consider Maybin’s study (2013) on the constructions of identity and knowledge through everyday informal language practices in a working class, multiethnic primary school in England. Maybin found that children’s voices were socially and dialogically constructed through the appropriation of voices of other people e.g., friends, teachers, media. At times, participants demonstrated distinct separateness, and at other times the voices of others became reproduced and absorbed as their own ‘voice’. As Maybin (2013) comments, “children align or distance themselves from other people in their social world through nuanced forms of voicing”, through “grammatical, prosodic or contextual cues” (p. 386). Within classrooms there was examples of “echoing, borrowing and appropriation of voices between teachers and pupils” (p. 386), for instance, when a pupil answers a question, the teacher often repeats or rephrases their answer into their own words to model, correct or reinforce learning. The pupil may assimilate their voice with their teacher’s voice, reusing

their words and phrases. The social constructivist model of learning and Vygotsky's Zones of Proximal Development theory, for example, illustrate the social context of voice and how individuals adapt and absorb their own voice and the voices of others (Maybin, 2013). Arnot & Reay (2007) add that there is a 'type' of voice children speak in that is literally 'schooled', that is, experiences and perspectives fostered as a result of being education within particular kinds of pedagogic, social and curriculum regimes.

This relates to theorisations of 'collective voices' expressed by participants themselves – for example, sharing stories, and building on and informing each other's understandings. This notion of collective voices guides my own research on the symbolic and political dimensions of belonging and collective identities ('us'/'them'). Therefore, my understanding in this thesis is that children's experiences and perspectives on belonging and identity, are not some singular, uncontaminated voice, but rather, children's worlds that are inherently plural and socially constructed through various cultural, educational, and historical influences. To put it another way, defining and 'listening' to children's voices is about recognising they "have some to say or, better, that they, like all human beings, have the capacity to give an account of their lives that is reflexive and continuous, an ongoing, embodied process of reflection" (Couldry, 2009, p. 579-580).

Furthermore, what Spyrou (2011) calls 'the limits of individual voices', refers to how "children's experiences [are] mediated by the discourses which they are able to access, and this is what we, as researchers, are offered through their words" (p.160). Voice is constrained, mediated, enabled by the certain contexts (Komulainen, 2007) – we are not free to say anything, and we are prompted to say certain things in relation to 'others' and the contexts we find ourselves in – a point I will return to later in this chapter. In many ways, then, children's voice are fundamentally relational – "the reciprocal nature of the dialogue is a communication where all parties are mutually and actively engaged" (Cassidy et al., 2022, p. 13) Indeed, as Thomson (2008) writes:

> Voice is very dependent on the social context in which it is located. Being able to say what you think, in ways that you want, is highly dependent on what you are asked, by whom, about what, and what is expected of you**.** (p. 6)

Therefore, researchers should be attentive to the modes in which children's voices are continually constrained and shaped by factors such as our assumptions of childhood, particular language use, institutional contexts, and power dynamics (Komulainen, 2007). Spyrou (2011), referring to Komulainen's work too, adds that "these issues may become particularly salient in research with children who have little or no speech" (p. 152). Perhaps some voices are more easily 'heard', for example. Thomson (2011) notes that often the 'well-behaved' or 'gifted' pupils are heard over the 'harder-to-reach' pupils. Sellman (2009) found that pupils who took part in his research were "amongst the most literate, mature, and pro-democratic section of the community" (p. 43). Indeed, studies often focus on children's immediate environments, such as playgrounds (e.g., Thomson, 2005), and local neighbourhoods (e.g., Matthews et al., 1998), where in pedagogical studies, their voices "are 'heard' most clearly in accepted roles", such as designing community parks, school playgrounds, school lunch menus – "spaces where their voice is not complicated by its relationship to 'other'" (Ruddick, 2007, p. 515).

For my study, a central component of 'child voice' theory lie in the relationship to the methods (Chapter 4). Eldén (2012) found that child voice was not a singular entity, stemming from a particular location or standpoint; instead, children's drawings were entangled within different aspects of the research encounter. Eldén (2012) concluded that children and young people's voices is messy and multidimensional, and the addition of arts-based methods can complexify the 'messiness' of voice (also Frimberger & Bishopp, 2020). Using dance and drama methods, research shows that collectively creating choreography and talking about their ideas, drawing on a cacophony of voices and experiences, can be a valuable approach in expanding child voice and creating 'new' meanings (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Cancienne & Snowber, 2003; Ritchie & Gaulter, 2018; Tordzro & Phipps, 2016).

3.1.3 Silences and 'tuning in'

The silencing of voice can occur when one is not "allowed" to speak or is "unheard", as a result of a nexus of ideological and intergenerational differences or overpowering normative discourses which render certain voices marginalised (Spyrou, 2016). This can also happen

when one's voice is "misunderstood" or "misrepresented" and therefore certain stories become conflated or "silenced". Fairey (2018) reports that children's voices that do not fit into adult-imposed agendas and "dominant visual frames" are often silenced (p. 111). Fairey (2018) draws on unseen photos taken by a young Bhutanese refugee called Dinesh, which was part of a previous NGO-run participatory art and photography project that ran from 1998-2008 called the Bhutanese Refugees Children's Forum. Fairey (2018) found that refugees' narratives of their forced displacement and long-term exile from Bhutan was imperative to their identity, history, and everyday experiences in refugee camps. As Fairey (2018) puts it:

> This history was crucial to Dinesh's sense of who he was and where he came from. He created the images because it was a story he wanted to tell people outside the camps. He wanted people to understand why and how he became a refugee. Such politically loaded and graphic imagery was problematic for the project organisers and the editorial decision to omit them was taken despite Dinesh's wishes and the project's claim to give Bhutanese youth like Dinesh a voice. (p. 116)

There were ethical and practical tensions between the aims, intentions, and wishes of the organisers and editors of the project and the voices of the participants. Consequently, Dinesh's photographs and stories were removed from the final publication. Fairey (2018) explains this was due to child protection duties and concern for the safety of Dinesh and his family. There was also an emotional and psychological risk of disseminating politically loaded, graphic torture-related imagery, and the concern that "the Bhutanese youth were overly focused on past events instead of looking forward and imagining a future" (p. 117). Nonetheless, Fairey (2018) presents a very literal silencing and exclusion of voice by researchers, which reflects difficulties in terms of deciding which voices to include in the publications.

In other instances, it may be the case that some children decide not to take part in research, or parts of the research. Additionally, there may be practical and epistemological challenges of actualizing children's voices: "to get children to freely and openly express themselves in such a way that the goal of understanding is served" (Spyrou, 2011, p. 152-153). Some children might be reluctant to speak in group settings or they may feel shy and uncomfortable with interview style approaches or questionnaires which involve written/

linguistic proficiency as a prerequisite for participation. In recent years, alternative, creative, and more 'inclusive' methods have been proposed to tackle the issue of self-silencing and exclusion in social research. This has involved turning to arts-based, visual, and creative research approaches - notable works include, Boydell, (2011); Chilton & Scotti, (2014); O'Neill (2008); Pink, (2001); Tordzro & Phipps, (2016). Alternative methods that may overcome certain issues of access, silencing and exclusion include, "eliciting children's experiences and voices which do not necessarily depend on interaction with an interviewer" (Spyrou, 2011, p. 153). Such methods emphasise 'knowledge' and 'meaning' through the physical, emotive, embodied and performed voice. Creative and visual methods could be considered suitable when working with subjugated voices and younger children as it avoids reliance on language and literacy (Clark, 2005) which is often one of the reasons for exclusion or privileging of certain voices. Bland (2018) adds that drawing, painting, dancing etc. are often familiar to children's worlds, thus perhaps making these methods less daunting to children. Despite interesting justifications for visual and creative methodologies, as Spyrou (2011) points out, a single method cannot full overcome the problems of 'silence', representation, and access in child voice research.

Furthermore, aside from 'silencing' as exclusion or misrepresentation of voice, silence can be 'loud' in the subtexts, the unspoken or inaudible utterances during the research encounter. As Mazzei (2003) puts it, "we should pay increased attention to the silent subtexts, to what is being left out, not said, or intentionally repressed in our ongoing quest to discover the 'truths' within our spoken stories" (p. 355-356). Silence is not always an omission of voice, it can be just as meaningful and purposeful as 'voiced speech' (Mazzei, 2003). As Spyrou (2016) notes, "silence is an aspect of voice, neither more nor less, in and of itself, authentic and true than uttered speech" (p. 18). Silences can happen in the non-responses, the avoidances, deflections, tangents, the pauses and breaths, and the internalised monologues (Mazzei, 2003). Yet, silences can be omitted from social science analysis because of its apparent 'nothingness' because it is not readily available for interpretation and may be perceived as unintentional and non-consequential (Spyrou, 2016). As Cassidy et al., (2022) writes:

> Voices should not have to be loud to be heard. Listening is an active and responsive process which relies on tuning-in to voices, having a shared purpose and providing

recognition that voices have been heard. … The culture of listening focuses on relational approaches where all voices are respected and valued. (p. 18)

This denotes a challenge surrounding the issue of 'tuning into' silent voices and interpreting silences without jumping to conclusions and inaccurately representing the meanings of silences in data. This might involve what is not said, and what is not said by whom. These theoretical points are important in helping me make sense of the data and addressing the research questions. For instance, Mazzei (2003) proposes five types of silences that researchers can observe in social science research. Firstly, there are "polite silences" whereby one remains silent, impartial or avoids commenting for fear of offending another. Secondly, "privileged silences" occur when one ignores or is blinded by one's own privilege. Then, there are "veiled silences", which seek to mask certain responses and one conceals something about themselves. "Intentional silences" are perhaps similar to protection strategies whereby one purposefully chooses not to speak because they do not wish to reveal something about themselves in fear of repercussions or concern for how they will be received. Finally, "unintelligible silences" encompass an acknowledgement that silences are meaningful yet sometimes unknowable and incomprehensible – as Mazzei (2003) explains, "I make no attempt to understand every silence. Nor can I be so presumptuous as to claim that every silence is intentional, discernible, or knowable" (p. 366).

For MacLure et al., (2010) 'resistance' is central to silence in research with children's voices too. MacLure et al., give the example of five-year old Hannah, who always remains silent when the teacher calls her name during the morning registration. The other children respond to their name, Hannah does not. Therefore, the school adopted various strategies to encourage Hannah to participate, even MacLure and fellow researchers became involved. Indeed, there was a desperate attempt to solve, remedy, reverse, and understand Hannah's silences. This speaks to how 'silence' is often met with confusion and resistance; MacLure et al., (2010) write that Hannah's silence "seems to mark a point of utter resistance (to meaning, communication, cooperation, and classroom order) and a site of proliferation (of speech, actions, emotions, interpretations, consequences)" (p. 493). The disruption to the 'call-and-response' register was represented as a risk and as resistance to routine, expectations, and expected practice. It signalled something that needed to be overcome; rather paradoxically, it was "simultaneously a knot and a dehiscent gap – an impasse and an

open(ed) wound" (p. 493). Yet, silence is "not merely a void hungering for noise or a flaw to be mended" (Mazzei, 2003, p. 361). In terms of 'silence' in research, MacLure et al., (2010) found that Hannah's silence prompted analysis as they were "unable to make sense of it […] the silence both blocks and produces analysis" (p. 493). Indeed, silence during data collection may be an uncomfortable process, signalling a subversion of power structures and norms or implying confusion around the researcher's questions or participants' responses.

In sum, this aspect of child voice theory has guided my study and helped address the research questions in terms of considering what is not said, by whom, the silences, absences, omissions, and distractions when exploring children's accounts of their identities and perspectives of belonging and inclusion.

3.1.4 Conclusion

The first section of the theoretical framework has engaged with NCS and child voice theories, which positions children as actively (re)constructing their own social worlds (Clark, 2001). I have considered the complexities of authenticity and listening (Spyrou, 2016), and the social and messy nature of children's voices (Frimberger & Bishopp, 2020; Komulainen, 2007; Maybin, 2013), as well as the silent subtexts (Mazzei, 2003). This has helped me theorectically position childhood and children's identities as inscribed within sociospatial and discursively co-constructed spaces where children are social actors (James, 2007; James & Prout, 1997; Matthews et al., 1998). The notion of voice was also taken up through the research methodology, where efforts were made to listen to, involve and represent children's voices and experiences in multiple ways.

Absent from the theorisation so far is how childhood and children's voices are inaugurated, represented, and imagined through relationships between the 'self', the 'other', and society. What Butler (2005) adds is a deeper theorisation about how we come to give such accounts of ourselves, within concepts of agency, opacity, responsibility, and relationships between the 'self' and the 'other'. This relates to the study's aims to explore about how children give accounts of their cultural and linguistic identities related to notions of belonging, otherness and differences.

3.2 Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself*

Judith Butler's theorisation in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) provides an effective framework for deepening child voice by exploring the social conditions within which children's identities are navigated, performed, and contested. In *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) Butler outlines her theory of moral ethics, accountability of the self and the social conditions of human existence.

Having reviewed some limitations of approaches to identities in studies in Chapter 2.2, I was guided towards a more deconstructed approach to identity. The theoretical ideas of Butler were seen as a useful way to address this and to grasp fluid, complex, changing and multiple identities. Further to this, Butler relates to the interconnectedness of belonging and identity, argued by Yuval-Davis (2010), amongst others, and which I support in Chapter 2.3. Belonging is shaped by socio-political and historical discourses surrounding identity, determining who is deemed to belong and who is not based on attitudes and perceptions of the self and 'others'. Butler, therefore, provides a framework for considering how individuals come to give accounts of themselves under vexed social and discursive conditions.

3.2.1 Opacity and social conditions of the self

According to Butler, identity is not what we are born into, but a 'role' one performs, situated within the confines of sociality and comprising of repeated stylised acts which are 'citational' in nature – in other words, discourse, behaviours, and norms are assimilated and adapted from one person or context to another (Salih, 2002). For Butler, "the 'I' has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation – or set of relations – to a set of norms" (2005, p. 8). Butler comes from the deconstructionist and post-structuralist movements, which sees a shift from gender and other identities as pre-determined and structured, forming a unitary self that can be represented by characteristics. Instead, the self is positioned through and within discourse, and identity is performatively constituted – provisional, shifting, and contingent. Individuals are rendered into being through and within discourse and norms, and the self is reiterated and performed in relation to the dynamic and shifting social world.

Butler's starting point in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) is the view that narrating oneself or giving an account of one's story is always in a condition of relationality – it is

through an encounter with another that one seeks to elaborate who one is. Butler articulates that "'I' begin my story only in the face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account" (p. 11) and "we cannot exist without addressing the other and without being addressed by the other, and that there is no wishing away our fundamental sociality" (p. 33). Butler draws on Cavarero to argue that:

> I exist in an important sense for you, and by virtue of you. If I have lost the conditions of address, if I have no ''you 'to address, then I have lost 'myself '. In her view, one can tell an autobiography only to another, and one can reference an 'I 'only in relation to a 'you': without the 'you ', my own story becomes impossible. (p. 32)

Thus, a key aspect of Butler's work for my theoretical framework is the emergence of the subject under conditions which limits its capacity to give a complete account of itself and render itself knowable and transparent to itself and others. Firstly, for Butler, this occurs through "opacity in our understanding of ourselves" (p. 20) where one's origins, stories, and identities are partial and ambiguous – "I cannot explain exactly why I have emerged in this way, and my efforts at narrative reconstruction are always undergoing revision" (Butler, 2005, p. 40). Secondly, the social norms confound the subject's capacity to give an account of itself, forming a "domain of unfreedom" (p. 21) where one struggles with the "unchosen conditions of one's life" (p. 19) and feels responsible and accountable for something they cannot ever fully know.

> I can tell the story of my origin and I can even tell it again and again, in several ways. But the story of my origin I tell is not one for which I am accountable, and it cannot establish my accountability. … any one of those is a possible narrative, but no single one can I say with certainty that it is alone true. (Butler, 2005, p. 37-38)

Butler, drawing from Levina and Foucault, argues that we are produced as ethical subjects in relation to a sociality that pre-exists and pre-dates us - the account of oneself precedes and exceeds the time of one's being. We have a history, a body, that cannot be fully narrated precisely and accounted for, and Butler gives the example of very early childhood – "there is a history to my body of which I have no recollection" (p. 38). Butler arrives at the assertion that when the subject gives an account *to* someone, real or imaginary, the account is not mine alone, and the subject becomes "compelled to give the account away, to send it off, to

be dispossessed of it" (p. 36). Therefore, Butler's notion of opacity and relationality is relevant to my thinking about children's linguistic and cultural identities and experiences of belonging because I can think about how accounts 'break down' in the presence of the 'other' and how children's narratives might be shaped by the presence of the 'other' in the data. This raises questions about how one might perceive oneself as similar or different to others, and how one might share a story about oneself in relation to stories shared by others and the wider discourses.

3.2.2 Responsibility

In the third chapter of *Giving an Account of Oneself,* Butler calls into question responsibility. Although Butler insists on opacity and non-narratability, it does not necessarily follow that the subject is not accountable for their actions and accounts (2005, p. 83). For Butler, responsibility, morality, and the subject's reflexivity all stem from interaction, but there is a level of 'unfreedom' that comes with interactions:

> Our capacity to reflect upon ourselves, to tell the truth about ourselves, is correspondingly limited by what the discourse, the regime, cannot allow into speakability … This struggle with the unchosen conditions of one's life, a struggle – an agency – is also made possible, paradoxically, by the persistence of this primary condition of unfreedom. (Butler, 2005, p. 19)

Responsibility does not require complete agency and knowledge of oneself. Butler's insights about the capacity for moral responsibility in light of restricted autonomy within the confines of sociality and discourse (in the quote above) is what sets herself apart from other scholars.

According to Rushing's (2017) analysis of Butler's work:

> We are not born, do not attain subjectivity, and then develop relationships within which we consent to ethical obligations to others. We come into the world in

> relations with others, impinged upon by the world from the start, and thus always already responsive to others and responsible for how we act on that. (p. 76)

Another way of putting it, as Phipps (2013) discusses, is that the responsibility of narrating my account is not my responsibility alone – I am bound to the historical, familial, political, cultural discourses which precede and exceed my life and my account of it. This links to my research with children in terms of thinking about how children are shaped by discourses preceding them, including school norms and policies or wider social events that create discourses around concepts of difference, otherness, who belongs and who does not.

Mills (2017), on Butler, writes that, “the subject is never able to give a full account of itself and its action, suggesting it is unable to live up to the requirements of responsibility” but, paradoxically, “the limits of self-knowledge that undermine full accountability themselves become the basis for responsibility, suggesting that one fulfils one’s responsibilities by abiding by those limits and the opacity that they entail for the subject” (Mills, 2017, p. 54). If we fail to give true accounts of ourselves, if accounts ‘break down in the face of a you’ (Butler, 2005) we can dismiss the possibility of ever being able to sum up, simplify, categorise, or dismiss the ‘other’ (White, 2003, in Green & Featherstone, 2014, p. 70). For Butler, if you know your origins, you are stuck in your story. Therefore, this relates to how children might transcend fixed identities, and describe themselves (and others) in contested, incomplete, and ambiguous ways.

3.2.3 Agency

Agency, which is understood as one’s ability to act on one’s free will and determine one’s own story, exists within the parameters of discourse and norms. However, moral agency and accountability is also inaugurated within discourse through the introduction of ‘difference’ into the chain of citationality (Butler, 1997, 2005).

> Our capacity to reflect upon ourselves, to tell the truth about ourselves, is correspondingly limited by what discourse, the regime, cannot allow into speakability … This struggle with the unchosen conditions of one’s life, a struggle – an agency – is

> also made possible, paradoxically, by the persistence of this primary condition of unfreedom. (Butler, 2005, p. 19)

So, the citationality of discourse, social norms, even laws – the "primary condition of unfreedom" – also becomes a site for moral agency. This is because gaps in the chain of citationality means universal regimes of 'truth' and 'power' that determine the subject's identity breakdown and become 're'-articulated:

> Painful, dynamic, and promising, this vacillation between the already-there and the yet-to-come is a crossroads that rejoins every step by which it is traversed, a reiterated ambivalence at the heart of agency. Power rearticulated is 're'-articulated in the sense of already done and 're'-articulated in the sense of done over, done again, done anew. (Butler, 1997, p. 18)

In this passage, from The Psychic Life of Power (1997), Butler theorises that through repeated discourses, marginalisation and social norms are inaugurated. Paradoxically, it is within this same discourse that agency arises every time power is "done over, done again, done anew". In the context of my research, 'citationality' may include passing on cultural norms, attitudes, and behaviours from migrant parent to child about heritage language practices, and language practices at home, in school, with peers. Spaces of agency and responsibility, through opacity and re-articulation - disruptions and breakdowns in the chain of citationality - is not an easy task, especially for those from historically marginalised positions of power. Societal assumptions about nationality, who does/ does not belong, based on racial or religious characteristics, or the expectations and social norms around language heritage for those with migrant and immigrant backgrounds, are deeply ingrained in social and political life, through immigration policies, school practices, the media, lingering histories, and everyday interactions.

Butler has been criticised for her negative framing of agency: "Butler conceives of the subject as essentially subject. Agency consists in acts of performative resistance such that the subject can do nothing but resist" (Magnus, 2006, p. 83). However, Butler does recognise the vexed and oppressive nature of discourse by proposing an alternative view of agency – one that "requires us to risk ourselves precisely at moments of unknowingness, when what forms us diverges from what lies before us, when our willingness to become undone in

relation to others constitutes our chance to be human" (Butler, 2005, p. 136). Agency is not understood in terms of complete autonomy, intentionality, and choice, instead it is the "willingness to acknowledge the limits of acknowledgement itself" (Butler, 2005, p. 41) – as in, the subject's awareness that they can never fully claim to know the origins of their story.

3.2.4 Conclusion

For Butler, one cannot give an account of oneself without accounting for the social conditions under which one emerges. This means recognising that identities are performed in any given moment, and children's voices and stories of belonging and identity will be situated in specific contexts and circumstances. Identity, as a social and performed role, and interrelated with responsibility and agency, inaugurate from the realisation of ambiguous origins – one's story predates one's emergence and reflects the inability to give full, complete, knowable accounts of oneself. This relates to this thesis: i) embracing the incompleteness and multiplicity in the accounts children give when engaging with discursive and arts-based methods in research, ii) agency and responsibility, through opacity and re-articulation, may provide a lens the interpret children's narratives on ('the unchosen conditions of one's life') cultural and ethnic identity and heritage language practices, and school norms that might shape children's interactions.

The difficulty of being able to give a complete account of oneself lies in opacity of the self, and, paradoxically, this incompleteness and lack of self-transparency provides somewhat stable grounds for agency and responsibility to inaugurate. The notion of 'agency' in NCS is rooted in children's capabilities and ability to express one's voice, preferences, histories etc. Indeed, NCS dismisses traditional theories that position children as incapable of giving knowledgeable accounts of themselves, their education, their social worlds because of their limited cognition, age, and experiences – or, to put it another way, because of their 'opacity' to speak on complex things beyond their micro-geographies, such as policy, curriculum, society (Ansell, 2009). However, Butler (2005) proposes that our stories and histories *are* always incomplete, and "it is precisely by virtue of the subject's opacity to itself that it incurs and sustains some of its more important ethical bonds" (p. 20). In other words, children are not simply passive receivers of knowledge and sociality. Butler, however, recognises the

conditions of discourse, social norms and intersubjectivity that renders the subject into being, and the mutually reinforcing relationships between the self and the other – "'I' begin my story only in the face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account" (Butler, 2005, p. 11). Children are capable of talking about aspects of their lives, their feelings, thoughts, desires that may be different/similar to their peers; through this discourse among peers, social norms and understandings may be performed, contested, and reiterated.

Identity and responsibility, as well as the subject's reflexivity and agency, for Butler, stems from interaction. Having discussed how the subject emerges under these social and ethical conditions, moving on from here I consider aspects of relationality and how children may give accounts of themselves within and beyond discourse and language systems. In the final part of the theoretical framework, 'new materialism' enables me to build on Butler's somewhat unspecific 'other' – characterised by human-human dependency – and consider children's accounts of themselves and others in relation to places, objects, people, sensations, materials, and technology.

3.3 New materialism

'New materialism' is an interdisciplinary theoretical field of inquiry concerned with the materiality of events and the human and non-human forces that shape social production. It is associated with a range of terms including 'the material turn', 'the affective turn', and 'the posthuman turn'. Some key developments in this area include Latour's (2005) actor-network-theory, and Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) 'lines of becoming' and assemblage theory. Although there is not a singular approach or definition, new materialist scholars argue the importance of problematising anthropocentric orientations to knowledge and are prompted by a desire to "emphasise how matter is 'alive', 'lively', 'vibrant', 'dynamic', 'agentic', and thus *active*" (Gamble et al., 2019, p. 111). In particular, new materialism is an emerging area in intercultural studies (Ros i Solé et al 2020; Frimberger et al., 2018; Harvey, 2020; Harvey et al., 2019) and in migration and identity literature (Basu & Coleman 2008; Burrell, 2008; Friedemann et al., 2022; Lytra & Ilankuberan, 2020; Youkhana, 2015). In the next few paragraphs, I will draw on these studies to develop my theoretical framework.

Alongside the proponents of new materialism, there have also been several critiques, for example, for overstating its alleged 'newness' (see Gamble et al., 2019). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss new materialist philosophy at length; instead, I will highlight some specific aspects of new materialism that has developed my approach to the research questions and methodology.

3.3.1 Belonging, identity, and new materialism

Through the additional lens of new materialism, though, I am able to reflect on relationality, in terms of the relationships between human and non-human entities that shape the research encounter and children's accounts of themselves. New materialist inquiry has the potential to deepen the scope of analysis of children's belonging and identity because it emphasises the relational and affective relationships between the physical environments, material objects, and feelings and thoughts of people. For Wyn et al., (2020), when studying "belonging in relation to place", new materialism highlights "the materiality of the world, both social and natural, in the production of the social" (p. 14-15).

Central to my thinking has been Youkhana's (2015) work which argues that belonging should be theorised as "a circumstance connected with a person or thing … [that] has come into being between people and things, and between people and people" (Youkhana, 2015, p. 16). These relationships are "a rhizomatic and chaotic network" (ibid, p. 16) and "describes multiple attachments that can be social, imagined, and sensual material in nature" (ibid, p. 16). This relates to the entanglements of ideas, sensations, spaces, artefacts, material culture that make up children's worlds. Along these lines, "belonging is not just in terms of the complex relationships of individuals with other people but directs our gaze to the importance of *things* and to the material semiotic relations … belonging is elucidated *through* circulating objects, artefacts, material conditions" (Halse, 2018, p. 12-13). Under new materialism, then, children may give accounts of themselves, and navigate encounters with the social world through rhizomatic and shifting relations between people, objects, sensations, memories, environments. Ros i Solé et al. (2020) explicates the notion below:

> We create new understandings as we connect with our various cultural allegiances in the everyday of our lives through the information we consume, the institutions we

are part of, or the languages we speak. Each contact, encounter, or new piece of information can lead to new ways of attaching and detaching ourselves. We develop new ways of seeing, interpreting, and thinking about ourselves: it is what Deleuze and Guattari (2004) call 'lines of becoming'. (p. 399)

In this view, identity and belonging are in processes of 'becoming', meaning that they are seldom fixed, complete, or reductive – "matter is in movement, in flux, in variation" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 451). Furthermore, Pollard (2004) speaks about the 'flows' of materials, and highlights how materials, like people and language, are processes and the root of agency lies in the fact that "[objects] cannot always be captured and contained" (Pollard, 2004, p. 60). This chimes with a somewhat Butlerian sentiment (although Butler does not refer to new materialism) relating to the root of object agency as ambiguous and 'opaque', and, therefore, a feature of human-object interactions and agency is that it is not simplified nor complete. Using new materialist theory enables me to position children's voices within entangled, ongoing relationships within different contexts and circumstances.

However, it is worth clarifying that although material objects are embedded in sociality and meaning, it does not immediately imply they have agency as this is usually associated with the ability to make conscious decisions based on reflection. Within psychology, in particular the seminal work of Bandura, 'agency' is defined as "an ability to act consciously and intentionally" (Lindstrøm, 2015, p. 208). Agency, on a collective evolutionary level and individual level, drives human development, capacities for moral agency, and self-regulatory behaviours. Nonetheless, Latour proposes that "objects too have agency" (2005, p. 63) and refers to objects as "different types of actors which are able to transport the action further" (2005, p. 70). Latour writes:

> After all, there is hardly any doubt that kettles 'boil' water, knives 'cut' meat, baskets 'hold' provisions, hammers 'hit' nails on their head, rails 'keep' kids from falling. Locks 'close' rooms against uninvited visitors, soap 'takes' the dirt away, schedules 'list' class sessions, price tags 'help' people calculating, and so on. Are those verbs not designating action? (2005, p. 70)

Lindstrøm (2015) disagrees somewhat with Latour's position, stating that:

> We say that 'kettles boil water', but in fact I/you/he/she/we/you/they boil(s) water in a kettle, cut(s) meat with a knife, hold(s) provisions in a basket, hit(s) a nail on the head (or on our own thumb, which seems the rule more than the exception) with a hammer, etc., etc. But the agency is human. (p. 216)

Thus, Lindstrøm's position is that the agency of objects may be distilled through humans, as their makers and creators, and that "humans project and attribute agency and life onto things" (p. 219). Perhaps humans, our cultures, languages, and semiotic practices, are often at the beginning (and end) of the agency of many objects and non-human entities, interweaving together. As Caronia and Mortari (2015) write:

> Most of the things that inhabit our social world and shape our conduct in it are created, installed, interpreted and used by humans: behind any architecture there is an architect and behind any object there is not only a design but moreover a designer provided with ideas, theories, expert knowledge, methods and creativity. (p. 405)

New materialist perspectives centring on the role of object agency do not deny the importance of human agency at the root of materiality. However, the agency of objects originates in their ability to (re)define, shape, and network with human agents and other living things. Citing Latour (1996), Caronia and Mortari (2015) add: "Once designed and introduced into the interactional scene by humans, texts, artefacts and objects of any kind make sense and have an agency on their own. They make a difference and have effects thanks to us but also despite us" (p. 402).

Lindstrøm (2015) proposes that more precise terminology should be used when thinking about materialism and object agency, including *distributed agency, secondary agency*, and *active/reactive agency*. Firstly, *distributed agency* is the idea that, for example, computers and electronic items 'interact' in complex ways, and 'communicate' with us even, but it is human agency, or the human's *distributed agency* (programming it, switching it on), that is performed through these technological materials. There is also *secondary agency* which is the idea that when an object 'does something', it is not always the object that acts with agency to affect change, for example:

> If a rock (an inanimate material thing) falls down and crushes a house, it is not the rock's 'agency' that 'did' it. In fact, if anything should be attributed with causing or creating the effect, it is Earth itself, or rather Earth's gravity. The crush was an effect of gravity. (Lindstrøm, 2015, p. 221)

Lastly, there is *active and reactive agency*, which distinguishes non-cerebral life from cerebral life forms, for example, a plant's 'agency' could be considered reactive agency, as plants are triggered by automatic reactions to chemical and physical stimuli. When a plant grows towards the sunlight, it is a reactive form of agency. In contrast, Lindstrøm (2015) gives an example of insect behaviour and active agency:

> If an insect starts to pull apart and eat the walls of the house, the insect indeed 'does' it, … its behaviour is an act. Although insect behaviour is considerably dominated by pre-programmed behaviours, an insect's behaviour still originates within an organism with a central nervous system that is complex enough to imply a certain behavioural flexibility (some capacity to make choices and changes, and to learn). The insect has an active agency. (p. 222)

My point, then, is that agency in new materialism is complex, and there may be various forms of circulating agency. Therefore, just because material objects are embedded in material practices, it does not necessarily imply that an object *has* agency, as we can examine what agency itself means in the context of new materialism and social practices. For this study and the data collected, my understanding of object agency aligns with Caronia and Mortari's (2015) observation that "depending on what we focus on in the interaction under scrutiny, we can notice that things make a difference, have effects and make us do things, thanks to us but also despite us" (p. 406). In any case, I am interested in the material features of children's everyday contexts, and how children's accounts of themselves, and others, are shaped by and with objects and the material world around them. I am guided by what children choose to share about themselves and their perspectives and experiences of belonging and school inclusion.

3.3.2 Language and research materials

New materialism also focuses on decentring language as the primary mode of communication (Frimberger et al., 2018; Harvey et al., 2019), rather it is "one of the many materials in the communicative assemblage" (Harvey et al., 2019, p. 468). Li Wei (2018) advocates researchers to move beyond language, emphasising the embodied, performative, and emotive ways of constructing meaning and expressing oneself. This performativity of self relates to the choices of creative and performance arts-based methods for this study, which may help to remove language barriers which is relevant when working with young children and in research contexts where multiple languages/ cultures are represented (further see Chapter 3). For instance, Frimberger et al., (2018) utilises a new materialist approach to explore language and the entanglements of affective, material, and embodied aspects of intercultural encounters, beyond traditional research methods.

The concept of 'translanguaging' (introduced in Chapter 1) relates to new materialism. Rooted in its etymology, translanguaging encompasses notions of 'translating' or 'trans-ing', which refers to "performing complex relationships between one site, identification or mode of speaking/doing/being and another" (Jones, 2016, p. 2, as cited in Harvey et al., 2019, p. 464). In a recent article, Harvey (2020) suggests that 'translating' relates to:

> mov[ing] not only across and through semiotic modes, but also through the real and the fictional, the literal and the symbolic, the well-known myth and the newly created narrative … the global language and the nonsensical gibberish. (p. 194)

Therefore, language and meaning transcends across visual, spoken, written, and physical avenues (Harvey, 2020). Relating to my study, participants' views and experiences of belonging and identity were 'translated' within and across modes, as in their voices were displayed through their artwork, focus groups, and reimagined and further explored visually through 'interactive pinboards' and through dance and drama workshops which was performed to an audience. With regards to Harvey's (2020) notion of moving between the "real and fictional", as explored in the Findings Chapters, children shared their 'real' stories as well as embraced imagination and fictional storytelling to express meaning.

Arts-based approaches to intercultural communication, young people's identities and language education (Bradley et al., 2018; Harvey et al., 2019) has engaged with materiality and performativity and the affective and multisensory ways people express themselves in research. Translanguaging deconstructs the 'artificial' boundaries, going across, through and beyond named languages, and embracing multiples modes of embodied, affective and sensory communication. García and Otheguy (2020) highlight how translanguaging relates to the individual's full linguistic repertoire and multimodal resources might involve gestures, verbal sounds, visual cues, human-technology.

Along a similar vein, studies have shown that child voice, and voice more broadly in qualitative inquiry, is relational and constructed between human actors (e.g., Elden, 2012; Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010; Spyrou, 2011) as well as non-human actors, such as digital technologies, objects, and art materials (Facca et al., 2020; Feely, 2020). I draw on Facca et al.'s (2020) suggestion that: "[a] new materialist approach to voice in qualitative inquiry, then, may provide a new perspective to the ways in which nonhuman materialities contribute to the construction of voice" (p. 8-9). Thereby consider ways of working with children through "new methodological avenues to collect data about their experiences" (Facca et al., 2020, p. 8-9). Feely (2020) uses new materialism for analysing narrative method to consider the "material, affective and non-human forces that shape and affect the stories people tell" (p. 174). For instance, Feely (2020) noticed that the nature of the spaces of the institutional building where participants' stories occurred seemed to affect the types of incidences and events.

Bennett (2010) theorises that things (like language), although inanimate, are material and have 'thing power' that gives agency to them, as in the ability for objects to affect – and be affected by – other objects and human agents. As such, my project is built to theorectically exploring children's accounts of themselves through and beyond language systems, so how children talk about their (linguistic, ethnic, religious) identities, constructions of otherness and how they experience and navigate belonging. New materialism shaped my thinking and the research approach by focusing on the materials, sounds, sensations, place are navigated in their accounts of their identities and belonging.

New materialism, then, is a lens to consider the art materials children use to represent their stories and the inanimate objects, sounds, sensations shaping the research encounters, as well as the material aspects of children's experiences of belonging and identity, such as place, 'home', artefacts, environments, and objects.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a theoretical framework comprising of i) NCS and child voice, ii) Judith Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), and iii) new materialism. As such, rather than approaching children's narratives through a singular conceptual lens – which might limit complexity – a multi-conceptual framework is utilised. A summary of the main components of this theoretical framework are outlined below.

Firstly, much can be gain from locating the thesis within NCS and child voice literature, as it positions childhood as a sociocultural construct where children as social actors, actively shaping and re-shaping their own geographies, and this view seeks to deconstruct essentialist and homogeneous notions of childhood (also discussed in Chapter 2). Voice can be very literal speech, dialogues between people, and what participants say about their identities, concepts of otherness, belonging and inclusion. It can also have political and symbolic dimensions – who speaks, who is silenced, who listens, what is said, what is not said. Voice also attends to the emotional and non-verbal forms of (implicit and explicit) meaning, such as behaviours, pauses, silences, movement (Cassidy et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2019). In sum, child voice accounts for the institutional, political, and practical hierarchies and challenges of researching children's voices and experiences.

Secondly, Judith Butler's (2005) theory has its value in terms of providing a framework for considering the subject's inability to give complete and contained accounts of itself. As such, we can dismiss the possibility of defining, simplifying, or dismissing the 'other' (White, 2003, in Green & Featherstone, 2014, p. 70). For Butler, if you know your origins, you are stuck in your story. Therefore, this relates to how children might transcend fixed identities, and describe themselves (and others) in complex and ambiguous ways and be agentic in their navigation of belonging in their social worlds. Butler also suggests that individuals are rendered into being through and within discourse, sociality, and norms. As Butler puts it, "'I'

begin my story only in the face of a ‘you’ who asks me to give an account” (p. 11). I am particularly interested in how children may give accounts of themselves and their experiences of belonging and school inclusion in response to the social conditions (and relationships with the ‘other’) they find themselves in. This reflects the decision to include ‘all’ children in the classroom, including those from migrant, immigrant, and non-immigrant backgrounds, as opposed to focusing on a particular social groups (discussed in Chapter 2.3), in order to investigate the richness and potentials for ambiguity and co-construction of children’s narratives. Furthermore, Butler’s theorisation of ‘responsibility’ is useful when considering how children navigate and experiences aspects of their cultural and religious identity, heritage languages passed on from parent to child. For Butler, identity and agency inaugurates through discourse. In viewing some of the literature on belonging, identity, place and migration in childhood, though, I realised I needed a theoretical lens to consider meaning beyond language and human-human ontology.

Therefore, the final construct was new materialism which enabled me to consider the human-object relationships and meaning-making beyond languages, including art materials, space, movement, sound, sensations, artefacts that shape and are shaped by children’s narratives of belonging, identity, and inclusion. When working with children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds, finding ways to go beyond and between dominant language can be valuable when addressing research questions (Harvey et al., 2019). The aim, therefore, was to develop a theoretical lens which could enable me to examine material entanglements, use of art materials and performative methods, as well as the politics and materiality of identity construction and belonging (i.e., place, artefacts).

In addition to these different focal points, the three theories share aspects that develop my inquiry. These theories propose shifting, multiple, and unfinished forms of identity construction and experiences of belonging, inscribed within entanglements between people, objects, sensations (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004). Section 3.2.1 of this chapter, for example, highlights how child voice does not necessarily predict ‘complete’ and ‘authentic’ interpretations of research questions (Lather, 2007; Spyrou, 2016), and, for Butler (2005), accounts of the self as shaped by factors that predate us and form us from a distance. As the next chapter will show, the aim of this study was not to capture complete narratives or

stabilise complex lived experiences, but to allow for reflection and re-iteration and contribute to an ongoing discourse.

Furthermore, the notion of 'agency' cuts across these theories, in different ways, for example, Butler's notion of agency arises from opacity of the self. Agency is not understood in terms of complete autonomy, intentionality, and choice, instead it is the "willingness to acknowledge the limits of acknowledgement itself" (Butler, 2005, p. 41). By contrast, the notion of 'agency' in NCS is rooted in children's capabilities and abilities to express one's voice, expertise, preferences, and rights. New materialism also references agency beyond anthropocentric orientations, such as 'thing power' - Bennett (2010) theorises that things (like language), although inanimate, are material and have 'thing power' that gives agency to them, as in the ability for objects to affect – and be affected by – other objects and human agents. Furthermore, as Pollard 2004) writes 'flows' of materials, and highlights how materials, like people and language, are processes and the root of agency lies in the fact that "[objects] cannot always be captured and contained" (Pollard, 2004, p. 60). These theories, considered together, provides a rich view of childhood.

Having discussed the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, the next chapter presents the research approach and methodology.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH APPROACH

This chapter focuses on the research approach and begins by outlining the participatory and arts-based methodological approaches (4.1). I will detail how I negotiated access and recruited participants (4.2). Following this, I will discuss the methods (4.3) and how I made sense of the children's narratives through the data analysis approaches (4.4). Finally, I will consider some central ethical considerations, in relation to doing participatory, arts-based research with children (4.5).

4.1 Foundations of participatory and arts-based methodologies

This thesis was committed to listening to children and acknowledging their ability to reflect on their complex social worlds. Participatory, arts-based methodologies are considered suitable as they "offer different ways to elicit the experiences, opinions, and perspectives of children and young people, as well as new means of involving them as producers of knowledge" (Thomson, 2008, p. 3). Participatory, arts-based inquiry can be suitable and more engaging for young participants, compared to traditional approaches (Bland, 2018; Cook & Hess, 2007; Hall & Wall, 2016); and to de-centre language as the primary mode of communication (Clark, 2005); and for the possibilities of expressing multiple identities and narratives of the self through multi-modal and collaborative approaches (Gerber et al., 2012; Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008; Parry, 2015; Ní Laoire, 2016). This section focuses on the rationale for the methodological choices underpinning this study.

4.1.1 Participatory research

Participatory methodologies refer to involving participants in the different stages of planning, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of data for more meaningful and community-engaged research and as a transformative capacity for social change. Participatory methodology "involves creative participatory techniques that facilitates and promotes children's and young people's active engagement in the research so that they are active participants in telling their stories and sharing their meanings and experiences of the

world" (Coyle & Carter, 2018, p. 2). Children as co-researchers, therefore, is a methodology because it relates to a procedure or logic that positions children as 'skilful communicators' (Clark, 2017) and 'experts in their own lives' (James & Prout, 1997). It centres around an interest in the "co-discovery of [participants'] unique insights" (Coyle & Carter, 2018, p. 2). This requires researchers to question their "own 'readiness' to relinquish control" (Mearns et al., 2014, p. 455). Fielding and Bragg (2003) suggest that when pupils adopt the role of co-researchers, they can develop "a positive sense of self and agency … new social competencies … and a chance to be active and creative" (p. 15-18).

Therefore, in this study, children took on a 'co-researcher' role. Engaging in research with children as co-researchers presented several unique challenges, which will be explored later in this chapter and in Chapter 8. I worked with participants in dynamic ways, and their roles changed based on their personal interests, availability, and capacity and willingness to engage with participatory aspects of the research. I asked participants for some input regarding the audience, date and time for their performances - in both schools they only wanted to perform to the rest of their year group, and they requested more time to rehearse their performances. Children had some choices over the art methods they wanted to use, and as the research progressed, children began to interpret and discuss the focus group transcripts and it was through these discussions that we clarified meaning and built further themes, leading to the dance and drama performances. As such, there were multiple phases of participatory and 'non-participatory' analysis. Rather than a dichotomy of 'full participation' to 'non-participation', this study was conceptualised on a spectrum of varying degrees of participant involvement, choice, and control (Southby, 2017). There have been various typologies aimed at visualising levels of child voice and participation (e.g., Hart, 1992; Mitra, 2006). While useful for acknowledging the complexity of participation in research, such hierarchical 'ladders' or 'pyramids' tend to denote that younger, 'less able' children may operate at lower levels of participation, while older, more capable learners can access the higher levels. Linear models might also be problematic when working in the area of socially constructed 'knowledge' and experiences, and also suggest that 'full participation' should be the ultimate aim of participatory methodologies failing to remain more responsive to the context and participants' preferences. For these reasons, I have avoided discussing participatory methodology within such models. Elsewhere, in a peer-reviewed paper

(Bennion & Rutter, 2024), I have presented the shifting and contextualised relationships with my participants and their capacities for engagement. Research relationships between researcher and child participants are conceptualised on a 'spectrum', and relationships in the research encounter are discussed as being liberating and restrictive, fragile and potent, positive and energising and simultaneously exhausting, meaning and yet somehow superficial, and so on.

In a study by Graham and Fitzgerald (2010), children were asked what 'participation' meant to them, and the researchers found that children distinguished between participation and choice: "[they] wanted to be consulted, [but] often did not want to take all the responsibility for planning and taking part in the research" (p. 347). Graham and Fitzgerald (2010) also highlighted that children commented that participation meant eliciting opportunities to inaugurate genuine change – "children are clear that any such participation should serve a useful purpose, for example, deeper understanding of an issue or a decision that might lead to a better deal for themselves or other people" (p. 346). Of course, the term 'genuine' change can be disputed here, and the degree to which researchers have the capacity to facilitate change may depend on factors such as the school's ability and willingness to implement social change, based on the participants' voices (Sellman, 2009).

Despite participatory methodologies being acknowledged for creating more equal platforms for dialogue and negotiation between researcher and participant, power differences are always present (Spyrou, 2011; James, 2007). Notions of power in research with young pupils is complex and fluid. While participatory inquiry can ameliorate top-down power asymmetries, 'power is everywhere' and can seldom be removed entirely – agency itself exists within systems of power (e.g., Foucault, 1980). This raises an important consideration: How far can I expect participation/ voice to go? The internalised socio-cultural norms in the school context may influence degrees of participation, and, within my position as the designated adult, there is an expectation that I uphold degrees of authority, safety, and ethical awareness.

Research also highlights that participatory research does not necessarily lead to more accurate and authentic accounts of children's worlds, and simplistic treatments of voice in research might result in the essentialist view that children should play a participatory role in research *because* they are children (James, 2007; Tisdall, 2012). This notion of expertise and

capability to give accounts of oneself stems from the assumption that children are representative of their 'group' when they act as researchers. Tisdall (2012, p. 187) also point out that children can be 'ghettoised' by adults into researching about supposedly childhood issues, and, as Ansell (2009) writes, positioned as 'experts' on issues only relating to childhood worlds and their 'micro-geographies'. Therefore, "it should not be assumed that children and young people within certain age groups or certain cultures will all behave in a certain way" and therefore, "participatory research techniques should be flexible enough to take account of differences in age, cognitive development, individual personalities and interests, context, and preferred forms of communication" (Coyle & Carter, 2018, p. 7).

While these ethical and practical concerns are important, they do not negate participatory methodology as a valid, multilayered and engaging research approach; these issues do, however, prompt me to remain reflective and vigilant in reflecting on the research aims, positionality, and interactions with participants throughout the research process.

4.1.2 Arts-based research

In recent years, there has been a flourishing body of art-based research emerging within social science, which "involves the use of any art form, at any point in the research process, to generate, interpret, or communicate new knowledge" (Lenette, 2019, p. 27). Arts-based methods may include visual methods such as scrapbooks, photography, walking tours, paintings painting (Bland, 2012; Elden, 2012; Hall & Wall, 2016; O'Neill, 2008; Pink 2001; Spencer et al., 2020), and performative approaches such as theatre and drama (Frimberger & Bishopp, 2020), or dance and movement for data collection and dissemination (Bagley & Castro-Salazar, 2017; Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Boydell, 2011; Ritchie & Gaulter, 2018).

In this study, arts-based research is positioned as a methodology (Chilton & Leavy, 2014; Gerber et al., 2012; Finley, 2008; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2015). As Gerber et al., (2012) highlights, arts-based research:

> requires a particular world view that is inclusive of multiple forms of interactive knowledge. This world view includes epistemologies rooted in sensory, kinaesthetic, and imaginal forms of knowledge. Also included in this world view is the aesthetic

> ontological concept that art is often the purveyor of truth or enlightenment relative to self-knowledge and knowledge of others. Finally, within the world view is the belief that the use of the arts is crucial to achieving self-/other knowledge through exploring pre-verbal ways of knowing. (p. 41)

Thus, chiming with poststructural, indigenous, feminist, and broader theories that have disrupted traditional conceptualisations of knowledge, arts-based research emerged as a challenge to dominant (positivist) research methodologies and ways of knowing and interacting (Finley, 2008; Leavy, 2015; Lenette, 2019). In fact, as Knowles and Cole (2008) highlight, art as a form of knowledge does not have a secure history in modern philosophical thought, regarded as supplementary or emotional in nature. There are strong links to new materialism: the ways in which arts-based methodology can combine verbal and non-verbal and well as material and non-material ways of being/ knowing in children's worlds. In particular Ní Laoire's (2016) study, which used participatory and multimodal approaches with young children in return migrant families in Ireland, has been useful when thinking about researching with children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds in multicultural school contexts:

> "People frequently perform different identities in different contexts, but young migrants in particular, because of the disruptions and incoherences associated with their migrancy and their complex social and cultural positionings, can express ambiguous and apparently contradictory narratives of self. (p. 470)

Therefore, I was particularly attracted to an arts-based methodology for the ways it can facilitate a process of co-constructing meaning and allow for different and ambiguous narratives of the self to be expressed. Furthermore, art methods that can be more "attractive, engaging, novel, distracting, [and] relaxing" compared to traditional methods (Hall & Wall, 2016, p. 210) as well as age-appropriate (Bland, 2018; Cook & Hess, 2007), and, as Einarsdóttir et al., (2009) point out, are a part of common pedagogies used with young children. Arts-based approaches can also be suitable when working with so-called 'harder-to-reach' voices, including those from migrant backgrounds or with limited verbal English, and it can ameliorate power dynamics (Thompson, 2008) and avoids a reliance on language and literacy (Clark, 2005). Therefore, through the use of visual, creative, and performative

approaches, children may be encouraged to express their voices and experiences in ways that go ‘beyond and between’ language systems (Li Wei 2018).

Furthermore, arts-based methodology is anchored in collaborative and multivocal understandings of identities and childhood. My choice of arts-based methods was less about the ability to capture children’s individual ‘truths’, but more about the capacity to express collective stories, perspectives, and imaginaries among participants and between participant and researcher.

Another thing that drew me to arts-based research as a suitable methodology was the emotive, sensorial, and affective dimensions. Ritchie and Gaulter (2018) studied dance methods to explore children’s sense of belonging in school. These authors worked with migrant secondary school pupils and found that “the dance interventions fostered opportunities for pupils to connect with one another, to feel safe to build confidence and engage meaningfully, all factors have been linked with sense of belonging” (p. 366). This raises interesting questions about how children in my study might engage with dance and drama, not necessarily to foster a sense of belonging in school (as Ritchie & Gaulter explored) but how the sensory, emotive and embodied nature of dance might facilitate discourses on and representations of belonging.

On the surface, perhaps, arts-based methodology may appear to privilege non-verbal methods, however, focus groups and informal discussions were an important part of data collection. I view arts-based methodology as a way to complexify voice, that is, to allow for, the different ways children express ‘voice’ – such as the silences and pauses, collaborative voices based on imagination, the art materials, and the embodied and material dimensions of children’s accounts of their identities and experiences of belonging and inclusion.

In sum, arts-based and participatory methodology forms part of the research approach and is viewed as more than “simply adding a splash of colour” (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 27); it is part of the methodological foundation upon which I view the social phenomena. I take heart with arts-based participatory methodology, which was built into the different stages of research, to varying degrees. This section has outlined the choice of participatory, arts-based methodology, which is an approach that emerges from my theoretical and ethical

commitment to 'child voice' when exploring children's contested, ambiguous and situated accounts of themselves, and their experiences of belonging and inclusion in school.

Having discussed the research methodology, I will now describe participant recruitment and school access (4.2) and then I will discuss the research methods (4.3).

4.2 Negotiating access

This section is comprised of two sections and will discuss the processes of how schools were recruited (4.2.1) and the choice of classes and participants (4.2.2).

This research is located in two primary schools in the North-east of England. I have found that there is a notable lack of studies that focus on children's perspectives and experiences of migration and identity in this region; compared to areas such as London and Manchester, cities and towns in the North-east remain under-researched. Once the cradle of the Industrial Revolution, and traditionally 'white' working class, it is an area marked by demographic challenges, such as degeneration of coastal towns (Telford, 2022), skills and labour gaps, investment challenges, and local concerns around migration (Murray & Smart, 2017). The North-east is a region of England with comparatively little EU and non-EU migration (Murray & Smart, 2017). However, ethnic and linguistic diversity is growing in the North-east of England, and while numbers are lower than the national average, some northern regions have seen increased diversity due to newly arrived migrant populations, including those from Central and Eastern Europe, asylum seekers and refugees, and other non-EU migrants (Barbulescu et al., 2019).

4.2.1 Recruiting schools

A 'purposive sampling' procedure was used to select schools based on the aims and context of the study (Cohen et al., 2018). Schools were selected based on their demographic diversity. I identified several cities in the North-east of England that were in reasonable proximity to my University. I began contacting schools via email and I liaised with the local council to help identify schools. Potential schools were also identified on the basis of ethnic

statistics and identified as having ‘high’ numbers of EAL learners by viewing Ofsted reports and searching on the schools’ websites to ascertain information.

School 1, Westfield Primary School (school names and all participants’ names are pseudonyms) is a large, inner-city school, and according to their most recent Ofsted report in 2017, the school is ethnically diverse and pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.

School 2, Oakland Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school located in an outer suburb of the city. The majority of pupils are from White British heritage, although the year 6 pupils who were involved in the study were a noticeably ethnically and linguistically diverse year group, compared to other year groups. Oakland has an above average number of learners identified as EAL. Both schools were high performing, either ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’, according to the recent Ofsted reports.

The research was carried out in two schools only as it allowed me to spend a sustained period of time in each school and gain deeper insights into the school environments, daily structures, and develop rapport with participants. I conducted several workshops, using multiple methods and often flexible in structure. I choose not to adopt a comparative approach; I did not aim to compare the two locations. However, a potential drawback of having only two schools is that it is small scale, and therefore considered less ‘generalisable’ and ‘valid’. However, the nature of this study does not seek generalisability, which aligns with more positivist traditions of ‘truth’ and representativeness. This links to Mazzei and Jackson’s (2012) critique of ‘more is better’ research – more voices, more schools, and more methods does not always produce richer, participatory, and more ‘authentic’ child voice research. Thus, looking at more than two schools did not seem to contribute any further to the aims of this study. In fact, I would have had to spend less time in each school. In terms of the theoretical and methodological approaches, I was interested in talking with children in depth, creating and discussing artwork, and spending *time* in schools to explore the children’s fluid, contextualised, and interconnected experiences and perspectives of identity, belonging, and inclusion.

The schools that took part were welcoming and interested in the project. There were, however, some challenges when negotiating accessing, for instance, many schools did not

reply to emails, and negotiating and maintaining access was made difficult in light of Covid-19, a point I will return to later in this chapter.

4.2.2 Choice of classes and participants

As discussed in Chapter 2.2, my study explores the perspectives and experiences of 'all' children in the school space – including those from 'migrant', 'immigrant' and 'non-immigrant' backgrounds. In line with the participatory, arts-based methodologies, I am interested in the co-constructed intercultural spaces and what children say in the presence of each other. For clarity, and although participants did not always define themselves in these ways, the distinctions between 'migrant', 'immigrant' and 'non-immigrant' children are necessary to position the study and are defined in the table below.

Migrant background children	Children with a recent history of migration, who were born in another country and moved to England.
Immigrant background children	Children whose parents experienced immigration, often speaks a different language at home (heritage language), and have a different cultural background from the dominant one of the country they live in. This includes those born in England and those born in another country but who moved to England when they were very young.
Non-immigrant children	Children born in England with no recent history of family migration. This is typically associated as 'White British'.

Table 1: Definitions of 'migrant', 'immigrant' and 'non-immigrant' background

Furthermore, I decided not to include language interpreters because all of the participants could communicate in English. I also did not see interpreters working well with the creative nature of the research as the research was less about didactic and individual conversations between interviewer-interviewee and more about conversations between peers and between myself and participants as a group. When speaking languages other than English, participants took on contextualised and fluid positions, for example, they switched between languages when talking with each other, and they acted as translators for each other. Sharing, teaching others, and speaking and writing in languages beyond English was a part of

the research process, where participants ‘shuffled’ between language and communicative systems in creative and performative ways (Canagarajah, 2011; Li Wei, 2011).

Westfield School and Oakland School were double-form entry schools. At Westfield, both year 6 cohorts (aged 10-11) were invited to take part, and I spent time in both classes. By contrast, at Oakland, the headteacher requested that just one of the year 6 classes took part. In total there were 14 participants at Westfield and 13 participants at Oakland. The table below shows the pseudonyms and genders of participants. The third column details information participants gave about themselves in terms of their ethnic backgrounds and places they were born, or where their parents/grandparents were born. Specifically, this information was based on what the children chose to share about themselves when asked ‘where were you born’ and ‘where were your parents/ grandparents born’. Information in these tables is also based upon information participants gave about connections to their heritage countries and trajectories of migration when speaking about places which they feel a sense of belonging.

Westfield School Participants’ names	Male (M) Female (F)	Country of origin/ where their parents/grandparents were born
Fareeha	F	Pakistan
Usman	M	Pakistan
Baha	M	England, Pakistan, Qatar
Fakhri	M	England & Bangladesh
Aminah	F	Libya
Jamil	M	England, Pakistan
Dayyan	M	England, Sri Lanka
Imram	M	Pakistan
Aasab	F	Libya
Aadila	F	England, Bangladesh, Asia
Linda	F	Spain, Africa
Teresa	F	England, Czech
Asman	F	Italy, Morrocco
Faruq	M	Bangladesh
Total = 14		

Table 2: Information about participants at Westfield

Oakland School Participants' names	Male (M) Female (F)	Country of origin/ where their parents/grandparents were born
Rose	F	England
Peter	M	England
Alaya	F	England, Pakistan
Kaamisha	F	England, Pakistan, India
Aamilah	F	England, Scotland, Bangladesh
Amy	F	England
Jessica	F	England
Izzy	F	England, Scotland
Batul	F	England, Algeria
Sarah	F	England, Japan
Yesenia	F	Iran
Yeva	F	Iran
Haimi	F	England, Bangladesh
Total = 13		

Table 3: Information about participants at Oakland

There were noticeably more girls than boy that participated at Oakland School. The languages spoken by participants was varied and was represented on the interactive pinboards (figures 1 and 2 below).

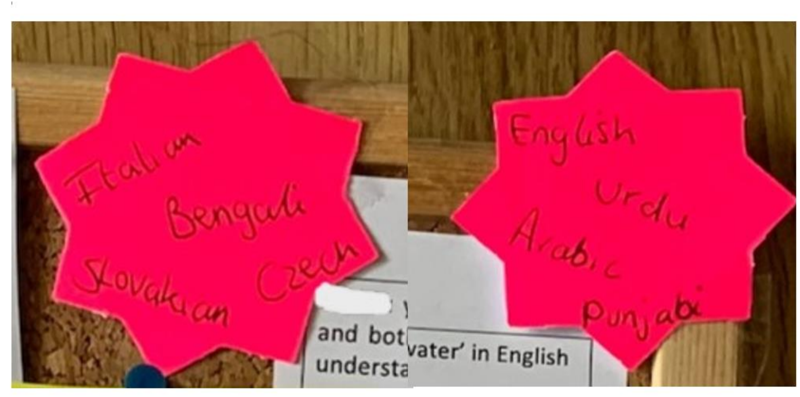

Figure 1: Pinboard image of languages of participants at Westfield

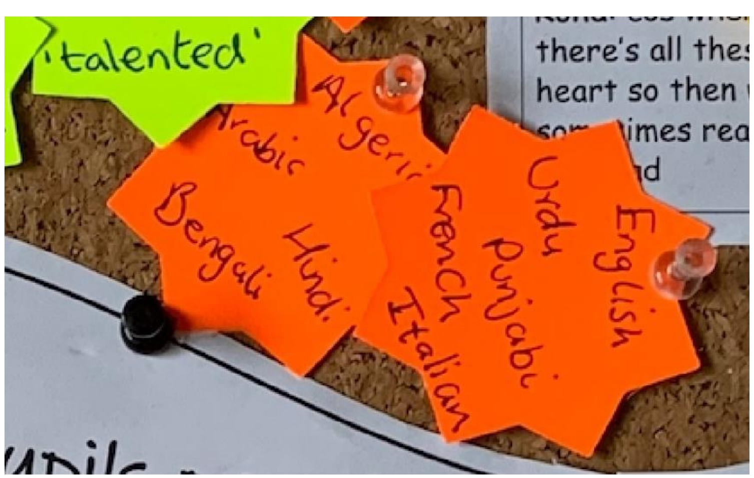

Figure 2: Pinboard image of languages of participants at Oakland

In sum, this section has discussed the recruitment process and the demographic of the schools and participants involved. The next section (4.3) addresses the choice of methods – painting, drawing and collage (4.3.1), storyboarding (4.3.2), focus groups (4.3.3), interactive pinboards (4.3.4), and dance and drama (4.3.5).

4.3 Choice of participatory and arts-based methods

The workshop schedule (Appendix 1) details the workshop aims, methods and resources needed, and related research questions. However, the sessions were also flexible and responsive to the participants' ideas and preferences. For instance, the dance and drama workshops took longer than initially anticipated because participants expressed that they wanted more time to discuss, plan and rehearse their performances. As such, the printed copy of the workshop schedule was annotated and 'messy' in response to often small changes to the planning, and my own reflections.

The data collection took place between September 2021 to March 2022. Working within the school context, I aimed to ensure that the fieldwork was not disruptive or interfered with the school routine. As such, at Westfield the workshops took place after school from 15.15 to 16.30 each week, and at Oakland the workshops took places during lunchtime from 12.30 to 13.00 each week. The reason for this was also that the school leaders at Oakland thought it would be more convenient for me to conduct the workshops during lunchtime. In both

schools, I spent around one month observing the classroom and volunteering (listening to children read). I also spent time with pupils at lunchtime, talking with them, developing rapport, and encouraging interest in the project. The arts-based sessions and focus groups took place in a small study room (Westfield) and their classroom (Oakland), but, in both schools, for the dance and drama workshops we were able to use the sports halls; this was useful as there was plenty of space for dance, movement, and the use of props.

To some extent, the time of day the workshops took place influenced whether children chose to participate, for example, one child at Westfield said he could not attend after school because he went to Mosque. Some children who initially agreed to participate expressed that they 'had a bad day' in school and wanted to go home and did not stay for some of the workshops. At Oakland, most of the boys said they did not want to waste their lunchtime doing art activities, as such very few boys at Oakland chose to participate. Whereas others said that because it was winter, they enjoyed being able to stay inside to take part in the workshops instead. Thus, different circumstances and personal preferences influenced children's (and perhaps their parents') decision to participate in the study.

4.3.1 Painting, drawing, collage

Participants were asked to create a piece of artwork about 'a time you felt lonely, upset or happy in school' using drawing, painting (Bland, 2018; Gerber et al., 2012; Yuen, 2004), and/or collage (Chilton & Scotti, 2014; Prasad, 2018). This activity aimed to explore children's experiences and feelings at school, and, because this was the first activity, it also served as an 'icebreaker' activity. I aimed to create inclusive group workshops that enable participants to participate in their own ways by selecting from an array of arts-based methods on offer. Participants were given the option to engage in creative writing as part of the activity (Stickley et al., 2018). However, none of the participants opted for this method; some participants said that this was because "we do writing all day in school anyway". Participants preferred to do painting, drawing and collage as they positioned it as more fun and different to what they normally do in class.

One of the affordances of drawings, paintings and collage was that it was motivating for me as a researcher, largely because it was intrinsically less rigid and adult-led (compared to

traditional methods like interviews and questionnaires). Hall and Wall (2016) reflect on visual and creative methods with young participants and suggest that "participants volunteered more readily. Participants stayed longer. Participants report finding the experience less intrusive than interviews. Methods themselves encourage creative and unexpected responses to the inquiry" (p. 211). Therefore, drawings (and painting and collage) were used for the ways they can help children make sense of their experiences and the world around them in imagined spaces.

There are, of course, limitations and challenges to using drawings in research with children, for instance, it should not be assumed that all children enjoy drawing and painting (Einarsdottir et al., 2009; Yuen, 2009). Einarsdottir et al. (2009), in a study investigating young children's perceptions of 'home', found that one participant did not want to engage in conversations with researchers and was keen to complete his drawings as quickly as possible. Some children may also experience pressure or negative feelings due to their perceived inability to draw (Einarsdottir et al., 2009; Yuen, 2009). I reminded participants that their drawings will not be assessed or judged for quality.

4.3.2 Storyboarding

In the next set of workshops, storyboarding method was used and involved asking the participants to 'tell a story of someone arriving to a new school'. This activity related to the research questions about children's perspectives and feelings of 'being new' to somewhere and experiences of inclusion and belonging in school. Storyboarding invited children to create sequences of drawings, using images alongside words (Lupton & Leahy, 2019). The storyboards could have been based on their real experiences and feelings, or they could have been imaginary stories and characters, or a combination of both.

I engaged in dialogue with pupils alongside drawing activities to enable children to discuss and clarify their drawings to help the researcher accurately understand their intentions and voices. The storyboards acted as a prompt for 'in-the-moment' conversations as the children were creating their artwork, as well as in the subsequent focus groups. However, in interpretating these stories, studies highlight that researchers should avoid overinterpreting children's drawings without clarifying the 'meaning' behind the drawings *with* children

themselves (Bland, 2012, 2017; Rollins, 2018). In a study exploring pupils' perceptions of their school environment, Bland's (2012) initial interpretation of a year five girl's drawing was that gender segregation was an important component of her ideal school. However, the pupil's written notes illustrated that her decision to include only girls was because it was 'easier' to draw girls than boys (Bland, 2012, p. 240). Thus, consulting *with* pupils about their artwork enables the researcher to build a clearer picture.

4.3.3 Focus groups

During the arts-based workshops, which took place over several weeks, I invited participants to take part in small group focus groups where children shared their perspectives and experiences of belonging in school and beyond school, which linked to the discussions about otherness, friendships, religious identity, and language practices and heritage languages. Additionally, after children completed their artwork, I planned a whole group focus group focusing on perceptions and experiences of inclusion in school, and I asked participants if they would like to share and discuss their storyboards as a prompt for further discussions. Finally, to round up the project, I invited participants to participate in a whole group focus group which involved asking participants to reflect on the methodological and ethical aspects of the project (e.g., what did you enjoy most/ least? Was there anything you found challenging? How did you feel about the audio recorders? Etc.).

The focus groups were framed as conversations, and rather than asking questions to each participant in turn, I encouraged participants to talk to one another – "asking questions, exchanging anecdotes, and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view" (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 2). Thus, the focus groups were loosely structured by some key questions I knew I wanted to ask participants (Appendix 2). However, the conversation was free-flowing, and participants often asked each other questions or shared stories that led us in different directions.

Focus groups are often considered less threatening as the onus is not on one individual (unlike one-to-one interviewing) and focus groups are useful for exploring participants' experiences, opinions, ideas, and concerns, which relates to the aims of the research. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) point out that, "[focus groups are] particularly useful for

allowing participants to generate their own questions, frames and concepts and to pursue their own priorities on their own terms, in their own vocabulary" (p. 5). Thus, focus groups as a method supports my desire in the project to engage in participatory research, with an emphasis on children's voices and interpretations of their experiences. Importantly, focus group method "explores how accounts are articulated, censured, opposed and changed through social interaction and how this relates to peer communication and group norms" (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 5). As such, focus groups were used to help address the research questions, and consider how children might contest, reinforce and reiterate identity narratives and feelings and experiences of belonging and inclusion.

The participants tended to organise themselves around their friendship groups for the focus groups; interestingly, this did not necessarily happen in the art workshops as they moved between spaces and worked alongside different peers. Participants could choose in which space in the classroom we conducted the focus groups, for instance, sometimes we sat on chairs in a circle, or around a table, or on the floor with cushions. Offering these choices often facilitated participant engagement and ownership for the focus group.

I recognise that focus groups have the potential for problems with confidentiality and anonymity because participants may share information beyond the group. I also acknowledge that focus groups might not be ideal for those with limited English language skills, those from migrant backgrounds for example, and I had to be careful not to exclude certain voices and reproduce oppressive practices I was committed to deconstructing through my theoretical and methodological positions (Chapter 2.2 and 4.1.2). I aimed to navigate this by talking with teachers about any specific language needs participants might have – a translator was not necessary. I aimed to speak slowly and clearly, using child-friendly explanations, and allowing space for pauses and silences and giving time for participants to think about an answer (Lund et al., 2016).

4.3.4 Interactive pinboards

As the research progressed, participants interpreted and identified themes from the focus group interviews (Appendix 3). Sections of the focus group transcripts were attached to the pinboards, and participants could read their own and each other's comments, 'fact-check'

and clarify meanings, and identify some further themes and ideas which informed the following dance and drama workshops. Participants used pens and post-it notes to add extra information and ideas or to amend aspects of what they said in the focus groups. The aim here was on co-constructing meanings (Coyle & Carter, 2018) as participants discussed and reflected on the stories and ideas expressed on the pinboards from the focus groups. Please see Appendix 3 for photographs of the pinboards.

This activity was exploratory in nature: participants could add, clarify, change, re-read the extracts and identify themes and key words and similarities and differences in each other's accounts, which led to prompts for the dance and drama workshops. Birt et al. (2016) provided a review of studies that have used 'member checking' and found that studies tended to focus on returning transcribed verbatim transcripts, or member checking synthesized analysed data (i.e., in the form of a findings chapter). This would have been unsuitable for children – it would have involved too much reading. Instead, the interactive and colourful pinboard offered a less rigid, more creative, and collaborative approach to co-analysis and participation.

4.3.5 Dance and drama

In the final part of the study, inspired by a handful of key research, I used dance as a method (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Boydell, 2011; Cancienne & Snowber, 2003) and drama approaches as a method (Frimberger & Bishopp, 2020; Tordzro & Phipps, 2016; Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008) to explore children's interpretations and experiences of belonging and inclusion, which they performed to their schools. Participants used the interactive pinboards (which displayed extracts from the focus groups) to explore stories, ideas, or key words, such as 'friendships', 'difference', 'diversity', 'being new', 'belonging', and 'ethnicity'. In particular, I was interested in how participants spoke about these concepts as they were choreographing their performances. Participants could choose to explore dance and/or drama, individually or in small groups, and we used a large spaces (sports hall), to choreograph movement, dance, script writing, prop work, and acting. Through this method, experiences and perspectives were brought to life in collaborative, exploratory, even

fictional ways (Harvey, 2020; Tordzro & Phipps, 2016). It enabled participants to pose questions and connect with emotions (Cancienne & Snowber, 2008).

Like other forms of arts-based methods, dance and drama can open up spaces for multiple meanings to emerge (Leavy, 2015). It also enabled the emergence of both factual and imaginary stories, leading to diverse interpretations of belonging, inclusion, and identity. Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008) used participatory theatre methods to explore identity with refugee community groups in London. They write that drama methods as a research tool for exploring identity construction – they conclude that being 'in and out' of role, being 'me and not me' enabled reflection and imagination when navigating accounts of oneself and one's identity. Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008) go on that the stories of identity in each group were constructed as part of a collective process, related to each other, build on each other as well as prompted through discourses of difference. Therefore, studies show that imagination plays an important role in identity construction - including imagined homogeneity, collectivity, and the capacity to invent how things are, how things should be, or could be. Greene, who has written extensively on imagination, writes about the 'potency of the arts' (Greene, 2000, p. 196) as an avenue to explore education and children's imagination. For Greene (2001), imagination involves moving "beyond the actual into the invented, to do so within our experience. To enter a created world, an invented word, to in find new perspectives opening on our lived worlds, the often taken-for-granted realities of everyday" (p. 81-82). Therefore, inspired by Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008) use of art methods, in my study dance and drama as a method was used by participants to explore and represent collective and individual stories and discourses on identity and belonging, being both 'in and out' of character, complicating notions of the 'self' and the 'other'. Dance and drama, therefore, was a useful device for combining theory and methodology.

4.3.6 A summary of methods, aims, and involvement

Below is a summary of each method, aims of activity/method, and a description of participant involvement. The methods and research activities were not necessarily discrete and separated, for instance, we sometimes returned to the pinboards at the start of each

dance/drama workshop to revisit and discuss, particularly when some participants had missed the previous session. Thus, there was flexibility and iteration between methods.

Method	Description of activity and aim	Description of participant involvement
Drawing, painting, collage	Activity: 'Create a piece of artwork about a time you felt lonely, upset, or happy at school.' To begin to explore participants feelings and emotions of experiences in school.	The activity was designed by the researcher (myself), but participants could choose which methods they wanted to use to interpret this activity.
Storyboarding	Activity: 'Tell a story of someone arriving to a new school.' 'Tell a story of someone arriving to a new place/ country.' To explore ideas and stories (real and/or fictional) of belonging, otherness, inclusion and 'being new' through artwork. To prompt further conversations in the workshops and in the focus groups.	Primarily researcher led as the activity designed and structured by the researcher.
Focus groups	To listen to children's views and experiences of belonging and inclusion in school (and beyond school). To explore how they give accounts of their identities and perceptions of otherness. (Appendix 2)	Primarily (adult) researcher led – although, participants were encouraged to ask each other questions and directions the focus groups took depended on the participants responses.
Interactive pinboards	To present the focus group data for participants to re-read, clarify, interpret, and identify emergent themes and key words. (Appendix 3)	Co-analysis and further exploration
Dance and drama	To further explore the themes and stories from the pinboards using dance and drama. To disseminate data to the rest of the school through performances.	Primarily child-led and the children created their own choreography and interpretations.

Table 4: A table to show each method, description of activity, and participant involvement

4.4 Making sense of children's voices and experiences

This section is comprised of three parts and discusses my approaches to data analysis – transcription (4.4.1), analysis and coding (4.4.2), and 'further' analysis, namely the use of poetry as an exploratory tool (4.4.3).

4.4.1 Transcription

Transcription is an important step in the research progress. The researcher makes conscious and subconscious decisions as they translate audio data into written text. The transcription process shapes how research participants are portrayed, how their stories and perceptions are presented, and determines what information or knowledge is relevant and important (McMullin, 2023). Data from the art workshops and focus groups were transcribed. Audio recorders were placed on tables during the art workshops, and an audio recorder was also used to capture the focus groups. Fieldnotes were also collected to record some of the supplementary aspects of the research – this included 'in-the-moment' reflections and observations. These fieldnotes were useful for iterative analysis to revisit interactions and reflections. Importantly, though, the fieldnotes were useful when two of the dance and drama workshops did not record due to technological issues (see Appendix 4 for examples of fieldnotes).

Focus groups can produce complex verbal and non-verbal responses, making transcription and interpretation challenging. I aimed to ameliorate this challenge by saying participants names when addressing them and making notes of the seating arrangements in the focus groups in my fieldwork journal. When transcribing the data, I recorded hesitations, pauses, silences, inflections and tone of voice, and volume of speaker (Cohen et al., 2018). I tried to remain close to the children's words, for instance, representing idiosyncratic speech. One particular reflection of this was the use of accents, slang, and incorrect grammar, repetition, that participants might have been reluctant or embarrassed to see transcribed. Indeed, when reading the interactive pinboards some participants pointed out their grammar, fillers ('erm'), pauses, and sentences structures. Aspects of intonation and non-verbal communication were important in creating meaning and so it was included in transcripts where possible, and I tried to remain as close to forms of speech used by children whilst also

representing the meanings and perceptions expressed. McMullin (2023) points out how transcription is not a mechanical process - the researcher makes decisions about what to include (or not) and how to represent aspects of spoken word in terms of syntax, word choice, grammar.

4.4.2 Analysis and coding

Analysis began with 'immersion' – reading, re-reading, and getting a general sense of the data – which the involved organising data into categories, progressively re-structuring and narrowing down themes and patterns. I analysed units of meaning through detailed and systematic reading word-by-word to derive codes and categories, then organised these into clusters and themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These analytical techniques were also applied to the visual data (the participants' artwork), which included coding by visual content and considering the meanings participants assigned to their images and how they talked about their artwork. In other words, for the visual data, I *looked closely*, making notes of the themes and images that were emerging in the children's artwork. This was crossed-referenced with how children spoke about their artwork. The coding process was detailed and iterative, including deep immersion and revisiting codes and categories. I (re)read the transcriptions to build up a pictured in relation to the research questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). These themes and codes were inductively devised from the data itself, remaining 'open' to the different ways children spoke about their lived experiences and perspectives.

The qualitative analysis software, NVivo 12, was used to facilitate the coding process (Appendices 5 and 6). Using this platform, I conducted line-by-line coding and then codes were group. I could sort and compare the codes in different ways. NVivo calls codes 'nodes' which can be labelled, grouped, and examined together. While NVivo was useful initially to conduct 'open coding' and to see how many people spoke about certain things, across different workshops or schools, it was limiting. Therefore, in order to develop themes, memoing in Microsoft Word enabled more descriptive processes, where I restructured and redefined the clusters and nodes from NVivo.

4.4.3 Further analysis

'Poetry' was used as an additional, creative data analysis tool. Researchers have highlighted the potential of incorporating poetic inquiry into various stages of the research process (Furman, 2004; Furman et al., 2007; Poindexter, 1998; Shapiro, 2004), including writing poetry as a way of understanding and representing qualitative findings. For example, Carr's (2003) ethnographic qualitative study about family members of hospitalised relatives uses 'poetic transcription' as a way of exploring the participants' lived experiences. Having transcribed and coded the data, I began experimenting with poetry as a way of seeing connections between participants' perspectives and experiences. I looked deeply at the words of participants, the feelings and things this evoked, and I 'scaled out' to see broader connection and themes (in doing this, though, I had to be careful about misrepresenting a generalised and homogenous view of children's experiences). Poindexter (1998) points out the potential of "arrang[ing] the respondents' phrases into stanzas which seemed to me the best way to represent the narrative flow and meaning, no changes were made to what the respondents had actually said" (p. 23).

Furman et al., (2007) found that poetry can be a powerful vehicle for communication, and the evocative and emotive exploration of multiple 'truths' about human experiences, through the playfulness of metaphor, alliteration, visual elements of poems. For instance, I used repetition on aspects the participants felt strongly about, or things that they mentioned a lot. Furthermore, I played around with short, snappy lines and onomatopoeia in the poems to represent how things were said, tone of voice, and the atmosphere of the workshops. In essence, through poetry, I was liberated from the structured form of academic writing; through poems I could experiment with form, structure, language that could represent the multiple and fluid nature of children's lives. I went back and forth between NVivo coding and transcription, visual data (children's artwork) and writing my own poems to provide a richer data analysis approach and to understand the children's voices from multiple approaches. As such, the data analysis was not an isolated and distinct stage of the research but an ongoing and iterative process which started from the first day of fieldwork. As such, analysis was not linear, but cyclical, as I read more, transcribed more, and interpreted more, this helped inform subsequent workshops. As highlighted above, the child

co-researchers assisted in reviewing some of the initial coding and excerpts of transcribed data. Some of the poems are included at the beginning of the Findings chapters.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

This section will present the key ethical considerations for this study – informed consent (4.5.1), minimising harm (4.5.2), position(s) of the researcher (4.5.3), and trustworthiness of the research (4.5.4).

The ethics of conducting participatory, arts-based research with children are important, particularly when exploring potentially sensitive, contextualised, and multidimensional aspects such as accounts of identities, and experiences of belonging, inclusion and otherness. Ethical questions were interwoven throughout each aspect of the research process, shaping the planning, data collection, analysis, and dissemination (Alderson & Morrow, 2020; Lenette, 2019). As Lenette (2019) puts it, "research integrity begins well before a project begins, and well after it officially concludes" (p. 83). Ethical issues have been discussed in relation to participatory, arts-based approaches and the particular methods of data collection, but a few additional ethical points will be made here.

Ethical questions are not static (Block et al., 2012). Ellis' (2007) theory of relational ethics requires researchers to act from their 'hearts and minds'. Ellis (2007) emphasises the values of "mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researcher and the communities in which they live and work" (p. 4). Relational ethics has been a useful concept in developing my study as it requires researchers to deal with the realities and practicalities of changing relationships and dynamics with our participants over time; to prepare for ethical issues that might arise but also in being responsive and adaptive.

This study followed BERA's *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2018) and *Community-based Participatory Research Guidelines* from the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, Durham University (Banks & Manners, 2012). Ethical approval was obtained from my respective University department. As I was conducting research within school spaces, there were in-built safeguarding policies and procedures for me to follow if

any concerns arose throughout the project. Data were stored on a password protected laptop, and the list of original names with the pseudonym names and the transcriptions were stored on separate documents in different digital files. I was attentive to securing confidentiality and anonymity for all participants throughout the project. All participants and school names in this thesis are pseudonyms; the participants names were chosen to match and accurately reflect their original names in terms of cultural backgrounds, meanings behind the names, and popularity of names in certain countries.

Furthermore, the UNCRC document (1989) was useful when thinking about ethical practices with children and young people, most noticeably, Article 12, "every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously", and Article 13, "every child must be free to express their thoughts opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law". This relates to voluntary, informed consent, which is discussed below. Furthermore, Article 16, "every child has the right to privacy" relates to anonymity, and confidentiality.

4.5.1 Informed consent

In all stages of the research, participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from parents/guardians in the form of a consent form (Appendix 7), parental information sheet (Appendix 8) and participant information sheet (Appendix 9) which explained the research aims, approaches and intended outcomes. Children were informed about the focus and outcomes of my research and were given the opportunity to discuss the research and ask me questions collectively and individually. This included discussing the purpose of the research, determining their roles and my roles, discussing how confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. This verbal informed consent from participants also took the form of reading though some 'ethical guidelines', which was informed by *Community-based Participatory Research Guidelines* (2012). I created a child-friendly form to read to and discuss with participants (Appendix 10). This was a 'working agreement', which would be flexible, and outlined some key things we must be mindful about in the project. I also explained why and how the participants were chosen to take part, and how the things they say and create will be recorded and used (Alderson & Morrow, 2020). Throughout the

project, I provided ‘regular checkpoints’ to check that participants still wanted to be involved (Ellis, 2007).

In addition, I recognised that some of the participants who agreed to participate were from migrant and immigrant backgrounds, with parents that did not speak English as their first language. As such, some participants explained that they read and translated consent forms to parents. Having spoken to the school about whether to translate to parental consent forms into other languages they advised that English would be sufficient, as they send all their school letters home in English. This reflects some practical challenges for inclusive research processes (Block et al., 2012).

4.5.2 Minimising harm

A further ethical imperative is to minimise harm, distress, and embarrassment when inviting children to share their perspectives and experiences of potentially personal and sensitive issues. I used my training as a primary school teacher to navigate group interactions, encouraging participants to respect each other’s views to avoid upsetting each other; this was particularly difficult when participants were excited about expressing their views resulting in children talking over each other and getting frustrated with each other.

In the context of arts-based research, sharing emotions and stories through creative and performance methods can be a vulnerable process. Despite researchers’ efforts to support participants, Alderson and Morrow (2011) point out that children might also experience nervousness, embarrassment as a result of sharing their thoughts and information about themselves. Therefore, to minimise any potential harm or discomfort, I made sure to remind participants of the purpose and goals of the workshops. This helped everyone feel more informed and prepared, allowing them to decide how much information they wished to share. Another approach revolved around aiming to build a culture of 'trust' with the respondents and being open and respectful of people’s different opinions and perspectives. Finally, the co-analysis pinboards enabled more agency for participants to clarify meanings, removing things they did not want included, and checking for misinterpretation in the transcripts and emergent themes that might cause upset and discomfort.

4.5.3 Position(s) of the researcher

Reflexivity relates to "the sets of dispositions and activities by which researchers locate themselves within the research processes whilst also attending to how their presence, values, beliefs, knowledge, and personal and professional histories shape their research spaces, relationships as outcomes" (Consoli & Ganassin, 2023, p. 1). Firstly, my professional background as a primary school teacher, and my master's degree on children's voices in literacy education, meant that I approached the project with an enthusiastic perspective towards children's participation and child voice. However, as I discuss in Chapter 8, I also had to appreciate that some participants were not as enthusiastic about arts-based methods as I was, leading me to reflect on how 'participatory' and child-focused the project was.

Furthermore, concerned with the position and use of power, participation, and different ways of knowing, I adopted a dynamic position. For example, I considered how I was an 'outsider' in nearly all aspects of the research 'areas': I was an adult; I was not a teacher in the schools; I am not from the North-east of England/ the community where the schools were located, and my accent was different; and I was not from a migrant or immigrant background. I recognise that I was not the 'expert' in knowledge creation as it was child-led and participatory. These positions challenged my role as a researcher: I was in a dynamic position, sometimes learning from and learning with my participants; sometimes I engaged in analysis alone, sometimes using my teacher skills, sometimes using my research skills; sometimes I was positioned (by others) as an observer, an interviewer, a teacher, an artist. This positionality was fluid and seldom isolated and discrete because I took on more than one position in any given workshop, multiple times**.** It is useful to think of children's participation and relationships with the research, with myself, and with one another, as on a spectrum, at different times, with different participants (Bennion & Rutter, 2024). In doing this, it detaches the idea of 'full participation' as the ultimate goal, which may further reinforce hierarchies and expectations, particularly around what young children or those from marginalised backgrounds are capable of. At times, I had to be the 'moderator' to manage disagreements between participants (for example, minimising harm, as discussed above) and to make strategic decisions regarding the methods and outcomes of the workshops related to the research question. As such, I had to navigate different levels of my own involvement, choice, and control.

Additionally, facilitating positive relationships with participants is important, but scholars caution against the oversimplified assumption that, through deep immersion in the field, relationships between researcher and participants will be strengthen, leading to more trustworthy and authentic research (reflecting the points made in Chapter 3.1). For instance, Ellis (2007) writes, "often [research] relationships grow deeper over time, but sometimes they don't" (p. 23). In my study, there were multiple relationships and connections fostered with participants, that fluctuated and changed depending on the day, and depending on different participants and their personalities.

Finally, I was also aware of my position as a young, middle-class white English-speaking woman carrying out research with children, many from migrant and immigrant backgrounds, and the power dynamics this could bring up. Researcher positionality and the 'insider-outsider' debate has received attention in scholarship (Carling et al., 2014; Gelir, 2021; Kerstetter, 2012; Kusow, 2003; Merriam et al., 2001; Savvides et al., 2014; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013), with many researchers seeking solutions 'in the spaces between' (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Milligan, 2016; Wilkinson & Wilkinson, 2022). However, being an 'insider' and/or an 'outsider' to a particular group is problematic, and I have chosen not to discuss 'insider/outsider' positionality at length because reflecting on my positionality goes beyond such dichotomies. Matching participants and researcher in terms of ethnicity, nationality, gender etc. can be essentialist in itself, as it assumes that certain characteristics are stable, always observable, and an important part of a person's identity, something this thesis moves away from.

Covid-19 had an impact on the project, particularly in the early stages of data collection when I was first familiarising myself with the school, for instance, there were social distancing seating plans in place, year group 'bubbles', and face masks. According to the Department of Education government guidance, class, and year group 'bubbles' and other Covid restrictions were lifted in September 2021. My fieldwork was planned after the nationwide lockdowns and school were beginning to open up. This created unique challenges particularly for the 'hands-on', messy, and co-constructed dialogic approaches that I was seeking to adopt. For instance, I was worried that face masks would make it hard for children to understand me (especially those with lower English language skills) and I was

worried this might have impacted the rapport I could build with my participants. Indeed, the project took place at a time when society and schools were beginning to 'open up' following school closures, and it seemed that the two schools who participated were pleased to be able to offer my workshops to pupils as an 'enrichment' opportunity (expressed by teachers at Westfield) and learning opportunity for teachers to learn more about the experiences of their migrant and immigrant pupils (expressed by the assistant and deputy headteachers at Oakland School). Covid-19 also impacted the continuous engagement and retention of participants as some children went off with illness.

4.5.4 Trustworthiness of the research

One way of promoting the trustworthiness of the research is through the notion of triangulation (Stahl & King, 2020). I have used methodological triangulation (using multiple, different methods), and using more than one type of analysis approach (section 4.4). I have also used theoretical triangulation, that is, using multiple theoretical orientations to understand the findings (Chapter 3). In this study I have also utilised 'fact-checking' where the participants could check the data from the focus groups using the interactive pinboards (section 4.3.4) (Birt et al., 2016).

Another aspect of trustworthiness is that of transferability, which is a somewhat tricky area, "given that by design qualitative research does not (cannot) aim for replicability" (Stahl & King, 2020, p. 27). The study, based in two schools, does not claim to be representative of all schools and classrooms in England, nor generalise from the findings and apply the experiences of these children to all children from similar backgrounds. The aim was to gain deep insights into children's perspectives and experiences of their lives (particularly in school). According to Stahl and King (2020), qualitative researchers argue that the patterns and descriptions observed in one context may be relevant to another context. There are aspects of the research that might apply to other schools, with regards to some of the common themes and comments children expressed with regards to belonging and school inclusion.

The notion of trustworthiness in also important in the context of arts-based research. Some scholars have reassessed the quality measures used for qualitative research, for example,

Chilton and Leavy (2014) who suggest that for arts-based research the following aspects of trustworthiness might be more suitable: firstly, 'question/method fit', that is, assessing that the method is suitable in addressing the research topic and aims (which I have discussed in section 4.1.2). Secondly, there is the 'usefulness' of the research, for example, rather than asking 'is this a good art piece?', asking 'what is this piece of art good for?' might be more appropriate for analytical meaning. Furthermore, these authors mention assessing the 'transformative' potential of the research, such as the involvement of silenced voices in the artistic output (discussed in Chapter 3.2 and Chapter 8). Finally, there is the notion of 'canonical generativity' which is about how much the research and artistic outputs resonates with a broader audience. For example, I invited the children to perform their drama and dance to the rest of the school. Moving forward, I also I plan to share the project's findings and pedagogical recommendations with the schools.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the central features of participatory and arts-based methodologies, seeking to address the research questions that facilitated collaborative, sensory, material, and imagined forms of meaning-making. Arts-based inquiry can be useful and productive when working with children (e.g., Cassidy et al., 2022; Cook & Hess, 2007; Hall & Wall, 2016) and when working in multicultural, multilingual research contexts with young people from migrant and immigrant backgrounds (Ní Laoire, 2016). Discursive and creative-based participation, choices, and co-analysis in the research process may promote more meaningful and engaged data and understandings of children's perspectives and experiences (Coyle & Carter, 2018). However, this is not without ethical and practical tensions, as this chapter and the previous chapter discussed (4.5).

Section 4.2 discussed the processes of negotiating access and recruiting participants. Section 4.3 outlined the workshops and methods for data collection. Section 4.4 discussed processes of data analysis and making sense of children's voices.

The next part of this thesis presents and discusses the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5: CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF BELONGING AND INCLUSION IN SCHOOL AND IN THEIR WIDER LIVES

School?

No, I don't think

Yes, sometimes I belong

Teachers are nice, they support me

I am used to school but

I don't belong

To them

Figure 3: Poem 1

Surprise!

Something for you

It belongs to me and

I own it, just mine, not sharing

I may share it sometimes

My life, my bed

My things

Figure 4: Poem 2

The focus of this chapter is on exploring how children conceptualized and shared their experiences of belonging and inclusion. Research Question 1 is addressed: What are children's feelings and experiences of belonging and inclusion, in school and in their wider lives?

The two poems above, which I wrote as ongoing exploratory data analysis exercises (Chapter 4.4.3), represent some of the points discussed in this chapter. The first poem refers to how participants reflected on the term 'belonging' in the context of school experiences. The second poem represents some of the participants' definitions of belonging as the concrete and symbolic 'things' they own.

The findings in this chapter indicate that children's narratives on belonging were expressed and defined in multiple ways, enmeshed in affective and symbolic relationships with people, groups, material objects, and places. Friendships were an important part of children's experiences of school inclusion. This chapter explores children's views on school inclusion and some of the 'barriers' to inclusion that children articulated. Based on the children's narratives, I also consider the relationships between notions of belonging and inclusion.

This chapter is built on the premise that to understand more deeply the workings of belonging and inclusion in childhood and education, we must listen to the voices of children (Ainscow, 2020; Messiou, 2019). The current climate emphasises the importance of cultural diversity, belonging, and inclusion in pedagogy and policy, especially for supporting EAL and migrant learners (Hanna, 2020). This chapter draws on existing studies and definitions of belonging and inclusion to compare and contrast with how participants perceive and experience these concepts. With regard to the timeline of obtaining understandings of belonging and inclusion, I first conducted small focus groups with children to understand their perspectives on belonging in school and their broader lives. Following this, after completing the storyboarding activity, I invited children to share their artwork, which led to discussions about school inclusion.

To begin with, the first three sections of this chapter focus on some of children's definitions and experiences of belonging, specifically attachments to objects and possessions (5.1), emotional attachments to people and places (5.2), and belonging related to a sense of self and moral behaviour (5.3). The rest of the chapter brings into frame children's narratives on

school inclusion and explores the relationships between belonging and inclusion, relationships with teachers, and navigating school as a newly arrived learner (5.4 & 5.5).

5.1 Belonging and attachments to objects

Children's definitions of belonging were expressed and defined in multiple ways. In response to the question "What does the word belonging mean to you?", participants expressed thoughts about their attachments to material possessions. For example, Sarah, a pseudonym, said, "my things … something that belongs to you" and Alaya said, "I think [belonging is] like things you own … my teddies". Participants' accounts of belonging included everyday items in their immediate environments, such as 'teddies', 'pencil case', 'water bottles' etc., suggesting that these every day, somewhat neutral items, formed a part of children's sense of belonging.

Fareeha	erm [pause] a cupboard?
Baha	pencil case?
Fareeha	water bottles as well?
Imram	toys?
Researcher	*yeah*
Imram	I would say my toys, umm a hoodie, jumper, erm PS4[1] (Westfield, focus group 1)

Kaamisha	your table or your chair … my legs!
Yesenia	my mum, actually no, my money!
Kaamisha	my life
Yesenia	because I worked hard for it! Er I didn't actually make my money, my dad and my mum makes the money because they both work hard

[1] 'Play Station 4' (PS4) is a video game console.

Sarah	my mum steals my money [laughs]
Kaamisha	you get pocket money!? I don't get pocket money
Yesenia	yeah yeah, it's my money (Oakland, focus group 2)

In the conversation above between Fareeha, Imram and Baha, their inflections signalled questions, perhaps suggesting that they were unsure about their answers, or they were proposing ideas. This reflects a wider point, that in these accounts above it seemed that, although some children spoke about personal 'things' of belonging ("my teddies", "my money", "my legs"), for others, they were seemingly listing things as hypothetical objects that *could* belong to people. I suggest that this could have been due to the collaborative nature of the focus groups, where participants often bounced ideas off each other and this shaped their accounts.

Furthermore, Fakhri and Asman provided a somewhat contrasting account of the material aspects of belonging. Fakhri said, "I belong to my football books". This phrasing, to belong *to* something, to be 'owned by' things, denotes positive feelings towards material things, and gives agency to the object in terms of indicating social-material practices with emotional/personal investments. To put it another way, in a 'philosophical' sense, Fakhri saying he is 'owned by' his football books, implies a sense of appreciation of how much his books mean to him. Asman commented that, "I belong to my paper and pencils", to which Teresa replied, "true, 'cos you're an artist!". Indeed, there is an interesting distinction here between 'owning things' and 'being owned' by things. These participants felt that they belonged to certain personal items, unlike the other way around where objects belonged *to them*, and Asman and Fakhri linked this to their interests/ hobbies, and the symbolic interactions with objects also shaped other people's perceptions of them (e.g., Teresa called Asman "an artist"). Therefore, these extracts demonstrate how belonging as 'possession' (as in, being 'owned by' things) links to object agency and the way objects can shape one's sense of self.

Participants spoke about belonging in complicated ways that demonstrated 'status' and dynamics of inclusion/exclusion (for instance, Jamil excluding his sister from playing with *his*

video games, see extract below). Sometimes participants referred to things 'they own' as a way to compete/show status, and, at other times, children referred to the ways they are 'owned by things' as a way to express symbolic and emotional investments in social-material practices (e.g., "I belong to my pens and pencils" which implies feelings of being included in the material/social fabric). Children may have referred to their material possessions as a way to demonstrate 'status' and feelings of inclusion through the valued objects they own. When analysing the audio recordings and transcripts, I got the impression that participants suggested objects of attachment that they thought others in the focus group would agree with and value as part of the discussion on belonging, for instance, Yesenia said, "my mum" and then quickly suggested "actually no, my money!" and then shared that she gets pocket money which prompted other participants to contribute their thoughts/ experiences of getting pocket money too (on pages 101-102).

Furthermore, participants offered examples of symbolic and material dimensions of belonging in their lives ("my legs", "my toys") in order to seemingly contribute to the conversation, which establishes a form of symbolic connection and investment in an interactional sense (it allowed them to join in the conversation, offering definitions of belonging/ listing examples of objects) and does express the presence of daily routine objects in their view of the world. This links to ideas of inclusion/exclusion in the sense that children are contributing to their own understandings and ways of expressing belonging through material objects as a way to be included in the interaction.

Additionally, a common finding was that participants spoke about belonging and sharing things.

Baha	like something is mine and I'm not going to share it (Westfield, focus group 1)
Teresa	like it belongs to me as well as mine and everyone's else at the same time
Asman	like er I will not share it with anybody, it's just mine

Teresa	yeah yeah
Jamil	yeah, kind of … ‘cos I have like a game, some like games, but my sister wants to play with them they’re like single player soooo [pause] and also for some books kinda so I can read, I can say something (like) that word belonging (Westfield, focus group 2)

Jamil felt that, because his games are “single player”, he cannot share with his sisters, which was exemplified through elongating “soooo [pause]” to imply that the answer would be that she cannot play the game.

In the extract above, Teresa defined belonging as something that “belongs to me” and “everyone else at the same time” – it was difficult to ascertain what Teresa meant here, as the conversation swiftly moved on, but perhaps she was implying how belonging can be about distinguishing between what is ‘mine’ and what is ‘yours’, as well as shared spaces of belonging. Asman defined belonging as “not sharing it with anyone”, and Teresa and Jamil agreed.

Furthermore, in one of the focus groups Aasab shared her understanding of belonging: “like something for you [pause] something um it’s like a surprise for you and we have to keep it”. Through the insertion of a post-it note on the interactive pinboards (where participants were asked to comment on the extracts from the focus groups, clarifying, editing, or reiterating their comments), Aasab extended her point and wrote about how belonging can involve distinguishing between the self and the other – deciding what is ‘for me’ and what is ‘for you’.

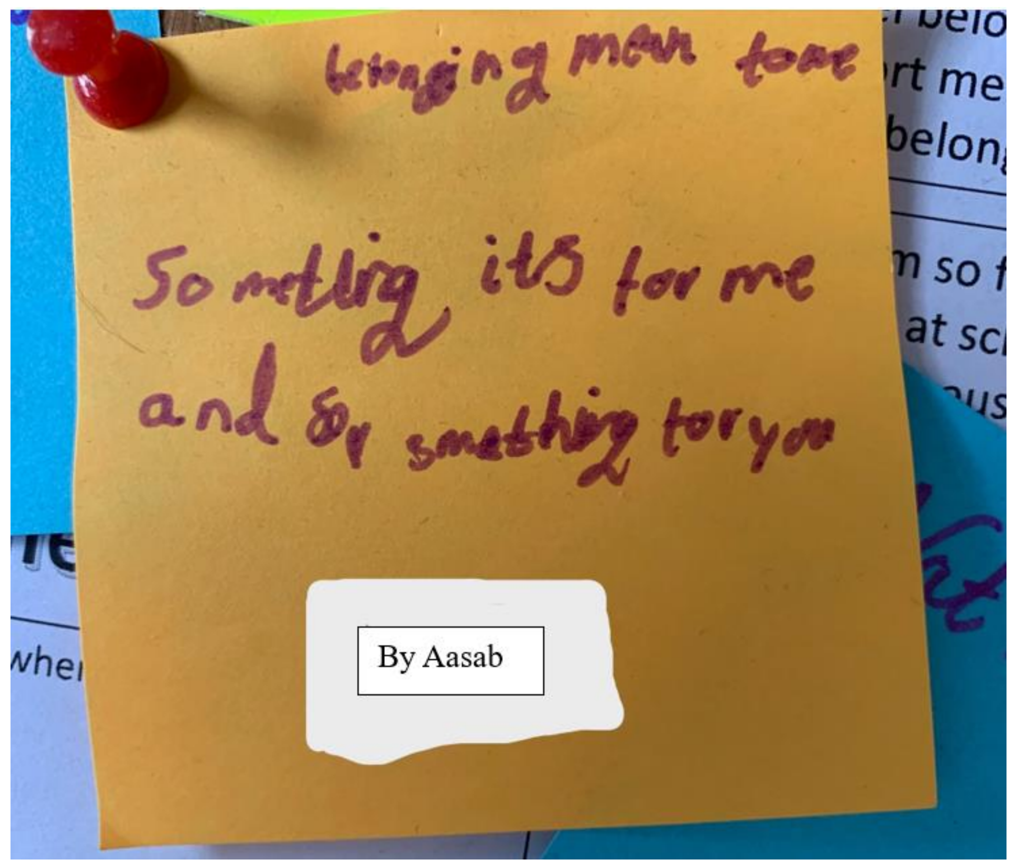

Figure 5: Post-it note by Aasab

Thus, possessions and material objects as conceptualisation of belonging can symbolise individuality – something that distinguishes myself as different from others (what is ‘mine’ and ‘yours’). Research has been conducted on the mechanisms that contribute to the development of the sense of ‘ownership’ in individuals. This includes understanding how people begin to perceive themselves as owners of particular items and how they incorporate this feeling into their sense of identity. One such example is the notion of ‘self-extension theory’, proposed by Belk (1988) and developed by Dittmar (1992), which proposes that objects, and the possession of material objects, become extensions of the self, through a control or mastery of the object and one’s environment, or through investing time/ and a sense of self in the object, perhaps contributing to its creation. As such, a loss of a cherished possession can feel like a loss of a part of oneself (Walasek et al., 2015).

Additionally, Pierce and Jussila (2011) suggest that the state of ‘psychological ownership’ satisfies several human motivations and needs, including a need for self-efficacy, to exert control over one’s environment and avoid powerlessness and helplessness, a need for self-identity, and a need to have a ‘place’ or ‘home’ for familiarity and security which can be

achieved by being surrounded by one's possessions. The notion of ownership is based on feelings of possessiveness and being tied to an object that is material (for example, Jamil commenting on his video games) or immaterial in nature (for example, ownership of ideas in the dance/drama choreography – which I highlight in Chapter 8.2).

Therefore, possessions can be a source of autonomy and pleasure, helping us to sustain and develop a sense of self (Dittmar, 1992), they can allow us to express our identity, and provide a symbol of our identity too (Pierce & Jussila, 2011). In the example of Asman, her 'paper and pencils' were perhaps a symbol of her identity as 'an artist', as perceived by her peers. As Pierce and Jussila (2011) put it, "when anchored psychologically, the concept of 'mine' comes to play a major role in the self-identity ('who am I?'), which also reflects relationships among people" (p. 2). Our belongings are not static elements of ourselves, but multifaceted active ingredients in the development of identity – as Pierce and Jussila (2011) put it, "we are what we possess and what we possess is an important part of our sense of self" (p. 15). Thus, my data resonates here, in that the relationships between identity and belonging are not only discursive and political in nature (i.e., 'politics of belonging') but also material and relate to a sense of psychological ownership and 'possession' of objects.

Furthermore, Baha, Faruq and Dayyan chose to do their drama performance about an issue of belonging which was about arguing and sharing the TV remote and was inspired by Faruq's experiences with his sister at home. In their drama performance, which was child-led, they comedically ran around the stage chasing each other. Most of their script did not contain words; it focused on conveying meaning through melodramatic body language and music. They felt that the audio clips on YouTube, such as the sound of the TV or a doorbell ring, would be necessary and important for conveying their drama to the audience. Similarly, Batul's definition of belonging, which she shared in our conversations in the focus group, was constructed as disagreements about their possessions and ownership.

Batul	can I give you a really good example? Haimi I want you, Yeva actually come here
Haimi	wait, wait, wait we actually have to tell her
Batul	yeah we're gonna talk about it [Batul and Yeva stand up] for example so if Yeva you're taking this

Yeva	'can I borrow this?'
Batul	'no give it me!' [Batul and Yeva tug on an imaginary object, acting out an argument]
Aamilah	that's called fighting not belonging!
Researcher	*so you were showing how something belongs to you and you want it back?*
Batul	yeah (Oakland school, focus group 3)

Aamilah's comment "that's called fighting not belonging" is interesting because it implies that she felt that belonging is not about fighting over having things; in Aamilah's view, Batul has conflated belonging with fighting. This was a similar sentiment expressed by Faruq, Baha and Dayyan who fought over a fictional TV remote in their drama performance. Indeed, children were able to convey stories of belonging discursively through the focus groups as well as physically by acting out their ideas in the focus groups and through the exploration of drama and dance.

In sum, this section has begun to explore how children gave accounts of themselves and their conceptualisations and experiences of belonging, through entanglements between objects and people (Youkhana, 2015) as most children spoke about and defined belonging as the attachments to material objects in their immediate environments, such as at home (my teddies, football books etc.) and at school (pencil case, cupboard, rubbers).

Participants also articulated belonging through sharing and distinguishing between what is 'mine' and what is 'yours'. As such, when asked about belonging, most participants initially referred to attachments to material possessions and the act of sharing and owning things with others. Perhaps the term 'belonging' was too abstract, and so they linked it to its simple meaning of 'possession'. This being said, I am not disregarding children's ways of reflecting on belonging as 'possession' of material objects. However, it does reflect an ethical challenge I was facing in the early stages of the project regarding negotiating the delicate balance of scaffolding and explaining what 'belonging' is whilst also remaining open-ended and allowing participants to formulate their own conceptualisations and

perspectives on belonging. In fact, one of the teachers at Westfield School suggested I should deliver a session with participants where I explained what belonging is; I anticipated that this session would end up running somewhat like a school lesson. I was keen to avoid such teacher-pupil or adult-child hierarchical dynamics as best I could. Instead, meanings of belonging emerged inductively, and participants shared their multiple understandings and experiences of belonging as the workshops developed. It was common that children initially spoke about belonging in terms of objects and possessions, and, as the focus group progressed children began to speak more symbolically about belonging.

This section has drawn on "the vibrancy of objects and the ways these come together" (Pennycook, 2016, p. 85), by reflecting on the interconnections between material objects and people, and how this can determine children's definitions of belonging and their identities. For example, children's ways of reflecting on belonging as 'possession' of material things ("my books"), as well as people ("my mum") and one's sense of self ("my life"), entangled with the feelings, sensations and development of self-identity and attachments. I will build on this discussion in the subsequent sections. Seen through the lens of new materialism, then, this has enabled me to conceptualise children's belonging as "not just in terms of the complex relationships of individuals with other people but directs our gaze to the importance of things and to the material-semiotic relations" (Halse, 2018, p. 12-13).

An additional point to make here, as a summary reflection, is that children's expressions of their experiences and definitions of belonging as affective and symbolic attachments to material objects raise interesting questions about the role of material belonging (and the agency of objects) in promoting inclusive school practices. The seemingly 'mundane' or everyday classroom objects ("my table", "my pencil case") formed part of children's definitions of belonging, and as discussed, this allowed them to 'take part' in the conversations, seemingly 'listing' the everyday classroom objects that they could see, point to, and engage with. The agency of objects to shape identity (e.g., "'I belong to my paper and pencils") reflects the importance of everyday objects in classroom spaces.

To add to this point, some participants spoke about how things/ spaces in school remind them of 'home' and their heritage countries e.g., Imram reflected that the "high ceilings in

school" reminds him of his "house in Pakistan". Another aspect of the data, related to this, was that several children spoke about a 'happy' time in school (the art activity) which involved playing with their water bottles. A group of children at Oakland school enjoyed recounting stories involving their water bottles, which they also depicted in their artwork – "a colourful collage of the water bottle exploding" (Aamilah), "I'm going to draw that too, my most happiest memory" (Yeva), "they were doing water bottle flips in the girl's bathroom" (Kaamisha). Here, interactions with everyday classroom objects were a part of children's social relationships in school.

My point here, then, is that inclusive policies and practices should factor in a consideration of the material worlds of children, in terms of the interconnectivity of objects, things, spaces, and related identities. In primary classrooms in England, it is often common to hear teachers talk about shared and individual ownership in the classroom, where children must be respectful of the shared space, but are also given classroom 'responsibilities'. For instance, as 'hallway monitors', or the children who are responsible for 'handing out the books', or the job of taking the lunch menu back down to the canteen, or the job of making sure the cloakroom is kept tidy, and so on. Yet, rather paradoxically, the classroom is sometimes spoken about as a teacher-centred space (for instance, displays that read 'welcome to Miss Smith's classroom') and the objects in the classroom are often 'owned by' the teacher, and so children must be respectful of these objects (e.g., the library books).

Indeed, some studies have explored the role of objects in classroom practices and children's sense of self. For example, Martin (2019) considers the 'agentic capacities' of mundane classroom objects in a culturally diverse early years classroom in the USA. Taylor (2013) explores how the "mundane materialities of the classroom" are part of "performative work in gendered power" (p. 688), drawing on data from a sixth-form college in the UK. Jones et al., (2012) look at young children's relationships with objects in nursery settings, in particular objects brought in from home. What all these studies have in common, in relation to what emerged in my work, is how by attending to material objects in children's worlds and the educational encounter, scholars can construct an insightful and textured portrait of issues related to children's identities, social interactions and school inclusion. Martin (2019) found that objects, specifically everyday classroom objects, were repurposed and "functioned in ways that extended beyond their intended purpose" (p. 96). This echoes my findings in that

children’s interactions with objects, or their definitions of belonging as material possessions, related to several ‘purposes’, so to speak. For instance, to demonstrate ‘status’ in some way (e.g., Yeva said that her “pocket money” belonged to her, and Kaamisha responded, seemingly impressed and shocked, “you get pocket money?!” – on pages 101-102). Participants also spoke about playing around with objects (water bottles) which facilitated feelings of social insiderness and positive memories with friends.

In terms of inclusion, research and policy tend to focus on, for example, the cultural values of an institution, teachers’ professional practices, the allocation of resources and funding etc., however, “less attention has been given to how interactions with material contexts, tools, or resources can also contribute towards such a purpose” (Martin, 2019, p. 86). Therefore, I advocate not dismissing the ‘simplistic’ meaning of belonging as ownership of objects (compared to the seemingly more contested area of belonging as constructions of otherness and identity – i.e., the politics of belonging) because understanding children’s definitions and experiences of belonging - being led by their own words - and considering how children interact with objects in the classroom, school spaces, perceptions of material/symbolic ownership and insiderness, may be relevant to discourses on promoting inclusive school spaces and practices.

5.2 Belonging and emotional attachments

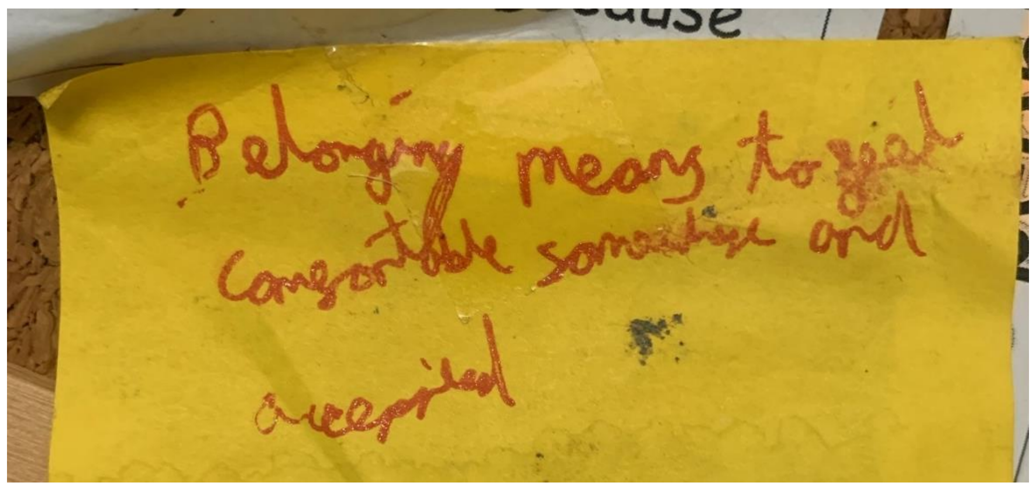

Figure 6: Post-it note (no name)

This section discusses children’s feelings of belonging as emotional attachments, such as familiarity and positive feelings associated with ‘liking’ something, someone or somewhere.

Children’s discussions of belonging related to emotional attachments with people close to them, such as ‘my sister’ (Aamilah) , ‘my mum’ (Yesenia) and ‘my friends’ (Jamil). In the image above, one of the participants wrote on the pinboard[2] that “belonging means to feel comfortable somewhere and accepted”.

In the extract below, Rose offered a view of belonging as ‘something you like doing’.

Rose	[belonging is] what you like? Like if you like being at home you can belong at home ‘cos you like being there, you like doing that
Researcher	*yeah, can you tell me more about what you mean?*
Rose	er so like every Friday night you have like a movie night or like a treat dinner or something-
Kaamisha	do you do that?!
Rose	er no, but I’m just saying like if you did and then like every Friday night you’ll feel like oh tonight I’m feeling belonging because we do this every night and I like doing this every Friday night and I like doing this
Researcher	*yeah, so it gives you happy feelings?*
Rose	yeah (Oakland, focus group 2)

Kaamisha seemed shocked and asked Rose “do you do that?!”. Rose seems to detach herself from this, using the first person to explain how someone might feel if they had a movie night every Friday night, which is an interesting process of displacement. Rose felt that belonging was about doing something you ‘like’, for instance, ‘being at home’ or having a movie night ‘every Friday night’. Elsewhere in her account, Rose added, “feeling like you belong, you’re in a group of people that are similar to you that you like being there … and being included there, feeling like you belong”. This raises notions about the interconnectedness of perceived similarities, group belonging, and positive feelings associated with being included.

[2] No name was written on this post-it note.

Similarly, other participants conceptualised a sense of belonging through narratives about their favourite things or places, for instance, Haimi said, “sometimes I belong in maths session[s] because I like maths”. Baha said, “I feel mostly connected to [Dubai] ‘cos it’s just like my favourite country … I see a lot of supercars here and I see a lot of supercars there, but most I see it there”. In the exchange below, Imram and Fareeha also expressed feelings of belonging and emotional connections to ‘home’ and school.

Imram	I would say my own country, my home or school, that’s it
Researcher	*okay can you tell me more about that?*
Imram	like my country I feel connected by that like um my country is Pakistan and Pakistan has a lot of armies in it, where I live there is a bunch of armies that protects the city
Researcher	*mmm*
Imram	that’s where I feel connected, that my grandfather is in an army and my grandma is army as well but they lost their legs then they had to get new ones [unclear]
Researcher	*right okay*
Fareeha	I think I belong to my family, my country because I’m used to it and I was born there and umm [pause] and the school because I’m used to the school (Westfield, focus group 1)

Imram mentions feelings of belonging related to his “own country”, Pakistan, as well as his home and school, and it was interesting that Imram connected this to the information about his grandparents and the armies in Pakistan. Although children gave accounts of belonging and geographical spaces of familiarity, comfort, and emotional attachment (Antonsich, 2010), Imram’s account of belonging was not necessarily associated with ‘safe’ and ‘warm’ feelings, as in, there was the threat of violence and army presence which resulted in his grandparents’ injuries. Imram’s account of belonging, as shared in our conversations, was constructed as geographical spaces of familiarity, and emotional attachments (to places and people) which were also linked to painful events, including feelings of grief, discomfort, and potential tensions. Despite this, or perhaps, because of this, Imram (along with other

participants) seemed to express belonging and a sense of self within these seemingly ‘challenging’ circumstances and memories. A similar sentiment was expressed by Aadila who said that her country, Bangladesh, has lots of stray animals: “in Bangladesh you can get some cats for free … because not many people like them in Bangladesh, so they just abandon them”.

Therefore, some participants shared ‘not-so-positive’ experiences related to their cultural identities and feelings of attachment to their heritage countries. Relating this to my conception of ‘belonging’, as discussed in Chapter 2, belonging is often described as a combination of symbolic, affective and seemingly positive feelings of familiarity, comfort, and acceptance etc. (e.g., Antonsich, 2010). This is particularly evident in research on school belonging, which is associated with positive educational outcomes to tackle exclusion and promote well-being, positive social relationships, and educational achievement (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Chen & Schweitzer, 2019; Gere & McDonald, 2010; Goodenow, 1993; Osterman, 2000). However, my evidence suggests that notions of belonging were understood by participants through complex and situated ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ feelings and memories, which can include notions of familiarity and comfort as well as painful and discomforting memories and affiliations (death, injury, poverty etc.).

In addition, Aminah, speaking about her life and family in Libya, added, “I give you a sad story: we have 7 dogs yeah who was guardians for the house, they are all dead from erm the sunlight”. Aminah said this very ‘matter of fact’. Some children in the group expressed their shock and concern (e.g., Dayyan asked “is it too hot in the summer?!”), and others chimed in to share similar stories (e.g., Aasab, also from Libya, said “yeah Libya is so hot … we don’t have to buy a cat cos always a cat comes to our house”). It was interesting that participants seemed to enjoy giving accounts of themselves and their past experiences that could potentially ‘shock’ or interest others in the group. For instance, several times Aminah said, “I give you another sad story yeah …” and proceeded to speak about the intense heat and abandoned animals, giving lots of details about her house in Libya and her family. Perhaps these exchanges enabled participants’ to contribute to the focus group, to find connections with each other and embrace shared experiences, and to detail stories that they felt other people would enjoy hearing as it was ‘different’ from life in England.

Returning to the extract above, for Fareeha, belongingness was defined in terms of feelings of closeness and familiarity ("I'm used to it") with her family and the school, as well as "my country" through notions of familiarity and cultural heritage and place of birth ("I was born there"). Rose also commented that she feels a sense of belonging in school "just because you literally go there 24/7". These findings correspond with Shaw's (2019) study, which explored secondary school-aged pupils' perspectives on belonging in school in the UK and found that "time in school was also highlighted as a positive factor to promote belonging" as participants said that time spent in school helped them positively navigate school and routines (p. 85). Participants in my study, however, expressed a slightly less positive and explicit view of time spent in school, instead belonging was defined as normality and familiarity and being "used to school" (Fareeha). Section 5.4 and 5.5 of this chapter discusses further participants' accounts of belonging and inclusion in school.

Furthermore, Haimi's account of belonging, as she shared in our focus group conversations, related to her future job possibilities and a space she 'sees herself being'. Haimi said: "so I was thinking in the future I'd belong in like somewhere like a nurse or a doctor since it's like a good job, so I think I belong there 'cos not that many people have that job, I think I should have the opportunity to do it". Interestingly, Haimi was the only participant to define belonging in this way, whereby most participants spoke about present or past feelings of belonging, particularly those from migrant backgrounds spoke about navigating belonging, self-identifications, and feelings of 'home' in the context of migration and cultural heritage (Chapter 7). Haimi's comment here reflects the notion of belonging and desires for emotional attachment proposed by Probyn (1996) whereby belonging is often tied up in "wanting to belong, wanting to become" rather than in a stable state of identity (p. 19).

In sum, children discursively and imaginatively carved their own understandings and interpretations of the term belonging and shared their personal affective feelings of belonging. Antonsich (2010) stresses the spatiality of belonging, which often relates to specific localities and territories, such as home, country or school. The children's narratives in this section related to the affective dimensions of belonging can be the geographical places and symbolic spaces of familiarity, comfort, enjoyment and general feelings of being 'at home' (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011).

5.3 Belonging and morals and 'sense of self'

This section explores another dimension of children's narratives on belonging which was linked to a 'sense of self'. In particular, it was Kaamisha and Batul who interpreted belonging as a perception of oneself and they contemplated their ethical conduct and way of living.

Batul	for me belonging means like erm what I'm made for, what is my belonging in this world as well
Researcher	*can you tell me more?*
Batul	so technically like my belonging in this world, like what should I be doing, am I doing the right thing, should I do this, should I do that, should I help these people, should I make a good role model. That's also what belonging means to me
Haimi	yeah, that's a good thing! (Oakland, focus group 3)

Here Batul felt that feelings of belonging are related to "what I am made for" and "what should I be doing". Haimi seemed to agree with Batul, pointing out "that's a good thing". In a similar fashion to Batul, Kaamisha said that belonging is about "my life … where you are" which reflects the idea that identity and self-identification are closely linked to personal feelings of belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Loader, 2006). Furthermore, both participants seem to highlight a sense of place, for instance, "what is my belonging in this world" (Batul) and "where you are" (Kaamisha). This resonates with bell hooks' (2009) inquiry into belonging and "whether it is possible to live on earth peacefully. Is it possible to sustain life?" (p. 1).

Butler (2005) finds some grounding in these children's narratives too. Butler argues that identity is shaped through discourse and sociality, but she does not deny the possibility of the subject reflexively and critically acting within discourse to redefine oneself – "efforts of narrative reconstruction are always under revision" (p. 40). Butler (2005) suggests that "'I begin my story only in the face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account" (2005, p. 11). In Batul's account, we see her navigating belonging and sense of self through responsiveness to the 'other', which in Batul's case seems to be an imagined other ("these people" or social obligation which prompts her to hypothetically ask, "should I help these people?"). Batul's definition of belonging, then, reflects wider implications into the relationships between the

self and the other which determines who belongs and who does not (Yuval-Davis, 2011; Welply, 2015). Batul's account of belonging here is somewhat abstract and complex. Batul seems to reflect on what is expected of her and what she expects of herself – and demonstrates herself as a self-reflexive subject, asking "what should I be doing". Batul's comments imply that belonging is difficult to pin down, reflected in the multiple, rhetorical questions she asks which show that belonging is interrelated with a sense of self, moral attitudes and behaviours which are in a relationship between the subject and the 'other' (Butler, 2005).

It is worth noting that, at times, some participants struggled to express their views on belonging – "I don't have an answer" (Alaya), "I can't really think of anything" (Peter), "I don't know what a 'sense of belonging' is" (Kaamisha), "I'm kinda stuck on that question so everyone can go first" (Haimi). The collaborative nature of the focus groups, though, meant that ideas and definitions were shared, built on, and contested by participants, for example, in the case of Haimi and Peter, after listening to others give accounts of their experiences and perspectives of belonging, they shared their thoughts.

Interestingly, some participants felt that they could not quite define belonging, or they did not know what the concept belonging was reflecting the potentially shifting and ambiguous, role belonging can play in our lives.

Kaamisha	[Glasgow] is where my mum's family is, so I like going there
Researcher	*do you feel a sense of belonging when you go there?*
Kaamisha	I don't know what a 'sense of belonging' is, but I like going there, and my mum says it is like one of my second houses cos I sleep there (Oakland, focus group 2)

Kaamisha's use of inverted quotations ("I don't know what a 'sense of belonging' is, but…") may indicate that she was repeating my phrasing, and she was not entirely sure what was meant by 'sense' of belonging. Instead, Kaamisha finds an alternative avenue to answer my

question by stating, “but I like going there…”. She refers to embodied feelings of enjoyment, familiarity and geographical space, “cos I sleep there”. Elsewhere in her account, Kaamisha adds that belonging is ‘just’ about “my life”. Her statement seems to suggest a sense of rootedness (rooting the definition in something more tangible).

Upon reflection, based on Kaamisha’s comment and the fact that some children struggled to express their views on belonging, it could be that this was not a term they would use, and, for some children, belonging happens (and participants spoke about belonging) without labelling it as belonging. Thus, belonging is perhaps a limiting term as children do not always think along these lines. It could be argued that children’s non-responses, silences and admissions of not knowing what belonging means could indicate that belonging was not a term used in school frequently as they were not familiar with it (I return to this point later about school belonging in this chapter).

It is noted, however, that the children’s seeming ‘off topic’ answers (e.g., I don’t know what a ‘sense of belonging’ is, but …”), not understanding the researcher’s questions (e.g., “I’m kinda stuck on that question”), and the ‘non-answers’ or ‘silences’ (e.g., “I don’t have an answer”) with regard to my questions around belonging (as framed by the research questions) are not seen as (only) the beginning of a more abstract account, or as children ‘not-yet-understanding’ the terminology (although, in some cases children did seem build on and learn from each other’s definitions). Indeed, staying with the children’s meaning-making and interpretations here provides some theoretical and methodological insights. A similar point is made on page 107 with regard to a recognition that children gave non-abstractable accounts of belonging and connections with material objects ‘before’ they spoke more abstractly about belonging and identity (as in, as the workshops progressed), however, this was not to say belonging as possession and materiality was not an important aspect of the findings.

Alaya’s response of “I don’t have an answer” could be interpreted in various ways. One possible interpretation is that the questions I asked about belonging might not have resonated with Alaya, suggesting that the concept of belonging may not always be observable or relevant to their life experiences. While it is often theorised in the literature that everyone ‘belongs’ in some way, children may choose to remain silent or not answer questions related to belonging which implies they do not immediately have anything to say

about the topic. Indeed, 'silences' are not an omission of voice/ meaning, they can be purposeful, and silences can happen in the non-answers, the avoidances, the tangents, the pauses and breaths (Mazzei, 2003). It was also observed that silences/ 'non-responses' served to redirect the questions onto others – for instance, Haimi said, "everyone else can go first". Perhaps this indicates a curiosity in hearing others' responses, or time needed to gather one's thoughts, or, not wanting to answer could suggest that nothing notable came to mind and that answers to the questions on belonging were not particularly urgent or self-evident (they'd rather talk about something else), which is an important reflection to make in itself.

This could all be interpreted as children 'undermining' the research as an exact linguistic mapping of the research questions, which also speaks to the theoretical framework and reveals methodological insights. Firstly, the participants' attention to non-abstractable accounts of belonging, for instance, Rose's comment about "feeling belonging" (p. 111) denotes that belonging can be touched and sensed in a material way, which, for Rose this was through familiarity with certain spaces/ things and highlights the importance of social-material dimensions of belonging.

Secondly, for Butler, the subject emerges under conditions which limit its capacity to give complete accounts of itself and render itself knowable and transparent to itself and others. This "opacity in our understanding of ourselves" (2005, p. 20) occurs through inherent sociality and a history of ourselves and our bodies that we cannot fully know. So, extending Butler to the data, this relates to the fact that it was difficult to 'pin down' and define what a 'sense of belonging' was for some participants. According to Butler, we give accounts of ourselves 'again and again'. This notion is evident in the comments made by participants who, at first, either expressed confusion about the concept of belonging in their lives or refrained from answering the questions. As the discussion progressed, and they were perhaps influenced by their peers' responses, they articulated their perspectives on belonging. For Butler, if you know your origins, you are stuck in your story. This relates to how children can transcend fixed identities and describe themselves, and their connections to the notion of belonging, in complex, ambiguous and agentic ways that can encompass material dimensions of belonging, 'non-answers' and silences etc. Thus, engaging children's voices, their interpretations and experiences of belonging through discursive methods,

provided a rich account of their lived experiences and social worlds (Clark, 2001; James, 2007). Indeed, the participants were agentic and creative in their responses, which is also perhaps a testament to the positive relationships fostered between participants and researcher during the workshops (which I also discuss in section 8.1).

In sum, these first three sections have offered an introduction to children's views of belonging on the material, symbolic and affective relationships and attachments with people, things and places. Children's discourses on belonging were mobilised along social, imagined and material lines, articulated through their everyday practices and conversations (Youkhana, 2015). The next part of this chapter explores children's narratives on the relationships between inclusion and belonging and perceptions and experiences of inclusion at school.

5.4 Relationships between inclusion as belonging - being included and belonging part in peer groups

In both schools, children shared their experiences of inclusion as being about 'being included' in social situations and friendships, as seen in the examples below.

Izzy	inclusion is when you get to be included in different situations, people not being mean to you about stuff
Peter	it [inclusion] means being included in things I think, like er taking part (Oakland, focus group 4)

Aadila	so like inclusion to me is making sure no-one feels left out and everyone's happy
Faruq	inclusion means erm like when someone's playing a game and they look lonely and you're like 'oh do you want to play with me', and they like 'yeah'

Usman like include people in a game and let them play with you … inclusion may be like letting people be your friend (Westfield, focus group 4)

Kaamisha also commented, arms in the air with excitement, “[inclusion is] playing with people, boom!”. This implied she thought the question was simple: inclusion is about playing with friends and included people in social groups.

Haimi offered a slightly different perspective, for her inclusion was about feeling she is ‘needed’ somewhere. Haimi said, “so inclusion to me means like where I’m needed, like for example, like if someone’s struggling with maths and they need me I’ll come”. Elsewhere in Haimi’s account she mentioned that “sometimes I belong in maths session[s] because I like maths”. Participants often interconnected the terms belonging and inclusion, such as Fareeha who write a post-it note (figure 7 below), “the word inclusion means to me that it’s mine like the book belongs to me!”.

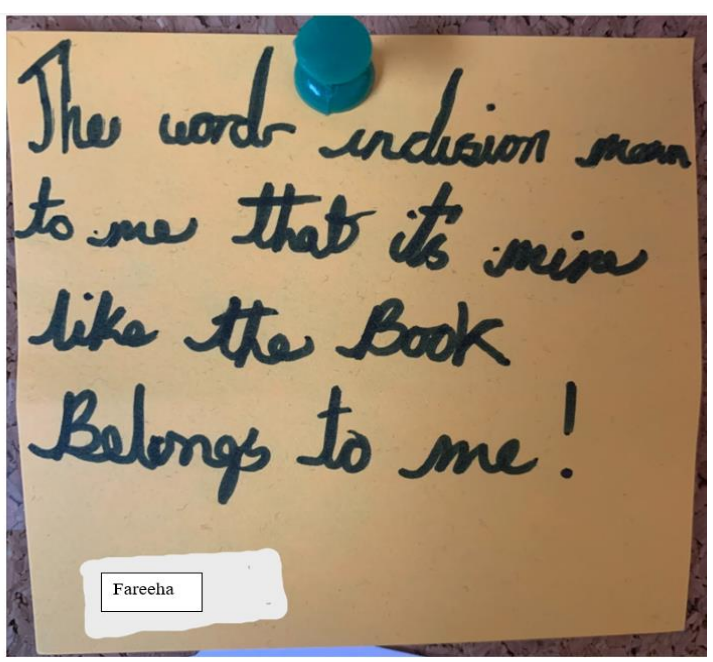

Figure 7: Post-it note by Fareeha

Kaamisha’s account, as she shared in our conversations in the focus groups, constructed inclusion as belonging to somewhere, something or someone, such as parents – “I think inclusion is like when you belong somewhere or if something belongs to you like Rose says

she belongs to her parents". Furthermore, Batul gave account of inclusion as belonging to her religion.

Batul	to me inclusion means like er you feel like you belong in some place, so like er for example me I belong in a religion, and like everyone belongs in a religion too
Kaamisha	not everybody
Jessica	not everybody
Batul	well some people don't belong in a religion but that's still erm [pause]
Researcher	*they belong to err no religion?*
Batul	yeah yeah, and for me yeah that's technically what belonging means to me (Oakland, focus group 4)

In the excerpt above, Batul commented that "everyone belongs in a religion" which Kaamisha and Jessica quickly refuted – "not everybody". Batul then said, "well some people don't belong in a religion" and implied that demonstrating "no religion" is still a part of belonging. She implied 'but that's still [religion]' in other words, being atheist or 'non-religious' is still a group or social location that one can belong to. This moment of reflection, a re-orientation of her account, was interesting. Seen through the lens of Butler (2005), this quote could indicate that not only is one's story always in a condition of relationality as in, through an encounter with another one seeks to understand and elaborate on who one is, but also accounts 'break down' in the face of a you. One reason that Butler points out is that the subject is 'dispossessed' of its story the very moment the subject brings it into existence (p. 36). Thus, my interpretation of Butler here relates to the idea that Batul's perspective was contested by her peers which caused Batul to be reflective in her account.

Batul begins by saying "this is what *inclusion* means to me" and then ends with "that's technically what belonging means to me" – she interchanges inclusion and belonging. Perhaps Batul misinterpreted the question and thought we were talking about experiences of belonging. Nonetheless, it is possible that Batul felt that in order to describe inclusion, her experiences related to the idea of belonging was relevant. Indeed, for Batul, and other

participants (above), belonging was a concept that could be used to express their ideas and experiences of inclusion in wider aspects of their lives. This raises some methodological implications to consider regarding whether participants' interconnected perspectives on belonging and inclusion were influenced by their awareness of the project's aims. For example, when explaining the project, I often used the phrase "belonging and inclusion", which may have influenced participants' discussions. Additionally, we initially discussed belonging in the first set of focus groups, in later focus groups, we shifted our focus to school inclusion. As a result, participants may have drawn on previous conversations related to belonging when discussing inclusion.

5.5 Considering the school context – children's voices on school inclusion and belonging

So far, this chapter has discussed how children conceptualised belonging and inclusion in their wider lives. The final section of this chapter explores children's narratives on their perspectives and experiences of belonging and inclusion at school including relationships with teachers, friendships, and navigating schools as a newly arrived learner.

5.5.1 Children's perceptions on the presence and degrees of belonging and inclusion at school

During the focus group with Baha, Imram, Aasab and Fareeha (Westfield), they shared that their school talks about school belonging occasionally. When asked to elaborate, the children conceptualised school belonging with concrete materials, such as 'pencil case' and 'water bottle'. Aasab added: "I feel like this is my school, I feel like um I can bring anything like um and I like teachers like my mum when I go [to high school] I feel like I'm going to miss them a lot".

During the focus group with Kaamisha, Sarah, Rose and Yesenia (Oakland), the participants seemed to have a positive perception of the school's efforts to promote school belonging. Rose explained that she feels this way because she "goes there 24/7… it feels like all day".

However, some participants were unsure about ideas about school belonging and had few responses, for instance, Aadila said "I can't think".

While several participants experienced a feeling of inclusion and connection with their school, which they expressed by claiming that they 'belonged' to the school and have good relationships with their peers, there were others who did not associate the term 'belonging' with their school experiences. This was demonstrated by Aadila, who added a post-it note to the pinboard (figure 8 below).

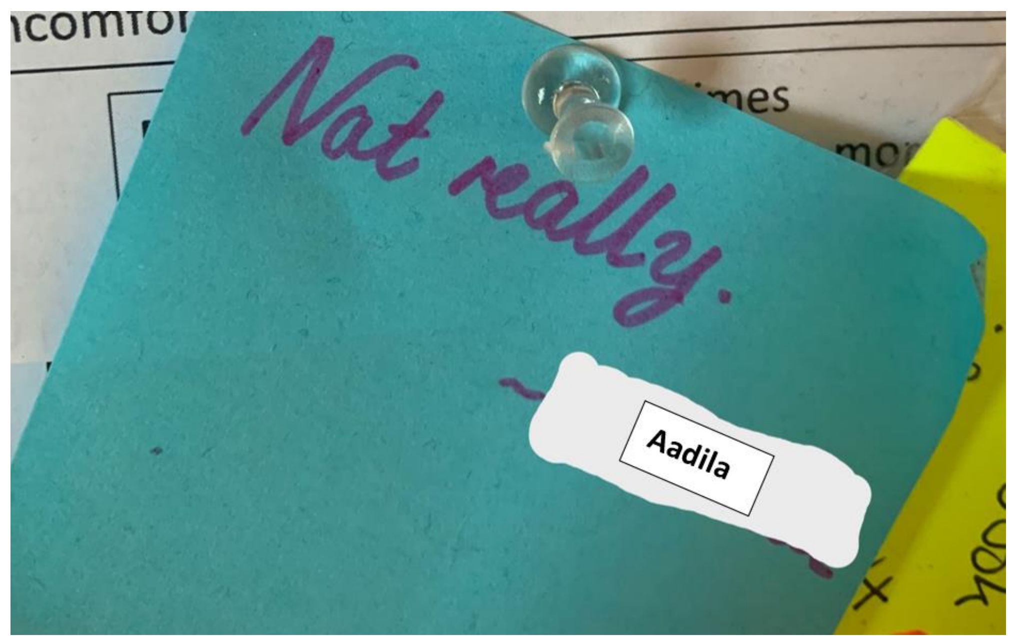

Figure 8: Post-it note by Aadila

Aadila elaborated on her point here, wrinkling her nose and tilting her head, she explained that: "I don't feel a sense of er you know, I truly belong here, it's not that this place is bad but when I feel like I belong to some place, I feel a connection". Here Aadila used a discursive buffer "it's not that it's a bad place" to soften her point. She felt that to 'truly' belong somewhere there must be a closer personal and affective connection. At Westfield, Asman provided a somewhat similar account of school belonging, stating that: "I feel belonging to my teachers because they're nice and support me … (but) I don't belong to them". Asman's account of belonging seems to relate to a sense of ownership (as others had mentioned) – and she raises the point that she feels she does not "belong *to* them". From these accounts, it seems that the term belonging was not always a term that participants would use to

describe their relationships and daily experiences in school, instead, belonging was more associated with feelings of home, family, and heritage country, and aspects of their cultural and religious identities (Chapters 6 and 7).

In their narratives around school inclusion, children had mixed responses. Some participants felt that their school is inclusive, and they experience a sense of belonging, while others have expressed negative or neutral feelings towards school inclusion.

Researcher	*does this (inclusion) get spoken about at school?*
Dayyan	yes!
Faruq	I guess by teachers
Aadila	a lot by my teachers (Westfield, focus group 4)

Some children expressed that they do not feel inclusion is talked about enough in school and that teachers do not prioritise it, and even when they do it is “not very good”, as Peter said. In particular, participants at Oakland School tended to feel more negatively towards teachers’ efforts at inclusion.

Aamilah	they (the teachers) don’t care about it … the teachers don’t care about it
Kaamisha	no they do!
Batul	no
Kaamisha	they do, but they do it in smaller groups not the whole class knows, but it’s not really a problem because in year 6 everyone has their own friendship groups
Batul	groups are because you’re included in a group
Kaamisha	but we didn’t like the group (Oakland, focus group 4)

As evidenced in this exchange, it is clear that there were different opinions among the children regarding their understanding and perceptions of inclusion. Aamilah expressed a

negative perspective and believed that the teachers did not prioritise it ("the teachers don't care about it"). On the other hand, Kaamisha believed that teachers spoke about inclusion with some children "in small groups". Kaamisha also felt that this was not an issue in year 6 as friendship groups have already been established. Thus, social groups and peer friendships seemed to be central for the concept of inclusion, and some children felt that this is how teachers approached the discussion and practice of inclusion. In the conversation below, Peter and Jessica expressed that teachers "try their best" to talk about and promote inclusion but "it's not very good".

Researcher	*is inclusion spoken about at school?*
Peter	they try their best, but it's not very good
Jessica	mm [agreeing] they try their best, but it's not very good
Researcher	*can you tell me more?*
Peter	they talk about it in assemblies sometimes but they don't make it very clear 'cos like with receptions or year ones doing it, it wouldn't be very clear for them (Oakland, focus group 4)

Peter felt that the reason why "teachers try their best but it's not very good" is because they fail to convey ideas about inclusion in a way that is easily comprehensible to young children who might not be familiar with the terminology being used. Elsewhere in the workshops, Peter expressed low levels of school belonging, and added a post-it note (figure 9 below) which reads, "school barely makes you feel included and [like] you belong there".

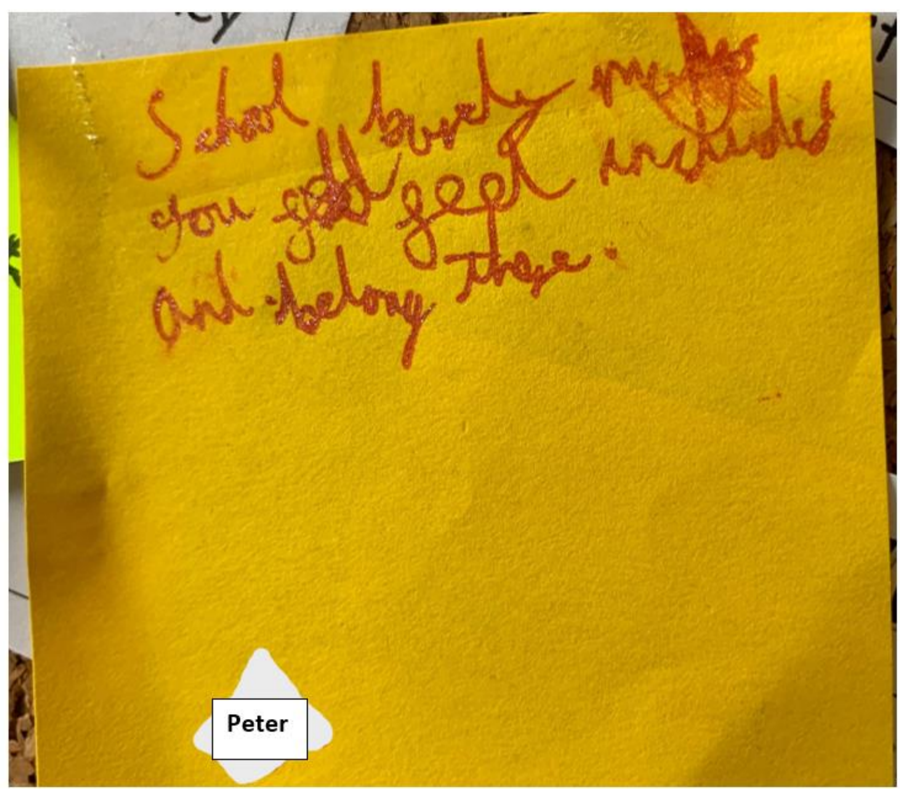

Figure 9: Post-it note by Peter

During the focus groups, I was also curious about children's views on learning and inclusion, which is often central in definitions of school inclusion (Allen et al., 2022; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Black-Hawkins et al., 2007). Participants, however, did not have much to say in response to this question about feeling included in lessons and accessing learning.

Researcher	*do you think inclusion could also mean being involved in learning, the lessons?*
Batul	yes
Kaamisha	everyone *does* learn (Oakland, focus group 4)

In this extract, Kaamisha's interpretation of the question was interesting; nodding her head, she said, "everyone *does* learn" and emphasised the word 'does' said almost to reassure me. This extract was one of the rare instances in which participants commented on inclusion as 'being involved' in learning and classroom, prompted by me, and even then, it was brief as the participants soon moved into talking about something else. From this, I suggest that children may view inclusion related to being 'included' in groups and friendships, and they

had less to say about accessing lessons. Elsewhere, though, participants spoke about wanting teachers to know about their learning and their knowledge (discussed in the section below) and Aminah, when talking about when she moved from Libya to her new school in England, spoke about the challenges of missing learning and feeling behind her peers. So, participants did mention some aspects of inclusion related to equal access to learning. Nonetheless, to extract this concept in-depth, I would have needed to engage in lengthy conversations with participants, but due to time constraints, I did not focus much on it during the focus groups.

The framing of school inclusion highlighted low levels of belonging and acceptance in school, for some children. Children's discussions of inclusion in this section reveal that teachers should speak more about inclusion and make it clear that they genuinely care about it. Some participants felt positive attachments to school, through familiarity and feeling supported by teachers (also teacher-pupil relationships are explored in the next section), but belonging was not always a term they would associate with school. From this, I argue that listening to children's voices can reveal important understandings about how children conceptualise, understand and experience inclusion and belonging, which may differ from the adult's perspective, for example, it seems unlikely that teachers would describe themselves as "not caring" about inclusion (Peter), particularly given the importance of inclusion for improved teaching and learning (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020) and its prevalence in policy in the UK (Department for Education, 2014b). This is reflected in both school's inclusion policies and practices. Riley et al., (2020), in their study on belongness in primary schools across England, highlight the notion of consistency, that is "children and staff speak about what goes on in the same way" (p. 14). Therefore, being on the 'same page' is a central factor in promoting school belonging.

Children's discourses in this section have revealed their conceptualisation and definitions of belonging and inclusion in school, and sometimes there can be a disconnect from how children are experiencing these concepts in school compared to the teachers and schools' intentions (although, I recognise I did not speak with teachers on this topic). In the next

sections I continue to explore children's perspectives and experiences of inclusion, including how they talked about teacher-pupil relationships (5.5.2) and the correct pronunciation of their names (5.5.3).

5.5.2 Teacher-pupil relationships

During the conversations about children's experiences and perspectives of school inclusion, I also asked them, 'What would you like your teachers to know about you?'. Some participants felt that their teachers already knew a lot about them.

Aasab	well erm Miss already knows about me 'cos I always talk with her, I want her to know err to know what's my favourite colour, what's my favourite food, but she already knows (Westfield, focus group 4)

Here Aasab highlights a positive relationship with her teacher as her teacher knows about her and the things she likes – 'I always talk with her'. These social spaces and interactions were about Aasab's hobbies and general interests. Children valued opportunities to talk with their teachers. Some expressed that they wanted to 'chit-chat' more with their teachers so that their teachers could know about their learning in school and home lives.

Aminah	I like to talk to teachers, it's because I want, I want them to know about my life, how do I do, and how do I learn. I want them to know everything about me … so they can, the teachers, can always talk to me [laughs]
Researcher	*so they can always talk to you yeah?*
Aminah	yeah, when I get lonely and things
Researcher	*do you like when your teacher talks to you?*
Aminah	yeah, like chit-chat (Oakland, focus group 4)

Aminah felt that it was important for her teachers to know about her 'life' and her learning in school. The teachers could also be important to support children's wellbeing, as Aminah points out, that she talks to her teachers when she gets "lonely". Similarly, Dayyan,

commented that he is “shy” – and he wanted to his teacher to know this about him. Furthermore, Yeva said that she wants her teacher to know “that I’m really weird!” and Kaamisha added, “that I’m human”. Research on promoting school belonging and inclusive pedagogies shows that social bonds, including teacher-student relationships, are important (Allen et al., 2018, 2021; Osterman, 2000; Pedlar, 2018). For example, Pedlar (2018) highlights the importance of fostering a supportive and caring learning environment, where teachers show interest in students, are sensitive to students’ needs and emotions, and prioritize high-quality teacher-student relationships. This is reflected in Aminah’s comment about how she “like[s] to talk to teachers … chit chat”. As such, the role of talk and pupils’ voices cannot be overlooked in promoting inclusive school practices and students’ sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2021; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020).

In the extract below, Fareeha and Kaamisha also felt that they wanted their teacher to know more about their learning and knowledge. This reflects an important element of inclusion – responding to learner diversity and planning inclusive and suitable lessons (UNESCO, 2005).

Fareeha	erm I would like my teachers to know like what I do, what I know and what I don’t know (Westfield school, focus group 4)
Kaamisha	I want them to know how clever or not how clever I am (Oakland, focus group 4)

In particular, children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds expressed a desire to share information about their lives in their heritage countries with their teachers, as highlighted in the conversation below.

Researcher	*so, you said you want teachers to know more about your life?*
Aminah	yeah
Fareeha	yeah
Aadila	yeah, exactly
Researcher	*what parts of your life?*

Aminah	like how did I live in my farm. Yeah, I got a farm!
Dayyan	woah, you live in a farm?
Fareeha	I have a farm
Aasab	I have a farm
Dayyan	was there cows? Pigs?
Aminah	no ‘cos they would die from the erm … Africa doesn’t have any pigs
Dayyan	wait, you are from Africa?
Aminah	yeah, Libya [participants talking over each other]
Aadila	back home in Bangladesh er he [grandfather] owns a lot of chickens and chicks (Westfield, focus group 4)

In this extract, participants enjoyed speaking to each other and sharing their stories, which began with some participants feeling that they would like to share information about their lives in their heritage countries with their teachers. It is worth noting that participants at Westfield School expressed this sentiment, while those at Oakland School did not mention much about their desire for their teachers to be aware of their backgrounds in their heritage countries.

However, some participants at Westfield felt reluctant about sharing things with teachers and felt they would be less likely to tell their teachers about their lives.

Imram	I would not say to my teachers, I don’t know why but I have a feeling [pause]
Researcher	*could you tell me more?*
Baha	I would just say to my friend
Imram	we can just say about two teachers that we played Fortnite [3] and that, but Miss would say you’re so young

[3] Fortnite is an online video game.

> and like that stuff … and because if we play the game then if they, if the teachers, tell our parents then we can't play the game again, that's the thing I don't like (Westfield, focus group 4)

For Imram, he felt he would not talk to his teachers about things he does at home or outside of school because there was a concern the teachers would tell his parents. As such, Imram and Baha expressed feelings of mistrust that their teachers would tell their parents.

5.5.3 Pronouncing children's names correctly

Participants commented on the challenges that arise when their teachers and classmates mispronounce their names, which often leads to feelings of peer exclusion, embarrassment and frustration in school, particularly when recalling being a newly arrived learner, as illustrated in the extract below.

Researcher	*what would you like your teacher to know about you?*
Aamilah	how to pronounce my name properly
Alaya	same with me
Haimi	that's for me the same (Oakland, focus group 4)

Additionally, in this whole group focus group, Jessica, Yesenia, and Yeva added that their teacher often confuses their names, especially the twins, Yesenia and Yeva, due to their similar sounding names. Alaya chose to represent her experiences in her storyboard (figure 10 below). The storyboard activity asked participants to 'tell a story of someone (real, fictional, both) arriving at a new school'. Alaya wrote on the back of her storyboard: "[it is] non-fiction, and it is about a girl, and she is in the classroom and her teacher gets her name wrong and she gets embarrassed". Alaya's peers can be seen laughing in the storyboard, which upset her.

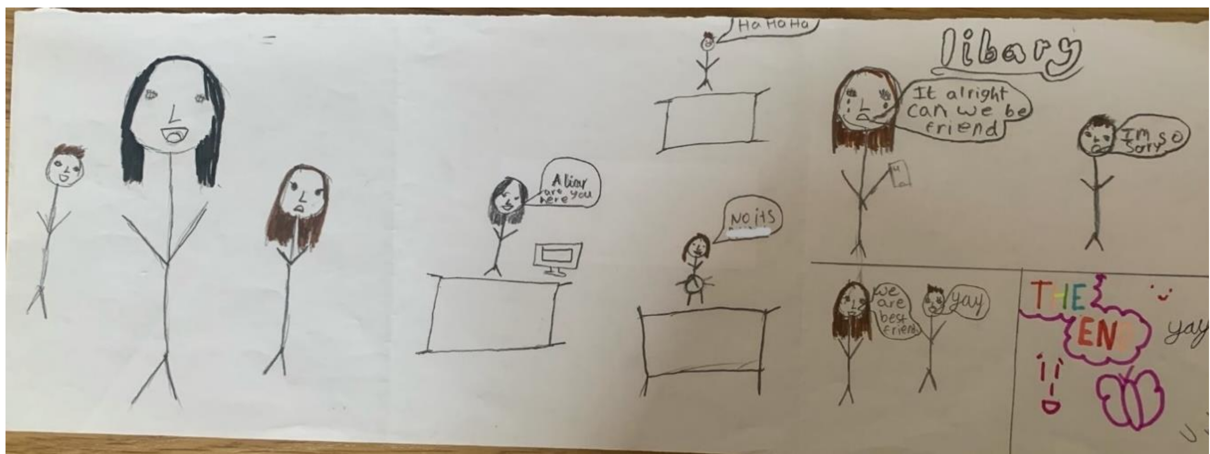

Figure 10: Storyboard by Alaya

In Alaya's storyboard, the children resolved these matters among themselves, and this relates to a key feature in most of the other storyboards. Children's depictions of being new in school or arriving at a new place and navigating making friends and feeling happy were always resolved by the end of the storyboard – I return to this point later in this chapter.

Similarly, at Westfield, Dayyan recalls how his class teacher got his name wrong on his first day, and he represents this in his storyboard (figure 11 below) – "[the] teacher says my name wrong!". Dayyan chose to draw himself separate from the other children, who were standing in groups, which perhaps represents his sense of isolation.

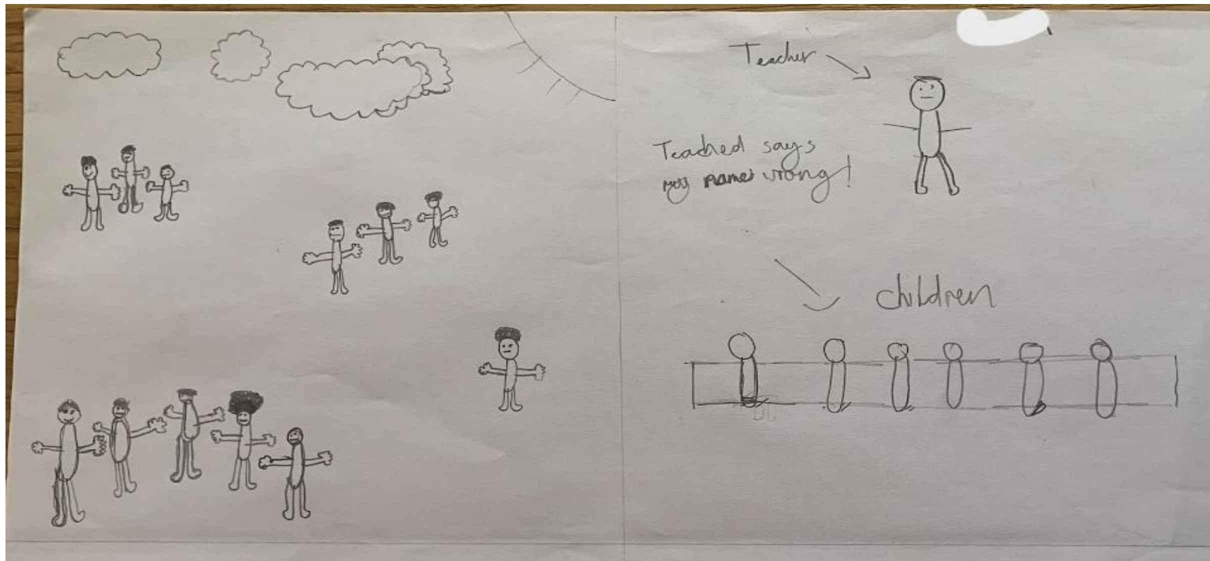

Figure 11: Storyboard by Dayyan

Indeed, issues around mispronouncing names were mentioned by several participants, in both schools, as reflected in their storyboards and focus group discussions, which suggests this was a significant matter for them. It also prompted further conversations around culturally 'different' names (e.g., the teacher joined in with the conversation here, while I was talking with a different group, and explained how names can be different in different parts of the world). This demonstrates the importance of recognising culturally responsive and inclusive practices, such as pronouncing children's names correctly, to help address feelings of frustration or outsidedness (and a lack of belonging) experienced by some children, particularly as newly arrived learners.

5.5.4 Inclusion, friendships and being a newly arrived learner

In this section, I will explore how children spoke about creating and maintaining friendships in school and feelings of inclusion and their experiences of being a newly arrived learner to school, which included navigating friendships and linguistic difficulties. Establishing and maintaining friendships was important part of positive feelings associated with school belonging and inclusion. Other studies have found that school-based peer relationships and acceptance is key for pupils' well-being and feelings of inclusion in school (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005; Osterman, 2000).

Firstly, on the pinboard, illustrated below, Faruq writes that inclusion is school was commonly spoken about and it is a "good way to make friends".

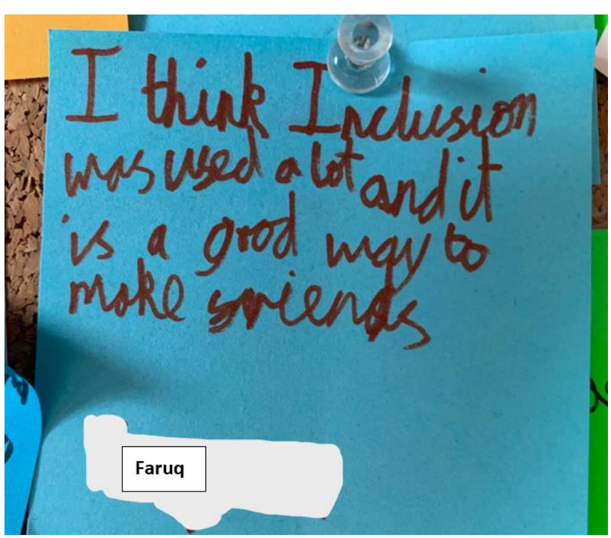

Figure 12: Post-it note by Faruq

Participants spoke about constructing and maintaining friendships at school as something that is important to do for their wellbeing and positive feelings of school. Often friendships and feelings of inclusion in school were navigated around play, in the example below.

Aasab	it was a breaktime and I don't have any friends, then er like when everyone look at me, some people come and just tell me 'do you wanna be friends', I say 'yes'
Faruq	today at lunch I had the ball and then some people just played with me, and that can kinda happen
Aadila	this erm kind of refers to Faruq's story, it was lunchtime and we went to the astro-turf and it was literally all boys so I didn't know who I was going to play with and Faruq asked me 'do you want to play' (Westfield, focus group 4)

Other studies have found that children's views on inclusion often revolved around gaining entry to play and having friends (Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010; Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019a). Jasmine, one of the participants expressed her thoughts about inclusion - "not being included can affect you mentally". Jones (2005) found that, children expressed a strong desire to be included in school and found that inclusive practices "have an important factor on the emotional well-being of the children" (p. 65).

Representations in the storyboards

Prompted by the storyboarding, participants recalled many emotions and feelings when moving to a new school including nervousness at meeting new people and going into the school, sadness and longing for the past, as well as excitement at the idea of making new friends.

Faruq	basically when I joined I felt lonely because I never knew anyone, erm except Fakhri … I had no one to play with
Jamil	when I newly came to this school like … I would kinda have sad stories … but now I have like funny stories or basically I tell

funny stories, if a trip, or playing with my friends, and the lessons (Westfield, focus group 4)

In the exchange below, both Faruq and Jamil echoed sentiments of being new at school and being 'lonely' and having 'sad stories' but now they have a friends and feel more positive about school. This echoes Manzoni and Rolfe's (2019b) study with newly arrived migrant learners in primary schools in the UK, which found that pupils felt nervous during the first few days at a new school, and, according to their participants, they found that making friends was crucial to feeling happy, settled and comfortable at school.

Furthermore, Aminah, who moved to the school in year 5 from Libya, shared her story and spoke about her drawing, which she said was "the story of me"

Aminah	once when I move to that school, well I was so nervous, literally, then er nervous and excited a bit, when I came I saw everyone err welcomes me here … then Miss Johnson dragged me to see the class
Dayyan	was Miss Johnson your first teacher?
Aminah	yeah … in year 5, I joined in year 5, I use everything, like er I was thinking that I don't know anything no more it's because I did not join the whole year, well no, like year 1, year 2, and year 3, and year 4 (Westfield, focus group 4)

Here Aminah felt that moving to a new school and navigating aspects of inclusion was challenging because she missed part of the school year and she felt she did not "know anything no more". This corresponds with her earlier comment, and other participants' comments, about wanting their teachers to know about "how they do", "how they learn", "what I know and don't know". This relates to the UNESCO (2005) definition of inclusion as "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education" (p. 13). Aminah felt aware that she was behind her peers, and this is often expressed in literature on how to support children from refugee and recently migrant

backgrounds in terms of language, learning and cultural barriers (de Oliveria & Jones, 2023; Demie, 2018; Oxley & de Cat, 2019).

In Aminah's storyboard (figure 13 below), we see her reservations about moving to the new school ("no, no, no, no…"). Aminah recalled feeling that on her first day her teacher "dragged" her to meet the class, which is an evocative word and implies how the experiences for newly arrived migrant learners can be overwhelming.

Figure 13: Storyboard by Aminah

Similarly, in Sarah's storyboard (figure 14 below), she represents feelings of being overwhelmed and her character must navigate the new school space, saying "wow it's huge" and "where am I?"

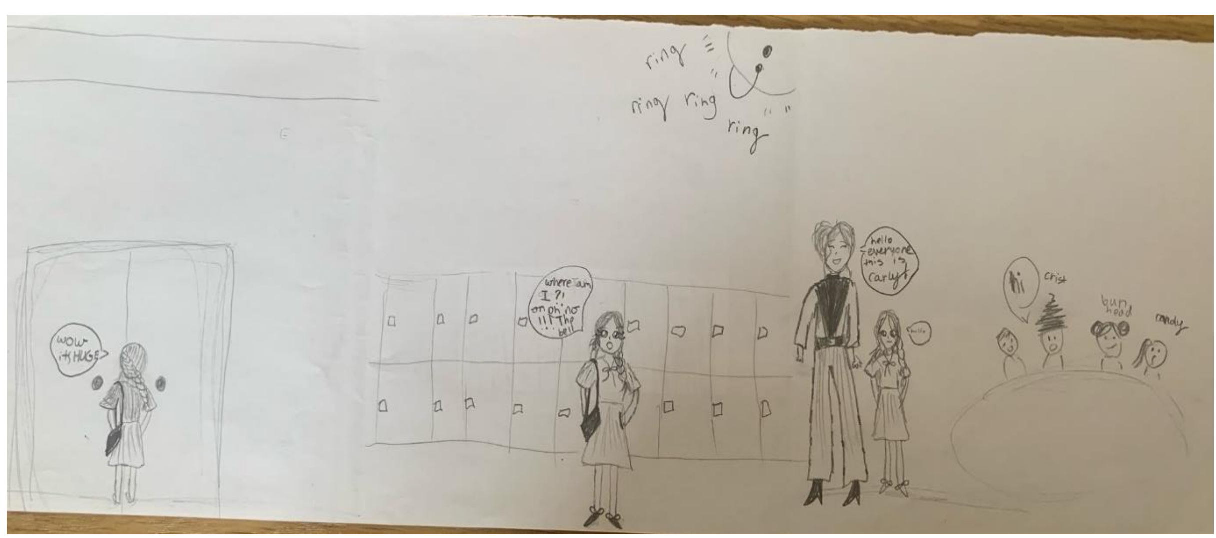

Figure 14: Storyboard by Sarah

Furthermore, the children's storyboards had a common theme of characters overcoming challenges and ending up happy and welcomed in school. This could have been because the children felt the need to resolve the story so that the storyboard could come to an end. Alternatively, it could be that they represented their own positive experiences of making friends and being happy in school through their characters in the storyboards. This could indicate that, in both schools, migrant children's experiences of school inclusion, particularly related to making friends, were positive.

In a study conducted by Frimberger et al. (2018), involving students aged between 16-20 years old from refugee and asylum backgrounds in Scotland, the authors reflect on the use of 'identities boxes' as a method. The study highlights that while the identity boxes can be a useful tool, the researchers had to be careful not to assume identity can be ‘summed up’ and easily represented through ‘identity boxes’ as they do not fully capture the complexity of young people's lives. Building on Frimberger et al’s. (2018) points, I recognise that representing their stories through 3 or 6 boxes on a storyboard cannot represent their identities fully, recognising the limits of being able to give “adequate accounts of themselves” (Butler, 2005, p. 50). Thus, when inviting children to create storyboards about ‘moving to a new school’, which they related to experiences of migration, travel, school experiences, and inclusion, I was mindful of the limitations of a linear, step-by-step representation of identity. Upon reflection, I appreciate that methods such as storyboarding might not always facilitate past and present, local and global, here and there understandings of children’s identities when seeking to appreciate the full complexity, ambiguity and becoming nature of children’s ways of being in the world. Therefore, echoing my earlier point, the potentially linear nature of storyboarding might have prompted the participants to represent their thoughts and feelings as having a ‘beginning, middle and end’ to their stories.

Furthermore, participants often included each other in their drawings (figures 15 and 16 below); similarly, Cassidy (2019) also found that many of the children’s drawings in her study depicted individuals talking to each other.

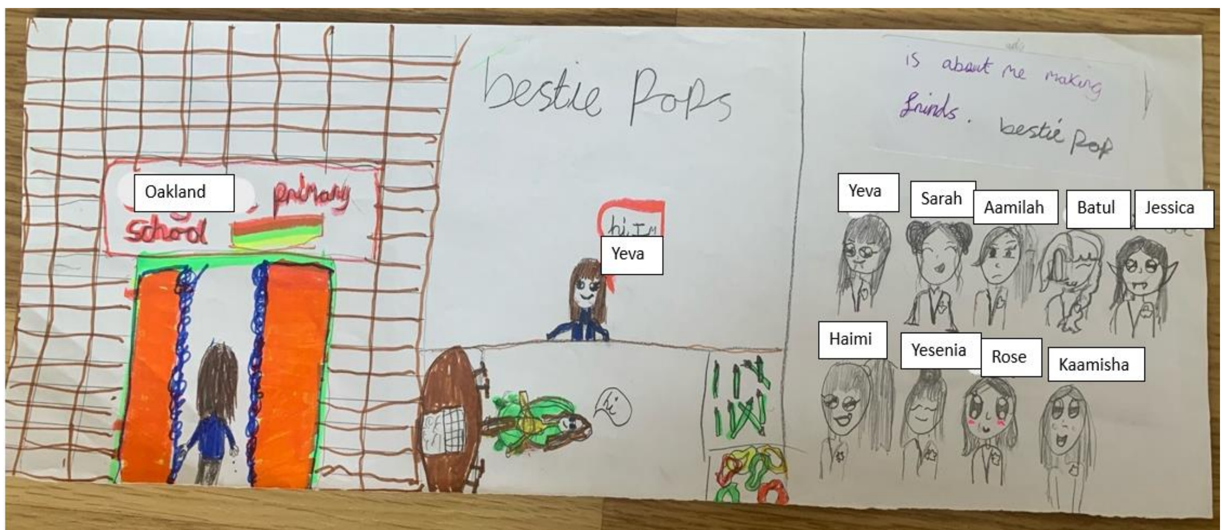

Figure 16: Storyboard by Yeva

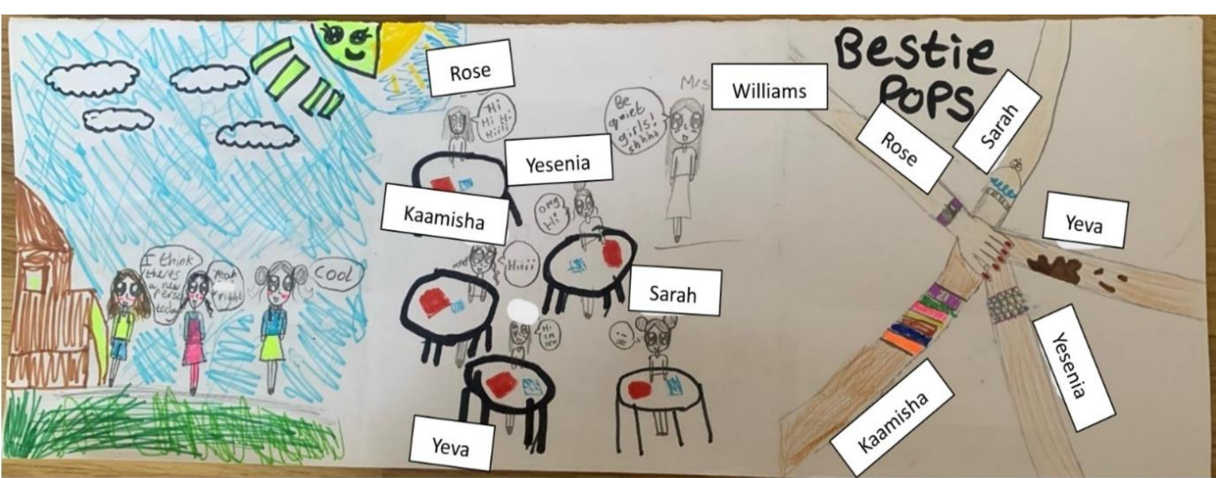

Figure 15: Storyboard by Rose and Kaamisha

Rose and Kaamisha decided to do a storyboard together (figure 16 above). The story depicted was a collective memory of when Yeva and Yesenia joined the school. In their own written words, they said, “it’s not entirely accurate but it’s as good as it gets!”. Participants drew on real experiences and also fictional aspects to create their storyboards about what it was like/might be like to move to a new school.

Representations of inclusion and friendships in the dance and drama

Additionally, ideas of making friends, being lonely, or being accepted were a popular themes in the drama and dance performances, which revolved around school experiences, such as,

arriving to a new school (Westfield) or characters who felt they did not belong and starting at a new ‘fancy’ school (Oakland). There was an interesting distinction in drama and dance performances in the two different schools. At Westfield, the children drew inspiration from their immediate surroundings, like their home or school. On the other hand, at Oakland, the children's ideas were based on global imageries and images that were not limited to their immediate surroundings. For instance, one group performed a talent show that showcased different cultural identities, while another group set their performance in various countries and time periods.

Furthermore, children’s narratives and representations in the dance and drama were sometimes about dealing with differences. In some instances, participants associated being new or difference with being strange or unusual. For instance, Aamilah referred to Batul's character as "weird" because she was a new person. This sentiment was also expressed in the following excerpt.

Researcher	*what are your ideas so far?*
Sarah	friendship
Kaamisha	yeah friendships, and then like no belonging the whole idea, and then Sarah wants Yeva to be a weirdo but I don’t [laughs]
Researcher	*what do you mean?*
Kaamisha	so they have a great friendship
Sarah	she’s [Yeva] is shorter than all of us
Kaamisha	that’s called diversity!
Sarah	but I think she’s like er a Reception [pupil]
Researcher	*how do you feel about that Yeva?*
Yeva	oh happy yeahh [sarcastically] (Oakland, dance and drama workshop)

It seems that in this extract participants wanted to represent the idea that Yeva and Sarah have “a great friendship” even though Yeva is perceived a “weirdo”. Notions of belonging were attributed to differences between each other.

Representations in the paintings/collage

Some participants depicted linguistic differences as an aspect of, or barrier to, feelings of inclusion in school as a newly arrived learner. The painting below, by Yeva, represents her feelings of ‘sadness’ and ‘confusion’ when she moved from Iran to the school in England.

Figure 17: Painting by Yeva

Yeva described her painting in the following extract.

Researcher	*Yeva, that looks really good, can you tell me about what you are drawing?*
Yeva	um [pause] I feel sad because er when I just came in this umm school I think it was my first day and [pause, deep breath] and I was like going for lunch and like [pause] I lost my band, and I didn't know how to say. The dinner lady said what are you having for dinner, I mean do you have your band, where is your band. So, I said I don't know then umm the dinner lady said you have to have a band to get lunch and then I went outside, and I was so sad then a dinner lady came and said umm are you having lunch I said no because I don't have my band then they gave me a band
Researcher	*ohh, so what is this bit happening in your drawing?*
Yeva	roses
Researcher	*ooh, why have you chosen roses?*
Yeva	because umm I try to make like black roses so like when I was sad … sooo in my old school, my old school was not here
Aamilah	it was in Iran
Yeva	yeah
Researcher	*oh right*
Yeva	in my old school, I was in there, I was in reception so there were big rose, like this big and tree, no not tree
Aamilah	bush, a bush
Yeva	yeah, the rose, the rose, the big rose

Researcher	*ohh like a flower?*
Yeva	yeah yeah, like pinkish, red, pinkish rose
Batul	did that make you happy?
Yeva	yah like really happy, pretty (Oakland, art workshop)

Yeva recalled the challenges she faced on her first day, and used symbolism of black roses to depict when she was sad, and pink roses to depict happy memories of her school in Iran. During an informal conversation one of the teachers explained that Yeva did not speak any English when she first arrived, and so it seems that she faced some challenges with daily school activities like ordering her lunch. I noted the pauses and deep breaths, suggesting Yeva was concentrating hard to formulate her ideas and recall story, trying to find the right words, in English, to express her story. Yeva got excited at one point, laughing with her friends, and decided to splatter paint onto her painting, perhaps demonstrating how she managed to merge laughter with the sadness of the missing lunch band and being unable to communicate this in English at the time. In Yeva's case, the absence of the band meant that she was excluded from the ritual and social practice of lunch.

Haimi shared her perspectives on when she helped Yeva (and her twin sister Yesenia) when arrived in school. In the extract below, Haimi implied the imperative for Yeva and Yesenia to learn English. Haimi drew on her linguistic repertoire of Arabic and English and knew that some words in Arabic are similar to Yeva and Yesenia's language, Iranian-Farsi. Haimi depicted this in her storyboard below and then described her storyboard in the extract below.

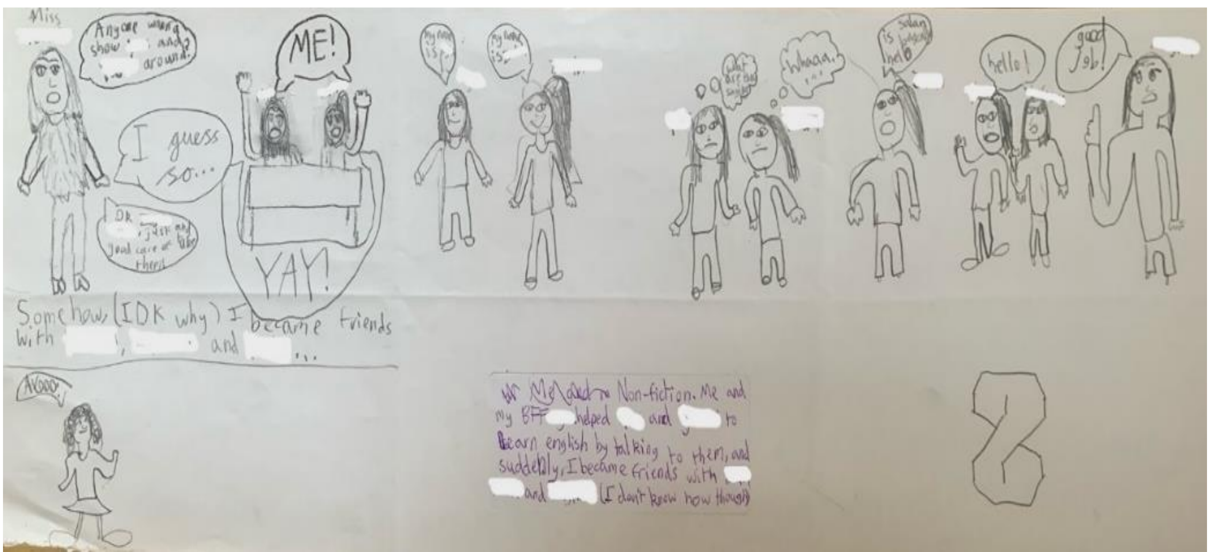

Figure 18: Storyboard by Haimi

Haimi	so er my old teacher Miss Fisher asked all the class if they wanted to like [help] Yeva and Yesenia get around school me and Mary were so desperate and we said we want to, so we said our names to them and in their minds they were saying what is this, what are they saying, and then the next part they started learning, and I say 'Salaam' is basically 'hello' cos they say 'Salaam', same with me, I say ''Salaam alaikum' we say 'Salaam alaikum' and they say 'Salaam' … and they started saying 'hello' cos me and Mary told them that 'Salaam' is basically 'hello', Mary said 'good job' (Oakland school, focus group 3)
	… suddenly we kind of taught them, we said 'Salaam' which is basically 'hello', so then they started saying 'hello' and then then as we talked to them a bit more, they started to learn English a bit more so now Yeva and Yesenia know a lot of English (Oakland, art workshop)

Here Haimi expressed how she developed a friendship with Yesenia and Yeva, in part through processes of translanguaging where Haimi and Mary taught Yeva and Yesenia some basic English phrases, such as "hello" which is similar to "Salaam" in their heritage language.

Haimi recounted that, as they continued to talk and interact, Yeva and Yesenia were able to learn more English.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed children's views and experiences of belonging and inclusion in school, and in their wider lives (Research Question 1). Children's narratives presented in this chapter were multi-faceted and they constructed belonging in different ways, which emphasises the complexity of these constructs and is reflective of wider studies which ask pupils to talk about (school) belonging (e.g., Jones 2005; Nichols, 2008; Shaw, 2019). Children spoke about material, emotional and symbolic feelings of belonging to people, places and objects, as well as feelings of familiarity, comfort, enjoyment and 'sense of self'. Furthermore, participants' initial responses to questions about belonging often centred on objects and possessions in their immediate environments (such as teddies, books, video games). In the context of this chapter, the personal and immediate objects in children's lives formed a part of their understanding of belonging. Therefore, children's worlds comprised of multiple interconnected forms of belonging – I continue to expand on the concept of belonging in Chapter 6 (which brings into frame notions of identities, otherness and difference) and Chapter 7 (which brings into frame notions of migration and home).

The chapter also revealed that children had a broad understanding of the term "inclusion" and shared their perspectives and experiences on various aspects, such as being accepted, forming and sustaining friendships, teacher-pupil relationships, and receiving support in their learning. These aspects were particularly relevant for newly arrived learners in schools, as depicted in the storyboards. These findings are consistent with existing research which highlights positive teacher-pupil relationships (Pedlar, 2018; Shaw, 2019; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020) and the importance of peer group relationships and friendships for inclusion (Gowing, 2019; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005). Black-Hawkins et al's., (2007) framework for inclusion involves 'access' and 'being there' – being able to access the physical classroom spaces as well as symbolically feeling 'part of' the class, being involved in peer groups, and being able to access the resources and curriculum. In this study, children spoke about being part of

peer groups, and accessing learning and school life (e.g., “I was thinking that I don’t know anything no more”, Aminah).

There was also the avenue of examining the interconnectivity of inclusion and belonging. It could be argued that belonging and inclusion look very similar in practice. On a theoretical level, to distinguish these terms, and keeping in mind the participants’ views presented in this chapter, school belonging can be conceptualised as “the connexion between components – beyond the legal obligation for inclusion for the policy, guidelines, and practices that might steer policy on equity and diversity. Belonging is the ‘how’ in transforming inclusion from a requirement to a practice” (Allen et al., 2022, p. 280-281). Therefore, school belonging can be associated with values, attitudes, personal affective feelings, sense of self and sense of 'other', while inclusion refers to how this translates into practice, policy, and classroom life.

Understanding children’s sense of belonging and how they give accounts of themselves can be important aspects of discourses around inclusion. As Allen et al., (2022) point out, belongingness is at the heart of inclusive practices. For some participants, belonging was a component in their explanations of inclusion, for example, “to me inclusion means like er you feel you belong in some place, so like er for example me I belong in a religion” (Batul), and “the word inclusion means to me like it’s mine like the book belongs to me” (Fareeha). Sometimes they interlinked the terms and used ‘belonging’ to describe what inclusion means to them. However, for some children, belonging was not always associated with school experiences. For instance, Aadila said, “I don’t feel a sense of er you know, I truly belong here, it’s not that this place is bad but when I feel like I belong to some place, I feel a connection”. Participants seemed to relate belonging more so to the affective feelings associated with ‘home’, family, and aspects of their cultural identity. This perhaps reflects a challenge for educators and researchers when thinking about promoting belonging (and providing inclusive school spaces) for children when the children themselves may not always associate the term belonging with schooling, beyond logistic familiarity, which they did mention (e.g., “it’s just because you literally go there 24/7”).

In summary, we can draw on literature around belonging to see some further connections to inclusion. For instance, belonging can be theorised as insiderness and feelings of being ‘accepted’ in a particular place/ group (e.g., Antonsich, 2010), and when talking about their

experiences of school inclusion (and recalling experiences of being a newly arrived learner), children mentioned negative feelings when their teachers, and sometimes their peers, did not pronounce their names correctly, causing them to feel like an outsider. This was expressed by Dayyan in his storyboard ("the teacher says my name wrong!") and he depicted himself standing alone while other children were in groups. This demonstrates the importance of building culturally responsive and inclusive practices, such as pronouncing children's names correctly, to help address feelings of frustration or outsidedness (and a lack of belonging) experienced by some children.

Goodenow (1993) defines school belonging as feelings associated with being accepted, respected, valued, and supported in school spaces. This chapter discussed how some participants spoke about inclusion through feeling 'connected' with their teachers through having opportunities to 'chit chat' with their teachers (Aminah), and they alluded to the value of feeling 'supported' when teachers know about their learning abilities, their personalities, and their cultural backgrounds. This chapter finds that schools should think how to foster a culture of 'care' with regards to children's perceptions of school inclusion and teacher-pupil relationships. Based on literature, without this element of 'care' (genuine investment) in school belonging cannot be fostered (Riley et al., 2020). Listening to children's voices can illuminate the challenges between school belongingness for inclusive practices in terms of how children define these concepts and how they perceive their experiences of these concepts.

The next chapter builds on the discussed outlined in this chapter to explore how children give accounts of their linguistic, ethnic, and religious identities interrelated to belonging and otherness in school, and this includes a discussion on how language identities play out in multilingual spaces and in the school context.

CHAPTER 6: EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL – CHILDREN'S ACCOUNTS OF THEIR LINGUISTIC, RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC IDENTITIES, AND PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERNESS AND DIFFERENCE

Face, skin

And how you look

But people don't bother

About that stuff; they do not care

It's just a friendly face

Not being mean

Accept

Figure 19: Poem 3 (Izzy)

For me

My religion

Where I feel I belong

And people who are similar

And you like being there

And taking part

Needed

Figure 20: Poem 4

Chapter 5 focused on participants' definitions, perspectives and experiences of belonging and inclusion, which related to Research Question 1. This chapter examines participants' interactions around language and attitudes towards multilingualism in the context of school, and explores children's accounts of linguistic, ethnic and religious identities interrelated with perspectives on belonging, otherness and difference in school.

This chapter focuses Research Question 2: How do children give accounts of themselves and talk about their (linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural) identities? This chapter also focus on Research Question 3: Through their narratives of belonging and inclusion (RQ1) and accounts of their identity (RQ2), how do children articulate and experience otherness and differences in relation to school and their wider lives?

As discussed in Chapter 3, children are positioned as subjective beings who are capable of actively (re)shaping their own sociocultural worlds, forming, negotiating, contesting their identities and belongings (Cassidy et al., 2022; James, 2007; Ní Laoire, 2010). Research has highlighted children's active involvement in processes of othering and belonging, constructing oneself in relation to the 'other' (Devine & Kelly, 2006; Devine, 2009; Welply, 2022). Further studies have provided valuable insights on children's perspectives and experiences at the intersections of ethnicity, religion, language and otherness (Evans & Liu, 2018; Ipgrave, 2009; Lewis & Demie, 2019; Welply, 2015, 2017, 2018). As discussed in Chapter 2, language diversity in schools in England has received increased attention, in terms of pedagogical strategies, resources and financial pressures, as well as negative framing in the media, for example (The Guardian, 2002). Research also highlights the monolingual ideologies deeply ingrained in the English education system (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Welply, 2022). All of this highlights the importance of listening to the views and experiences of children, to understand the ways in which they navigate language diversity in school, and how they give accounts of themselves, and others, in relation to experiences of belonging, differences, and otherness.

In terms of children's language practices and multilingual identities, this chapter draws on some of the aspects of 'translanguaging' (Chapter 1) to consider the discursive, creative and performative modes through which children expressed themselves and spoke about their identities and experiences of belonging. 'Translanguaging' relates to "the entire range of

multimodal resources that make up the speaker's full communicative repertoire – gestures, gazes, posture, visual cues, an even human-technology interactions" (García & Otheguy, 2020, p. 26). Translanguaging is also, as Li Wei (2018, p. 15) writes, "a practice that involves dynamically and functionally integrated use of different languages and language varieties, but more importantly a process of knowledge construction that goes beyond languages", which includes named languages, often embedded in nation-state ideologies and hierarchies. As such, a key aspect of translanguaging for this chapter is problematising the often binary and hierarchical orientations to language which places learners in distinct, seemingly immovable categories such as 'monolingual', 'multilingual' and 'EAL' learner, and often relies on the mastery of languages as the ultimate goal (Canagarajah, 2011).

The first poem in Chapter 6 represents Izzy's comments about school inclusion, racial differences and being accepted by others; this poem is almost verbatim as I wanted to write down Izzy's comment in poetic form to represent her insightful views. The second poem combines children's stories from several of the research encounters at Oakland and represents some of their views on belonging, related to religious identity, similarities with others and familiarity and comfort in places.

This chapter reveals that children positioned themselves, and others, as multilingual speakers, drawing on a range of linguistic and cultural knowledge, and children engaged with languages in curious, playful and celebratory ways in school. Children spoke about belonging and inclusion, and peer-friendships, through lines of difference and sameness. In this chapter I explore stories of othering and discrimination. Central to the discussion is the notion of co-construction: through interaction participants established, contested and reinforced their own, and one another's identities.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: firstly, I will discuss children's language practices at school and their accounts of their multilingual identities (6.1); secondly, I will consider how children engage with languages in curious, playful and celebratory ways in school (6.2); in the third section I will discuss children's accounts of languages at home and their heritage language practices (6.3); finally, I will present the children's narratives on religious, linguistic and ethnic identities and notions of belonging, or lack thereof, through constructions of differences and otherness (6.4).

6.1 Multilingualism and language practices at school

In this section, I will present the children's accounts regarding their language practices and identities at school. This includes their discussion on the languages they speak, the use of 'Modern Foreign Languages' (MFL) as part of their multilingual identities (6.1.1), and their perceptions of language expectations and norms within the schools (6.1.2).

Firstly, participants seemed to enjoy speaking about their heritage languages and the languages they know, for instance, one of the participants, Haimi, exclaimed "ooh can I start?!". Language diversity was valued and celebrated by participants in both schools, and crucially, participants often positioned themselves, and others, as multilingual speakers. Participants listed the languages they thought they spoke.

Batul	I have quite a few languages
Aamilah	I can speak a few too (Oakland, focus group 3)

Fareeha	I speak Urdu, English err Punjabi and I'm learning more languages (Westfield, focus group 1)

Yesenia	I can speak a bit of Turkey, I can speak Iranian, English
Rose	she can speak like five thousand languages!
Yesenia	a bit of Spanish, French (Oakland, focus group 2)

In these excepts, among other conversations, children often positioned themselves as multilingual. When asked about the languages they speak, the children's responses were intertwined with stories of differences and comparisons to their peers, as seen in the two examples below.

Imram	I speak five
Baha	I can only speak 2-ish
Aasab	erm I speak English and Arabic

Fareeha	I speak Urdu erm and English and Punjabi
Fakhri	I speak English and Bengali (Westfield, focus group 2)

Aamilah	I can speak Bengali, French-
Haimi	oh yeah, I can speak kinda French too yeah, I can speak English obviously
Yeva	French, Spanish, Japanese, er Iranian, English,
Aamilah	I can only do four
Yeva	Turkey
Aamilah	Turkish
Haimi	I can only do like three (Oakland, focus group 3)

These children's accounts of the languages they speak were tied up in narratives of similarities and differences and comparing their multilingual competencies – 'I can *only* do one', 'I can *only* do three'. They used the word 'only' to seemingly downplay their language abilities and compare themselves to others who spoke more languages. For example, Aamilah said 'I can only do four' in response to Yeva's list of five languages. This pattern was observed in other participants too, such as Baha and Imram (above).

It is also interesting to consider how Yeva chose to list the languages she knows – French, Spanish and Japanese before English and her first language, Iranian-Farsi. While Yeva may have listed the languages as they came to her mind, it is also possible that she intentionally highlighted the less obvious ones first to showcase her language proficiency. This is illustrated by the fact that earlier in the focus group, Aamilah mentioned Yeva's background ("hers [Yeva] is really interesting … she's from Iran … so English is her second language"), indicating her peers (and myself) might have already known about her language abilities in English and Iranian-Farsi. Although it is important not to overanalyse the order in which participants listed their languages, it raises interesting questions about the perceived significance of certain languages and the relationship with language proficiency and recognition from peers.

In the focus group, Haimi commented that, “I speak Bengali, obviously this language, a little bit of French, a little bit of mandarin”. Haimi’s comment that she can “obviously speak English” reflects a wider discourse expressed by participants, such as Batul’s comment below.

Batul	okay I speak French er Algerian, I can speak er what else?
Haimi	English?
Batul	well yeah, oh yeah English, a bit of- er no I’m not gonna count that, erm I think more languages (Oakland, focus group 3)

Perhaps this reflects normative language practices that implies speaking and knowing English did not always count as part of their identities as multilingual speakers as it was perceived as the norm. In this extract, Batul mentions that she speaks “a bit of” a language but excludes it by saying “I’m not gonna count that”. This perhaps reflects Batul’s thoughts about which languages she wants to count in her linguistic repertoire and how certain languages can hold more significant social and global status.

Indeed, at times, children compared their knowledge of one language with that of another in their linguistic repertoire. At other times, participants expressed a noticeable lack of differentiation between languages they know and speak fluently and the languages they briefly encounter, such as the languages they know through friends or are learning at school as part of MFL instruction. I argue that this was part of their peer culture in the workshops to demonstrate linguistic abilities and value their own and each others’ multilingual identities. This finding reflects Dressler’s (2014) study, investigating linguistic identity with young children in a German bilingual program in Canada, which found that there was a narrative surrounding language practices that meant even ‘knowing’ a few words of a language still counts and these languages they know shapes their identity as multilingual learners. Similarly, Welply (2022) found that participants listed languages and there was a desire to emphasise multilingualism. This is interesting given the spatial and time differences between my study and Welply’s study, which was conducted in primary schools in England (and France, in the case of Welply) almost 10 years apart. I theorise that this type of

discourse was a way of relating to peer culture, and to the symbolic representations of language – locally and globally – encountered through peer group relations and peer culture (e.g., films, music, anime), as exemplified in the extract below.

Yeva	I speak kinda like Cardi B[4] … I speak kinda like American, I really speak like Americans
Aamilah	she speaks like Americans
Batul	aw so do I
Aamilah	too many American shows change them
Batul	I act American do I?
Aamilah	yeah
…	
Yeva	I speak Spanish French, Japan
Haimi	Japanese [correcting Yeva]
Aamilah	she watches too much anime
Yeva	noo I don't [laughs]
Batul	I love anime
Aamilah	I love anime
Yeva	I can say 'hi' in every language I know
Batul	Konnichiwa
Yeva	yeah Konnichiwa
…	

[4] A female American (ethnic background is West Indian and Dominican) rapper/singer.

Aamilah	okay I can speak Bengali, I mostly speak Bengali I can speak a bit of Hindu because I watched Hindi films
Yeva	oh yeah, I can speak Hindi too kind of (Oakland, focus group 3)

Children's narratives demonstrated that language, youth culture (such as films and anime) and positive peer group relationships were interlinked. Interestingly Yeva's list of the languages she can "speak ... kind of" included Japanese and Hindi, influenced by her peer's language knowledge and heritages. Furthermore, Yeva lists the languages she speaks ("Japan"), and Haimi corrects her ("Japanese"). Elsewhere in the focus groups, Aamilah also corrected Yeva's comment, saying she speaks "Turkish" not "Turkey". It seems that Yeva is often corrected by her peers for her linguistic 'mistakes' – in both of these cases Yeva did not verbally address this. These extracts highlight how children express their range of linguistic repertoires, drawing on youth culture and peer group friendships, to blur the boundaries of who is a speaker of certain languages that extends beyond monolingual speakers and heritage language speakers.

In a later workshop, in a conversation between Baha and Jamil as they sat at a table completing their artwork, Baha stated, "I was born English" and Jamil replied, "I was born Urdu". Urdu is a linguistic identity, and perhaps that is the same for Baha and English. This raised an interesting point about children's perceptions about 'being born' into a linguistic identity.

The pinboards added an additional dimension to the analysis of the languages spoken by the participants, offering insights into their identities and peer relationships, for instance, at Westfield, Aadila, Fareeha, and Linda chose to revisit their accounts of language identities by (re)listing the languages they speak (figures 21, 22 & 23 below). Some participants were unsure about what to write on the pinboards, which led them to re-write the answers they gave in the focus groups on the post-it notes.

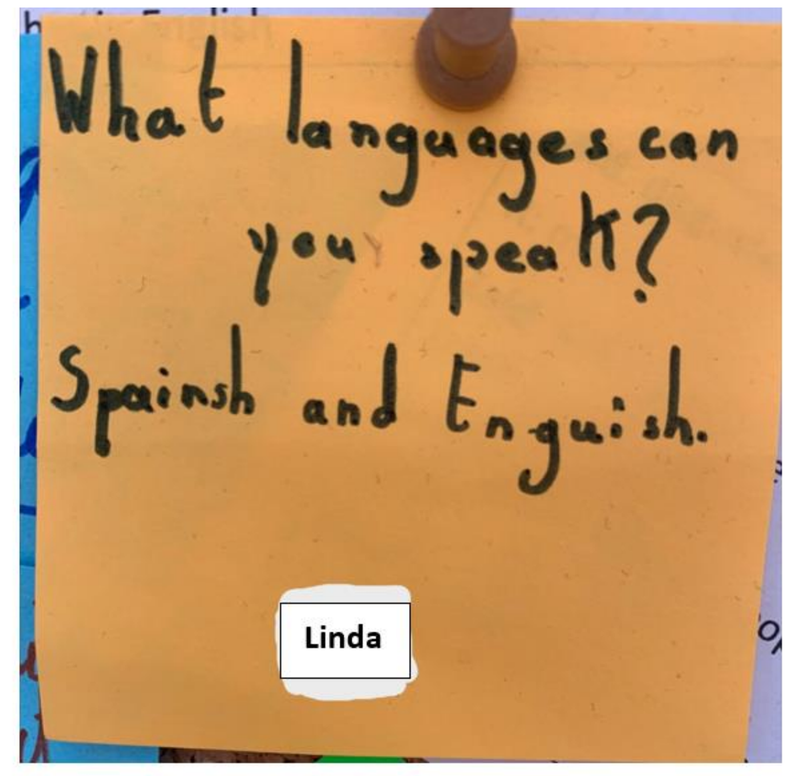

Figure 21: Post-it note by Linda

Figure 22: Post-it note by Aadila

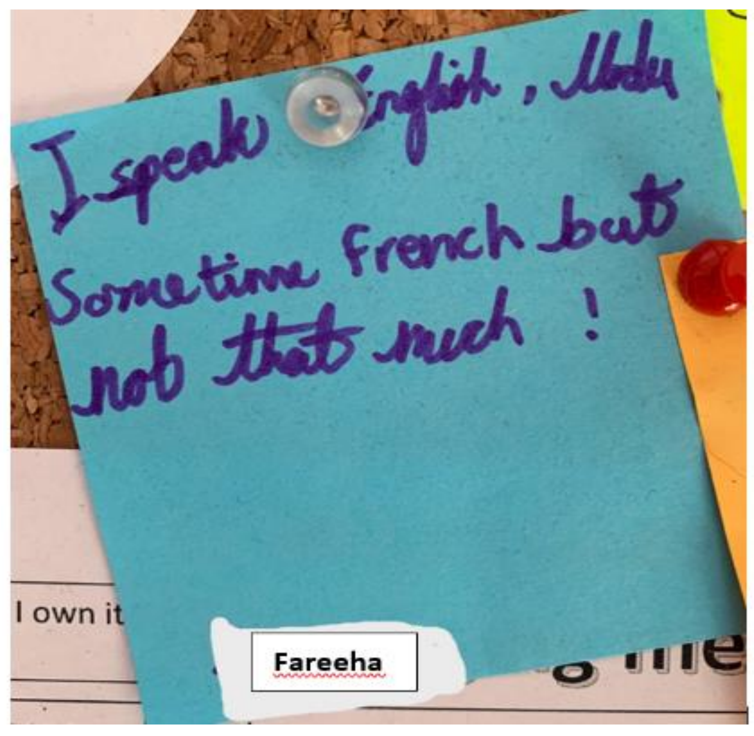

Figure 23: Post-it note by Fareeha

The pinboards were an opportunity to revisit and reconsolidate accounts of language identities and representations. Kaamisha re-read her account where she explained how she speaks some Arabic because "the Qu'ran is in Arabic". Kaamisha then added a post-it note on top of this comment which said, "I speak English to[o]!", implying she felt that this aspect was not captured in the pinboard (figure 24 below).

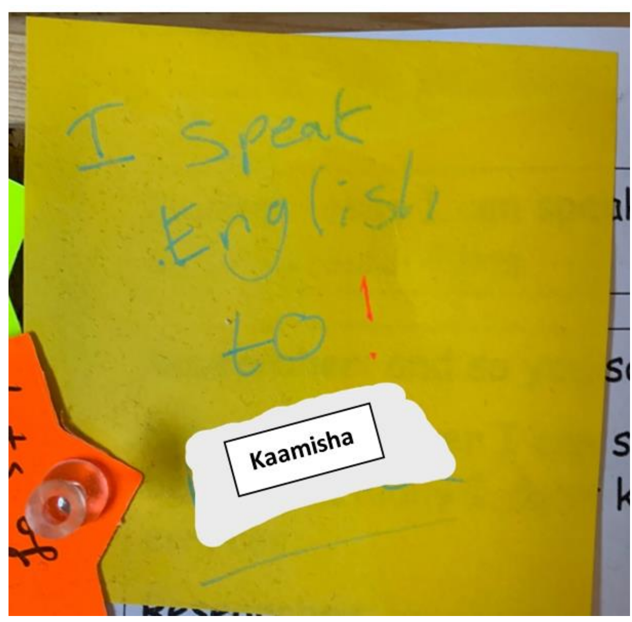

Figure 24: Post-it note by Kaamisha

Sarah expressed that she speaks "more English" compared to in the past where she would speak "a lot of Japanese" at home. During the co-analysis pinboard activity, Sarah added a note to her comment from the focus groups, emphasising that - "I still speak lots of Japanese".

Researcher	*so do you speak Japanese at home?*
Sarah	I used to speak a lot of Japanese with my mum … but now I speak more English (Oakland, focus group 2)

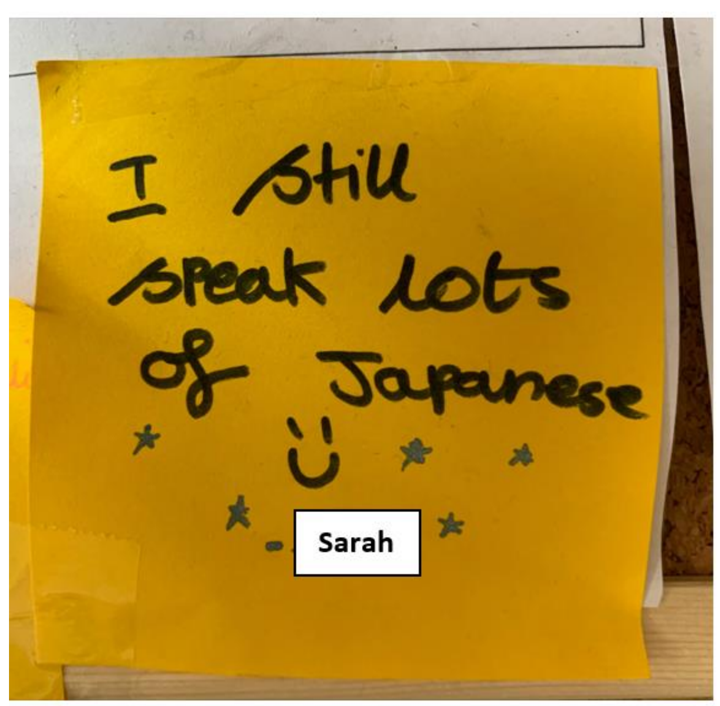

Figure 25: Post-it note by Sarah

The accounts of children on their linguistic abilities and identities sometimes shifted and were reiterated depending on the context and method (focus group, pinboard). There are examples where participants' perspectives and stories of belonging and identity changed, for instance, Sarah's account of herself and her linguistic background was re-storied and re-orientated. Perhaps Sarah felt she had been represented incorrectly, perhaps her experiences of Japanese and English speaking at home had changed since the focus group workshop, perhaps her perception of what it means to speak "lots" of Japanese or English

had shifted. Sarah included smiley face and stars to her comment, implying positivity in framing her account of language.

Butler (2005) suggests that our stories are never singular, fully complete: "I can tell the story of my origin and I can even tell it again and again, in several ways… any one of those is a possible narrative, but no single one can I say with certainty that it alone is true" (p. 37-38). Representing children's voices on the pinboards posed a challenge from a methodological standpoint, as it was contingent on the space and only allowed for the selection of key phrases and conversations. As such, the pinboards may not have captured the complete conversation or sentiment, as exemplified by Sarah's and Kaamisha's use of the pinboards to modify their accounts and reposition certain aspects of their linguistic identities. The nature of clarifying meaning and retelling their accounts through the co-analysis pinboards and different methods, allowed for multiple, ambiguous and creative narratives of language identity to emerge. Indeed, accounts of the self cannot be easily captured, which relates to MacLure's (2009) assertion that the "insufficiency of voice" can "allow people to mean more than one thing at a time; to fashion mobile and nuanced readings of situations; to connect with others despite not knowing exactly 'who' they are themselves" (p. 98).

6.1.1 The relationship between MFL and language identity

Since 2014, MFL teaching has been a statutory requirement of the Key Stage 2 curriculum in England, which aims to raise the language competencies of young learners in preparation for secondary schools (Finch et al., 2020). Children in this study expressed a positive attitude towards language learning in school, for example, Haimi said, "I wonder if we're doing French today? I'm excited!". In both schools, French was the chosen language for MFL lessons. For children from both migrant, immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds, MFL learning was considered a part of their multilingual identity, alongside with English and heritage languages, and this was evident in the way they spoke about their language learning experiences at school.

Kaamisha	I speak English, I know a bit of Urdu and Punjabi er I can read Arabic, I know French because Miss Harris is teaching us

…

Yesenia	… a bit of Spanish, French
Kaamisha	we're learning French
Yesenia	er yeah, learning French (Oakland, focus group 2)

Aasab	and I speak French, I'm not really good in French, but I speak a little bit
…	
Baha	actually I know three ish because we are learning French in year 6 … at home I speak Urdu err Punjabi, kinda French, I'm learning that, er Arabic and Spanish and English (Westfield, focus group 1)

Asman	I speak Italian er English and Arabic but umm we are learning French (Westfield, focus group 2)

Therefore, children listed French alongside the language they speak or are learning which highlights an ongoing multilingualism where participants 'work on' their languages. This was the case for Baha, who speaks English and Urdu, and MFL enabled him to position himself as even more multilingual. He commented, "I can only speak two ish … English of course and I can speak er I'm not *that* good at Urdu". He then remembers about MFL and quickly states "actually I know three ish". Furthermore, children from non-immigrant backgrounds who did not speak languages other than English at home often mentioned MFL learning as part of their linguistic abilities.

Amy	I just know English
Izzy	we are like learning languages at school
Alaya	yeah like French (Oakland, focus group 1)

Rose	erm I know English [pause] and French because we've been doing it (Oakland, focus group 2)

Izzy reminds Amy that 'we are learning languages at school' which affords Amy and Izzy positionality as multilingual speakers.

These findings correlate with Costley et al's., (2020) study on monolingual and multilingual pupils' language proficiency and attitudes towards MFL instruction in England, finding that children had positive attitudes towards MFL. Costley et al., (2020) found that, monolingual children commonly mentioned French (MFL) whereas the multilingual children did not tend to include French in their list of known languages – "This may suggest that multilingual children were clearer about what knowing a language actually means and were more aware that they knew very little French yet" (p. 652). However, my findings did not show this correlation between 'monolingual' and 'multilingual' speakers. In fact, some participants articulated that they knew French 'a little bit', but for others, French was listed alongside other languages, such as heritage languages, without discrimination.

The languages children learn in their MFL lessons in school was expressed as one of the languages they knew and formed part of their multilingual identities. Similarly, other studies have found positive attitudes for language learning in MFL classrooms (Bower, 2019; Chambers, 2019; Costley et al., 2020). However, studies show that the current curriculum and policies in England might not always reflect this, for instance, children in England are offered limited MFL learning, often as little as 30 minutes per week (Board & Tinsley, 2017), and teachers have expressed difficulty with successive policy changes and a crowded curriculum (Dobson, 2018). It is important for teachers, leadership teams and policy makers to consider how to effectively use MFL pedagogy in linguistically and culturally diverse schools (Finch et al., 2020). By doing so, it can shed light on the broader role of languages, inclusion, and identities in primary schools and promote further opportunities for translanguaging pedagogies.

In sum, this section discussed how children listed the languages they knew, sometimes not discriminating from ones they were proficient in and only knowing a few words. They positioned themselves and others as plurilingual speakers. Children gave accounts of

themselves in relation to the language identities of others – and sometimes this was shifting and re-iterated, facilitated through different methods. Children from both migrant and non-immigrant backgrounds mentioned how MFL learning was a part of multilingualism learning at school and part of their identities. For these children, foreign language learning at school is important, and affords them their positionality as multilingual speakers.

6.1.2 Language expectations and norms at school

The previous section discussed children's accounts regarding the languages they 'know' and how they positioned themselves, and others, within multilingual identities, and discussed MFL in relation to their multilingual identities. This section continues to examine children's language expectations and norms at school.

Both schools seemed to champion a multicultural and multilingual approach, typical of the wider national values. Both schools appeared to endorse a pedagogy that values multiculturalism and multilingualism, which is consistent with the broader national ethos. The schools' policies, information available on their websites, and my informal conversations with teachers all suggest an approach that aims to "celebrate individuality and diversity" (Oakland school website). Similarly, Westfield School policy emphasises the importance of appreciating "the diversity and richness of the cultures of the United Kingdom and the wider world" (Westfield school website). Examples of this 'multilingualism' that I observed were multilingual signs around school and multilingual staff members. The school curriculum also included notions of cultural differences. An example observed during fieldwork at Westfield School was an English lesson where teachers asked children to critically look at the negative representations of 'refugees' and 'migrants' in the media and newspaper tabloids. I sensed that this in some ways informed Dayyan's views in his storyboard. When I asked Dayyan about how his character was feeling he said, "disgusted… because of the way they treated him… he was a refugee, so they treated him badly". Furthermore, in the case of Oakland School, teachers mentioned their desire to support my project because they wanted to know more about how they can support the pupils as they noticed an increased in the number of newly arrived migrant learners into the school and the community in recent years.

Firstly, some children expressed uncertainties and assumptions surrounding language and perceptions of otherness. The extract below, for example, highlights the complexities between children's accounts of language, nationality and school.

Sarah	now I speak more English
Kaamisha	'cos you go to an English school
Sarah	and I have-
Kaamisha	English friends
Sarah	except Yesenia (Oakland, focus group 2)

Participants appear to attribute speaking English with attending an English school, implying the implicit emphasis school places on English and which languages are promoted and valued. Kaamisha and Sarah also associate speaking 'more English' to having 'English friends', which implies that English is spoken by peers and supported friendships. Further to this point, 'English friends' could mean English-speaking friends or friends with English nationality, and this is an interesting distinction because, as I will discuss in Chapter 7, very few participants from both immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds described themselves as 'English'. During the conversation, Sarah excludes Yesenia as one of her 'English friends' – Yesenia does not say much in response to this. I noted down her response in the fieldwork journal and was partly captured on the audio recording: 'Yesenia appeared to gasp at Sarah's comment, as though she was insulted, or pretended to be insulted, and Yesenia, Sarah and Kaamisha then laughed'. It seems, then, that this comment was taken lightly, but Yesenia reaction to the comment suggests that she felt singled out in some way. It was interesting to reflect on why they felt Yesenia was not an 'English friend'. Drawing on other data to understand this, it seemed to be because Yesenia had recently moved to the UK and had recently learnt English, which set her apart from other children who were from immigrant or non-immigrant backgrounds. Language was a form of difference and intersected with migratory status, and the children's narratives were inscribed within wider socio-political contexts regarding belonging and language and national identity, in terms the relationships between having 'English friends' , attending an English school and speaking 'more English'.

Furthermore, in the pinboard activity, participants re-read the extract above. One of the participants wrote “+ Yeva”, meaning that both Yesenia and Yeva (twin sisters) were not positioned by their peers as “English friends”. Interestingly, Yeva added a post-it note saying, “I still speak English at home” (figure 26 below).

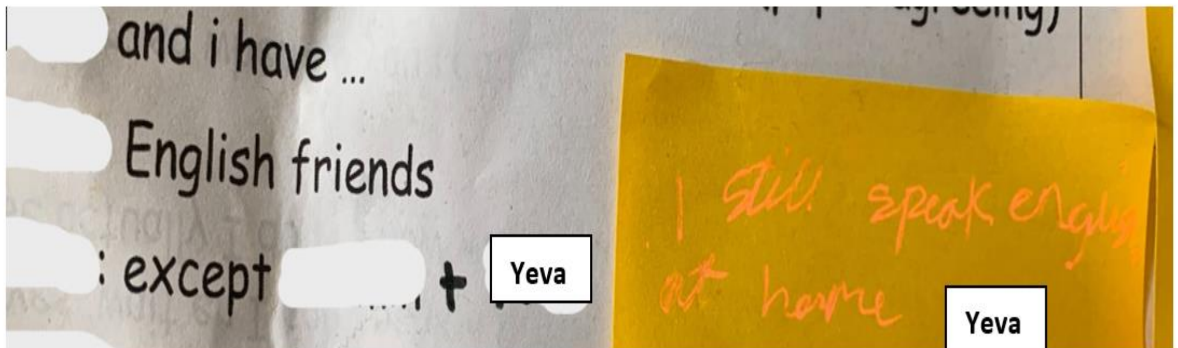

Figure 26: Post-it note by Yeva

Perhaps Yeva wanted others to know that she does not just speak Iranian-Farsi at home but English too. As such, her comment could be seen as an attempt to reduce the sense of exclusion and difference that Kaamisha and Sarah mention, highlighting that she shares a commonalty with her peers through the practice of speaking English at home. Therefore, the language spoken at home can have an impact on how pupils are perceived in school.

Elsewhere in their account, Yeva and Yesenia mention how they speak multiple languages, including Iranian-Farsi *and* English at home. In this extract, though, it seems that Yeva’s heritage language is reduced in favour of English which appears to hold a higher, legitimate status in school and amongst these pupils. However, the meaning behind Yeva’s comment is unclear, for instance, this post-it note does not capture the in-the-moment dialogues, gestures, and thought-processes that preceded and followed it which prompted Yeva to write this comment. Nonetheless, through the inclusion of multiple methods (pinboards and conversations), children were able to interrogate ideas, clarifying, adding more detail, or even complicating their accounts.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier in section 5.5.4, Haimi spoke about teaching Yeva and Yesenia English – “suddenly we kind of taught them, we said ‘Salaam’ which is basically ‘hello’, so then they started saying ‘hello’ and then as we talked to them a bit more, they

started to learn English a bit more so now Yeva and Yesnia know a lot of English". Haimi's comments somewhat reflect wider socio-political discourses surrounding the aims of schools to support migrant pupils' EAL and proficiency in English as the ultimate goal for migrants living in a host country. This implicit belief of a desire to learn English participates in a process of de-legitimisation of heritage languages, compared to English which appears to hold a higher, legitimate status. I tentatively suggest a tension here, that although participants position themselves and others as multilingual, this desirability is linked to having proficiency in English 'first and foremost'.

Meanwhile, at Westfield, although participants did not comment much on their language practices in school directly, the exchange below demonstrates an example of how some participants perceived languages other than English in school.

Imram	mine's an Urdu word, can't share it, mine is all in Urdu
Researcher	*your answer is in Urdu? Do you want to share it?*
Aasab	just say it in Urdu
Fareeha	I'll understand
Imram	the problem is I can't speak it when I'm in school, can I?
Researcher	*yes, here you can*
Imram	erm
Fareeha	you can tell me then I'll tell her
Baha	I'll try and translate it as well
Imram	okay then … (Westfield, focus group 1)

Here Imram asked permission to share his answer in Urdu to the question about his perspectives and experiences of belonging. Imram appears to express a monolingual attitude whereby he feels he can't speak Urdu at school – "the problem is I can't speak it when I'm in school, can I?". Imram seemed to express a distinction between home and school languages. This is reflective of other studies, such as Tyrell (2015), in a study on Spanish-speaking migrant children and parents in England on their language practices in

translocal home and school spaces, found that the home space was often where children could speak their heritage languages. Welply (2017, 2022) also found that there was a strong distinction between home and school languages, where children sometimes viewed school as monolingual spaces. Therefore, despite the schools' enthusiasm for supporting multiculturalism and multilingual approaches, children's narratives were sometimes inscribed in confusion surrounding monolingual school spaces. It is possible that Imram was hesitant to speak Urdu in front of me since I did not speak the language, and Fareeha and Baha offered to translate Imram's ideas. Interestingly, Imram was just as proficient in English as Fareeha and Baha, and so there was not necessarily a language barrier here, but rather the participants seemed to enjoy the possibility of translating for one another. Fareeha is subverting any ideas about being a place where only English is used as she is encouraging Imram to use his language. There were several examples where participants spoke to each in their shared languages other than English. This took place in the informal, child-centred spaces while they were participating in the creative art activities and talking amongst themselves. This switching between languages, particularly at Westfield School, created ambiguous and contested spaces where children spoke about language identities, differences and otherness – which I elaborate on later in this chapter.

It is also possible that Imram thought about the purpose of the focus groups, which was to engage in conversations to share their stories and feelings, and so he might have been questioning whether they could speak Urdu in the focus groups. This raises an important methodological point about the tacit language norms and expectations in the research process. Although I encouraged creative collaboration and pupil preferences for multiple languages and communication, perhaps, for some participants, the nature of focus group work (with an English-speaking researcher) meant that it was difficult to overcome these monolingual expectations about the place of certain languages in the research process. To give another example of this, during one of the focus groups earlier in the project, Batul asked, "can I speak some of them [languages]? … okay so the one I know most is Algerian, so let me speak it …". Thus, Batul felt she had to ask if she can speak her language (Algerian-Arabic), rather than more freely translanguaging between the languages she knows, which perhaps related to power dynamics in the research encounter and wider schooling, adhering to monolingual expectations and related power dynamics. This raised questions about what

is perceived as expected in terms of education and research spaces of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

Batul's comment can also be interpreted through the lens of Butlerian sociality. For Butler, narrating oneself or giving an account of one's story is always in a condition of relationality; it is through an encounter with another that one seeks to elaborate who one is – "'I' begin my story only in the face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account" (2005, p. 11). Thus, it is through the encounter with me (the researcher), in this specific context, that Batul navigates her account and chooses how she wants to articulate herself. For example, it is possible that knowing that the researcher does not speak Arabic, Batul may have wanted to be polite as she was keen to connect and express herself. According to Butler, accounts also concern a sociality that precedes and exceeds the time of one's being, for example, the social norms surrounding monolingualism and multifaceted language expectations and policies in school, in research, as discussed above. Arguably, Batul's multilingualism may have afforded her more 'agency' in this situation, given that she was the one who could decide to either enable or disable the conversation in Arabic; and she was able to choose whether to continue the conversation in Arabic and/or English. This point extends to the complexity of power relations as relational and shifting - 'power is everywhere' (Foucault, 1980), and, in this context, language proficiency in English as well as languages other than English could determine what additional information was/ was not shared.

In sum, this section (6.1) has found that children expressed complex multilingual identities and attitudes towards which languages belong in school. Children enjoyed speaking about languages they know, including their heritage languages and MFL, which afforded children positionality as multilingual speakers. Children's accounts were tired up in narratives of similarities and differences and comparing their multilingual competencies with others. This section has found that children mention that they 'possess' their own languages as a way of positioning themselves in relation to their peers, perhaps to assert their 'status' (as multilingualism was often valued by children) or to connect with others.

Despite schools expressing multilingual and multicultural practices, some children were unsure about the place of heritage languages and others help assumptions about

monolingual school attitudes which shaped peer-relationships. Children also spoke in shared languages other than English in informal conversations between peers. This section, like other sections in this chapter, has continued to explore children's attitudes towards multilingualism and the interactions participants had around language and notions of belonging in the context of the schools. In the next section (6.2), I discuss how children spoke about their language identities in playful and celebratory ways in school, before presenting children's narratives on languages at home.

6.2 Engaging with languages in curious, playful, and celebratory ways in school

During the workshops, it was common for participants to inquire about each other's heritage languages, and they shared and learned from each other about different languages, for example, at Westfield as Baha was doing his artwork, he asked Jamil, "what does [speaks Arabic] mean? And Jamil replied, "like er it means like 'oh my god', 'omg' basically". Additionally, Yeva shared about her language practices, including her first language Iranian-Farsi, and then Aamilah told me more about Yeva's background.

Aamilah she was born in Iran so her first language is erm 'n-Farsi'

Researcher *ohh, is that right Yeva?*

Batul speak in 'n-Farsi'? [encouraging Yeva to speak]

Aamilah it's like Arabic

Researcher *Farsi or with an 'n'?*

Batul 'n-Farsi'

Yeva what? No! [laughs]

Batul Yesenia says 'n-Farsi'

Yeva really?!

Haimi okay anyways, let's get to the point

Batul	wait say it, say it
Yeva	its ‘Farsi’
Aamilah and Batul	ohh (Oakland, focus group 3)

In this conversation, Aamilah mentioned that Yeva’s first language is “n-Farsi”. Perhaps Batul tried to explain their mispronunciation by saying that Yesenia, Yeva’s twin sister, calls it “n-Farsi”, which surprised Yeva (“really?!”). The children were often interested in each other’s stories, and linguistic and cultural difference was framed as interesting. Some of the participants were eager to share their friends’ stories, which they positioned as different to their own, as seen in the example below.

Researcher	*ah right, and where was your old school?*
Aamilah	in Iran [pause] she’s from Iran
Yeva	yeah
Aamilah	so English is her second language (Oakland, focus group 3)

Aamilah, amongst others, answered questions for their friends and shared stories and identities that highlighted symbolic differences between them, often framed positively, for example, elsewhere she expressed that “her [Yeva’s] story is so interesting”. As such, this indicates that the children were curious and positive about each other’s language identities and positioned themselves and others as highly multilingual (e.g., Rose commenting that Yesenia can “speak like 5 thousand languages!”). Upon reflection, I was conscious that those children with recent trajectories of migration - i.e., Yeva and Yesenia at Oakland school - were often the subject of conversations regarding multilingualism and cultural differences, compared to those from non-immigrant or immigrant backgrounds (children born in England and those born in another country but move to England when they were very young, and whose parents experienced immigration). As such, there was sensationalising (and albeit positive discourses) around recent migration which positioned some children as the ‘exotic’ and interesting other.

Furthermore, as part of their discussions on language practices in school, participants at Oakland School frequently expressed how they teach each other different languages.

Rose	err I know a tiny bit of Chinese because I used to have a friend, best friend called Anne who used to come to this school but she left and she was Chinese
Researcher	*so you learnt some of the language from her?*
Rose:	yeah
…	
Yeva	err a bit of Japanese
Sarah	I taught her […] she can say a bad word
Rose	she accidently told her!
Researcher	*it seems like you sort of teach each other and share your languages?*
Rose	yeahh (Oakland, focus group 2)

Yeva added a similar sentiment to a post-it note on the pinboard (figure 27 below) that reads that she would like her teachers to know "that I can speak different languages like Iran/ France/ Japanese (Sarah taught me) / English/ Spanish".

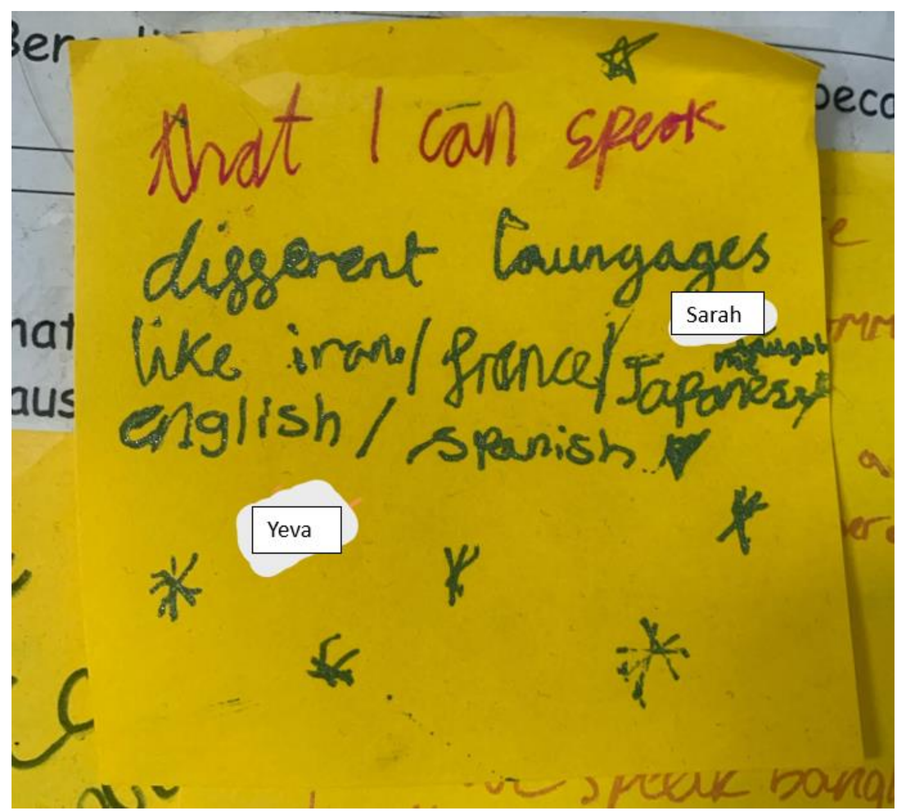

Figure 27: Post-it note by Yeva

These narratives reveal that children acquire language skills from one another in these translanguaging and multilingual spaces, often through peer-group relationships, and it seems that languages in school intersect with particular youth culture and belonging in friendships. These sentiments were observed at Oakland School, whereas there was a distinct absence of discourses around participants explicitly sharing, celebrating and teaching each other languages and heritage languages at Westfield School. In both schools though, the children also enjoyed sharing facts and information about their heritage languages and cultures. For instance, Aminah said, “Libya people speak a bit Italian … we say ice-cream, ‘i’ ‘ski’ ‘mo’, and ‘i’ ‘ski’ ‘mo’ is Italian”. And Aamilah said, “erm Bengali was originally Indian because er Pakistan was originally Indian”. As previously mentioned elsewhere in the discussion, children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds often demonstrate expertise and knowledge of their heritage languages and cultural practices. This observation is reflection in other studies with children from migrant backgrounds (e.g., Morgan, 2017; Hanna, 2020).

Furthermore, participants switched between languages in creative and purposeful ways, at home, in school and during the research process. Humour was an important part of this process, and they created their own fictional languages. The act of "playing" with languages and accents, and creating fictional languages, was a significant aspect of their friendships. In different ways, participants expressed playing with languages and making new languages. Kaamisha joked about how she thought her friend was speaking Spanish but “she was just making the entire language up!”. Batul playfully merged two English words together ‘nice’ and ‘mean’ to create ‘nmean’ to describe Aamilah’s personality. And Yeva spoke about how her and her twin sister, Yesenia, speaks a fictional language “that no-one else knows … we just say ‘fafafa’”. As such, languages were associated with the attraction of engaging in play, humour and imaginary performance between peers (Evans & Liu, 2018). In the conversation below, the participants were playing around with ‘babyish’ language saying ‘me no no’ to mean ‘I don’t know’. They mentioned that Linda used to speak in a similar way when she first arrived at school as she did not have a good understanding of English.

Researcher	*mm where has my pen gone?*
Dayyan	me no no
Asman	that is literally what i always say, me no no … Linda used to say it, ‘me no no’
Linda	yeah I remember
Fakhri	she came to this school she never understand English and she said me no no
Dayyan	me no English me no English (Westfield, art workshop)

Indeed, for some participants at Oakland, language narratives centred on humour with peers and imagining connections between languages. In the first half of the extract below, Sarah gets confused between Mandarin Chinese and mandarin the fruit, which the children found funny. For these participants, language could be a fun topic of conversation, open to getting things wrong. In the second half of the extract below, Sarah tells me that she remembers the Iranian greeting for ‘hello’, which is ‘Salaam’, by thinking of a ‘salon’ because they sound

similar. Here participants imagined connections between languages and compared words with other words.

Sarah	err what was it called?
Kaamisha	Mandarin? I know Mandarin
Sarah	Mandarin like the fruit?
Kaamisha	no, Mandarin Chinese! [laughing]
Sarah	ohh! [laughing]
…	
Researcher	*oh, what is 'hello' in Iranian?*
Yesenia	'Salaam'
Sarah	I just remember like 'salon' like getting your hair done
Rose	yeah, she just thinks 'salon', 'salon', 'salon' (Oakland, focus group 2)

Furthermore, the exchange below demonstrates how some children spoke in shared languages and playfully translanguaged between Bengali and English.

Haimi	okay me and Aamilah will have a conversation [speaks in Bengali]
Researcher	*could you share what you said?*
Haimi	okay yeah
Aamilah	so she said hi to me
Haimi	and then she said 'hi' and I said 'how are you' and I said 'I'm good' and I said 'what are you doing' and she said 'nothing I'm just talking to you' [laughs] (Oakland, focus group 3)

Haimi and Aamilah found their conversation funny, because of its simplicity and directness. They decided to re-write this exchange on the pinboards, which they wrote in Bengali and English.

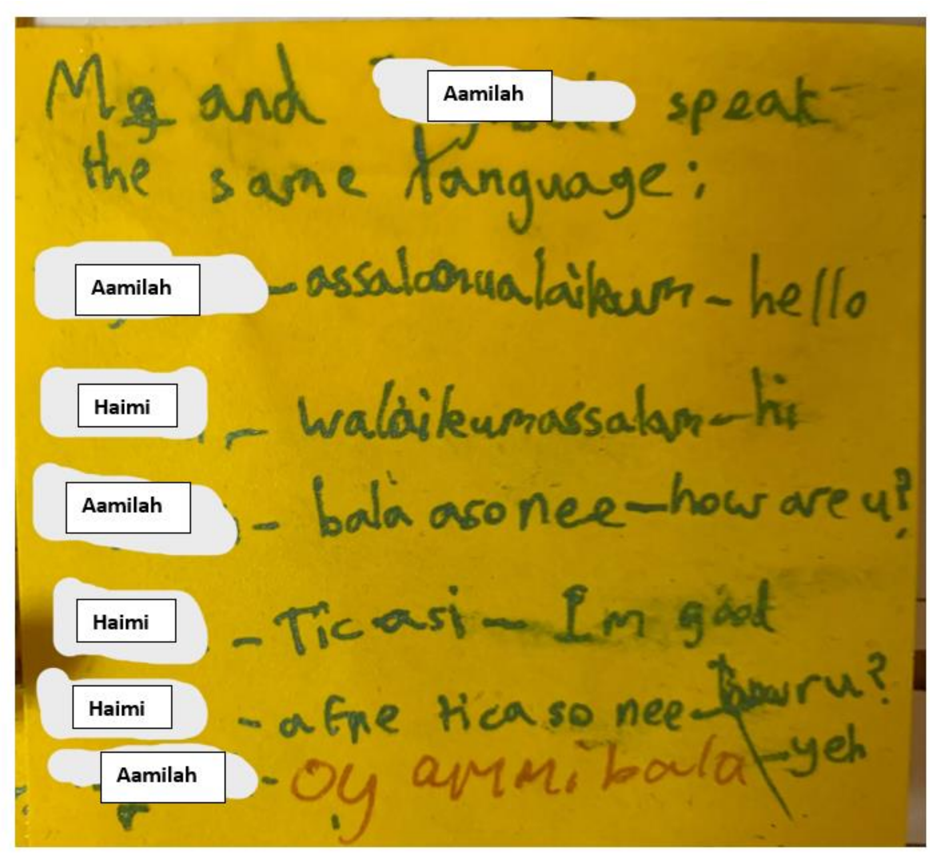

Figure 28: Post-it note by Haimi and Amilah (1 of 2)

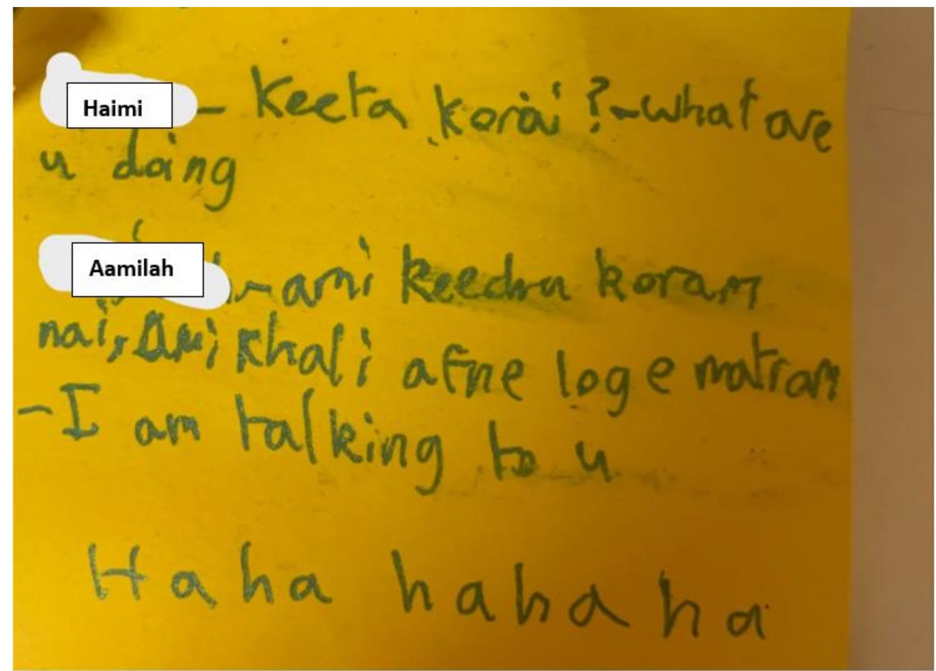

Figure 29: Post-it note by Haimi and Aamilah (2 of 2)

In school, the teaching of languages, either formally (MFL lessons) or informally (through peer group friendships), became sites through which identity was negotiated (e.g., Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Blackledge & Creese, 2008). These authors focused on complementary language schools in the UK and therefore the context is slightly different to my study as complementary schools often focus on discourses around heritage and language. Regardless, as the children's narratives above show, children appeared to utilise language teaching opportunities as a means of positioning and repositioning themselves and others (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Blackledge & Creese, 2008). In this section I have shown that children used language in playful, imaginative and humorous ways to facilitate friendships. Building on section 6.1 of this chapter, children seemed to teach each other languages and celebrate each other's languages and language knowledge. At school, children were curious about each other's language identities and positioned themselves and others as multilingual.

6.3 Languages at home and heritage language practices

Children's perceptions and experiences of their heritage language practices at home were varied, and children were able to describe their language practices at home and give accounts of their relationships with their heritage languages. To start with, Alaya shared that she speaks her heritage language (Urdu) at home with her mum because "my mum doesn't really know that much English since she was born in Pakistan, so I speak to her like that". Like Alaya, one of the other participants, Asman, expressed that her language practices were shaped by her parents' linguistic abilities – "mostly I speak a lot of Arabic with my parents but since my mum needs to learn her English and is in college um, I sometimes speak with her in English".

Fakhri expressed how he speaks certain languages to communicate with family members in their heritage countries - "I speak English at home, but sometimes when people from my Bangladesh call I have to speak Bengali". Fakhri's term "my Bangladesh" is interesting – perhaps he initially was going to say, "my country" and then switched to "Bangladesh", or he could have been expressing a strong sense of ownership and affective belonging with his country.

Furthermore, Kaamisha and Baha, in the extracts below, spoke about their feelings of responsibility to learn and speak their heritage languages.

Researcher	*so do you speak Urdu and Punjabi at home?*
Kaamisha	well my mum might say we should, er my mum wants us to start a bit more, but we don't really, cos we like say some words, cos like when we were younger we get in the habit of, like when we were learning to talk my mum might say one word and we still say, like in Urdu or Punjabi, and we still say that [pause] but er no not really, so yeah we don't really, well we don't really speak it, we know one or we speak a few but (Oakland, focus group 2)

Baha	so erm my parents speak English but for water in English I just say 'pani' and er [pause] yeah
Researcher	*so you say certain words-*
Baha	yeah yeah, certain words in Urdu … my brothers the same but I don't erm I don't really know any but then they (parents) always say to my sister to learn it when he's (father) the one who should be learning me because he hasn't taught me anything because when I learned how to ride a bike yeah, I just had to go and learn myself (Westfield, focus group 1)

Kaamisha recognised the differences between her attitudes towards speaking heritage languages compared to her parents ("my mum wants us to start a bit more, but we don't really"). Kaamisha reflects on how she used to speak the loss of heritage language proficiency as she gets older, which was a point expressed by other participants regarding the need to constantly speak languages to avoid 'losing' them. Participants in this focus groups, namely Jamil, Asman, Teresa and Fakhri (in focus group 2, Westfield) discussed the

challenge of losing languages if you do not continually practice them, for instance, Asman said, “it seems like I have forgotten all of my Italian”. These participants spoke about affective relationships and feelings of nostalgia with heritage languages and cultures.

Kaamisha and Baha expressed that even though they do not speak Urdu or Punjabi frequently at home, they still know a few words in those languages. Baha’s account points to some tensions between responsibility to learn heritage languages and he expressed some frustration about the responsibility he feels his parents have to teach him Urdu. This reflects wider findings in the literature on heritage language speakers’ experiences and attitudes towards parental language management (Weekly, 2020; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009; Zhu & Li, 2016). For example, Weekly (2020) found that children’s experiences were varied and children’s perspectives on heritage language practices may differ greatly from their parents’ beliefs.

Furthermore, Aasab and Jamil, in the extracts below, gave accounts of their experiences of navigating heritage languages at home. In our conversations, Aasab expresses how she and her family navigates language learning when Aasab does not speak much of their heritage language.

Aasab	erm I speak English and Arabic, but I don’t understand Arabic a lot because my mum and my like erm my whole family speak Arabic, but I don’t understand them that much … I speak in my house English cos like well like my mum and my dad know how to speak English and my family and all of them and used to err like don’t understand them when they speak Arabic, so I speak with them in English and they don’t always understand me … like my mum and my dad speak Arabic and like my sisters and brother we speak English with my mum and dad and they understand us
Imram	so if your dad is Arabic why don’t you speak Arabic?
Aasab	I don’t understand them
Imram	ooh (Westfield, focus group 1)

Aasab mentioned that she communicates in English with her parents at home due to her limited understanding of Arabic. Although Aasab felt that her parents “know how to speak English” sometimes she felt they “don’t always understand me”. Her account here suggests some of the tensions that children have around linguistic experiences within the home. Imram’s comment is interesting as he appears to question why Aasab does not speak Arabic much despite her parents’ cultural and linguistic background being Arabic.

In a similar fashion to Aasab, in the extract below, Jamil feels that speaking heritage languages at home can be difficult and confuses and ‘muddles up’ words in Urdu and Punjabi which causes some tensions between him and his mum.

Jamil	I can speak [pause] Urdu, English, a bit of Punjabi but it confuses me a bit with Urdu, so not a lot #
Researcher	*why does it confuse you?*
Jamil	cos it um Punjabi and Urdu are pretty similar so sometimes er I say for a Punjabi words Urdu so it confuses me
Researcher	*ah so sometimes you mix them up?*
Jamil	yeah yeah, I speak all of them at home
Asman	I don’t I don’t
Jamil	well not a lot of Punjabi cos my mum kinda gets angry at me
Teresa	why?!
Jamil	cos erm [pause] actually er basically whoever you're going from my parents they’ve born from like not Punjab in Pakistan so therefore er they don’t really speak Punjabi and then when I speak Punjabi I also muddle it up with Urdu so it’s really hard to understand and my mum doesn’t really like it (Westfield, focus group 2)

Jean and Geva (2012) found that multilingual children enjoyed speaking languages they were good at, and negative feelings were associated with lack of proficiency in their heritage languages, such as shyness, anxiety or frustration. Similar to Jean and Geva (2012), children

from migrant and immigrant backgrounds expressed negative feelings associated with a lack of proficiency in their languages, such as being uninterested to learn (e.g., Kaamisha), hesitation and confusion (e.g., Jamil and Aasab) or frustration (e.g., Baha) related to language heritage and parental management. Also, Fakhri and Alaya mentioned the responsibility to learn/ maintain language in order to communicate with family.

The participants' narratives on their heritage language attitudes and practices resonate with Butler's (2005) theory of ethical responsibility. In Butler's view, the subject is formed within passivity and a history of itself that is unwilled and unchosen – for instance, aspects of heritage language practices – and "this struggle with the unchosen conditions of one's life, a struggle – an agency – is also made possible, paradoxically, by the persistence of this primary condition of unfreedom" (Butler, 2005, p. 19). So, Butler constructs agency as beyond the gaps in the chain of citationality – the discourses, behaviours, and norms that assimilated and adapted from one person to another (Salih, 2002). Children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds navigated their heritage language practices through repetitions or breakdowns in the chain of citationality in terms of the norms and attitudes from migrant parent to child. This was apparent through the 'gaps' in their knowledge or the inability to speak fluently in their heritage languages (Jamil, Aasab, Kaamisha, Baha) which seemed to imply agentic constructions of their language practices which resonated in the ability to resist and reinvent inherited linguistic practices and parental management. However, at times, children (Alaya and Asman) articulated a responsibility and a desire to speak heritage languages with parents. From this, I suggest that children's heritage language practices can be conceptualised through processes of navigating the "unchosen conditions" (Butler, 2005) of one's emergence though multiple feelings of responsibility and communicative purposes, and frustration, confusion, and nostalgia associated with knowing/ not knowing their heritage languages. Indeed, children had varied experiences and attitudes towards learning and speaking heritage languages at home, which was perhaps reflective of the demographic of participants from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds and trajectories of migration.

Furthermore, theorisations on translanguaging presents a challenge to traditional scholarship on heritage language practices and maintenance as it challenges the idea of heritage languages and identities as unchanging and stable entities, inscribed in a colonial and perennial past (Blackledge & Creese, 2008; Mazzaferro, 2018). As such, children and

younger generations are seldom passive receivers of linguistic and cultural traditions and values. Mazzaferro (2018) points out that, "the transmission of past collective memory, including named languages, never precedes the construction of individual identities … individuals never act in isolation, but they are always involved in a relationship with others" (p. 102). Following this line of thinking, children's narratives on heritage languages, and indeed wider language practices, might not be about learning or maintaining some kind of distinct language, although, I do recognise that individuals do express the importance and value in speaking their heritage languages as a resource for meaning making and to their sense of identity (Blackledge & Creese, 2008). However, there is also a recognition of the dynamic and dialogic ways children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds might be engaging with their heritage languages.

6.4 Identities, differences and otherness at school

The first part of this chapter has explored the interactions between participants around language, translanguaging, and what this meant for the context of the schools and children's attitudes towards multilingualism. The next section continues to explore language by bringing into frame how children spoke about religion and ethnicity and unpacks forms of othering and difference and how this translated into children's experiences at school. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, forms of belonging, otherness, and discrimination based on cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic identities amongst children and young people from migrant and immigrant backgrounds has been well documented in research (Clayton, 2012; Devine, 2009; Devine & Kelly, 2006; Evans & Liu, 2018; Tanyas, 2016; Welply, 2018, 2022). Studies have examined how peer-group friendships between children are constructed through cultural and linguistic differences (e.g., Ipgrave, 2009; Rutland et al., 2012). Some studies found that children transcend ethnic and cultural boundaries as a marker of friendship (e.g. Devine, 2009). The findings in this section indicate that children orientated friendships towards discourses of sameness as well as difference and commented on the importance of navigating these aspects for belonging. These sections seek to interrogate further lines of difference and belonging through intersections of language, religious and ethnicity – to understand children's construction and their lived experiences.

This section begins with a discussion on how children navigate self-identification and belonging through discourses of difference (6.4.1), followed by children's narratives on perceived religious and linguistic sameness claims and friendships (6.4.2). Then, I will present children's comments during the research encounter on construction of otherness amongst peers based on religious, linguistic and ethnic identities (6.4.3).

6.4.1 Self-identifications and belonging through discourses of difference

This section focuses on how children defined belonging and inclusion and spoke about their experiences of these concepts through discourses of difference, and specifically, 'accepting' people who are 'different'. One of the participants, Izzy, felt that "to be belonging is like you fit in". Izzy conceptualised belonging through notions of inclusion and 'fitting in', and the phrasing of "to be belonging" was interesting too as it seems to imply a state of being, or something that you can be or have. Izzy went on to discuss stories she had heard about discrimination and racial differences in high school.

Izzy	I feel like with some people, but again especially at high school, like some people might not accept you if you had like different opinions … I think at this school people don't really do that, but I've heard from my friends who go to older schools and my brother that sometimes people do like accept you in ways … like my friend told me on Saturday that someone had fully punched someone down the stairs and they like really injured because they were black in their skin colour so that their eye had gone black and they had broken a rib, and that was in high school
Researcher	*that's very sad*
Izzy	yeah, I feel like that doesn't really happen in this school that much but-
Amy	in high schools
Izzy	in high schools

Amy cos they're older and their violenter (Oakland, focus group 1)

Izzy and Amy restated the fact that this form of racial discrimination and otherness takes place in high schools ("because they're older and violenter"), not in their school. It is worth noting that they repeated this statement (and I represented this in the poem at the start this chapter), and their comments seem to suggest that such overt forms of othering on account of racial difference do not happen within their school. Furthermore, there was another occasion where participants spoke about racial differences and discrimination. During the icebreaker activity, I asked participants to tell me about themselves. Imram said 'racist' and I asked him to tell me more about what he meant by this. He explained that he meant this hypothetically, that *some people* are racist.

Imram I wouldn't describe for myself, I would describe for other people like if you saw the Euros 2020 the last final one when it was England v Italy err [pause] the black guy

Baha Saka

Imram yeah, Saka, missed his goal and then other people were being racist and stuff (Westfield, focus group 1)

For Izzy and Amy their older friends had told them, and for Imram and Baha, they had seen this through sports and popular culture. Imram felt that sometimes people are racist, but makes clear, "I would not describe this for myself". Similarly, Izzy and Amy reiterate that racist incidences don't happen "in this school", rather they can happen "in high schools" because "they're older and violenter". For Izzy and Amy, they imply that they view racist incidences as fairly regular in high schools. In both cases, participants spoke about stories or incidences they had heard, but actively detached themselves from experiencing racial otherness or discrimination. In these accounts, children highlighted how deeply ingrained racist attitudes and discrimination can come to the surface to illuminate discursive and politicised constructs of otherness and exclusion that are present in schools as well as national attitudes (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Furthermore, elsewhere in her account, Izzy shared her views on inclusion which is about recognising and accepting differences.

Izzy	when people care about me, like skin colour or how you look, like people don't bother about things like that, it's just a friendly face
Researcher	*yeah, accepting you for who you are?*
Izzy	yeah
Aamilah	'cos I like Batul, I accept Batul even though she's annoying, I'm still her friend [laughing] (Oakland, focus group 4)

Izzy felt that physical or symbolic differences, like skin colour or appearance, does not matter much when there is a sense of caring between people, which is usually established through friendships. According to Izzy, at school people usually do not pay much attention to these differences. Izzy's comment reflects an interesting difference from the school's approach to multiculturalism, which was to recognise and celebrate individual differences, whereas Izzy seems to suggest the inclusion was about people accepting and not 'caring' about the way you look. Similar findings have been reported by Devine (2009) in her study on the views of migrant children in Ireland and found that when friendships were established in particular, differences were circumvented and included devices of 'forgetting' or 'ignoring' ethnic differences among peers. Izzy's framing of difference and inclusion in school reveals a noticeable contrast when compared to the schools' ethos of multiculturalism which is built on 'celebrating and recognising differences'. Aamilah added to Izzy's comment - "I accept Batul even though she's annoying". In later workshops, Aamilah, Batul, and Haimi explained their drama ideas which echoed a similar sentiment to Aminah's earlier comment.

Haimi	we're like letting her in er letting her join in
Aamilah	'cos she's very weird
Batul	it's all about where you fit in
Aamilah	yeah yeah, so basically Batul was very weird … she moved from somewhere else, she was a new person and she was weird … we are very nice people and we are accepting her (Oakland, dance and drama workshop)

Batul's character is considered 'weird' which Aamilah relates to 'being a new person from another country'. Despite this, Aamilah's character choses to accept Batul because they are 'very nice people'. Interestingly, this group of participants (Haimi, Batul and Aamilah) decided to change their ideas for their drama performances, they reflected on their final idea and the process of exploring drama methods in the post-performance workshop illustrated below.

Haimi	I think it was easy for like the belonging, inclusion and identity thing because we already had it on our minds 'cos everyone in our group was like Muslim so we could do it about culture and like er religion
Aamilah	but we are all different
Haimi	yeah we were all a bit of the same and a bit different, we were a bit the same because like we-
Batul	all believe in the same god
Haimi	but different cos we are all from different countries and like er we had different like hair styles different faces and things (Oakland, focus group 5)

Haimi was able to draw connections between the themes of cultural identity and belonging and her personal experiences and perceptions of herself and others, and it seems that perceived similarities between peers was useful for helping them explore belonging in their drama performances ("everyone in our group was like Muslim so we could do it about culture and religion").

6.4.2 Navigating religious and linguistic 'sameness' and friendships

Several participants defined the term 'belonging' and gave examples of experiences of belonging through notions of religion. For example, Batul said "for example, me, I belong in a religion, and like everyone belongs in a religion too". Some participants expressed

belonging through collective identity and practices related to religion and learning/speaking Arabic. Children developed narratives of belonging through ‘sameness claims’ related to language and religion, and shared otherness was central.

Jamil	actually, for us Muslims it’s even harder because we always have to um cos our like Qur’an like your guys have like the um [pause]
Asman	Bible?
Teresa	Bible?
Jamil	Bible, yeah!
Researcher	*Christians have the Bible, yeah*
Jamil	yeah but we Muslims have the Qur’an but in the Qur’an it’s all-
Fakhri	-it’s all in Arabic
Jamil	it’s all Arabic so we have to basically learn to read all the Arabic that’s sometimes a bit confusing
Fakhri	yeah that’s how I know how to read it, that’s why (Westfield, focus group 2)

This conversation began from Asman talking about how she feels she’s forgotten all her Italian since moving to England 5 years ago, this prompted a conversation about having to practice languages to not ‘lose them’. Jamil felt that it was ‘harder’ for Muslims because the Qur’an is in Arabic. Jamil constructs a narrative of collective belonging (‘us Muslims’) and reference to Ummah (the worldwide Muslim community). Jamil used the comparison of ‘Christians have the bible’ to explain the equivalent for Muslims is Qur’an. These connections build on common identifications in terms of religious and distinction between ‘us/them’, using phrases such as ‘you guys’ and ‘us Muslims’. Furthermore, in the extract below, participants spoke about religion as a marker of sameness as well as difference.

Researcher	*what about the characters in your storyboards?*
Kaamisha	yeah we're bestie pops[5]
Yeva	we're Muslim sisters [laughs] you're Christian sisters, one Christian sisters
Kaamisha	she's not even a Christian, what are you?
Rose	a nothing
Yeva	she nothing, I don't know about her er Sarah what are you?
Kaamisha	she's Japanese, she told me
Sarah	my religion is-
Kaamisha	nothing?
Sarah	er
Kaamisha	you told me you pray in Japanese
Sarah	yeah, I pray in Japanese, great life and other stuff
Kaamisha	she doesn't know [laughs] (Oakland, art workshop)

This conversations demonstrates that participants had insightful comments about identity and belonging, which was built on common identification through family claims, such as, "Muslim sisters" (and, in a later workshop, participants also said, 'halal sisters') or telling the stories of others to construct notions of religious difference as well as sameness and belonging in peer-group relationships. The possible link to the Ummah (Muslim community worldwide) might have been a way that Yeva understands her relationships with others in this instance too. Rose says that Sarah is "a nothing", meaning that she does not believe in any religion. Sarah commented that she "prays in Japanese" prompted by Kaamisha. The participants split themselves into groups and sat on particular tables of their own volition during the workshops. It was observed that this group of children were friends (and they would call each other their 'bestie pops'), and, therefore, I theorise that this meant that

[5] Slang term amongst some participants which meant 'best friend'.

children at Oakland were more familiar with each other and were likely to ask direct, sometimes jarring, questions, such as Kaamisha asking “she’s not even a Christian, what are you?”. The children did not seem to frame this as discrimination, but rather playfully amongst friends and attempts at humour, therefore, my interpretation of this is that quizzing each other’s identities, inscribed with somewhat othering sentiments, did not seem to threaten the possibilities of belonging in these peer groups. This is in contrast to the discourses at Westfield where religion was considered taboo and an area of offensive and negative othering, for example, “it’s very rude to assume someone’s religion” (Asman), which I discuss in the next section.

Children’s accounts of their identities and experiences of belonging also related to discourses on perceived similarities as sites for the formation of friendships. For example, Haimi commented, “I know how Aamilah became my friend cos we met at Islamic school”. Aamilah then added, “we were both at the same school we didn’t talk that much and then when we joined the same mosque class we became more closer … we [Aamilah and Haimi] started school, we’re both Bengali, we live near our cousins”. Complementary schools have been found to be spaces that develop identities and heritage (Blackledge & Creese, 2008) and in the case of Haimi and Aamilah's, complementary schools helped facilitate friendships in school. During the co-analysis pinboard activity, Aamilah recalled this conversation and decided to rewrite the conversation (see figure 30 below).

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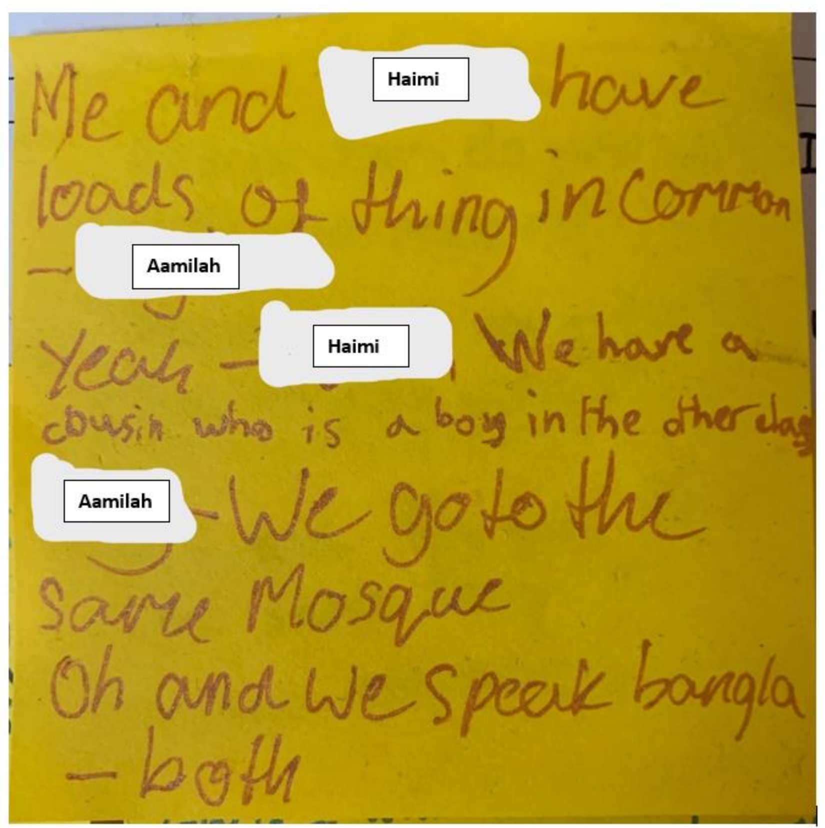


Figure 30: Post-it note Aamilah

In sum, children created narratives of belonging through distinction between 'us/them' and religious and linguistic sameness claims. Religion was put forward as a marker of sameness as well as difference between pupils, which intertwined with friendships. Sometimes children built on ideas of family claims and participants told stories of other peoples' identities to construct narratives of difference as well as sameness and belonging in peer-group relationships.

6.4.3 Constructions of otherness - being othered by peers during the research process

The relationships between language identity and religion operated within context-specific discourses of belonging and otherness in school. For some, language was a vehicle for belonging and insiderness to religion. In one of the art workshops, while participants were completing their storyboards and the audio recorder was placed on the table, Aadila asked Dayyan, "where you born in Sri Lanka?", and Aminah stated, "I was born in my country … that's why I don't speak English well". Dayyan responded to Aminah's comment, "what's this

English I hear then" – Dayyan was suggesting that Aminah could in fact speak English well. Aminah then mentioned how she speaks Arabic, to which Dayyan said 'Arabiccccc'. The rest of this conversation is illustrated below.

Dayyan	Arabiccccc [in a funny voice]
Jamil	stop making fun of languages now, you're making fun of religion
Dayyan	no no what you mean making fun of Arabic?
Jamil	are you Muslim? No, don't think so
Fakhri	is he Muslim? I thought he is
Jamil	nah
Fakhri	I thought he is
Jamil	he isn't one [pause] day one you think he was a Muslim but then I find out, no [teacher walks past, pause, participants whisper]
Aadila	then why does he say "[Arabic phrase]" then?
Jamil	yeah [replies in Arabic, then switches to English] like he's a fake Muslim
Aadila	aw yeah, fake, okay
Jamil	I think the third time he can't even say them [pause]
Aminah	[turning quietly to Dayyan] what religion are you?
Dayyan	I'm Muslim
Aminah	why does everyone say you're not? [unclear] (Westfield, art workshop)

In this extract, participants spoke about religious and linguistic identity, and articulated discourses of otherness and disagreements in response to perceived anti-Muslim utterances by Dayyan. Children constructed a narrative of collective religious belonging through the

expectation of language knowledge and excluded Dayyan because of his perceived limited knowledge of Arabic. It would seem that Jamil felt that because Dayyan was not a Muslim he should not “make fun of” Arabic. It is interesting to reflect on how Jamil and Aadila spoke in Arabic at points during this conversation. Perhaps Jamil’s and Aadila’s used translanguaging, utilising English and Arabic, to exclude Dayyan from parts of the conversation, or to demonstrate their own belonging and membership to Islam by speaking Arabic. This reflects the powerful role that language can have, which worked to deny Dayyan of his Muslim identity as perceived by his peers. This extract shows the intersectionality of otherness and exclusion, where language is associated with religion. Referring back to Yuval-Davis’ (2011) ‘politics of belonging’, these children’s accounts demonstrate their attitudes towards identity and belonging (to their peers, to Islam/ as an Arabic speaker) as the ways it is “accessed and valued by the self and others” (p. 18), related to expectations and perceived differences (as in, Dayyan cannot speak Arabic, unlike his peers).

Furthermore, Jamil states that Dayyan is a “fake Muslim”. Although Dayyan’s linguistic and religious identity is being discussed by his peers, at no point did he intervene to voice his own views – his response came when Aaminah asked him directly, “what religion are you?”. Unfortunately, Dayyan’s response to Aaminah’s question was not captured on the audio recorder; participants began talking over each other and voices were muffled. Within a pupil voice framework, silence is important (Mazzei, 2003; Spyrou, 2016). As Mazzei (2003) writes, “we should pay increased attention to the silent subtexts, to what is being left out, not said, or intentionally repressed in our ongoing quest to discover the ‘truths’ within our spoken stories” (p. 355-356). Perhaps Dayyan’s voice became marginalised in the context of overpowering ‘othering’ discourses. Perhaps he refrained from commenting to protect himself from further interrogation and so Dayyan’s non-responses and silent voice was purposeful in presenting resistance and detachment from this conversations. Self-silencing – choosing to say anything – under such vexed and exclusionary discourses, could be a protective strategy to avoid embarrassment or vulnerability. As such, the spaces beyond and between languages and language identities (García & Otheguy, 2020; Li Wei, 2018) in cases of otherness, such as silences, may be important. Thus, acknowledging the different modes – such as silences and non-verbal body language – as other children switched between in Arabic and English adds to “the semiotic meaning-making repertoire that is involved in the

act of communication" (García & Otheguy, 2020, p. 24). However, I recognise that silence is ambiguous and difficult to interpret, reflecting the challenge of interpreting non-responses and pauses in the conversation without jumping to conclusions.

Another example of silences in this interaction – or 'silent subtexts' (Mazzei, 2003) - was when the teacher walked past the table where participants were sitting and, consequently, they paused and then proceeded to speak quietly. To understand this further, I draw on new materialism, and specifically Deleuze and Guattari (2004), and how out-of-field sounds, such as the presence of the teacher, entangled with the children's dialogues. Mazzei and Jackson (2012), drawing on Deleuze's point about sound in film, give the example of "the sound of boots when marching solders are not seen in the frame" (p. 748) whereby we do not see the soldier but the silences, sounds and sensations it conjures up continues to tell the story. They suggest a view that "voice is not linked directly to a speaking subject but rather one that is constituted in the intersection of images, intertitles, out-of-field noises, and other elements in the continuum of sound" (p. 750). Perhaps participants recognised this as a potentially sensitive topic and related to the feeling of illicit behaviour and the reaction to authority. Here, the brief presence of the teacher seemed to impact on the way in which participants said their comments.

Furthermore, from a methodological viewpoint, having multiple audio recorders enabled me to access these peer conversations about belonging and identity. However, there was a literal 'silence' of my voice in terms of an absence of my presence as I was working with another group of children. As such, I was not there to engage with this conversation and help navigate these ethically tricky situations where people's feelings may become hurt. Rather paradoxically, though, the presence of the audio recorders, in some instances, contributed to silencing individuals' voices because, not only did the recorders struggle to detect some conversations, but at times participants would remind each other that myself or teachers 'will hear this' and therefore they edited, omitted, or adapted their voices. I elaborate on this point in Chapter 8.

Furthermore, the sentiments in the narratives in the extract above were also reflected in another art workshop, between the same groups of participants. I asked Aminah about her storyboard and said explained that it's based on her experiences of moving to a new school (Aminah's storyboard has also been discussed in Chapter 5.5.4).

Aminah	this is real, my mum is wearing a scarf so … Dayyan, help me, how can I show my mum is wearing a scarf?
…	
Dayyan	why are you drawing your mum as well?
Fakhri	wait wait, what does that say? [pointing at Aminah's storyboard]
Aminah	[reading] this is new school 'noooo' [laughs] I just didn't want to go to this school
Dayyan	where's your scarf?
Jamil	excuse me?!
Dayyan	you take your scarf off?
Aminah	because I was in year 4
Jamil	er excuse me, what did you say?!
Aminah	he said take me scarf off [giggles]
Fakhri	I'm not listening, get out [jokingly]
Jamil	nah fam, that's just not a joke (Westfield, art workshop)

It would seem that Dayyan is often othered by his peers, and his peers interpret his comments as offensive and inscribed within anti-Muslim sentiments. The children seem to be behaving like this in relation to Dayyan, whom the children are giving an account of (what language he speaks, whether or not he is a Muslim). It seems that these discourses were underpinned by context-specific relationships between certain groups of participants, and that religious and linguistic otherness just so happened to be the focus of the conversation,

but it could be theorised that, at its core is the relationships between these participants that were challenging. Had it been a different child, someone other than Dayyan, perhaps Jamil would have reacted in a different way? These discourses were underpinned by context-specific relationships between Dayyan and his peers, and religious and linguistic othering became the focus of the conversation. As such, in social research, researchers should interrogate the context-specific and inter-relational experiences of children, related to perceptions of identity, and how this impacts how they talk about themselves and others.

Furthermore, interactions around otherness were sometimes infused with attempts at sarcasm and humour, and included comments where they were 'fake offended', such as Fakhri's response - "I'm not listening, get out". Nonetheless, participants often felt that religion was a sensitive topic, as Asman said in one of the other workshops, "it's very rude to assume someone's religion" and then laughed. What this meant for peer relationships and navigating belonging and sense of self (as in religious and linguistic identity) was that it was a case of assessing the boundaries of what people would get offended by. Participants in my study were very aware of anti-Muslim sentiments and were able to express when they felt their peers were being offensive. But both cases, Dayyan did not perceive that what he had said was offensive. As such, in the school participants struggled to negotiate these unclear boundaries between curiosity and asking questions about others and offending others, and the taboo nature of religious discourses.

In the UK, and globally, media and policy discourse on religious diversity, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim attitudes has been shrouded in discrimination, fear, and mistrust (Gilks, 2020; Mancosu & Ferrín Pereira, 2021). As such, in recent years, there has been growing interest in identity and the experiences and perspectives of Muslim children in the UK (e.g., Ipgrave, 2012, 2013; Welply, 2018, 2022). In recognition of this context, I acknowledge that children appeared to view religion as an area of otherness and were sensitive to being insulted, and these narratives were infused in peer culture and attempts at humour and underlying sentiments of othering. In the case of Westfield School, I tentatively suggest that participants' comments seem to reflect school discourses - that they have been told that religion is a sensitive topic (e.g., Asman saying that "it's very rude to assume someone's religion"), perhaps chiming with wider school pedagogies e.g., the English lesson on representations of refugees in the media.

An additional example of othering discourses and children navigating cultural and linguistic differences is in the exchange below.

Faruq	have you ever been to Dhaka?
Aadila	Dhaka? Yeah
Faruq	okay then talk about it [laughs]
Aadila	huh?
Faruq	can you talk about that?
Aadila	oh? Yeah!
Faruq	hey, why are you laughing? [to Aasab]
Aasab	I'm not!
Faruq	it's just a place, it's a country
Aadila	yeah seriously Aasab, you were laughing like when we were saying our different languages in forest schools[6]
Aasab	erm I don't know
Aadila	yeah, but you don't laugh at them
Faruq	that's not nice, what if we laughed at you when you said your Arabic
Aasab	I never!
Faruq	I know you never said but
Aadila	okay, just forget it … (Westfield, art workshop)

[6] Forest schools is a curriculum design that some schools in England implement. It focuses on teaching and learning that can happen outside the classroom, in woodland and natural environments.

In this conversation it seems that Aasab is confused about how Faruq and Aadila were offended. Aadila saying "okay, just forget it" suggests she wanted to move on from this conversation. The tension surrounding cultural and linguistic differences and otherness was related to participants feeling that their peers were 'laughing' or 'mocking' them or parts of their identities. The recorders on the tables picked up conversations as children were engaging in the art activities. I noticed that when things became awkward (e.g., "okay, just forget it …"), children turned to the art activities as a neutral, less tense area of conversation e.g., commenting on paint, asking where the rubber went etc. As such, this suggests the power of the art methods and materials, not just for communication and data collection, but as a tool to manage social tensions.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on Research Question 2: How do children give accounts of themselves and talk about their (linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural) identities? And Research Question 3: Through their narratives of belonging and inclusion (RQ1) and accounts of their identity (RQ2), how do children articulate and experience otherness and differences in relation to school and their wider lives?

This chapter has shown that children have a strong desire to emphasise their multilingualism, often positioning themselves, and others, as knowledgeable multilingual speakers. Interactions between participants around language was a way of relating to peer culture (such as film, music, anime) and navigating belonging in friendships. Children's representations built on the notion that, language related to 'status' and enabled peer group relationships (e.g., through sameness and difference claims), and through friendships children developed their linguistic identities (e.g., they taught each other languages). Children taught each other different languages, and this is a key part of translanguaging pedagogies (García & Otheguy, 2020) and reflects how some children viewed language diversity. Indeed, schools should harness this enthusiasm for peer-peer teaching of different languages and cultures.

Furthermore, MFL learning in school was an important part of shaping multilingual identity for all children, including those from non-immigrant backgrounds as foreign language

learning at school was important and afforded them their positionality as multilingual speakers. Studies focusing on children's perspectives of MFL in the primary classroom in England, including those who speak heritage languages or languages other than English as their first language, remains limited. The findings in this chapter suggest that MFL learning in school forms part of the interactions that participants had around language and their attitudes towards multilingualism, and, therefore, suggests that schools should recognise and promote the affordances of MFL – which resonates with the argument for the introduction of languages into the curriculum for educational benefits (Hunt et al., 2005). However, as discussed, the lack of emphasis on MFL in curriculum and policy in primary schools in England is a challenge (Board & Tinsley, 2017). As such, there is scope here to de-essentialise the dichotomy of monolingualism and multilingualism, as most participants expressed some form of multilingualism, problematising the perception that non-immigrant White pupils are monolingual and migrant learners are multilingual (or EAL learners) who speak heritage languages at home. This distinction, based on children's voices themselves, did not always apply.

This chapter (section 6.1.2) has also raised questions about language norms in the schools as, despite professing a multilingual ethos (e.g., the schools' websites, policies and resources), some children struggled to reconcile this with their lived experiences or assumptions of monolingualism in school e.g., Yeva recalled struggling with lunchtimes as a newly arrived learner because she did not know English (section 5.5.4), and Sarah said she mostly speaks English now, compared to Japanese, because she "goes to an English school … and has English friends". There was confusion around whether heritage languages had their place in school e.g., Imram's commented that "the problem is I can't speak [Urdu] when I'm at school, can I?". At times, though, children switched between languages and spoke to each other in their shared heritage languages in school, often while they were chatting in groups while they were engaging with the arts-based activities. During the workshops, there were some cases of translation, for example Aamilah and Haimi speaking Bengali together during the focus group which was seen as fun and an opportunity to demonstrate their multilingualism. In the case of Jamil and Aadila, switching between English and Arabic during a conversation about Dayyan's identity could be seen as an example of language being used to exclude others or demonstrating belonging. In their accounts of identity and belonging,

children depicted multiple linguistic and communicative repertoires including silences, pauses, attempts at humour, accents/ Americanisms, imaginary languages, and youth culture. The extracts presented in this chapter shows interesting examples of children's multilingualism, negotiating language identities and translating between languages. Through listening to the voices of children, and through the discursive and arts-based approaches, I have begun to understand the complex multilingual worlds of the children.

In this chapter, some of Butler's theories (2005) can be used to understand how children gave accounts of themselves and their language identities in relation to others, for example, deciding whether they speak 'a few' or 'a lot' of languages in relation to their peers. The use of discursive methods alongside visual methods has allowed for multiple, ambiguous, and imaginary narratives of language identities to emerge. The interactive pinboards enabled children to clarify, retell and re-iterate their ongoing stories (Butler, 2005). Participants' different (artistic) modes of expression to revisit their accounts perhaps helped shift the power imbalances in the research relationships (Ní Laoire, 2016; Thomson, 2008), for instance, sometimes participants subverted my instructions in the pinboard activity and wrote whatever wanted, whatever they felt was important at the time.

Parts of the discussion on heritage language utilised Butler's (2005) notion of responsibility in terms of navigating the "unchosen conditions of one's emergence" through feelings of responsibility, frustration, confusion and nostalgia associated with knowing/ not knowing how to speak their heritage languages. In some ways, agency emerged from those discourses through reinforcing or challenging the intergenerational norms and discourses. Butler's idea of agency draws on the irreducibility of the self and thus the inability to give full accounts of oneself. For Butler, the shifting identities and difficult-to-navigate contexts within which a subject emerges, and whose origins can never be fully accounted for. In other words, perhaps in a world which seeks to define, categorise people and determine who belongs and who does not, the subject's inability to 'be summed up' is important for understanding the fluidity and complexity of children's worlds (White, 2003, cited in Green & Featherstone, 2014, p. 70). As evidenced in this chapter, the socio-cultural and political and education narratives can shape and extend beyond the subject (Butler, 2005).

Furthermore, in both schools, language was positioned as a category of difference, which intersected with religion, ethnic and migrant status to create positive as well as negative forms of otherness in school. This chapter (section 6.4) presented findings on how children constructed otherness and friendships through symbolical lines of sameness and differences. Children's exchanges in this chapter showed multiple perspectives and experiences of linguistic, ethnic, and religious identities and differences, which involved positive centring of otherness to form belonging and peer-group friendships, as well as more negative framing and attitudes of exclusion, alienation, discrimination, and denying access membership to certain social groups. When asked about their feelings and experiences of belonging and inclusion, participants expressed stories they had heard about discrimination in high school (Izzy and Amy) or in the media (Imram), but these participants clarified that they did not have their own personal experiences of racial discrimination and otherness, and these things do not "in this school" but rather high school because older pupils are "violenter". At Westfield School, narratives of otherness were observed through peer-peer exclusion or disagreements due to perceived anti-Muslim sentiments, for example, Dayyan was ostracised by his peers. At Oakland School, children navigated otherness and difference through attempts at 'humour' (or outright silencing – "shut up Yeva" – in Chapter 8) and through drama performances, for example, Aamilah calling Batul "weird" because her character is a "new person". Other studies on children's experiences of identities, migration and education have found they navigate experiences of otherness and ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities in complex and intersectional ways (Devine, 2009; Ipgrave, 2013; Welply 2015, 2022). What is distinct about the findings in this chapter is that participants did not give stories about illicit otherness and discrimination in school that had happened *to them*, instead, it included stories they had heard from others, or it was within the peer-peer conversation during the workshops that participants had to navigate their self-identifications and otherness.

Participants told stories of other peoples' identities to construct narratives of difference as well as sameness and belonging in peer-group relationships. What is interesting in this chapter is the notion of 'co-construction' and socially constructed childhood voices (Facca et al., 2020) – through dialogue/ interactions the participants' established, contested, and reinforced their own, and one another's, identities and related feelings of belonging. Jenkins

(2000, p. 22) points out “the recognition and validation” by others is central “in setting the limits” of belonging and self-identification. As Butler writes, “we cannot exist without addressing the other and without being addressed by the other, and that there is no wishing away our fundamental sociality” (2005, p. 33). Aligning with Welply (2022), children’s accounts in this chapter demonstrates that, although schools are not the only site for the (re)production of hegemonic or exclusionary discursive repertoires, the school ethos of multiculturalism needs to be thought about critically to question how children are engaging with multilingualism, difference, and discriminatory discourses. This point can be extended to the context of educational research as children may produce exclusionary discourses without the presence of an adult researcher guiding the questions, which reflects the importance of considering ‘informal’, ‘child-centred’ spaces.

Overall, the findings suggest that in current times of increased migration and discrimination, it is important to support teachers and children to find ways to embrace multilingualism and translanguaging practices and develop the tools and the language to engage critically in discourses around otherness, differences and belonging to understand how young people are experiencing school and childhood in diverse spaces.

CHAPTER 7: BEYOND SCHOOL – CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF BELONGING, 'HOME' AND ASPECTS OF IDENTITY AND MIGRATION

A place

And connection

To my home, my country

I was born there, my cousins too

I am truly home there

In my small town

That's it

Figure 31: Poem 5

Maths class

My happy place

And where I like to be

Or a second home; travel there

To see my family

I can belong

At home

Figure 32: Poem 6

The previous chapter focused on how children's language identities play out in the context of school and how children expressed and contested their own, and others, identities related to perceptions of belonging, differences and otherness. In this chapter, I turn to another aspect of belonging: children's perspectives and experiences of belongingness as 'home' and place. Thus, I will focus on Research Question 1: What are children's feelings and experiences of belonging and inclusion, in school and in their wider lives? And Research Question 2: How do children give accounts of themselves and talk about their (linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural) identities?

Again, the poems above represent some of the key ideas discussed in Chapter 8. These poems helped me synthesise and present similarities in the participants' accounts of their feelings and experiences of belonging as the geographical, material and symbolic connections to their heritage countries, feelings of being 'at home' in a place, and feelings of comfort and familiarity with family, place and home (for children from migrant, immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds).

In this thesis, 'home' is a geographical and symbolic open space, and is related to movement (Ní Laoire, 2008) and complex webs of connections and attachments that people form (Gilroy, 1997). Several studies find that children and young people's constructions of home and belonging are messy, multi-placed, and specific, inscribed within ongoing social relations and materiality (e.g., Mand, 2010; Moskal, 2015). However, home can represent domestic, private spaces as well as symbolic spaces of 'rootedness', familiarity, comfort and emotional attachment (hooks, 2009; Lovell, 1998). Antonsich's (2010) theorisation on belonging relates to the "personal, intimate feeling of being 'at home' in a place" (p. 645). This chapter finds that participants defined belonging as feelings of home and connections with family and country inscribed in notions of familiarity, social relations, and cultural heritage. Children gave accounts of their national identities in terms of place(s) of birth, related to local and global identifications, and participants spoke about migration and nostalgia.

The chapter is structured into four parts. Firstly, I will present how children gave accounts of their national identities and where they were born (7.1) which leads into a discussion on children's feelings and experiences of belonging, home and place (7.2). Following this, I will discuss how some children spoke about migration and feelings of nostalgia (7.3); Finally, I

will present the children's narratives on celebrating travel, migration, and embracing differences within this context (7.4).

7.1 Children giving accounts of their places of birth

During the focus groups, to gain more insight into children's backgrounds and their conceptualisations of belonging, I asked the participants to talk about the places where they were born and/or where their parents were born. Children were often enthusiastic to share these stories, and the way they phrased their answers were similar to each other. To pick some examples, "I [was] born in Libya and my dad born in Libya too and my mum too" (Aasab), "I was born in Pakistan, my mum was born in Pakistan too" (Fareeha), and "I was born in Italy … my parents were both born in Morocco" (Asman). Children seemingly enjoyed providing information and demonstrating their knowledge about their family backgrounds, positioning themselves, and being positioned by others, as knowledgeable, as highlighted in this exchange between Kaamisha and Sarah.

Kaamisha	so my dad's dad was born in India, but he was on the Pakistan side when the county split up … I was born in [Name of local city] my mum was born in Scotland … and my grandparents were both born in Pakistan
Sarah	you know your history!
Kaamisha	yeah I know my family history! (Oakland, focus group 2)

Furthermore, in both schools, children's accounts included local and global lines of identification, and participants often used the term 'here' to refer to their local spaces, as demonstrated in the two extracts below.

Teresa	I was literally born here, in [Name of local city]
Jamil	me too! … I was in [Name of local city] too, my parents were born in Pakistan, my both sisters were born in Pakistan … I was born Urdu

Fakhri I was born in [Name of local city] but my parents are born in Bangladesh (Westfield, focus group 2)

Izzy erm I was born, well I was born here, and my mum was born in Scotland … and my dad was born down south in [Name of city]

Peter I was born here, my mum was born north Yorkshire and my dad was born in just [Name of local city]

Izzy my dad was born in Thailand when my grandparents were on holiday but he's like my grandparents are from down south

Researcher *mmm*

Alaya I was born here, my mum was born in Pakistan and my dad was born in [Name of city]

Amy all my family's just born here (Oakland, focus group 1)

Children with little history of family migration, some children from immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds constructed their identities through these local lines of identification, 'here'.

Baha I was born in [Name of city], and my mum was also born in [Name of city] and my dad was born in Qatar … and then I don't know how I'm Pakistani, but I think it's because my mum and dad's parents, they were born in Pakistan, but my parents weren't (Westfield, focus group 1)

In this extract, Baha questioned why he is 'Pakistani' and concludes that this might be because of his grandparent's place of birth. Seen through the lens of Butler (2005), this quote reflects the idea that accounts of the self cannot be easily articulated and captured. As Butler (2005) writes, "my account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story. I cannot explain why I have emerged in this way, and my efforts at narrative reconstruction are always undergoing revision" (p. 40).

Furthermore, some participants expressed how their parents' backgrounds shaped their own self-identifications, for instance, Aadila commented that "I was born in err the UK … my parents, they were born in Bangladesh, and I'm Bangladeshi … and my parents were born in Asia". Here, Aadila feels a connection to her cultural heritage through her parents, and she went on to say that she feels a sense of belonging to Bangladesh, "because my cousins are like there, and I feel like I'm truly home there". This was a common sentiment echoed by other participants. Aadila added that "my parents were born in Asia" which was perhaps an effort to add further important and demonstrate family knowledge and transnational connections.

Aamilah provided a somewhat contrasting viewpoint to Aadila. In one of the focus groups, Aamilah commented that, "my parents were born in Bangladesh, but I'm not from there, I was born in London … my mum and dad are both from Bangladesh, but my dad came to [Name of city] earlier". Aamilah felt that, although her parents were born in Bangladesh, she is "not from there". What did Aamilah mean by this comment, "not from there" – perhaps she meant in terms of birthplace, rather than cultural heritage. In this extract it seems that, in some ways, Aamilah detaches herself from "being from" Bangladesh – although, elsewhere in her account she commented that her and Haimi are "both Bengali". It seems that children's accounts of their self-identifications were multiple and complex, and sometimes it was difficult to tease apart these notions of birthplace, nationality, and wider cultural identity, and children had fluid conceptualisations of what it means to "be" from somewhere.

The extracts so far have demonstrated that children navigate their identities and feelings of belonging by distinguishing their stories from their parents or by showing solidarity with their parents and gave accounts of themselves through local and global lines of identification.

7.1.1 Questioning notions of hybrid national identity

In the context of this chapter, it is important to note that children rarely referred to their identities as hybrid (e.g., British-Pakistani). In Chapter 2.2 I reviewed literature on the concept of hybridity. However, I do not deny the fact that children navigate multiple and

interconnecting identities, for example, navigating between two or more cultural and linguistic identities at school by relating to peer culture, school norms, heritage language practices, and religious identities that come together to impact children's ongoing identities and experiences at school (Chapter 6).

However, when discussing the questions 'where were you born', and 'where were your parents born', children did not seem to articulate themselves, and others, as having hybridised national identities. Children tended to adopt an 'either/or' discourse (Zontoni & Peró, 2019) in terms of whether they expressed localised identity as in being from "here", or, through parental heritage, spoke about being from their heritage country. Related to this, this study also finds that children did not articulate belongingness to 'British' or 'English' – instead they situated themselves within the local space, "I'm from here" and then usually gave the name of the local city/ towns. This distinguishes my study from other research in the field of migration and education which finds that young people often express hybrid cultural and national identities and articulate how they navigate these different aspects (e.g., Boland, 2020; Faas, 2008; Harris, 2016). Harris' (2016) study, on how young people navigate their intercultural lives in Australia's most culturally diverse neighbourhoods, found that hybrid identities were "normal, productive, and unproblematic" and "many of the young people described themselves in these ways" (p. 364). Faas (2008) also found complex, hybrid ways in which young people constructed their 'ethno-national and nationalistic' identities in two English secondary schools. It is important to acknowledge that many of the studies I found tended to be conducted with older children and young people.

The extract below highlights was one of the rare instances in which participants spoke about a hybrid national identity. Aamilah, Haimi, Batul and Yeva were working together to create ideas for their drama performance.

Aamilah	we could do different countries, cos you're from Iran, we're from Bangladesh, so we're all from different countries, diversity!
Haimi	diversity

Aamilah [looking over at the researcher] we’ve sort of got an idea of what we are going to do in the actual drama thing

Researcher *okay good*

Aamilah so basically because we’re all from different places, Batul does err

Batul belly dancing

Aamilah belly dancing because she’s from Algeria, Yesenia can do whatever dancing from Iran

Batul she does dirty dancing

Aamilah what’s dirty dancing!? [laughs]

Batul I don’t know [laughs]

Haimi maybe they do this [Haimi dances] er what’s it called?

Aamilah Bollywood dancing

Researcher ah okay, so you’re thinking about traditional dancing from different countries?

Aamilah you two [Yesenia and Batul] can do the same

Batul but we’re not from the same country

Haimi so we’re [Haimi and Aamilah] British Bengali, so we just do gymnastics and Bollywood, wouldn’t that be so cool!

Yesenia so basically how are we gonna start? Basically someone can say, Batul say 'hi I’m Batul' and then Haimi says 'hi I’m Haimi-

Haimi wait there should be a new kid

Batul and I'm from Algeria [adding to Yesenia’s comment] (Oakland, drama workshop)

For this group of participants, during their performance, they opted to showcase their cultural differences and identities through dance. They planned to do a ‘talent show’ that combined drama and dance, where each participant performed a dance from their countries. The children chose to include the concept of 'diversity' in their performance, which was a term that had not been discussed in the workshops, and they might have learned about in school. It is possible that when Batul mentioned “dirty dancing”, she was alluding to either an inappropriate form of dancing or the movie ‘Dirty Dancing’, which could indicate how she perceives traditional dance in Iran. Haimi wonders whether people do Bollywood dancing in Iran – “maybe they do this” and proceeded to visually dance and act out Bollywood dancing. Yesenia, who was present during the conversation, did not intervene to express her opinion on which dance form best represents Iran. Aamilah tried to resolve Haimi's question by suggesting that Yesenia and Batul could perform the same dance. However, Batul felt that this would not work as they are from different countries.

Through dance, these children navigated the cultural boundaries between different countries and explored potential similarities and differences. Haimi proposed the idea of combining gymnastics, which was considered a British activity, with Bollywood, which was associated with Bengali culture. She expressed excitement about the possibility of creating a unique and culturally hybrid form of dance – “wouldn’t that be so cool”. Performative methods such as dance and drama can provide a platform for individuals to explore alternative ways of self-expression. In the extract above, as well as during other participants’ performances, there were moments of uncertainty where participants were unsure of how to best represent themselves and their ideas, which were based on ‘real’ and fictional stories.

7.1.2 The role of imagination for dance and drama

Furthermore, in both schools, participants often used material objects and technology to help create their stories and express their identities and interpretations of belonging. For example, Batul, Haimi, Aamilah and Yeva spent lots of time searching through YouTube to find different music for their dances. Kaamisha asked to use the computer to decide which country they wanted their drama performance to be located – “can we have a picture of the world map, because we need to see countries”. Sarah, Rose, Kaamisha, and Yeva, saw an old

suitcase that they wanted to use as a prop, which they compared to "Victorian times" and so they chose to locate their performance in this time period, which then prompted a conversations about how people were treated differently, particularly men and women. Children also questioned which accents they might use – "what's the London accent?". Aamilah, wrapping a patterned scarf around her body, said "I'm a bride now… I'm an Indian bride … purple is a Muslim colour". When we discussed the option of bringing in props and costumes from home, children were excited about this – Haimi said, "I'm gonna bring my Korean thing, Korean dress". Through engaging with materials, music and technology, children presented globalised imaginaries that cut across spaces. Different materials seemed to facilitate further conversations surrounding children's perceptions and experiences of belonging and cultural identity. This reflects the notion of 'translanguaging', the ability to communicate multimodally, through creative methods, and therefore raises a methodological point about how children utilised creative flows of semiotic resources (props, technology, maps) to interrogate their understandings of belonging and cultural identity. Seen through the lens of new materialism (and the social-material dimensions of children's accounts of belonging and identity), the various props and technological objects (the computers) used during the dance and drama workshops, seemed to structure discourse and relations between children and influenced the design and possibilities of their dance and drama performances (e.g., finding music on YouTube, looking up images of traditional cultural dress, searching images of the world map).

Studies have shown that imagination plays an important role in identity construction (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008), in terms of the imagined homogeneity and 'sameness claims' that shape identity boundaries (Hall, 1996), but also in the capacity to 'invent' how things are, or how things should be or could be (Greene, 2001). In other words, as Greene (2001) writes, "**i**magination [allows] us to move into the "as-if"—to move beyond the actual into invented worlds, to do so within our experience. To enter a created world, an invented world, is to find new perspectives opening on our lived worlds, the often taken-for-granted realities of everyday" (p. 81-82). Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008), in their study using participatory theatre methods to explore identity with refugee youth groups in London, found that using drama as a research tool for exploring identity construction enabled participants to be 'in and out' of a role. Drama methods was a research tool for exploring

identity construction. They conclude that being ‘in and out’ of role, being ‘me and not me’ enabled reflection and imagination when navigating accounts of oneself and one’s identity. For example, in the study, children put themselves in other people’s perspectives; at Westfield, when playing the character of the teacher, which was based on their ‘real’ class teacher, I encouraged children to imagine how the teacher might think and feel about the new pupil in the school. Like Greene (2001), I believe that in this study art provoked imagination, allowing participants to draw up social, global spaces, imagine other possibilities. Participants used discourse and art to co-create stories, feelings, characters, settings to explore their own and others’ perspectives on belonging and cultural identity, which can destabilise notions of authentic ‘voice’ as it embraces possibilities of ambiguity and collective meanings.

In sum, this section (7.1) has revealed how children navigate their origins and identities by distinguishing their stories from their parents or by showing solidarity with their parents and gave accounts of themselves through local (‘I am from here’) and global (heritage country) lines of identification. Aadila was the only participant to say she was ‘born in the UK’. Children from migrant, immigrant as well as non-immigrant backgrounds did not tend to identify themselves as being born in England or Britain, nor did they associate themselves with national British or English identity. They seemed to focus on linguistic identities (Chapter 6), and feelings of ‘home’ in terms of the local versus elsewhere (the country of their parents), which I will discuss further in the next section.

The role of ‘hybridity’ in children’s accounts was discussed. It was noted that children belonging to migrant and immigrant families generally did not use terms such as 'British-Bengali' to define their national identities. By listening to children's voices, we can question the idea that hybridity is a universal experience for children from migrant backgrounds when presenting their accounts of their national identities in favour of a more situated and localised view of national identity. Furthermore, through the use of imagination and drama and dance methods, children were able to create their own stories and draw from collective narratives to position themselves in different ways, drawing on material and symbolic ideas of belonging and cultural identity.

7.2 Children giving accounts of belonging and 'home'

As discussed in Chapter 5, children conceptualised belonging as related to notions of 'home', feeling safe, familiarity, and connections with heritage country and family. This section focuses specifically on how participants defined and gave accounts of their belonging related to 'home'. The role of 'home' was central in children's constructions and experiences of belonging. The ways in which children spatially and emotionally constructed feelings of 'home' and national identities was complex and specific to each child.

Aadila expressed that, for her, belonging meant an emotional connection to Bangladesh "because my cousins live there, and I feel I am truly home there". In a similar sentiment, Fareeha said, "I think I belong to my family, my country because I was used to it, and I was born there". For Fareeha, and other participants, familiarity and place of birth was linked to conceptualisations of home and belonging.

In the extract below, participants shared stories of belonging and home through positive feelings – "what you like? Like if you like being at home you can belonging at home, cos you like being there, you like doing that" (Rose) and "so to me belonging means like where I belong in like my house, wherever" (Haimi). Thus, participants shared stories of belonging as feelings of home as a place you 'like being'.

Amy	my bed!
Peter	I guess, my houses because my mum and dad have split up obviously, well not obviously but I have to go between the two houses sort of, yeah
…	
Amy	I don't let my sister in my room [Alaya and Peter laugh] because it belongs to me, sort of! (Westfield, focus group 1)

Amy and Peter establish their sense of belonging through physical connections to items such as their bed, house, and bedroom. This attachment to people and materials, can create a sense of rootedness, as described by Antonsich (2010).

Imram defines his feelings of belonging as – "I would say my own country, my home or school". Other participants, also spoke about feelings of belonging with "my country". For

Baha, belonging to a place was not linked by family heritage, rather his 'favourite' country, because he likes all the sportscars in Dubai – "so like I feel mostly connected to [Dubai] cos it's like my favourite country" Here, Baha felt a sense of belonging to a country he 'likes'.

Imram added that he feels, "connected by that, like umm my country is Pakistan and Pakistan has a lot of armies in it, where I live there is a bunch of armies that protects the city … mmm that's where I feel connected that my grandfather is in army and my grandma is army as well, but they lost their legs and they had to get new one…". In Imram's account, home was constituted discursively through connections with the land and people and symbolic ownership. Similar to other studies with migrant youths in England (e.g., Katartzi, 2017; Moskal, 2015), in these narratives above, constructs home and 'homeland' was utilised to capture the nuances of belonging in relation to migration, not just as a physical or geographical space, but inscribed within emotions and affiliations.

For many children, belonging was formed through everyday interactions with the environment, including people, groups of people, places, objects, sensations etc. For Wyn *et al.,* (2017), the 'mutually constitutive' process of belonging includes "people … buildings, services, streets, air and trees and the ways these connect" (p. 17). For instance, Jamil, expressed how the streets of Manchester reminded him of Pakistan:

Jamil — in the summer holidays I went to my sister's house 'cos she lives in Manchester after she's married and basically I umm basically when I came back to school right now in September, first day at breaktime, I told my friends the stories and how it [Manchester] reminds me of like Pakistan, because it's really busy and there's tonnes of shops (Westfield, focus group 2)

Jamil felt that the environment of Manchester, the "really busy" streets and "tonnes of shops", was similar to Pakistan. Perhaps Jamil's language of "back to school right now" and "first day" implies that he was eager to speak to his friends about his trip to Manchester. Children's experiences and perspectives were inscribed within relational and material relationships between physical environments, memories, and feelings. Children spoke about objects, spaces, houses, shops, artefacts that interact with their lives and their lived experiences of belonging.

Furthermore, in the conversation below, Teresa spoke about her sense of belonging to her country, Czech Republic - "[belonging] as well to my country, kind of, cos like it is hard cos tornadoes come there, and I don't know why … my town is kind of like small, and I kind of belong there, cos it's kind of small to go there, and no-one goes there basically … I didn't even go to Slovakia which is sad … when my dad is calling my cousin and auntie I always speak with them and they're so nice". It is interesting that Teresa says that she is 'sad' she did not visit Slovakia, the Czech Republic's neighbouring country. Teresea maintains connections to her country through phone calls to her family, which she seems to enjoy. In a different focus group, Fakhri also mentions how he speaks to people back home in his heritage country, and through these conversations he is encouraged to speak in his heritage language. Fakhri said, "I speak English at home but sometimes where some people from my Bangladesh call, I have to speak Bengali".

In sum, in this section (7.2) I have discussed how children spoke about their perceptions and experiences of belonging related to feelings of home. This included home as a geographical (local and global) space as well as affective and symbolic feelings of comfort and familiarity.

7.3 Stories of migration and nostalgia

This section explores children's narratives on belonging and stories of migration and nostalgia.

To start with, Aminah, while working with Aadila on their drama script, shared her story with me about when she moved to England from Libya.

Aminah	did you know when I changed countries, I changed at midnight, I was so scared
Researcher	*you changed at midnight?*
Aminah	mmm like erm secretly, we were tidying the hall and we told our grandma without knowing where we are going, like we told her in the end when we go [unclear] I'm not a refugee I'm just- because my mum is a

	student here, she's finishing her [qualification] [unclear]
Researcher	*mm, so did you say you moved from one country to another at midnight?*
Aminah	welllll actually it isn't one country to another. I go Libya to France then English, England, England [correcting herself]
Researcher	*and did you say before you felt scared when you had to go at midnight?*
Aminah	yeah yeah, and excited at the same time but then when I came here I was [like] aww I wanna go back [to] my country, er it's because there is lots of tests in school and in my country there is no schools … I really like playing in the sand, we have sand, sandy lands
Researcher	*mmm, and there's not much sand here in England*
Aminah	no no, it's just on the beach that's it … so hot in Libya, I have to wear shoes well actually I don't wear shoes and sometimes if it's so hot I have to wear shoes (Westfield, drama/dance workshop)

In this extract, Aminah spoke about her life in Libya, comparing England and Libya, and there was a strong sentiment of nostalgia related to daily life, materials, and the physical environment, such as the weather, school, shoes, and sand. Aminah commented on the very abrupt departure and the uncertain migratory journey, and there seems to be a sense of grief in the face of this sudden change which amounts to loss. Aminah's account suggests that she felt her life was much better in Libya, and it was interesting to hear the things she attributes this to, for instance, not having schools in Libya, the hot weather, and the 'sandy lands'.

Furthermore, Aminah seemed to distance herself from being perceived as a refugee, ("I'm not a refugee") and she linked this to the fact her mum is a student studying for her

‘qualifications’. It is interesting to think about Aminah’s conceptual image of her self-identity here and why she felt the need to clarify this; perhaps Aminah was aware of the fact she had described her account of migration as abrupt and uncertain with different countries involved, often a feature of the refugee journey. This comment can also be understood in the context of the school as I had observed how the children had learnt about refugees during ‘refugee week’ (e.g., studying a poem by Brian Bilston, and an English lesson on language uses/ inferences in media newspapers about the ‘refugee crisis’). Therefore, perhaps Aminah is aware of the discourses surrounding migration and had the vocabulary to express that she “wasn’t a refugee”.

As explored in Chapter 5.5.2, some participants valued opportunities to talk to teachers about their lives in their home countries, which they framed as being different to life in England.

Dayyan	woah you lived on a farm?
Aminah	yeahh
Fareeha	I have a farm!
Aasab	I have a farm!
…	
Aadila	erm back home in Bangladesh, erm he owns a lot of chickens and chicks, so when I was very small I used to hold them in my hand a lot
Fareeha	I can’t wait to go to my country to see my cat
Aminah	I give you a sad story, we have 7 dogs yeah, who was guardians for the house … they are all dead from erm the sunlight (Westfield, focus group 4)

In this extract, participants shared their stories about their home countries by presenting their accounts through a sentiment of uniqueness and difference from their peers, whilst also building on each other’s comments in shared stories. For example, Fareeha joined the conversation with her own experience as a counter to Aadila’s, and then Aminah recounts

her 'sad story' of the dog. The children's views in this section, expressed in different workshops, shows how children gave accounts of home and belonging through feelings of nostalgia. It also seems that children invoke ideas about home through one another's stories, all of which help to create feelings of belonging and nostalgia relating to material objects, animals and the physical environments that trigger particular emotions.

In sum, this section presented a discussion on some of the children's feelings of nostalgia and memories of their heritage countries. These conversations arose from questions about inclusion and what participants felt they would like their teachers to know about them, and in the example of Aminah, discussing ideas for their dance and drama prompted Aminah to share her story.

7.4 Celebrating travel and cultural differences

The final section of this chapter highlights how discursive constructions around cultural differences were often positively framed as children were interested in stories of migration and travel.

In the extract below, children's accounts of difference, related to sharing stories about visiting their countries and travelling on planes.

Usman	I've been on a plane twice, and that was back to my homeland, Pakistan
Faruq	I remember going on loads of planes, I remember going on one to Bangladesh, and one back from Bangladesh, and then err one to France and then one [back from] France
…	
Dayyan	I've never been on a plane, stop flexing
Usman	I've been on a plane 4 times as well

Dayyan	no flex, no flex[7] [laughing]
Linda	Miss, do you know if you were born in a plane, not every baby gets it but some baby gets a golden ticket that means they can fly everywhere they want (Westfield, focus group 4)

Dayyan playfully used of the term "flex" when his peers shared their accounts of visiting different countries, including their heritage countries (or "homeland"). Elsewhere in his account, Dayyan reflected, "I've never been to my country, I've never even seen my grandma", which perhaps explains why Dayyan jokingly thought that Usman's comment about visiting Pakistan and going on a "plane 4 times" was a boastful statement. Therefore, this suggests how examples from children who have not travelled far or internationally perceived these stories as 'flexing'. Perhaps Dayyan was trying out different expressions, e.g., "flex".

Additionally, it was observed that participants actively contributed to the discussion, even when their comments did not seem directly linked to the previous speaker's point, as exemplified by Linda's remark about the possibilities of travel and global citizenship though a "golden ticket". This phenomenon was also noted in other workshops, indicating that participants were keen to express themselves and share their perspectives, even if it did not always align with the current topic of discussion.

Furthermore, Aadila and Aminah also spoke positively about travelling to different countries.

Aadila	Aminah has moved a lot unlike me I stayed in this country for a very long time except for summer holidays where I go to Bangladesh but that was like two years ago
Aminah	I've been like everywhere, I didn't go to France, I go to Italia
Aadila	I'm kind of jealous that she's travelling to new places (Westfield, drama workshop)

Aadila compares her story to Aminah's story and frames the experience of travelling to different countries as exciting. As Butler has argued, my account of myself is constructed within and because of the you who asks me to give an account. For Aadila, the account she

[7] Meaning 'bragging'.

gives of herself is someone who has “stayed in this country for a very long time”, compared to Aminah who portrays herself, and is portrayed by the ‘other’ as someone who has travelled a lot. Aminah chooses to say Italy in Italian (‘Italia’) demonstrating language skill and switching between languages, perhaps to show knowledge of the language and country she has been to. This might have also been an example of ‘translanguaging’ where Aadila drew on the term most familiar to her.

Furthermore, at Oakland, participants seemed to value parts of their identities that afforded them positionality as having travelled and lived in different places. For example, Aamilah and Yeva spoke about travel and their place of birth, and Aamilah positioned Yeva’s story as ‘really interesting’.

Haimi	your turn Yeva, it’s interesting
Aamilah	hers is really interesting
Yeva	well I was born in Iran but I was kinda born in here too when I was three, I came here
Aamilah	she came here when she was er but actually she went to America first
Batul	[gasp] you never told me that
Yeva	yeah erm first I went to America and er Spain I think?
Haimi	Spain wow
Yeva	and then we went on plane and then we went here and then er my dad was born in Iran and my mum was born in Iran (Oakland, focus group 3)

This extract raises several points. Firstly, Yeva’s account is slightly disjointed, and she is unsure of parts of her story, for example, “I went to America and er Spain I think”. It might be difficult for Yeva to recall parts of her story that she cannot quite remember. As Butler (2005) would suggest, there are aspects of ourselves that cannot be narrated precisely and accounted for fully, and Butler gives the example of early childhood – “there is a history to my body of which I have no recollection” (p. 38). In the extract above, Yeva is partly

supported by, or influenced by, Aamilah's interjections. The relationships between Aamilah and Yeva, who were close friends, was observed elsewhere in the workshops: on several occasions, Aamilah would tell parts of Yeva's story (for example, "English is her second language") perhaps because Aamilah already knew lots about Yeva and wanted to help her share her story with me, also perhaps because Aamilah and Yeva perceived themselves, in some ways, different from each other. In other cases, Yeva's (and her twin sister, Yesenia's) pronunciation and word choices were 'corrected' by their peers, for instance, in one of the focus groups, Yeva said she speaks "Japan" and Haimi corrected her, "Japanese". I theorise that these interactions between Yeva and Yesenia and their peers, marked by correcting their English or helping them share their stories, are linked to the fact that some participants helped Yeva and Yesenia when they first arrived in the school, as Haimi recalled "we kind of taught them … they started to learn English a bit more, so now Yeva and Yesenia know a lot more English" (Chapter 5.5.4). Therein lies an interesting reflection regarding the peer relationships and fluid and contextualised power dynamics and knowledge amongst peers. Yeva and Yesenia position themselves, and are positioned by other, as multicultural and multilingual, which as viewed positively and as a powerful form of status and peer group relationships. Yet, there were incidences where Yeva's and Yesenia's accounts of themselves were undermined, albeit unintentionally, by other children who corrected their English or spoke about their story for them. These comments illustrate how schools must be more aware of the complex and contextualised discourses surrounding celebrating multiculturalism and differences.

Secondly, Yeva commented that she came 'here' when she was three, which was different to her teacher's account which was that Yeva and Yesenia moved to the UK in year 5 (last year). Perhaps Yeva's meaning of 'here' was that she left Iran when she was three, travelling to America and Spain first. Alternatively, it might have been a misunderstanding on the teacher's part – it is difficult to know for certain. The ambiguous and contrasting accounts that children sometimes gave about themselves is perhaps symptomatic of the nature of the methods, in particular the focus groups which facilitated multiple and incomplete narratives, such as participants spoke over each other, and conversations moved swiftly with few clear opportunities to revisit and clarify participants' comments. Butler (2005) can be used to interpret this point too. Butler argues that the conditions within which one emerges is in a

state of relationality with the ‘other’ and when the subject gives an account *to* someone, their account is not theirs alone as the subject becomes “compelled to give the account away, to send it off, to be dispossessed of it” (p. 36).

In the accounts in this section (7.4), children re-framed and shared their experiences of ‘travel’ in positive ways, related to “travelling to new places” (Aadila) and travelling on planes to visit their heritage countries (Faruq, Dayyan, Usman). Stories about their cultural backgrounds and different countries of birth were inscribed within notions of sameness and differences. The workshops facilitated conversations and co-constructions of belonging and cultural identities and have enabled children to know more about one another and explore different possibilities for living.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on addressing how children express feelings of belonging and aspects of their cultural identities, which related to feelings of ‘home’ and stories of migration (Research Questions 1 and 2). This chapter found that children were often excited to share their stories about where they were born, and their stories of home and children shared information and demonstrated their knowledge about their family backgrounds, positioning themselves, and being positioned by others, as knowledgeable.

This chapter has also revealed that children navigate their identities and feelings of belonging by distinguishing their stories from their parents or by showing solidarity with their parents and they give accounts of themselves through local (“I am from here”) and global (affiliation with heritage country) lines of identification. This chapter found that children did not tend to express forms of hybrid national identities, with the exception of Aamilah who suggested doing a gymnastics Bollywood dance because she would describe herself as ‘British-Bengali’. This differs from other studies in the field of education, identity and migration (e.g., Boland, 2020; Faas, 2008; Harris, 2016) and therefore reflects the importance of listening to the voices of children and re-examining notions of hybridity in research with children to think about the ways children describe themselves in given spaces

and times. Children spoke about visiting their heritage country and maintaining physical and symbolic connections with family in their heritage countries, such as speaking on the phone with family. As other studies in this area have found, children's lives are often embedded in local places as well as global and 'transnational' spaces (Fog-Olwig 2003; Mand, 2010; Moskal, 2015; Ní Laoire et al., 2011).

This chapter draws on aspects of new materialism (i.e., Wyn et al., 2020 and Youkhana, 2015) to highlight the role of material objects and place in children's accounts of belonging and identity. Children spoke about the significance of the physical environment, such as the weather, environments, objects, technology and animals that intersect with their multifaceted experiences of belonging and identity. According to Wyn et al. (2020), new materialist approaches (in terms of examining the role of materials in the research context) can widen the analysis of belonging in relation to place as they highlight the importance of the materiality of both the social and natural world in shaping the social fabric. Some participants with limited experiences of travel and migration felt nostalgia for the heritage countries they had not visited (such as Teresa and Dayyan). This chapter shows how belonging was constructed through the material world and thinking about material conditions invokes feelings, emotions, and affective experiences, including feelings of nostalgia and worlds that are different. For example, Aminah reflects on her life in both Libya and England, evoking memories of the sandy, hot lands of Libya. Similarly, Teresa's sense of belonging and home encompassed reminiscences of her rural hometown in the Czech Republic, which is frequently struck by tornadoes.

CHAPTER 8: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON DOING ARTS-BASED RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN

The point of departure for this chapter is to discuss the processes of doing arts-based research with children, drawing on my reflections as well as conversations with participants. This chapter provides a researcher's account of some of the ethical and methodological issues involved in listening to children's voices, and how these issues impacted and facilitated the exploration of the research questions. A number of papers have reflected on working with children in arts-based research (e.g., Arnott et al., 2020; Blaisdell et al., 2019; Hall et al., 2019; Wall & Robinson, 2022), but fewer have asked children themselves to reflect on their involvement in and attitudes towards arts-based research (with the exception of Morrow, 1998 – although this is an older paper). This chapter is also driven by the fact that a limited number of papers have focused on drama and dance as a research tool used with children (Fraser & al Sayah, 2011). This chapter seeks to address this gap, drawing on theories and data from my researcher experiences of trying to capture and represent child voice, what things constrained and facilitated voice, and how children engaged with the creative and discursive methods and participatory approaches of the project.

This chapter contains 5 sections: participants' views on their levels of enjoyment and choice about engaging with the methods/ in the project (8.1); reflections on formulating ideas in their drama and dance (8.2); the ethics entailed in sharing participants' voices and their artwork (8.3); research relationships with participants and teachers (8.4); and reflections on the inclusion of the audio recorders (8.5).

8.1 Participants' views on enjoyment and levels of choice

As discussed in Chapter 4.1.1, participants engaged with participatory aspects of the research and their roles changed based on their personal preferences, availability and willingness to engage as the study progressed. Children were given the freedom to choose from a range of arts-based methods and were encouraged to interpret and discuss the focus

group transcripts using interactive pinboards. It was through these discussions that we clarified meaning, shared stories, and build further themes related to belonging and identity, leading to the exploratory dance and drama performances. Studies have shown that participatory approaches can be powerful in engaging the voices of children (Coyle & Carter, 2018; Fielding & Bragg, 2003), but it is important to reflect on these processes with the children (Blaisdell et al., 2019; Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010). This section focuses on how children reflected on the project, including what they enjoyed the most and the least about the research, and how they felt about the levels of choice and participation they had during the workshops.

The children were very reflective in their responses. They were mostly positive about the project, and often mentioned the creative methods as fun and enjoyable, as highlighted in the following extract.

Yesenia	er I like everything, but the most one I really love was the drama
Aamilah	I liked the drama bit the best
Izzy	I liked the art a bit more (Oakland, focus group 5)

Yeva also expressed that she enjoyed the dance and drama workshops because she had time to practice the choreography. She said, "I really like, you know when we did the dance, I really like that er cos we got like a lot of time to perform it, to remember the scripts". Flexibility was key, and on several occasions, participants in both schools requested more time on certain sessions, specifically to finish off their storyboards and to spend more time rehearsing their drama and dance performances. Furthermore, Linda felt that the performances gave her more confidence saying, "I like the performances because it gives [me] more confidence … we loved everything". Other participants at Westfield School, including Teresa, Aasab, and Fareeha, also commented that they "loved everything".

Furthermore, Aminah expressed that she enjoyed 'talking' about her life and sharing stories. She said, "I say my facts about my country and erm what did I do in my life and yeah … information about my life … I felt like er I was talking to people that are like trust me". Aminah's comment suggests that the project provided children with an opportunity to

discuss their personal experiences and cultural backgrounds; the focus groups seemed to be an effective platform for such conversations. Aminah was the only participant to mention the focus group conversations as most of the participants stated that they found the creative techniques to be the most enjoyable. This is consistent with wider studies that suggest that arts-based methods are attractive, engaging and age-appropriate for research with children (Bland, 2018; Cook & Hess, 2007; Hall & Wall, 2016; Ní Laoire, 2016; Thompson, 2008). For instance, Hall and Wall (2016) found that children expressed positive attitudes towards creative and visual art methods. Aminah's comment also highlights the importance of relationships in research and establishing a safe and trusting environment between researcher and participants and between participants themselves, as this can encourage participants to share their thoughts and feelings (McKenzie, 2019; Pinnegar & Quiles-Fernández, 2018). I return to this point later in this chapter to interrogate and explore the notion of researcher relationships and its facilitation of children's voices.

However, not all children expressed enjoyment in engaging with arts-based methods, for example, Faruq rated it "0 out of 10 … I didn't even like my drawing, like painting people, I don't like painting people". Batul expressed a similar sentiment, in the extract below.

Batul	I didn't like the painting, like why did it have to be painting?!
Izzy	but you had the option to do collage or sketching
Batul	I know, I know, but it just wasn't my thing (Oakland, focus group 5)

Batul used to phrase 'it just wasn't my thing' to express her option and to perhaps soften her viewpoint. Izzy seemed to challenge Batul's statement by reminding her that she had other options, such as doing college or sketching. Although studies reflecting on children's voices and perspectives on research are rare, Morrow (1998) in particular found that children expressed positive responses to engaging in research. Morrow (1998) reflected that, "it would have been highly unlikely that they would have made negative remarks to my face" (p. 308). However, participants in my study expressed both positive and negative comments to me directly, which might have been a testament to the positive relationships created and for the enthusiasm for co-creation and participation, and also due to the nature of the focus group which enabled support from the group.

During a discussion among the participants at Oakland School, it was observed that some children decided not to participate because they were not comfortable performing in front of the entire school.

Researcher	*how about you guys because did you chose not to come to the drama sessions? Was that not really your style?*
	[participants verbally agreeing]
Izzy	I did one session and then didn't-
Amy	I just don't like performing in front of people
Alaya	same
Jessica	I do, but I just didn't want to (Oakland, focus group 5)

On certain occasions, I happened to overhear these participants persuading each other to skip the workshops, whispering to each other 'are you going to go?'. In the extract above, it was noted that these participants belonged to the same circle of friends. Similarly, those who took part in the drama and dance workshops were also seen to be in their own groups of friends. This highlights the influence and power of friendships, as friends may have encouraged or discouraged each other's participation and feelings. This dynamic can create an interesting tension when working with pre-existing peer groups and friendships. Thus, these children mentioned in the extract above did not take part in the workshops (although they attended the post-performance workshops where they shared their reasons for not attending).

In both schools, participants expressed some nervousness and reluctance but also excited anticipation at the prospect of performing their drama and dance to the school. For example, Aadila asked, "do we *have to* perform it?". Upon reflection, it is worth considering that if the drama and dance methods were conducted solely for exploratory data collection, without being disseminated and performed to the school, some of the participants might have been more willing to engage. For other participants, the opportunity to rehearse, perfect and perform their stories and ideas was an important aspect of the project. As such, the knowledge that their ideas would be performed to the school might have constrained and also facilitated what was said and what views were expressed. Therefore, this reflects a

challenge in research to respect and navigate people's different preferences, and that despite my enthusiasm for creative forms of dissemination, and research that often highlights the importance of community-based dissemination (e.g., Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Harvey et al., 2019), this did not always align with the preferences of some of the participants (Mannay et al., 2023; Mannay et al., 2019). This prompted me to become more flexible and responsive to participants views and approaches, as I will continue to explore later in this chapter.

The next section focuses on children's perspectives on their levels of 'choice' during the workshops. In the extracts below, participants expressed different views on the notion of choice.

Faruq	I think we had some choice because when we were doing the performance you weren't like okay Aminah does this, Baha does this, Asman does this, and you actually let us do what we want
Aasab	yeah
Fareeha	yeah (Westfield, focus group 5)

Aamilah	erm when we did the art part we didn't really get to choose what we actually did, you said make the comic strips
Kaamisha	we got to choose the colours, Aamilah
Sarah	that's the best part
Aamilah	yeah but not like what we were doing, I think we should have had a vote
Batul	but that's not choice cos what if-
Kaamisha	that's democracy!

Batul	-what if like someone says, I want to talk about Makka Pakka[8] but someone else says-
Kaamisha	why would we want to talk about Makka Pakka?! [laughs]
Batul	-and then the other one wanted to do about the recorder, that's not really choosing, so I think we should have just done comics on about what we felt or what we wanted to do
…	
Haimi	I would have added another session that's freefall so we can do anything we wanted but it has to be about-
Batul	art?
Haimi	no not art, it could be anything, dancing or anything, but you could choose what you wanted to do, just like what we did with drama but like anything you want, belonging and do a drawing
Aamilah	but didn't we already do that, like when we were doing collage
Haimi	yeah but anything we wanted! (Oakland, focus group 5)

These interactions were interesting because they raised questions about what counts as 'choice' and the degrees of choice the participants felt they had, and what was important to them, for example, Sarah perhaps jokingly saying they could choose "the colours" in their artwork which was the "best part". Haimi also mentioned that she would have liked another session that was "freefall, so we can do anything we wanted". Batul's comment about talking about Makka Pakka or the recorders, which she said, "that's not really choosing", and instead thought "we should have just done comics on about what we felt or what we wanted to do", relates to a practical tension early in the project, regarding negotiating participant agency and choices but also keeping in mind the research topic and research questions. One of the participants, Dayyan, for example, suggested that we could use clay and paper mâché to build models of bridges. Some participants asked to do other types of

[8] Children's TV cartoon character.

methods and activities - “can we do bike riding?”, “can we do PE[9]?” and “can we play outside?”. This raised an ethical reflection about whether children fully understood the research aims and also raised questions about my framing of the research and how children interpreted the idea of ‘choice’. In the moment, I thought about whether building bridges, as Dayyan suggested, could address the research questions, but ultimately I felt restricted by amount of time and resources available. Existing research highlights how, despite participatory methodologies being acknowledged for creating more equal platforms of dialogue and meaning-making, power differences between researcher and participant are always present, complex, and fluid (James, 2007; Spyrou, 2011). Participatory research can be thought of as a spectrum, for example, as demonstrated through the children’s comments, there was varying levels of independence, autonomy and choice as the project progressed, which provided space for ambiguities and differences to arise in terms of researcher and participant expectations and preferences (i.e., Dayyan’s comment). It was also interesting that one of the key aspects of co-creation and co-analysis that I had valued, the interactive pinboards, participants did not comment on this as an aspect of ‘co-research’. Therefore, the choice of method, in different ways, might constrain and facilitate voice, including children’s personal preferences and the researcher decision-making.

The research environment also shaped children’s voices and engagement with the research topic. For the drama and dance workshops, which took place in the school’s sport halls, there was more energy, noise and chatter, and movement, such as running around and making use of the space in ways that was different from the art workshops which took place in the classrooms or small study room. Children were also conscious about producing good dance and drama, as there was the ‘high stakes’ of performing to the school. Therefore, the prospect of performing the methods might have both facilitated and constrained voice, for instance, reluctance to participate or possibly withholding and editing voice to ensure it was suitable for performance; however, some children enjoyed the dance and drama sessions which facilitated voice as they were bonded by a desire to produce a ‘good’ performance.

[9] ‘Physical Education’.

8.2 Participating in drama and dance and generating ideas

This section discusses participants' reflections on the processes and challenges of participating in the drama and dance activities and generating ideas for their performances. While some participants said that "nothing was hard" (Fareeha and Aasab), others expressed that the performative methods were "really difficult" (Yeva).

The following extracts highlight the reflections of Izzy and Aadila regarding the challenges of working in groups with other people – either groups that were 'too big' (Aadila) or 'too small' (Izzy).

Aadila	I found the hardest because like it was really hard to come up with ideas because there [were] more people in the groups (Westfield, focus group 5)

Izzy	I think well err it was hard because we only had two people so that wasn't really like, it was hard to have ideas and make it work with only two people it was hard to piece together, cos Alaya abandoned us [laughs]
Researcher	*right, so if it was a bigger group you might have had more ideas?*
Izzy	yeah, we kinda had the idea but I think it would have been easier to piece together if there were more people (Oakland, focus group 5)

Furthermore, Aamilah's perspective highlighted the usefulness of additional resources, the pinboards and mind-maps with key words, as a scaffold to help them create and represent their ideas through dance and drama. Aamilah said, "'cos in art you'd ask us these question and you know how you put down things we've said … that really helped us to make our drama and dance". Thus, Aamilah's comments highlight the potential benefits of using mind-maps and pinboards as a scaffold to help them explore and represent the abstract concepts of belonging, inclusion and identity through dance and drama.

Participants also expressed challenges of negotiating ideas and decision-making, which seemed to be quite contentious among the participants, as highlighted in the exchange between Kaamisha, Yeva and Rose below.

Speaker	Speech
Researcher	*was there anything that was difficult about the dance and drama activity?*
Yeva	it was really difficult
Rose	it was kinda both because-
Kaamisha	*we* made the start cos you [Rose] were not at the session
Rose	yeah but I helped make add-ons
Kaamisha	well, *we* made the story
Rose	er well cos they had made the ideas then you had to write the script and you had to write what lines you gotta put in here, does this sound right, does this line join with this line
Kaamisha	yeah we kept changing the accents
Rose	and we were like oh wait we're doing it Victorian, oh wait we're doing it American, no we're doing it such and such
Yeva	it was really difficult because like Kaamisha and Rose wanted to add a lot of ideas, but I sometimes wanted to add ideas, but they kept going and changing more words
Kaamisha	that's cos I kept having ideas for dances and we had to change the time cos there wouldn't be dancing in the Victorian times as such [pause]
Researcher	*so, was it conflicting ideas, different ideas? You didn't always agree?*
Kaamisha	no basically I just say we're gonna change this and Sarah would go 'no', and I said 'well I'm gonna change it anyway' [laughs] (Oakland, focus group 5)

Here, participants highlighted some of the challenges they faced when engaging in drama methods, including changing the accents and time periods (e.g., Victorian times), and negotiating different people's preferences and ideas. Kaamisha commented on a conflict of ideas between herself and Sarah. Yeva felt that her ideas were not always recognised and appreciated by her peers, making collaboration and communication in research difficult. In some ways, Kaamisha seemed to reject Rose's co-ownership of their drama ideas too ("well, we made the story") with Rose remaining somewhat on the periphery ("I helped make add-ons"). Thus, it seems that the roles and responsibilities in the workshops were quite contentious among the participants. In arts-based research spaces which encourage collaboration, collective stories, and imagination, not all children's voices are heard and represented equally. Existing literature often highlights the importance of the researcher actively listening to and representing children voices (as discussed in Chapter 4.1), and **i**n recent years, alternative, creative, and more inclusive methods have been proposed to tackle the issue of voice and exclusion in social research. Reflections of my data, however, also reveals the capacity for peer-silencing and how children became gatekeepers amongst themselves, accepting and rejecting each other's ideas and ownership in the drama and dance performances.

Further to this point, in the focus groups my role was sometimes to mediate disagreements amongst participants to navigate peer-relationships and everyone's right to participate and share their views.

Researcher	*hang on, the recorder won't be able to pick up the sound if everyone talks over each other*
Yeva	can I say something?
Batul	no shut up [to Yeva]
Researcher	*oh Batul, that's not nice to say*
Batul	sorry, [continues with her point] technically what happens is my mum asks how was your day … (Oakland, focus group 3)

Children silencing one another ("shut up") is an interesting ethical point, and perhaps reflects some of the challenges associated with the fact that participants were already in

well-defined peer friendship groups. As discussed earlier, at Oakland School in particular, children would sometimes experiment with the boundaries of what they could get away with, and sometimes through humour, they would exclude each other. As the researcher sometimes I had to mediate these tensions and remind children to be kind to each other.

As discussed in the previous section, some participants expressed reluctance to participate in the drama and dance activities, Firstly, Sarah jokingly said, "I will just be a tree in the background". At Westfield, all the children except for one were happy to perform in front of the rest of their year group. This particular child was very uncomfortable with this idea. Therefore, I suggested he could join in during the rehearsals, discuss with peers, but did not have to participate in the actual performance. Some of the participants suggested that this participant could help with music or be the narrator. The children's suggestions were collaborative and inclusive, as they felt they did not have to be 'on stage' to participate. This raises the question about what actually constitutes participation. This child was willing to participate if he is able to support 'backstage'. Therefore, researchers should be responsive to the range of levels of participation children want in a project, and 'full' engagement, as in the loud voices and physical presence on stage, should not be the only desirable form of participation and means for including children's voices.

Secondly, Aadila said about the drama and dance performance, "do we *have to* do it? Can we change our minds!?". The teaching assistant who was liaising with the project overheard Aadila's comment, and she told the pupils that if they have committed to the project they should not drop out. Although it was difficult to maintain continuity, and so I did want all the participants to take part as much as possible, I was also concerned about upholding the right to withdraw with no repercussion. Therefore, I made it a point to remind them at various stages of the project that they could withdraw at any time. I was worried that this message contradicted what the teacher was telling the pupils. Indeed, when collaborating with schools and dealing with various stakeholders, I realised that there were instances where my positionality and desires did not align with those of the teachers. To give another example, in Oakland, the class teacher was enthusiastic about the project, but initially introduced the project in a way that implied exclusiveness and that a prerequisite of participation was good behaviour. The teacher said: "Holly has come to work with you, talk to you, show her how

polite you are … if you are good, you might be invited to take part". I wondered about the impact of this statement and whether certain pupils who considered themselves, or are considered by others, as not being "good" might have chosen not to take part? I also questioned whether pupils might have perceived me, the adult researcher, as having the responsibility and authority to select certain students to participate ("you might be invited to take part"). Indeed, I did not select participants, or groups of participants, based on certain characteristics, rather the project was open to all of the year 6 cohort. As discussed in Chapter 2.2, the objective of this study was to involve 'all' children to understand the dialogic, co-constructed and contested spaces in which identities and belonging emerges. Children's lives, their accounts of themselves and others, do not happen in a vacuum, and so I was interested in what children in the presence of each other. As such, in these early stages of the project, I made the aims clear and that 'all' children in year 6 would be invited to participate.

In sum, silences and tensions around coming up with ideas and expressing voice during data collection can be an uncomfortable process and took shape in different ways. This section also discussed how the children navigated participation and coming up with ideas during the dance and drama workshops, and this involved complexities around silencing and representing each other voices.

8.3 The ethics entailed in sharing participants' voices and their artwork

This section focuses on participants' attitudes towards sharing their comments on the pinboards and sharing their artwork with their peer. At Oakland, during the pinboard activity, children were generally very positive and enthusiastic to re-read their focus group conversations. Participants' reactions to the pinboards and sharing their artwork with the group at Oakland School were markedly different from their counterparts at Westfield. At Westfield, children were often reluctant to share their additional comments they had written on the post-it notes, for example, "please don't read mine first… read it later" (Fareeha) and "please don't show it" (Aadila). These sentiments were also reflective in one of the focus group sessions which planned for children to show each other their storyboards which would prompt further conversations about school inclusion and moving to a new

school. The extract below was fairly representative of all participants' attitudes towards sharing their artwork and reading aloud (or me reading it for them) their additional post-it notes on the pinboards.

Researcher	*erm that's yours Aadila? [reading the name on the back of the storyboard]*
Aadila	please don't show it!
Aminah	oh mine's worse
Aadila	mine doesn't exist
Researcher	*but they are so good! Dayyan, this is yours? [continues handing out artwork]*
Dayyan	no, don't look … I just messed it up
Faruq	can I throw [mine] away?
Researcher	*aw we need to keep it for a bit?*
Faruq	fine (Westfield, focus group 4)

Participants seemed to express that they did not want to share their artwork because they didn't think they looked good. Aminah appeared to reassure Aadila but saying "oh mine's worse" and Aadila replied somewhat jokingly, "mine doesn't exist". Faruq even asked to throw his storyboard away, which reflected a challenge because I was dependent on their 'productions', which is an interesting ethical aspect of arts-based research. In the extract below, the participants conveyed their objection towards discussion their storyboards with peers.

Researcher	*if you want, shall we spend a few minutes talking to the people next to you about the storyboards you made?*
Dayyan	no, no!
Faruq	definitely not
Aasab	no

Researcher *oh? Okay, okay* (Westfield, focus group 4)

My expectations of this activity being a fun and supportive activity did not seem to align with the participants' attitudes. Komulainen (2007) points out that children's voices are often constrained, mediated and enabled by certain contexts and relationships. In this case, it is interesting to reflect on the relationality of children's voices and attitudes and how they might have been influencing each other and echoing similar sentiments in an effort to 'fit in' with the group. In the early stages of the workshops, and throughout, I reminded participants that we would be sharing and discussing the artwork to facilitate further conversations in the focus group. Nonetheless, when it came down to it, participants demonstrated agency and ability to articulate their reservations, and this reflects how my expectations and attitudes sometimes differed from the participants' attitudes. I struggled to balance my own agenda with the children's wishes and preferences – and Blaisdell et al., (2019) and Cassidy et al., (2022) found similar challenges. Therefore, I had to shape the research agenda but also be responsive to the different and changing perspectives and preferences of participants, and the shifting ethical situations that can arise during the research process. According to Cassidy et al., (2022) research where "adults are not afraid to shape the agenda, but do so in responsive, gradual and sensitive ways – creates the potential for a more inclusive experience for children that also meets researcher needs" (p. 13).

This section has discussed a particular ethical dilemma that emerged regarding representing children's voices through creative methods and respecting children's perspectives. At Westfield in particular, sharing their artwork and talking about it was an area of contention. This could be due to the fact that the artwork reflected personal and emotional experiences related to identity and belonging. However, it is possible that participants lacked confidence in their artistic abilities, which could have contributed to the issue.

8.4 Research relationships with the participants and methods

In both schools, during the art workshops, participants spoke to me a lot whilst they were engaging in the activities. However, during the dance and drama workshops, I played a more passive role as a listener and occasional facilitator as my main role was to assist the children

in developing their ideas if they needed my help, but for the most part, they talked amongst themselves. As such, certain arts-based methods were conducive to closer engagement with the researcher than others.

Conversations with the researcher were nonetheless important and ongoing in the data collection process, and, at times, the focus groups provided a clearer method to answering the research questions. This raised questions about why I had selected certain methods. Firstly, the artwork was difficult to analyse and relied on clarification from the participants by talking with them (Bland, 2012; Rollins, 2018). Secondly, at the risk of undermining the theoretical underpinnings (Chapter 3.2.1), I found myself questioning whether the artwork produced by the children reflected their 'true' feelings and interpretations. I wondered if the storyboards carried the same weight as the focus group discussions, given that some children seemed disinterested in engaging with the artwork; some participants doodled on their artwork, and Faruq wanted to 'throw away' his painting.

The informal conversations with participants, and the focus group sessions, seemed to be the 'voices' that fit most easily into the research questions, positioned as children's "message-like thoughts that can be exchanged, and intentions that match the situations defined by adults" (Komulainen, 2007, p. 25). This seemed to, in some ways, contrast with my underpinning theoretical and methodological philosophy of decentring language as the primary mode of communication (Frimberger et al., 2018; Harvey et al., 2019; Li Wei, 2018) and utilising creative art methods as a powerful child-centred tool and when working with children who speak languages other than English as their first language (Clark, 2005; Thomson, 2008). Blaisdell et al., (2019), in a study on using creative arts-based methods in research with young children, found similar tensions – "although we had purposefully made space for open-ended processes, we then defaulted to a view of children's verbal utterances as their 'authentic voice'" (p. 24). This reflects the importance of finding flexible ways in which to work with children (Blaisdell et al., 2019) and embrace children's full communicative and linguistic repertoires, including silent voices, imaginary voices, collective voices. Trying to capture and represent child voice and understand their views and experiences of belonging and inclusion was complex, and different methods intersected with the possibilities of giving voice and listening to voice at different times.

Indeed, the methodological variety regarding the 'mixing' of more discursively focused methods alongside more imaginative elements allowed me to generate accounts which speak to the research questions in different ways. This observation that the focus group data 'mapped' most easily onto the research questions can also be viewed in light of an earlier analysis that highlighted how children's responses as seeming 'non-answers' and 'non-abstractable' accounts speak implicitly to the research questions and research methodology when considered in relation to the theoretical framework (Butler/ New Materialism). This is because the data reveals ways in which belonging was linked to non-abstractable accounts and social-material dimensions (read through new materialism) as well as the impossibility of giving complete, knowable accounts of oneself (Butler). As discussed in Chapter 5, children's 'off topic' answers, silences, or non-abstractable accounts (also linking to conceptualisations of belonging as material possessions), provide an 'undermining' of the research as an exact linguistic mapping of the research questions (e.g., seldom expressing meaning through 'verbal' utterances only, as well as belonging not only being about abstract and politicised constructs around to identity and otherness but also non-abstractable and rooted in material dimensions).

Arguably, certain voices are more easily 'heard' when they fit into the researcher's/ existing conceptualisations of belonging, determined by the research questions and research methodology. However, the findings highlight the importance of being attentive to 'other' forms of voice (Blaisdell et al., 2019; Komulainen, 2007), which require close researcher observation in terms of what is not said and why (Mazzei, 2003). For instance, children saying "I can't think of an answer" could denote a lack of understanding, but it could also tell us about the place/ perceptions of belonging in their lives, or perhaps highlights that children speak about belonging without labelling it as such (e.g., "I don't know what a 'sense of belonging' is, but …").

8.5 Children's awareness of and comments on the audio recorders

This section focuses on how the inclusion and awareness of audio recorders impacted and facilitated children's voices. Throughout the workshops, I noticed that participants were highly aware of the presence of the audio recorders – commenting on them, touching them,

whispering jokes into the microphone. In one of the focus groups, Batul spoke directly into the recorder saying, “okay, listen up recorder” and began giving her account of her multilingual knowledge and heritage language practices, suggesting she felt it was important the recorder captured her voice here. Participants at Oakland school sometimes called the audio recorders their “bestie pops”. Batul said, “recorder, you are my best friend”. I wondered why participants did this; it was clear that “bestie pops” was a popular phrase (which they called each other, and even called me at times), perhaps participants said this to be humorous as they often laughed at utterances of “bestie pops”, particularly when it was for something unusual, like saying the audio recorder is their “bestie pops”. Perhaps it was also a signal of affection, implying that they enjoyed participating in the workshops and enjoyed the fact the recorder was ‘listening’ to what they had to say.

At times, however, participants approached the audio recorders with caution and described it as “weird” and “creepy”.

Rose	it listens!
Batul	it listens
Sarah	I think its creepy [participants laugh]
Researcher	*can you tell me more about what you mean?*
Sarah	cos it listens to our voices, it’s a creep
Kaamisha	you’re offending it, stop bullying it [participants laugh] (Oakland, focus group 5)

In this extract, Sarah felt that the recorder was a “creep” because “it listens” to their conversations. This sentiment was echoed at Westfield School too, illustrated in the conversation below.

Teresa	it felt kind of weird
Researcher	*ah, why do you think that?*
Teresa	I don’t know why, it just feels weird
Researcher	*it’s just there?*

Teresa	and alone
Fareeha	when you like, put it in the table I didn't even notice it was there, but it felt weird
…	
Asman	at first when I erm when you mentioned it, I was like, why is she interviewing us with this thing?! But as time goes on you kind of forgot it's there, as in, it's invisible, it has superpowers, it just wants to listen to your- to our conversations (Westfield, focus group 5)

There were several examples of children personifying the recorders – "you're offending it" (Kaamisha) and "it has superpowers" (Asman). These comments reflect an interesting point of indirectness and personification as that participants never said directly that it was 'creepy' that *I* (the researcher) wanted to record the workshops, instead it was the *recorder* that was 'creepy'. The participants seemed to position the audio recorders as mechanical objects with agency and human-like qualities – as in, the recorder could be offended, it could 'listen', it could be their 'best friend', it could also be 'creepy'.

At times, the recorder became less visible in conversations, for example, Asman and Fareeha commented (above) that they forgot about the recorder after a while, and Asman said it was "invisible" which reflects an ethical tension (although I frequently reminded them of the recorders), where the lines between 'being researched/being recorded' and just regular conversations may become blurred (e.g., Ellis, 1995). Thus, although I frequently reminded participants of the purposes of the audio recorders, the use of arts-based approaches where the recorders were placed on the tables as the children participated in the art activities (as the 'main' purpose), compared to more formal spaces (e.g., focus groups), meant that interactions and recordings were sometimes less formalised.

Furthermore, I noticed that the flow of conversations sometimes came to abrupt stop when participants remembered and noticed the recorders on the table, for instance, some children stopped what they were going to say, lost their train of thought as their eyes flickered to the recorder, or they reminded each other I would listen back to the recorder, or

they told each other to stop talking as “the teachers might heard this”. For example, Fareeha and Aminah were talking about boys “who tease them” and Aasab reminded them not to say anything, pointing and signalling to the recorder.

Fareeha	actually there are these boys who tease, like Imram
Aminah	I don’t play with them
Aasab	don’t say anything [pointing to recorder] they’ll come after you (Westfield, focus group 4)

In this exchange, participants seemed to feel that their stories could be threatened with lack of security and confidentiality. Therefore, it could be suggested that participants used silences as a ‘protective strategy’. This is what Mazzei (2003) calls “intentional silences” whereby one purposefully chooses not to speak because they do not wish to reveal something about themselves due to fear of consequences or concern about how they will be perceived.

The nature of silences facilitated by the audio recorders (i.e., a silence which is the absence of ‘verbal’ voice) added an interesting dynamic to the workshops. Depending on the context, participants omitted, reduced, or altered aspects of their voices, in part due to the presence of the audio recorders. This can be said to be both ‘empowering’ and ‘disempowering’, as I have discussed elsewhere in relation to children’s reflections on religious identity, and self-silencing, as well as the way silence was slinked into teacher authority and feelings of illicit conversations (section 6.4.3). In the excerpts above, the silences facilitated by the audio recorders may have been 'empowering' for participants, as an ethos was created where participants could decide how they wanted to interact with the recorders, speaking directly into them ("listen up recorder") or remaining silent in some way. However, the silences facilitated by the audio recorders can also be perceived as 'disempowering' for participants, especially when influenced by peer pressure related to concerns about the security and confidentiality of their stories, as well as the distracting nature of the recorders as a seemingly unfamiliar object. For example, when I walked around the room with the recorder and asked children to talk about their artwork with me, I noticed that their eyes flickered towards the recorders with subtle moments of pauses and hesitation. Thus, children’s interactions with the audio recorders relate to silences, as well as labelling them as

‘creepy/weird’ (human-like qualities) which ascribes degrees of agency to the recorders. This can be thought about in terms of the role of the recorders and children’s practices of ‘undermining’ as well as ‘affirming’ their function. For instance, the ways in which participants creatively undermined the function of the recorder (to capture ‘voiced’ accounts) and creatively undermined my attempts to ‘abstract’ their definitions of belonging – e.g., by remaining silent in the presence of the audio recorder. This points me to my theoretical framework (Butler/new materialism) and methodological insights in terms of the difficulty of abstracting accounts of the self, related to the social-material embeddedness of children’s worlds.

Continuing to draw on aspects of new materialism, the agency of the audio recorders became evident through its capacity to impact what some children chose to say because the recorders were framed as threatening their confidentiality, with a human on the receiving end who will ultimately hear what is said. Gordon (2012) discusses the phenomenon of recorders in the research process which has been useful to my exploration of object agency and how the audio recorders shaped discourse and relations. Like Gordon (2012), I found that participants sometimes framed the recorders as a form of ‘surveillance’ whereby someone on the other side of the recorder will be able to hear what they have said – including their teachers (“the teachers might hear this”), myself as the researcher (“you know Holly will hear this”) or other pupils, illustrated by Aasab in the extract above. Therefore, as discussed, participants framed the recorder itself as ‘listening’ and ‘creepy’ (as though it is judgemental and has agency), and, related to this, the recorder was a surveillance tool for others to listen to their stories.

Furthermore, on one occasion, participants seemed to position the audio recorders as a strategy for ‘behaviour management’. For example, when some children were perceived by others as ‘messing around’, they warned each other, “you know Holly will hear this!”. As such, the recorder may have been a symbolic extension of teacher/ researcher presence and authority. Gordon (2012) also found that participants in his study sometimes spoke through the recorders to a specific researcher. I found this with one participant, Batul, who whispered into the microphone on several occasions, “hello Holly”. As such, my relationships and a sense of connection between myself and some of the participants were fostered (and perhaps hindered) through the presence of the recording devices.

Indeed, the ways that the audio recorders in particular facilitated as well as restricted voice given their object agency was interesting, in that the recorders shaped discourses and even the ways that the children related to each other, the researcher, and encouraged their mutual adherence to disciplinary procedures and perceived teacher authority ("the teacher can hear us", "you know Holly will hear this").

Discussions with the participants about the audio recorders brought up some further reflections on confidentiality and anonymity and children's understandings of these concepts.

Batul	so you know like 'anonymous' [participants correct her pronunciation], however you say it, so you keep it to yourself, no-one knows who's actually gonna or anything-
Kaamisha	why did we write our names on the back of the thing (artwork) then?
Batul	it's not really linked to like say you write your names on a piece of paper [addressed to Kaamisha], you know when your anonymous or whatever you call it
Kaamisha	just say 'when no-one knows who you are'
Jessica	I am non-existent
Batul	okay you're writing a story and you didn't write it like you wrote it but someone could maybe affect that, be jealous of you, so if it's anonymous you get a special pen and write their name on it so it's there, I don't think that's good
Kaamisha	an invisible ink pen?
Researcher	*so, you don't think it's good to be anonymous?*
Kaamisha	but then what if-
Batul	-there are some good things

Kaamisha on social media [unclear] (Oakland, focus group 4)

In this exchange, participants were able to think deeply and express reflections on the processes of research and anonymity, for example, Kaamisha wondering why they added their names to their artwork and made links to social media and Jessica jokingly saying she's "non-existent". It was difficult to follow Batul's comments and I think this perhaps reflects how children were trying to understand and attach meaning to the term 'anonymity'.

The stories presented in this study passed along complex chains of 'narrators', including human (researcher interpretations, the children as co-researchers, my supervisors and other people who have read my work and provided feedback) and non-human (audio recorders, children's artwork, the camera when taking photocopies of the artwork, analysis software, Word processing software). Feely (2020) makes a similar point in his article on the treatment of sexuality within disability services and looked at the human-human discursive features and the interactions of material agency. Feely (2020) points out that, "all narrators, both human and non-human, are necessarily unreliable. All narrators edit and alter the data they receive and pass on, including certain details, omitting others" (p. 184). For instance, I appreciate that the audio recorders may exclude audio data and contextual clues and details that exist outside the recorder's frame. So, the agency of the audio recorders determines which voices are captured, distorted, and deciphered. Once spoken, the words become disseminated, or as Butler (2005) mentions, "[we] give the account away, to send it off, to be dispossessed of it" (p. 36) - once the words, pauses and meanings are 'handed over' to the audio recorder (so to speak), this must then be (re)interpreted by the researcher. The recorder may not always capture everything that happens in real-time though. For example, often children talked over each other, and utterances became blurred and inaudible; this perhaps does not reflect the 'reality' of what occurred in the actual moment in terms of the conversations, pauses, awkwardness, meanings conveyed between groups of participants.

In sum, the audio recorders facilitated as well as restricted voice given their object agency, in terms of the capacity to 'capture' and interpret voices, as well as the fact that the recorders shaped discourses and even the ways that the children related to each other and the researcher, and encouraged their mutual recognition of disciplinary procedures,

confidentiality issues, and perceived teacher/adult authority. This section has demonstrated the inclusion of audio recorders can impact and facilitate children's voices, in different ways at different times. Children showed remarkable reflection and knowledge about research and anonymity, and inclusion of audio recorders and the risk of being exposed. This further reinforces the idea that children should be involved in conversations and decision-making regarding ethics.

8.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I reflected on the experiences of trying to capture and represent children's voices, and discussed what aspects might constrain and facilitate voice. I discussed some of the ethical and methodological issues in arts-based, participatory research with children. Children's views presented here highlight the realities of when the researcher's and participants' views do not align. I also stressed the importance of researchers' awareness around silences, and I discussed how the prospect of performing the methods might have both facilitated and constrained voice, for example, some participants were reluctant to participate in the dance and drama portion of the research. However, other children were motivated by a collective desire to create a good performance and so they wanted input and shared their ideas.

In this chapter, as well as in the previous chapters, children sometimes self-silenced or silenced each other's voices, through the different the methods. Firstly, in the focus groups, children spoke over each other, making it difficult to capture everybody's voices; it was the loudest voice that was heard, and this required me to remind the children to take turns to speak. Additionally, other times during the focus groups, participants told each other to "shut up" (Batul) or advised each other to withhold their voices in case other people might hear the voice recording (Fareeha and Aminah). Finally, in the drama and dance activities, generating ideas and identifying which voices were heard was an area of tension, and from an analysis viewpoint, the collective voices and representations of fictional stories in their artwork and dance and drama meant that it was difficult to represent 'individual' voices. However, I view this as a particular strength of the project, for example, I agree with Parry's (2015) assertion that "arts-based methods invite participants to take part in a creative

process [that] enable[s] us to love with and even revel in the mess, uncertainty and ambiguity of research, and thereby the world" (p. 89).

This chapter has provided an evaluation about the different methods, and suggested that different methods (focus group, artwork, co-analysis pinboards, dance and drama) impacted on the possibilities of 'giving voice' and listening to voice at different times. This also encompasses the influence of these methods on the relationships and conversations between myself and the participants. During the dance and drama sessions, the participants were the main contributors to the conversations and collaboration. My role in these sessions was to observe and facilitate when necessary, particularly when the participants encountered challenges with their ideas. However, I wondered if I could have designed these sessions to facilitate more conversations between myself and the participants. One interesting approach could have been for me to assume a character/ role in the dance and drama, where participants could have instructed me what to do and this could have provided further insight into their ideas and interpretations of belonging and inclusion.

The narratives presented in this chapter relate to new materialism in terms of the social-material dimensions of belonging and identities and the material aspects of the research encounter itself. As discussed, the presence and agency of the audio recorders (used for data collection) structured discourse and relations between children, and between children and researcher. This happened through, for instance, participants positioning the recorders as a seeming surveillance tool, or as a behaviour management tool (and an extension of researcher/ teacher authority). This chapter has discussed the agency of the audio recorders to restrict as well as facilitate children's voices. Additionally, in the previous chapters, I have discussed how props and technological objects (the computers) structured discourse and relations between children and shaped the production of their dance and drama performances (i.e., finding music on YouTube, looking up images of traditional cultural dress, searching images of the world map).

Participants appreciated having flexibility and time to practice their drama and dance performances and had mixed feelings about the levels of choices they had in the project, at different times. My post-methodological reflection has shown that sometimes children had reservations about participating in the dance and drama sessions and expressed reluctance at the idea of sharing their artwork with their peers. As such, participatory approaches, and

the ways to facilitate the inclusion of children's voices, were best thought of as a spectrum where researchers and participants had ongoing dialogue and attitudes towards research at different times. Rather than arts-based participatory research being conceptualised as hierarchical on a dichotomy of 'full participation' to 'non-participation' (e.g., Hart, 1992; Mitra, 2006), this study reflects on the ambiguities and messiness of research and differences between researcher and children's views, and therefore advocates for a participation spectrum of varying degrees of participant involvement, choice, and relationships (Bennion & Rutter, 2024; Southby, 2017).

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

This study has focused on children's views and experiences of belonging and school inclusion in two multiethnic primary schools in the North-east of England. The overarching aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between belonging, cultural and linguistic identities, and forms of difference and otherness, in school and in their wider lives. In total, 14 participants at Westfield School and 13 participants at Oakland School (aged 10-11) took part in multiple workshops, including focus groups, painting/collage, storyboarding, interactive pinboards, and dance and drama.

The final chapter of this thesis examines the substantive (9.1), theoretical (9.2), methodological (9.3) and pedagogical (9.4) contributions and implications of this study for research and practice. In this final chapter, I return to the research questions guiding the study to explicate how the chapters have addressed the focus and fit together to form a valuable and coherent contribution to the field of childhood and education. Thereafter, I will suggest directions for future research (9.5), and my final remarks on this study will conclude the chapter (9.6).

9.1 Substantive contributions: Answers to the research questions

1. What are children's feelings and experiences of belonging and inclusion, in school and in their wider lives?

Chapter 5 illustrated that children's narratives on belonging were expressed and defined in multiple ways, enmeshed in affective and symbolic relationships with people, groups, places, and material objects. Belonging was mobilised along social, imagined and material lines, and children infused their understandings of belonging (and identities and inclusion) through hypothetical situations or fictional stories and imagination through creative methods (Greene, 2001; Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008).

The participants' responses to questions of belonging often included physical attachments to material objects, suggesting that the term belonging was linked to its meaning of

‘possession’, and for these children, the everyday items in their lives were examples of belonging (section 5.1). Belongingness was also defined in terms of feelings of closeness and familiarity (e.g., “I’m used to it”), and children expressed emotional attachments with places, groups and people, and positive feelings associated with ‘liking’ something (section 5.2).

Furthermore, this study revealed that participants felt that belonging and inclusion were important concepts to consider (Jasmine: “not being included can affect you mentally”, section 5.5.4). Children shared their experiences of inclusion as being about ‘being included’ in social situations and friendships. Making and sustaining friendships were important for feelings of belonging and positive experiences in school, particularly for newly arrived learners, which was represented through the storyboarding and drama and dance activities.

The responses to focus group questions on the topic of 'school belonging' were quite varied. Some children chose to remain silent, while others expressed uncertainty about their sense of belonging in school. A few children expressed not feeling a strong sense of belonging in school, while some others reported that they did feel a sense of belonging in school due to positive relationships with their peers and teachers.

The findings also revealed that children had mixed responses to feelings of inclusion in school, for example, Peter said, “school barely makes you feel included and like you belong there” (section 5.5.1), whereas Asman said, “I feel belonging to my teachers because they’re nice and support me” (section 5.5.1). The children’s perspectives imply the subjective and ambiguous positions that belonging and inclusion might have in the schools.

A further contribution of this study refers to the possibilities of examining school belonging for promoting inclusion. Sometimes participants used the term ‘belonging’ to describe their feelings and experiences of inclusion (Kaamisha: “I think inclusion is like when you belong somewhere or if something belongs to you like Rose says she belongs to her parents”, section 5.4). Some children did not seem to associate *school* with feelings of belonging (Aadila: “I don’t feel a sense of er you know, I truly belong here, it’s not that this place is bad but when I feel like I belong to some place, I feel a connection”, section 5.5.1). For some, belonging was associated more with symbolic, affective and collective attachments to

cultural identity, things they 'liked doing', or aspects of their identity such as religion and heritage, or feelings of 'home'. Those who did comment on a sense of school belonging said it was because they were familiar with the school.

Sometimes participants' framing of school inclusion highlighted low levels of belonging and acceptance in school, due to the perceived 'lack of caring' of inclusive practices by teachers (section 5.5.1). Participants expressed that teacher-pupil relationships were important, and they enjoyed opportunities to talk with their teachers about themselves and their lives; they implied the importance of being listened to, acknowledged, and respected by their teachers (section 5.5.2), and they also highlighted the importance of teachers pronouncing their names correctly (section 5.5.3). Some children also highlighted being able to access the learning (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007), for example, Fareeha said, "I would like my teachers to know like what I do, what I know and what I don't know", p. 116. These findings are consistent with existing research which highlights positive teacher-pupil relationships (Pedlar, 2018; Shaw, 2019; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020) and the importance of peer group relationships and friendships for a sense of belonging and inclusion in school (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005).

Chapter 8 illustrated that children's voices on belonging and inclusion were perhaps both constrained and facilitated by the choice of methods. For example, although art methods facilitated voices through imagination, collaboration and engaging activities (Yesenia: "I like everything, but the most one I really love was the drama", section 8.1), the process of sharing their artwork and presenting additional notes from pinboards also constrained children's willingness to share their comments on belonging and inclusion.

2. How do children give accounts of themselves and talk about their (linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural) identities?

Chapter 6 has shown that children had a strong desire to emphasise their multilingualism, positioning themselves, and others, as knowledgeable multilingual speakers, and interactions between participants around language were a way of relating to peer culture

(film, music, anime) and navigating belonging in friendships. For most children in this study, MFL learning was considered part of their multilingual identities, listed alongside English and heritage languages. For children from non-immigrant backgrounds (as well as migrant and immigrant background children), foreign language learning at school was important as it afforded them their positionality as multilingual speakers.

Furthermore, this study has drawn from the innovative field of 'translanguaging' (e.g., García & Otheguy, 2020; Li Wei, 2018) to explore the complex ways children utilise multiple linguistic and communicative repertoires which included silences, pauses, attempts at humour, accents, going beyond 'named' languages including imaginary languages and youth culture. Children also spoke in shared languages and translated between their languages, at home and school, for different purposes. Children taught each other languages as part of their translanguaging practices in school (García & Otheguy, 2020), for example, Haimi expressed how she supported Yeva and Yesenia when they first arrived and taught them English through a shared knowledge of languages other than English (section 5.5.2).

The findings revealed that some children spoke about their religious identities feelings of belonging. These discourses intersected with peer group relationships (Yeva: "we're Muslim sisters, you're Christian sisters", section 6.4.2). Children's narratives on their religious identities also related to navigating language practices and a sense of collective identity (Jamil: "we Muslims have the Qur'an but in the Qur'an, it's all … in Arabic", section 6.4.2).

Ethnicity/race was spoken about less frequently compared to religious and linguistic identity. In both schools, though, there were two notable instances where ethnicity was discussed, namely Imram's and Izzy's comments (section 6.4.1). These participants shared stories they had heard about racial exclusion and discrimination, but they emphasised that it was not from a personal experience. Rather, they mentioned that such incidents occur either in high school or in the public/media.

3. Through their narratives of belonging and inclusion (RQ1) and accounts of their identity (RQ2), how do children articulate and experience otherness and differences in relation to school and their wider lives?

Chapter 6 revealed how, in both schools, language was a category of 'difference', which intersected with religion, ethnicity, and migrant status, to create positive as well as negative forms of otherness in school. These narratives were represented mostly through focus groups, informal conversations, and the dance and drama workshops. Through the use of imagination and drama and dance methods, children were able to create their own stories and draw from collective narratives to position themselves in different ways.

The participants gave accounts of themselves, and gave accounts of others, on notions of religious and linguistic difference as well as sameness and belonging in peer-group relationships. At Westfield, religion was often positioned as a taboo subject, perceived as a site of difference and discrimination. In both schools, sometimes children expressed, contested and navigated cultural and linguistic identities and differences though attempts at humour (section 6.4.2). It seemed that some participants were 'othered' more than others: in the case of Dayyan, notions of differences were negatively framed, and his peers interpreted his comments as offensive and inscribed within anti-Muslim sentiments (section 6.4.3). The tension surrounding cultural and linguistic differences and otherness in school was related to participants feeling that their peers were 'laughing' or 'mocking' them or parts of their identities.

Chapter 7 discussed how the discursive constructions around cultural differences were often positively framed as children were interested in stories of migration and travel. Children's accounts of differences related to sharing stories about visiting their countries and travelling on planes. Chapter 7 presented the findings on children's sense of belonging related to 'home'. The findings here revealed that children navigated their identities (attachments to their heritage countries and places of birth) and feelings of belonging by distinguishing their stories from their parents or by showing solidarity with their parents, giving accounts of themselves through local and global lines of identification.

My discussion in the findings chapters has presented 'otherness' and 'difference' as closely related concepts, but there are some distinctions to be made in the ways children used these concepts (echoing some of the points made in Chapter 1.4). Firstly, 'differences' referred to how children spoke about their own and others' linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and religious identities. Children talked about belonging through these differences, particularly

in relation to peer group friendships. It is important to note that differences did not always lead to forms of othering. My findings show that children often celebrated their different backgrounds (perceived as 'different' from their peers or the majority school culture) when discussing their heritage countries and multilingual knowledge. Secondly, in the context of the study, 'otherness' was inscribed within notions of difference, including forms of collective identity and denying membership to certain religious and linguistic groups. Therefore, 'otherness' is distinguished from 'difference', based on the children's narratives, in terms of how otherness related to inclusion (lack of inclusion). Children's narratives on inclusion related to being included and being 'accepted for who you are'. These forms of inclusion/otherness became more nuanced through the consideration of differences and identities that contribute to processes of inclusion/otherness.

9.2 Theoretical contributions and implications

Located within the fields of childhood education and migration, this study has attempted to give visibility to children's situated and multifaceted voices and experiences in the multiethnic classroom and has contributed to the wider body of literature on inclusive education and the place of belonging in children's lives.

This next section discusses the theoretical contributions and implications and is comprised of five subsections: theorisations of belonging (9.2.1), linking school belonging and inclusion (9.2.2), reflections on Butler (9.2.3), reflections of child voice (9.2.4), reflections on new materialism (9.2.5), and implications for terminology (9.2.6).

9.2.1 Theorisations of belonging in children's lives

As discussed in Chapter 2, belonging can be generally defined as the ways in which individuals develop, perform and contest their sense of self and their spatial and symbolic attachments to places, people, and material things (e.g., Antonsich, 2010; Youkhana, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Firstly, this study has endorsed the view of belonging as discursive and politicised constructs that create, justify, and resist forms of inclusion and otherness, as in, the 'politics of

belonging' (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The children's narratives demonstrated multidimensional notions of belonging related to ongoing questions of self-identification, and children conceptualised belonging through lines of sameness and difference related to linguistic, cultural and religious identities, which determined forms of insiderness and belonging (peer, school, national). Through dialogue and interactions, the participants established, contested and reinforced their own, and one another's, identities and related feelings of belonging.

Additionally, this study also contributes to theorisations on belonging as feelings of 'home' and place (e.g., Antonsich, 2010; Ros i Solé et al., 2020; Youkhana, 2015). The children's narratives chimed with Antonsich's (2010) definition of belonging as "personal, intimate, feelings of being 'at home' in a place" (p. 645). Chapters 5 to 7 uncovered children's perspectives and experiences of belonging related to material dimensions, including the embodied relationships between people, material objects, places, memories, and physical landscapes (Ros i Solé et al., 2020; Macleroy & Shamsad, 2020; Youkhana, 2015). Children from migrant, immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds spoke about belonging as being at 'home' in a place.

As discussed in Chapter 5, an important contribution of this study was the child-led definitions and theorisations around the concept of belonging. For instance, when asked about their perspectives and experiences of belonging, some children provided seemingly 'off-topic' answers ("I don't know what a 'sense of belonging' is, but…"), and they expressed some confusion ("I'm kinda stuck on that question") and 'non-answers' or silences (e.g., "I don't have an answer"). These aspects 'undermined' the research as an exact linguistic mapping of the research questions (in terms of direct verbal utterances on what belonging 'is').

The findings in this study also raised questions regarding notions of 'hybridity' (specifically hybrid national identity) as children's narratives did not tend to include notions of 'hybridity', with the exception of Aamilah who considered doing a 'gymnastics Bollywood' dance because she is 'British-Bengali' (section 7.1.1). Thus, children often did not express hybrid, cosmopolitan national identities; instead, they adopted an 'either/or' discourse (Zontoni & Peró, 2019) in terms of localised identity ("I am from here"), or, partly through parental heritage, they spoke about 'being from' their heritage country. This distinguishes my study from other research in the field of migration and education which finds that young people

often express hybrid cultural and national identities and they articulate how they navigate these hybrid parts of their lives (e.g., Boland, 2020; Faas, 2008; Harris, 2016). This reflects the importance of listening to the voices of children to re-examine notions of hybridity in research with children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds. However, upon reflection, I realised that the focus group questions may have influenced the children's responses regarding their national and cultural identity. Specifically, asking where they or their parents were 'born' may have led them to identify solely with their country of origin, such as saying "I was born in Bangladesh, I am from Bangladesh," instead of acknowledging a more complex hybrid identity in terms of daily experiences.

The theoretical contributions of this study have been enriched by choosing to focus on various backgrounds. Unlike most researchers studying children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds in the UK (e.g., Clayton, 2012; Faas, 2008; Tanyas, 2016), I decided to concentrate on ‘all’ children in the classroom (who wanted to participate), this included children who self-identify, or are assumed to identify with, any ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural background (discussed in Chapter 2.2). Through this, I was able to develop an understanding of the co-constructed and contested spaces in which belonging and identities emerge. This study did not seek to categorise identity but rather explored what participants choose to share about themselves, through discourse, creative methods and imagination. I advocate that children’s lives and their accounts of themselves, and others, do not happen in a vacuum, and it is valuable to consider the conversations that take place among children in the presence of each other.

9.2.2 Linking school belonging and inclusion

In this section, I present some theoretical contributions related to the context of school belonging and inclusion. Similar to other studies, such as Hamm and Faircloth (2005), this study has emphasised the importance of peer group relationships for fostering a sense of school belonging. These relationships form a positive base for school experiences, feeling accepted and included in peer groups (Goodenow, 1993).

The findings of this study also align with scholarship that emphasises the importance of teacher-pupil relationships in promoting school belonging (Shaw, 2019) and inclusion (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). This includes providing opportunities for pupils to 'chit chat' with teachers about their learning, gaps in their learning (as Aminah mentioned), their personalities, and their cultural backgrounds (section 5.5).

This study contributes to the theorisations of school inclusion in relation to 'access' and 'being there,' as discussed by Black-Hawkin et al. (2007). Participants defined inclusion as being 'part of' peer group friendships and accessing school life (e.g., Yeva recalled her struggles of navigating the routines and social practices of lunchtime when she first arrived at school, which made her feel excluded).

In addition, I have examined the connections between school belonging and inclusion, drawing on previous studies such as Allen et al. (2022), Vandenbussche and Schauwer (2018), Hall (2010), and Prince and Hadwin (2013) who have emphasised the importance of belonging for debates on inclusion. My study has shown that the relationship between school belonging and school inclusion is complex in terms of the ways children defined these concepts and spoke about their experiences in school. For some participants, belonging was a component in their explanations of inclusion (Fareeha said: "the word inclusion means to me that it's mine like the book belongs to me!", section 5.4). However, some children not always associate belonging with inclusion or experiences at school (Asman: "I feel belonging to my teachers because they're nice and support me … (but) I don't belong to them", section 5.5.1). Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter 5, using definitions of school belonging (e.g., Goodenow, 1993; Black-Hawkins et al., 2007) I have suggested that children's experiences of school inclusion relate to feelings of belongingness at school, including feeling respected and 'heard' by their teachers and fostering positive social relationships between teachers and peers.

9.2.3 Reflecting on Judith Butler

One of the central theoretical contributions of the thesis has been to develop an understanding of children's experiences building on the work of Judith Butler in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005). This study has shown the potential for using this framework to

position children's identities as shifting, contested and ambiguous in nature. Butler (2005) argues that narrating one's story is always in a condition of relationality and it is through an encounter with another that one seeks to elaborate who one is -"'I' begin my story only in the face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account" (Butler, 2005, p. 11). Throughout the study, it was observed that children often compared themselves with others, using concepts of 'differences' and 'sameness', and reiterated, contested and reinterpreted their own, and others' stories and perspectives, which prompted them to further elaborate on and give accounts of themselves.

Children sometimes expressed that they did not know parts about themselves (Baha: "I don't know why I'm Pakistani", section 7.1). Other times they very clearly expressed a sense of knowing their origins and their identities (Jamil: "I was born Urdu", section 6.1). However, by drawing on Butler, I have been able to interpret children's narratives by going beyond what the children say directly to consider narratives from the perspective of the irreducibility of the self and the inability to give full accounts of oneself, processes which destabilise categories of identity and belonging.

Butler also calls into question the notion of 'responsibility', which she locates in the opacity of the subject. This has been a useful framework to consider notions of language and heritage language practices in terms of navigating the 'unchosen conditions of one's life' – this is the view that the subject comes into the world in relation with others, and is bounded to the historical, familiar, political, cultural discourses which precede and exceed its life and account of itself. Thus, in my study children shape and are shaped by discourses preceding them, including school norms and policies, or the wider social events that create discourses around identities and otherness. Some of the children's comments have linked to Butler's idea of 'breakdowns in the chain of citationality' whereby children contested and reflected on intergenerational language norms, at home with heritage languages (Baha: "I don't really know any … he hasn't taught me anything … I just had to go learn myself", section 6.3) and in school (Imram: "the problem is I can't speak it [Urdu] when I'm in school, can I?", section 6.1.2).

In sum, Butler's theory has contributed to my theorisation of the findings through a consideration of how children give accounts of their cultural and linguistic identities and

relationships between the self and the ‘other’. Butler has prompted a consideration of how children’s narratives go beyond what they say directly to consider the irreducibility of the self and the complexities of trying to ‘give an account of oneself’.

9.2.4 Reflecting on Child Voice

Additionally, this study has contributed theoretically by developing thinking around ‘child voice’ and voice in research more widely. Locating the study within ‘new childhood studies’ and ‘child voice’ seeks to critically position childhood as a sociocultural construct where children are seen as social actors, actively shaping and re-shaping their geographies. This study has contributed to a body of work on critical and reflexive approaches to child voice research and new childhood studies (e.g., Facca et al., 2020; Fairey 2018; Frimberger & Bishopp, 2020; Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010; James, 2007; Komulainen, 2007; Lewis, 2010; Maybin, 2013; Spencer et al., 2020; Spyrou, 2016). Part of this critical and reflexive approach is the important notion of ‘co-construction’: through interaction participants established, contested and reinforced their own, and one another’s, identities.

Furthermore, arts-based research presents an interesting paradox when it comes to ‘authenticity’ (3.2.1). The concept of authenticity in scholarship on critical child voice cautions the view that by involving children's voices and participation, researchers can access more genuine perspectives (Spyrou, 2016) and gain a more comprehensive and ‘true’ understanding of their lived experiences (Spencer et al., 2020). As such, ‘authenticity’ has often been uncritically assumed in qualitative inquiry with children when their (verbal) voices are said to be heard and analysed. On the one hand, my study suggests that it could be argued that arts-based approaches, which are seen to facilitate children’s engagement and research relationships (Hall & Wall, 2016), can lead to more authentic and comprehensive understandings of children’s voices. On the other hand, I have also found that arts-based approaches may prompt more imaginative, co-constructive narratives and collective voices (for example, children worked together to interpret and represent - through artwork and performance – notions of belonging and identity), which may contradict the possibilities of ‘authentic’ child voice in research.

My theorisations of child voice chimes with scholars such as Cassidy et al., (2022), Hall et al., (2019), and Thomson (2008), promoting analysis that considers verbal voices, as well as non-

verbal voices such as behaviours, pauses, silences, movement, artistic expression. Furthermore, this study was found that 'child voice' is inscribed within wider socio-political, historical and institutional discourses and norms, for example, the implicit values on the place of language and multilingualism in different spaces (at home, in school, between peers). Children's voices were also shaped by notions of peer silencing and self-silencing (for example, spotting the presence of the audio recorders and consequently withholding or editing their views).

9.2.5 Reflecting on New Materialism

This study has contributed to the theoretical literature on new materialism in the field of migration and intercultural studies (Ros i Solé et al 2020; Frimberger et al., 2018; Harvey, 2020; Harvey et al., 2019; Lytra & Ilankuberan, 2020; Youkhana, 2015), which is concerned with the materiality of events, physical and symbolic spaces, and the human and non-human forces that shape children's (intercultural) communication. In this study, new materialist approaches widened the analysis of belonging concerning place as they highlighted the importance of the materiality of both the social and natural world in shaping the social fabric. New materialism, as a theoretical lens, enabled me to consider the various ways in which children establish a sense of belonging through their dynamic accounts that related to material objects (section 5.1), places, sensations, 'home', and migration (Chapter 7). New materialism allowed me to emphasise the material aspects of children's experiences and perspectives of belonging and identity more decisively. For instance, children's ways of reflecting on belonging and 'possession' as ways of indicating important social-material practices and emotional investments in their lives. Another example was the way that props and other material objects, used during the drama and dance workshops, as well as the audio recorders (used for data collection), structured discourse and relations between children, and between children and researcher. For instance, there were symbolic, affective and material connections with these objects (e.g., framing the recorders 'positively' and 'negatively') and emphasises the 'agency' of objects to impact what was said and what was heard (e.g., the capacity of the recorders to capture/ distort voice).

Furthermore, new materialism is also related to the methodology of considering movement and art materials and finding ways to go beyond and between formal languages to address the research questions during the research encounter itself (Frimberger et al., 2018; Harvey et al., 2019). Children engaged with material objects, props, music, technological, movement of their bodies in different spaces which develop discussions and interpretations of belonging and identities.

Combining more discursively focused methods alongside more imaginative elements allowed me to generate accounts which speak to the research questions in different ways. As discussed in Chapter 8, I found that the focus group data mapped most easily onto the research questions. In relation to this, children's accounts as seeming 'non-answers' spoke to the research questions in relation to the theoretical framework. The data raises theoretical implications around questioning an exact linguistic mapping of the research questions, as children expressed meaning through 'silences' as well as 'verbal' utterances, and children gave accounts of social-material dimensions of belonging and non-abstractable accounts (e.g., Rose saying 'feeling belonging' as though it can be sensed) which can be understood as valuable insights and not (only) as the beginning of more abstract accounts.

In other words, then, this study has provided a rich account of children's perspectives and experiences, relating to literature on the political and discursive elements that shape belonging (i.e., politics of belonging), but also addresses an important need to consider the social-material dimensions of children's worlds and the multiple, intersecting forms of 'voice' (Blaisdell et al., 2019; Komulainen, 2007). Further to this point, in terms of Butler's theories, the seeming 'non-answers' or 'off topic' answers relate to the recognition of the non-narratability of aspects of oneself, and the social condition within one emerges shapes the account one gives. For example, in the context of the focus groups, I sometimes used the term 'sense of belonging' and Kaamisha, in response, seemingly redirected this, "I don't know what a 'sense of belonging' is, but…".

9.2.6 Terminology

As discussed in Chapter 3, the terms 'migrant', 'immigrant' and 'non-immigrant' were developed to acknowledge the diversity of the schools, and although they are not stable or

all-encompassing categories, they were useful when exploring the perspectives of newly arrived migrant students (Chapter 5). However, looking back on the project, I noticed some limitations of these terms. Firstly, the labelling of individuals as ‘migrant’, ‘immigrant’ or ‘non-immigrant’ creates an implication that their perceptions and encounters vary depending on these labels, and it indicates that it is a significant feature of their identities. Secondly, it became clear that children did not use these terms to describe themselves and others – although Aminah commented that she was “not a refugee” (section 7.4) and others spoke about their heritage countries and stories of ‘migration’. Nonetheless, the terms, ‘migrant’, ‘immigrant’ and ‘non-immigrant’, for analytical purposes, were not as useful as I had initially anticipated.

Furthermore, given the fluid and complex ways children gave accounts of themselves and others, determining whether children were from ‘migrant’, ‘immigrant’ and ‘non-immigrant’ backgrounds was challenging as the boundaries between these terms were blurry and fluid, for example, in Chapter 7, Yeva commented, “I was born in Iran, but I was kinda born in here too when I was three, I came here”. This account differed from what the teacher told me, which was that Yeva and Yesenia had moved to the UK when they were in year 5. Thus, even though I received some details about the participants' backgrounds from the schools, the project was mainly influenced by the amount of personal information the children were willing to share about themselves. These terms, nevertheless, allowed me to initially position the study, and allowed me to deconstruct these categories, based on children’s perspectives and interpretations.

9.3 Methodological contributions and implications

Firstly, the innovative methodological approach that I created in this project involved creative and performative methods alongside discursive methods, aspects of ‘co-research’, as well as a non-traditional data analysis - poetry. As such, I was able to explore children’s voices of belonging and self-identification that enabled more reflexive, ambiguous and imagination-based narratives; the children actively engaged in dialogues with others, re-examining, sometimes challenging previous comments, building on these narratives, and creating dance and drama. I invited children to engage with the themes, comments and

concerns emerging from the focus groups to embrace the ambiguity, collectiveness and imagination of their stories.

Methodologically, this thesis contributes to the body of literature and practice on arts-based, participatory approaches with children in the context of migration, identity and belonging (Frimberger & Bishopp, 2020; Ní Laoire, 2016; Ritchie & Gualter, 2018). Several researchers have reflected on working with children in arts-based research more generally (Arnott et al., 2020; Blaisdell et al., 2019; Hall et al., 2019; Wall & Robinson, 2022), but fewer have asked children themselves to reflect on their involvement and attitudes towards arts-based research (except Morrow, 1998, which is an older paper now). As such, Chapter 8 discussed children's reflections and processes in the project.

This study has shown that there were instances where my preferences, thoughts, and anticipations did not always match those of individual children and various groups of children (Mannay et al., 2023; Mannay et al., 2019). For example, I was enthusiastic about the possibilities of performing the dance and drama (for dissemination back to the communities involved and as a creative celebration of the project), however, some children expressed reluctance to perform their dance and drama scripts (section 8.1). Therefore, this study has explored how researchers need to consider the diverse levels of participation that children desire in a project. Having full engagement, where children have a prominent presence on stage or have 'voiced' and have 'loud' voices, should not be seen as the only desirable form of co-construction and representation of their voices. Another methodological contribution of this thesis has been the 'silent subtexts' and nuances regarding expressing voices (Mazzei, 2003). Some participants were 'silent' due to marginalisation in the context of overpowering 'othering' discourses (section 6.4.3) and silencing each other (Batul: "shut up Yeva" section 8.2), and some participants reflected on which voices were heard and who had ownership of the dance and drama (section 8.2). For some, silencing came in the form of choosing to emphasise certain parts of their identities over others to express themselves in a certain way or show memberships and peer relationships (section 6.1.2). There were some instances where people either spoke quietly, especially when the teacher was around or reminded each other of the presence of the audio recorders which limited what was said (section 8.4). At other times, though, the audio recorders facilitated and supported children's voices due to an interest in them. The findings

from this study show that, by being attentive to 'silences' as well as other non-verbal forms of meaning, researchers can understand children's voices and look for voices in different ways that support different methods and theoretical approaches (Cassidy et al., 2022; Mazzei, 2003; Hall et al., 2019).

Lastly, I have found that the use of multiple methods of consulting *with* pupils enables the researcher to build a clearer picture (4.3 & 6.1.2). As a result of this study, I follow Bland, (2012) in recommending that arts-based methods can help triangulate with other data collection tools, such as asking children to explain their storyboards, or listening to children as they examine written conversations from the focus groups.

9.4 Pedagogical contributions and recommendations

The purpose of this study was not to observe and evaluate the pedagogies of the schools, as in, how the teaching of EAL learners was delivered in the classrooms, or to evaluate the implementation of inclusive practices in schools. However, based on the children's perspectives of inclusion, belonging and aspects of their identities, I have identified several issues that I will address through three key pedagogical contributions.

Firstly, from the children's discussions of inclusion, the findings from this study suggest that schools may need to do more to promote children's feelings of belonging and inclusion, and teachers should speak more about inclusion with children and make it clear that they genuinely 'care' about it. This study proposes that listening to the voices of children can provide valuable insights into their perceptions and experiences of inclusion and belonging in school and beyond. Such perspectives may differ from those of adults; for instance, while inclusion is a significant aspect of educational policies and pedagogy (Department for Education, 2014b; UNESCO, 2005), and associations with positive outcomes for learners (Allen et al., 2022; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ostermann, 2000), it is unlikely that teachers would describe themselves as unconcerned about it, yet some children felt that teacher's "don't care about it" (section 5.5.1).

Children spoke widely about their experiences of belonging and inclusion in school. The framing of school inclusion sometimes highlighted low levels of belonging and acceptance in

school. Therefore, based on the children's views, schools could consider strategies for improving pupils' attitudes and experiences of inclusion through teacher-pupil relationships by providing more time to talk with pupils to learn about their backgrounds and preferences, particularly for those from migrant backgrounds, and pronouncing names correctly to promote feelings of respect and reduce children's embarrassment. Therefore, from listening to the voices of children, this study has revealed that there should be more 'visibility' and 'clarity' in terms of how teachers talk about belonging and inclusion with children in school (Bennion, 2023). This study has made a significant contribution to understanding how children express themselves and perceive belonging in relation to inclusion. Sometimes participants used the term 'belonging' to explain what inclusion means to them. However, some children did not always associate belonging with schooling, but rather affective feelings related to aspects of their cultural identities, 'home' and family.

The ambiguity of children's feelings of belonging and inclusion in their school environments reveals implications in terms of children's critique of teachers'/schools' "caring practices" and their (symbolic, affective) investments into out-of-school activities and material practices. Related to this, recommendations for practice include how teachers might facilitate engagement with inclusion by paying attention to children's social-material practices in relation to their sense of belonging. Children often defined belonging as their physical and symbolic attachments with material objects (e.g., "I belong to my pencils") and 'owning things' or 'being owned' by things was a source of status and inclusion/exclusion in their peer groups and in the participation in conversations/ research itself. Another example was Imram's comment about how the school's "high ceilings" remind him of his "home in Pakistan". Children spoke about ownership and interactions with seemingly mundane, everyday classroom objects (water bottles, pencil cases, football books). Thus, a recommendation for practice would be to be attentive to the social-material dimensions of belonging when designing and facilitating inclusive classroom spaces, in particular the relevance of material objects and spaces, considering who has 'possession' over certain objects, and how interactions with material belonging can shape one's sense of self and social interactions/ relationships.

Belongingness, perhaps at the heart of inclusive practices (e.g., Allen et al., 2022), relates to 'how' to transform inclusion from a requirement (a policy, a set of practices) into a practice.

As such, I advocate not dismissing the ‘simplistic’ meaning of belonging as ownership of objects (compared to the seemingly more abstract area of belonging as constructions of ‘otherness’ and identity – i.e., the politics of belonging) because understanding children’s definitions and experiences of belonging, and how children interact with objects in the classroom, school spaces, perceptions of ownerships and insiderness, may be important to discourses around improving inclusive school spaces. By engaging pupils’ voices directly, and without leading children into a specific answer on what belonging/inclusion ‘is’, educators may avoid assumptions about inclusive practices. Indeed, this is reflected in the findings around children’s perceptions that their teachers “don’t care” about inclusion. These accounts are impactful given that it can be assumed that many teachers do strive to uphold and embed inclusiveness throughout their practices/ policies. Consequently, this highlights a potential disconnect between teachers’ practices and children’s definitions and experiences of belonging and school inclusion.

Related to this point about belonging as ‘possession’, participants gave accounts of themselves and their experiences of belonging through notions of language identities, peer relationships, and ‘owning’ languages. Therefore, a further implication for educators is the importance of multilingualism as part of (school) belonging and inclusive practices. I elaborate on this point below.

Additionally, children’s narratives showed multiple perspectives and experiences regarding identities and differences, and these interactions included both positive approaches where they accepted and included each other to form a sense of belonging and friendship, as well as negative attitudes which led to exclusion, discrimination, alienation, and denying access to certain social groups (section 6.4). Therefore, this study suggests the need for schools to equip themselves with the necessary tools to encourage discussions around ‘difference’ and identities, addressing children’s perceptions, stereotypes, stories they hear from others and personal experiences around notions of difference and otherness (particularly between participants from within the ‘same’ ethnic or religious groups) to help promote a climate of inclusion and belonging in schools.

Finally, for most children in this study, MFL learning was considered part of their multilingual identities, listed alongside English and heritage languages. For some children, foreign language education in school was considered significant, as it afforded them their

positionality as multilingual speakers, including those from non-immigrant backgrounds as well as those from migrant or immigrant backgrounds who speak heritage languages at home. Therefore, the findings suggest that schools could benefit from further incorporating MFL teaching and learning into their curriculum. This would require policy and curriculum changes that acknowledge the importance of MFL education as research indicates that children in England are currently offered limited MFL learning, sometimes as little as 30 minutes per week (Board & Tinsley, 2017). Teachers have also reported facing challenges in keeping up with the changes in policy and managing a busy curriculum when it comes to teaching MFL (Dobson, 2018).

Despite schools expressing multilingual and multicultural practices, some children were unsure about the place of languages and held assumptions about monolingual school attitudes. This echoes criticisms of the monolingual ideologies deeply ingrained in the English education system (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Welply, 2022). A pedagogical recommendation from this study is that teachers, leadership teams and policymakers should consider how to effectively draw on children's multilingual practices and the use of MFL as a subject in linguistically and culturally diverse schools (Finch et al., 2020). Based on the children's comments, schools should consider embracing peer-peer teaching of languages and translanguaging approaches in formal and informal (child-centred spaces) school spaces, capitalising on children's enjoyment of foreign languages, which may seek to deconstruct the binaries of 'monolingualism' and 'EAL' and perhaps challenge the rigidity of the MFL curriculum and pedagogy. Ultimately, this research recommends that multilingualism should be seen as a pedagogical and social resource rather than a problem, which is more inclusive of multiple language and recognises the role that MFL as a subject might have in this process.

9.5 Directions for future research

This study has highlighted the need for research that continues to explore how to improve the quality of education for young learners, particularly children's experiences of belonging and inclusion in school. Future research could consider the connections between children's school lives and their wider lives with regard to belonging, differences and self-identification,

for example, looking at the role of religion, media and youth culture, and community/ complementary schools could develop further understanding of these issues. There is a role for greater inclusion of complementary schools in the wider school curriculum and environment.

Moreover, future research could continue to interrogate the connections between school belonging and inclusion, considering the possibilities of using belonging as a means of theorising inclusive practices, and seeking input from other key stakeholders including teachers, parents and community schools.

This study has also revealed the implications for research to further explore the significance of MFL teaching and learning for multilingual and monolingual pupils and examine children's attitudes toward MFL and language diversity in the classroom. Investigating the role of heritage languages within the foreign language classroom could also yield valuable insights. Further attention in research and practice should be given to (re)assessing policy implementation in the context of MFL and language provision in primary schools. A particular avenue for this research could be to explore teachers' attitudes and skills in translanguaging pedagogies.

In light of some of the practical and methodological reflections highlighted in this thesis, and in line with some existing studies (Blaisdell et al., 2019; Mannay et al., 2023; Wall & Robinson, 2022), it would be beneficial for further research to embrace arts-based approaches and consider silences, pauses, humour, non-verbal communication, and children's broad communicative repertoires, which could lead to further insights into childhood and education.

9.6 Concluding remarks

This research project has contributed to the literature on children's voices at the intersections of belonging and inclusion, and how they give accounts of themselves. By drawing on multiple theories and by combining several methods of data collection and analysis, this research has effectively studied the multi-layered and interrelated nature of

children’s stories and experiences in two multiethnic primary schools in the North-east of England.

This study has explored how children spoke about constructions and experiences of belonging and identities in school and in their wider lives and pointed to a celebration of multicultural and multilingual ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’, but also highlighted their struggles and reflections related to inclusion, belonging and monolingual assumptions in school; the study has shown that otherness was sometimes framed negatively related to accounts on ethnic, linguistic and religious identity.

The UK in recent years has seen an increase in mobility, migration and interconnectedness, coinciding with anti-immigrant rhetoric determining the ‘other’ as a significant ‘threat’ (Welply, 2022). As a result, schools are now tasked with navigating linguistic, cultural and religious diversity and must prioritise inclusive policies and practices. As such, this study has demonstrated that the significance of listening to children’s voices cannot be overstated in gaining important insights into their perspectives on and diverse experiences of living in the UK today.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Workshop schedule example (Oakland School)

Workshop Overview (12:15-12:45pm Tuesdays)

- **Workshop 1** – outline the project aims, ice-breaker games, and role of 'co-researcher'
- **Workshop 2** – discuss ethical guidelines, ice-breaker games and plan artwork (to create a piece of artwork that shows a time you felt lonely, upset, happy, anxious at school)
- **Workshop 3** – complete emotions artwork task (to create a piece of artwork that shows a time you felt lonely, upset, happy, anxious at school)
- **Workshop 4** - focus group 1 and storyboard activity (to tell a story of someone arriving in a new school)
- **Workshop 5** – focus group 2 and storyboard activity (to tell a story of someone arriving in a new school)
- **Workshop 6** – focus group 3 and storyboard activity (to tell a story of someone arriving in a new place/ a new country)
- **Workshop 7** – finish storyboard activity (to tell a story of someone arriving in a new place/ a new country)
- **Workshop 8** - whole group focus groups to discuss and share storyboards
- **Workshop 9** – co-analysis of data using interactive pinboard and conversations
- **Workshop 10** – Begin thinking about key words/ themes through group work, exploratory dance/ movement/ freeze frames
- **Workshop 11** – Possibly script writing if they want to and rehearse the choreography
- **Workshop 12** – Rehearse the choreography – EXTENDED, A FEW MORE SESSIONS!
- **Workshop 13** – perform to school/ year group
- **Workshop 13** – round up the project, whole group focus group reflecting on the project – doing ABR and being 'co-researchers'

Workshop 9

Aim(s)	RQs	Activities	Duration (30 mins)	Resources
To discuss the key themes that have emerged from the focus groups and artwork using an interactive pinboard. To introduce the idea of using dance/ drama/ movement to further explore our views and experiences.	*How do pupils perceive their feelings and experiences of belonging, identity and inclusion?*	**Welcomes again and the idea of 'analysis'** • Register of attendance. • Recap the activities we have covered so far. We have gathered lots of data and information on your views and experiences through group conversations and doing different art activities etc... Today, we are going to wear our 'researcher' hats and we will look at the information and the stories/meanings in your artwork. • Clarify to participants what we mean as 'data' and what the pinboards are about = it is the things we have talked about/ their views, stories, ideas etc. as well as the artwork they have created and what are the meanings within the artwork	**5 minutes**	Audio recorders
		Explore/ read through the pinboards • Give participants time to look at and read the pinboards, including finding their names and recalling what they said. • Is there anything you'd like to add to your comments? • Is there anything you think I have mis-represented? • Are there any themes/ common comments you notice, or things that stand out? Etc. • Have the RQs printed out as reference, refer to this as participants work on the interactive pinboard.	**20 minutes**	Transcripts, Post-it notes, coloured pens, Pinboards
		Conclusions/ tidy up • Propose plan for the following sessions - we will use this interactive pinboard to give us some ideas/ springboard improvised dance/ drama [Reflection: perhaps I could have added photographs of children's artwork to triangulate and include art methods in this co-analysis not just focus group data?]	**5 minutes**	

Appendix 2: Focus group questions

Focus Groups 1-3

1. What five words best describe you?
2. (if struggling to talk about themselves in this way…) what activities do you like to do? Do you do these activities at school? With friends?

3. Where were you born? What about your parents/ grandparents?
4. What language(s) can you speak?
5. Do you use your home language at school? Can you tell me more about this?
6. What do you like to tell your family at home about your day at school?
7. Is there any place/ anything at school that reminds you of home?
8. What do you like doing at school that reminds you of home?
9. At school, where/ when do you feel most like you are at home? (e.g., eating lunch, meeting up with brothers/ sisters, talking to your friends who come to your house)
10. Do you sometimes talk about things you do at home with your friends, classmates, teacher?

11. What does the word 'belonging' mean to you? Have you heard anyone use this word before? Can you tell me more about this?
12. (if this abstract concept is challenging, provide the following prompts…) maybe we can think of another word for 'belonging'? i.e., owning something, personal belongings, being part of something, being connected to something/ someone/ somewhere.
13. So, can you think of examples – anything/ anywhere you feel connected to?
14. Do you feel a sense of belonging at school? Can you tell me more about this?

Focus group 4

1. How does this person / character in your storyboard feel about moving to a new school? What about in your storyboard about moving to a new place/ country?
2. Is your character based on you / your experiences or is it fictional? Could you tell me more about this?
3. How does your character deal with challenges? Have you had to deal with similar challenges at school?

4. How do people make friends at school? Who plays with who?

5. What does the word 'inclusion' mean to you?

1

6. (if this abstract concept is challenging, provide the following prompts…) maybe we can think of another word for 'inclusion'? i.e., involvement, all together, being involved in activities, learning, friendships, feeling accepted as you are
7. So, in your own life / experience, is 'inclusion' a word you would use? In what way?
8. Does this idea of 'inclusion' get used / spoken about in school?

9. What would you like your teacher to know about you? If you had to tell them a story, or tell them something about you, what would you tell them? Why is this one thing important to you?

Focus Group 5

1. What did you enjoy most about taking part in the project? What did you enjoy least?
2. Is there anything you found challenging?
3. How do you think the performance went?

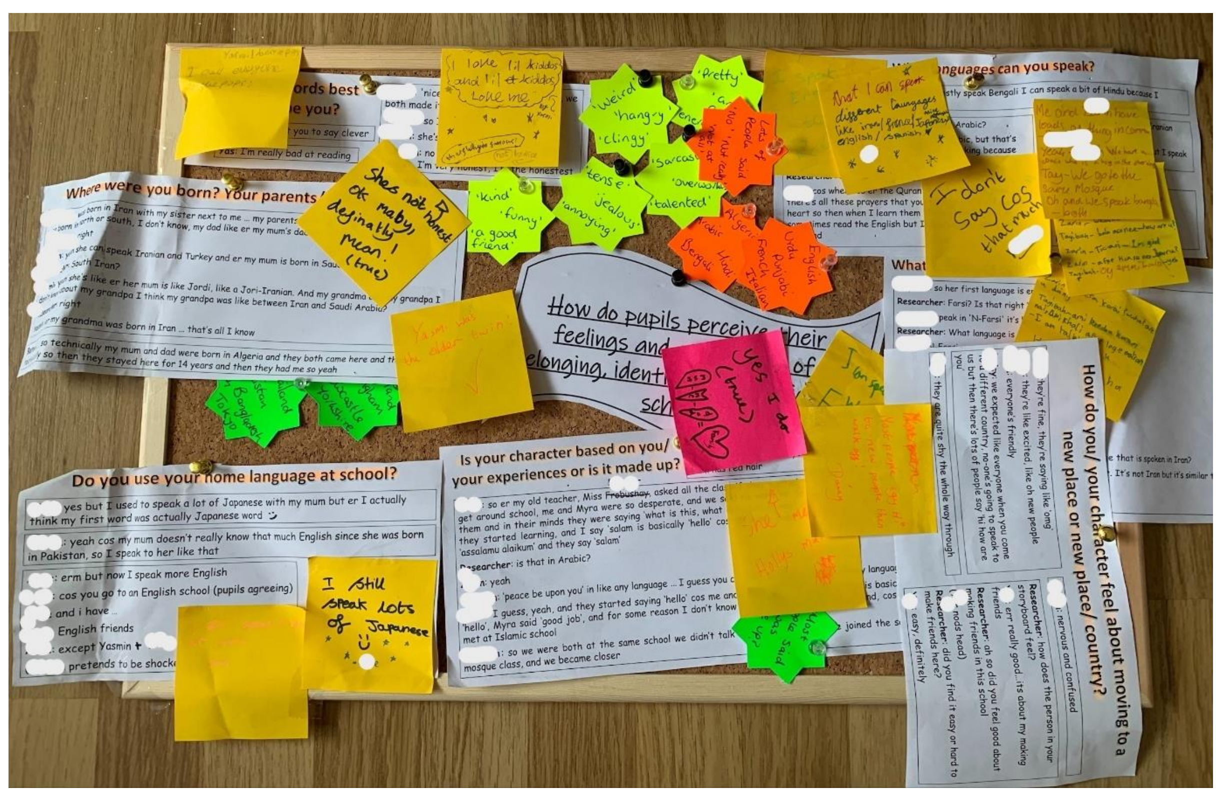
4. Which art method was best for you (we did, painting, drawing, collage, storyboarding, dance, drama) so which one did you like most? Where there any other art you would have liked to have done?
5. How did you feel about the comic book activity (tell a story of someone arriving in a new school/ a new country)?
6. How did you find the dance/ drama sessions? Was it easy or difficult to come up with ideas based on identity, inclusion and belonging?

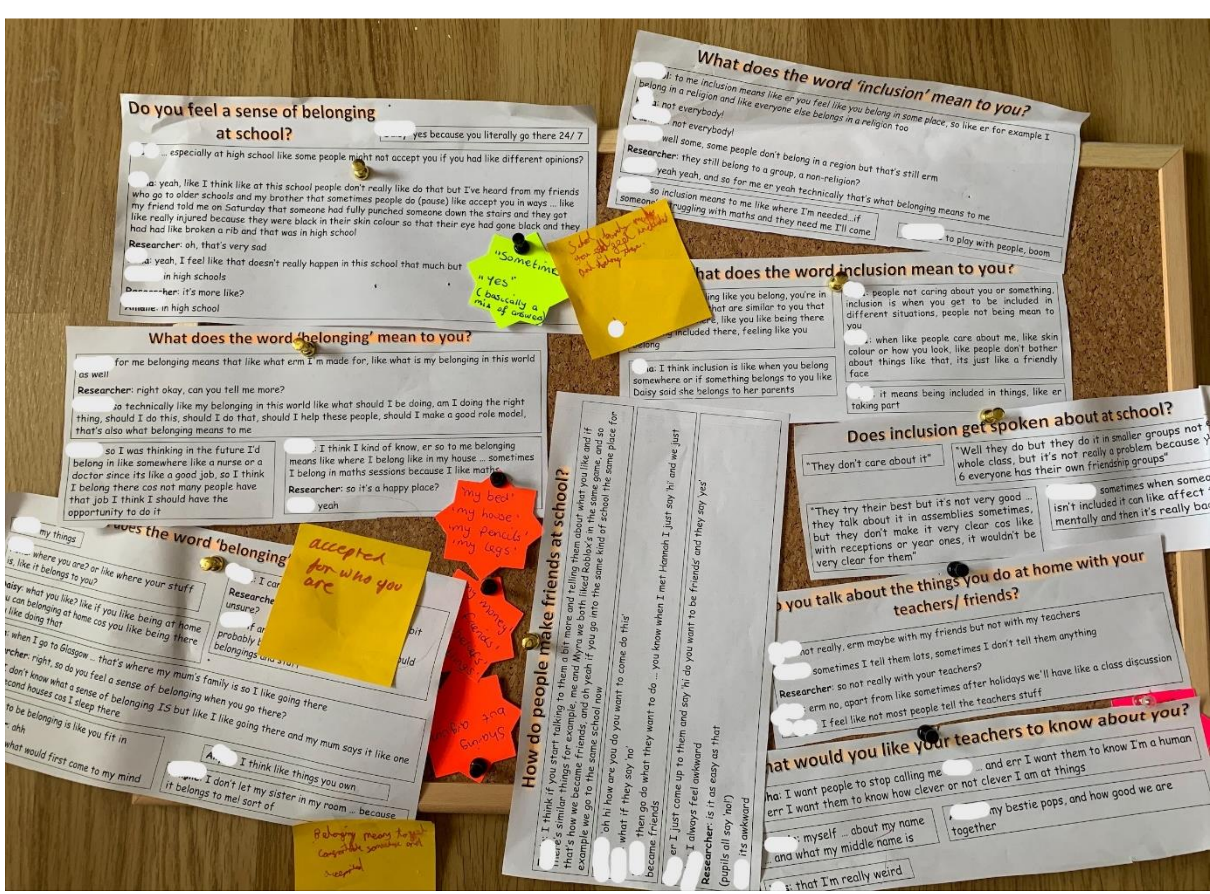
7. How did you feel about the voice recorders?

8. Do you feel like you had choices over what we did in the sessions?
9. If you could redo the project, would you have changed anything?

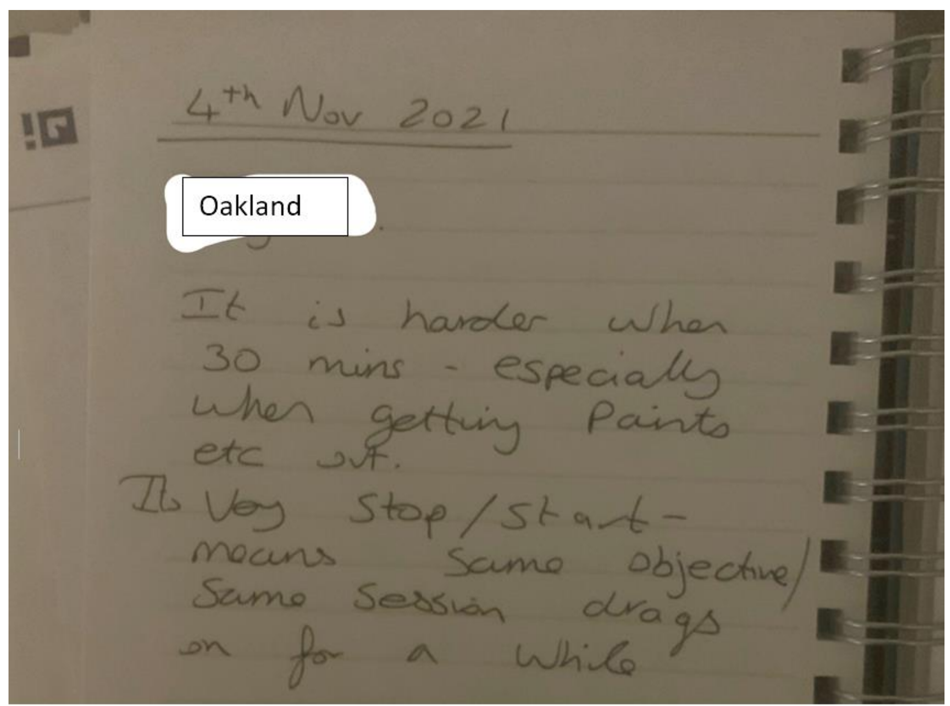
10. Is there anything else you'd like to share before we finish?

Appendix 3: Example photographs of the interactive pinboards from Westfield School





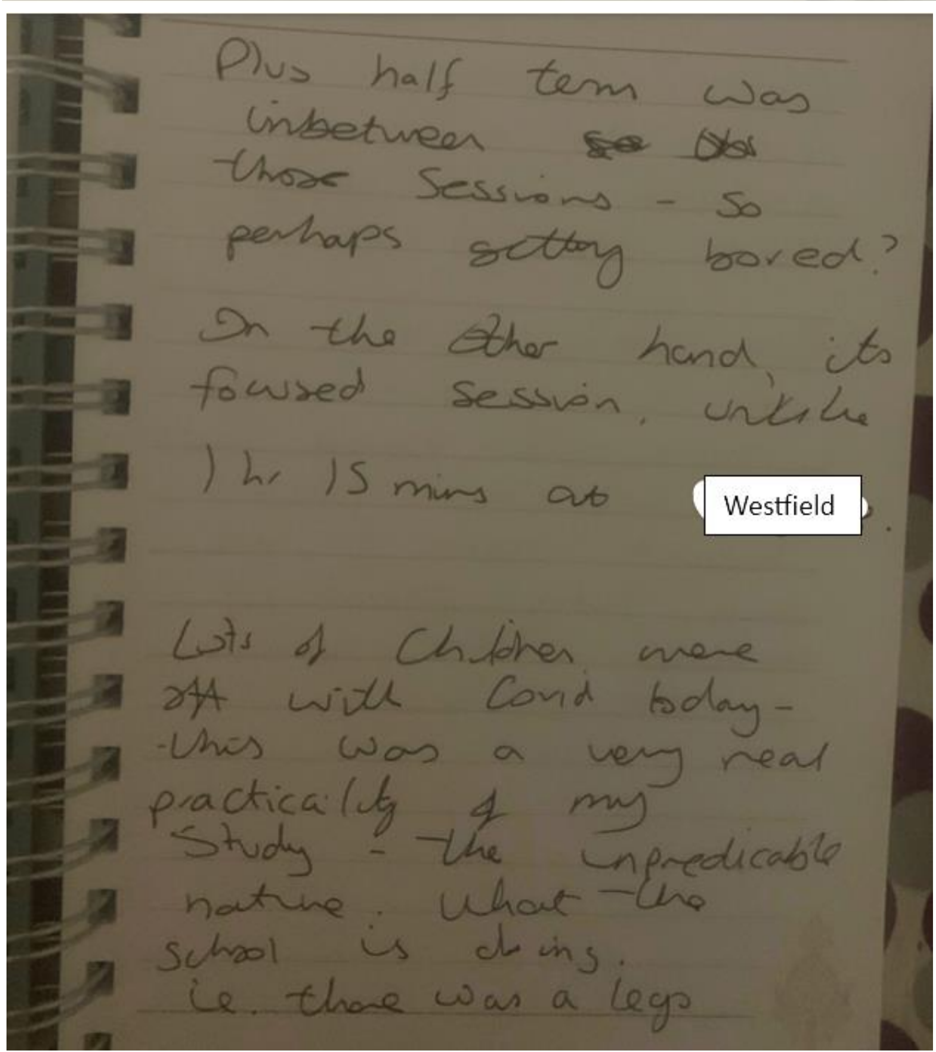
Appendix 4: Example photographs of fieldnotes



4th Nov 2021

Oakland

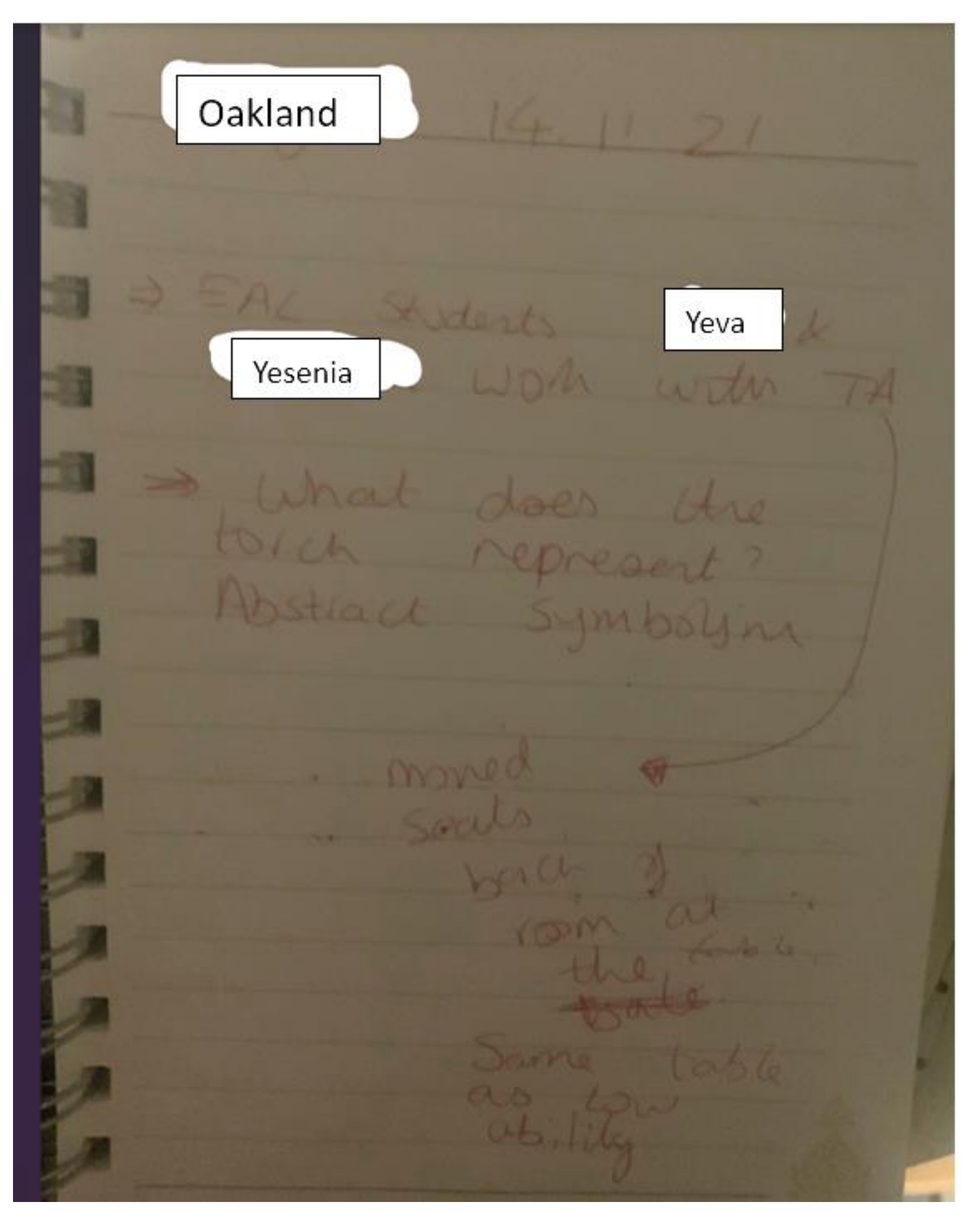
It is harder when 30 mins - especially when getting Paints etc out.
Its Very Stop/start - means same objective/ same session drags on for a while



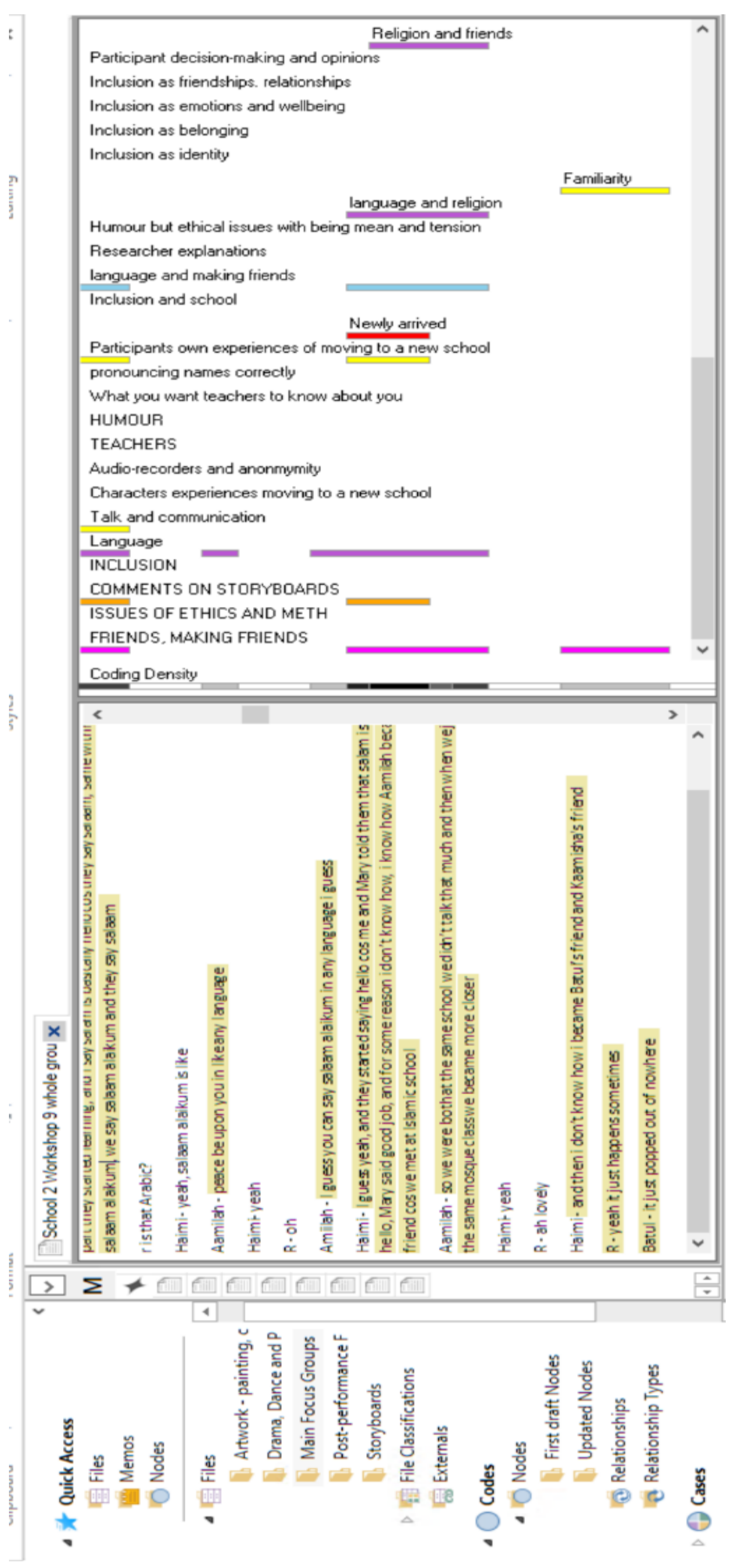
Plus half term was inbetween [struck through] those sessions - so perhaps getting bored?

On the other hand, its focused session, unlike 1 hr 15 mins at Westfield.

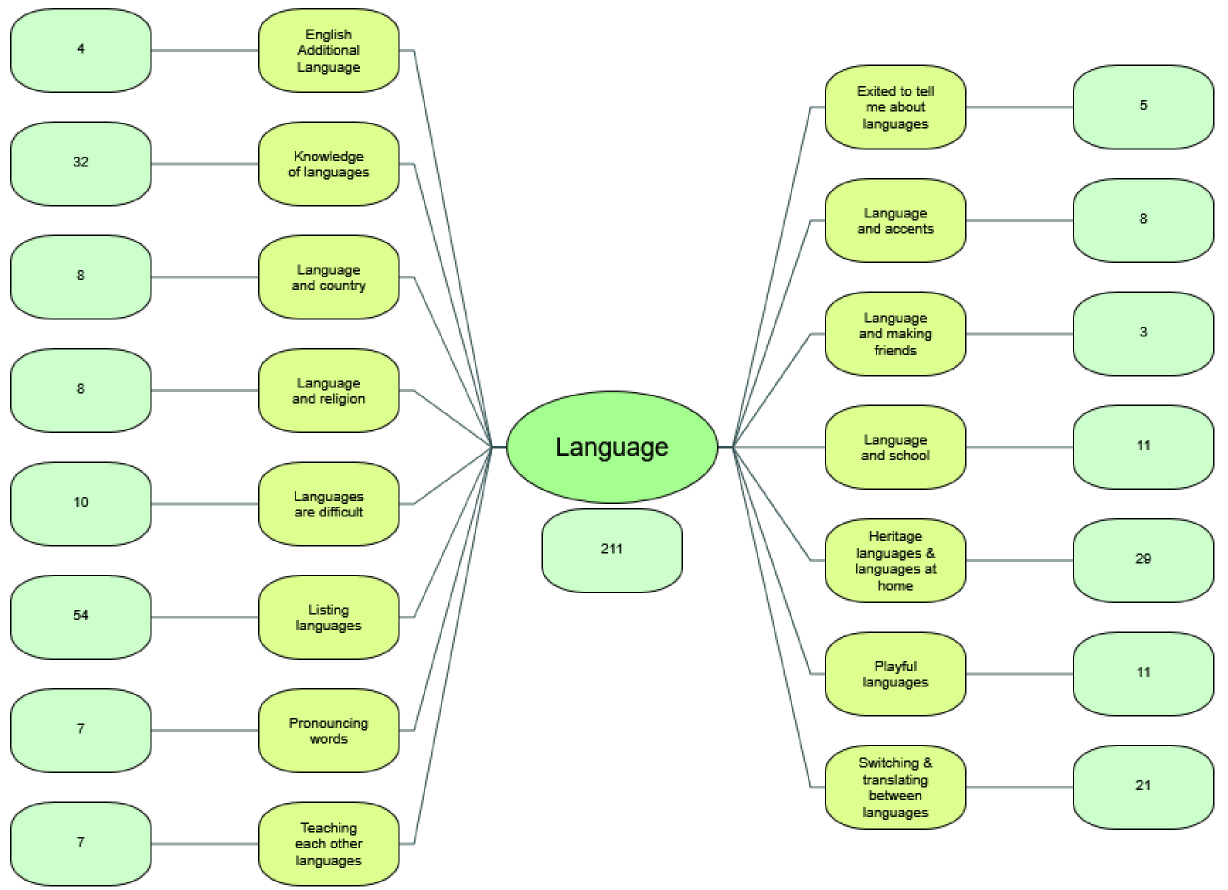
Lots of children were off with Covid today - this was a very real practicality of my study - the unpredicable nature. What the school is doing. ie. there was a legs


Oakland
14.11.21
⇒ EAL students
Yeva
Yesenia
work with TA
⇒ What does the torch represent?
Abstract symbolism
moved seats
back of room at the table
Same table as low ability

Appendix 5: Example of NVivo coding

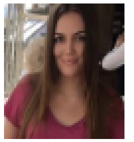


Appendix 6: Mind map example of 'Nodes' in NVivo (Identity node > Language node > number of references)



Appendix 7: Consent form

09/09/2021



Dear parent/guardian,

My name is Holly Bennion. I am a researcher and PhD candidate at Durham University. I am writing to ask for your permission for your child to take part in an exciting, art research project at [redacted] primary school.

Project Title: A study of belonging and inclusion with primary school pupils in North-East England using pupil voice, participatory and arts-based approaches.

Research Aims: To listen to children's voices, to explore and understand children's lived experiences of aspects relating to belonging and inclusion. This might involve talking about identity, race, culture, language, acceptance, friendships etc. Participants will be invited to use art methods (paintings, drawings, collage, creative writing, dance, and drama) to express themselves and understand their own and other people's views and experiences. Depending on the situation with Covid-19, hopefully we will put on a performance where the participants can share the findings with the school and community.

Key Information:

The workshops will take place in September 2021, once a week for around 8 weeks, during Thursday lunchtimes starting 23rd September. I will also be conducting informal observations to get to know the school and the children.

The project is voluntary: your child does not have to take part in the project if they don't want to. The participants can choose to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason, and I will not use their data in the research.

Privacy will be protected: all names will be kept anonymous i.e. not identifiable. Information will be confidential and stored in a password-protected computer. If there are any safeguarding issues that children bring up, I will need to pass these onto the school's designated safeguarding lead.

The workshops will be audio-recorded, and I will make observations in a researcher journal. The artwork and the things children talk about will be used for the purposes of writing my PhD, to create a toolkit of recommendations for schools, and for other legitimate research purposes.

Alongside your consent, your child will be told about the project and asked if they would like to participate. Please see the Information Sheet for more information.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter.

Warm regards,

Holly Bennion

Holly Bennion
Lead researcher, PhD candidate
holly.a.bennion@durham.ac.uk

Professor Prue Holmes
Supervisor
p.m.holmes@durham.ac.uk

Associate Professor Oakleigh Welply
Supervisor
oakleigh.welply@durham.ac.uk

09/09/2021

I confirm that I have read and understood the information in the Consent Form and Information Sheet. ☐

I have had sufficient time to process the information and ask any questions I might have, and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given. ☐

I understand who will have access to personal data, how the data will be collected, stored and used. ☐

I understand that my child's participation is completely voluntary, and they can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. ☐

I agree for my child ___________________________________ to take part in the above project.

Parent/ Guardian Name ____________________________________

Date _______________________

Signature _________________________________

Appendix 8: Parent/ guardian information sheet

09/09/2021

Parent/ Guardian Information Sheet

Who is organising the project?

My name is Holly Bennion. I am a researcher at Durham University, and this research project is part of my PhD. I am a former primary school teacher, and I live in Durham, originally from Manchester, England.

What is the project about?

The research is about exploring and understanding children's views and experiences of belonging and inclusion. I will be working with several multicultural, inner-city schools in North-East England. Things we may talk about include identity, race, culture, language, religion, acceptance, peer/ school relationships ... or other related things that children feel are important to them.

What will it involve?

To begin with, I will conduct some observations of the school context which will be recorded in a researcher journal. In the workshops, participants will be invited to share their thoughts, perspectives and experiences of belonging and inclusion through different art methods (drawing, painting, collage, crafts, creative writing). Then, participants will be invited to be 'researchers' to help analyse this data and look for themes, ideas, similarities and differences. This will include group discussions and exploration through dance and drama.

Who is invited to take part?

Children in Year 6 are invited to take part at [redacted].

When and where will the workshops take place?

Every Thursday during lunchtimes for around 8 weeks, starting in September at [redacted] School.

09/09/2021

Do they need to be 'good' at art?

Not at all! The participants are not being 'tested' on how good their art is. The project is about using art to express themselves and support conversations about issues relating to belonging, wellbeing and inclusion. I am interested in engaging children's voices in research to help improve education and policy.

What will happen with the artwork?

The participants will own the artwork they make. I will take photographs of the artwork for data analysis purposes. I will keep the artwork safe until the project is finished, and then children can take it home. All information, recordings, photographs will be deleted after 5 years.

How will personal information be stored and kept safe?

Anything participants share will be kept confidential and anonymous. If there is a safeguarding risk, I will share this with the school's safeguarding lead. The project does not aim to go into trauma or sensitive issues, and it is up to children to share what they feel comfortable with. The data will be anonymous which means children can choose a different personal name and school name.

It is important that pupils feel safe and feel that their voices are valued. Participants will be reminded to respect one another's views, and avoid sharing what people have said in the workshops with family, teachers, friends etc. However, due to the nature of group workshops, confidentiality among pupils cannot always be guaranteed.

Participants can choose to withdraw their data from the project at any time without consequences, and I will not use their data in the research.

If you have any questions or queries, please feel free to get in touch with myself or my supervisors (Prue Holmes and Oakleigh Welply).

Many thanks,

Holly Bennion

Holly Bennion
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Supervisor
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Associate Professor Oakleigh Welply
Supervisor
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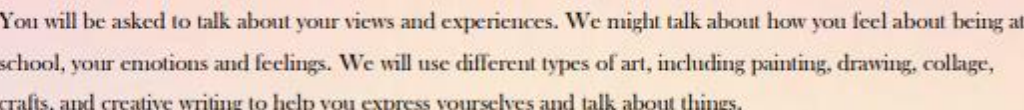
Appendix 9: Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

What is the project about?

The project is about understanding children's views and experiences of belonging and inclusion. Inclusion can mean being accepted, respected and valued as an individual, being welcomed and having equal opportunities. People can belong in different ways, such as belonging in school, belonging to friendship groups, clubs, religion, or nationality...



What will it involve and what will your role be?

You will be asked to talk about your views and experiences. We might talk about how you feel about being at school, your emotions and feelings. We will use different types of art, including painting, drawing, collage, crafts, and creative writing to help you express yourselves and talk about things.

You will have an important role as a 'researcher'. This means you can choose the art you want to use. You will help me analyse the information to look for themes, key words, similarities and differences in what people have said. To do this, we will create some dance and drama. The workshops will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

When will the workshops take place?

At Thursday lunchtimes for around 8 weeks starting in September.

Do you need to be good at art?

No, don't worry, you are not being tested on how good your art is.

What about the performance?

You are invited to share the dance and drama with the rest of the school. You can choose how much or how little you want to be involved.

What about the artwork you make?

You own the artwork you make. I will take photographs of your artwork. I will keep the artwork safe until the project has finished and then you can take it home.

How will your personal information be kept safe?

Anything you share will be confidential, as long as no one is in danger and I will have to pass it onto someone who can help. It is important that everyone in the group feels safe and feels that their voices are valued. It is important that we respect one another's views, and that we do not share what other people have said.

All information will be anonymous. This means I will use a different personal name and school name. You can withdraw from the project at any time if you decide that you don't want to take part anymore.

Appendix 10: Child friendly ethical guidelines for participatory research

School __________ Date ________________

Ethical Guidelines

Shared with and agreed by researcher and participants

Mutual Respect

- We agree what counts as mutual respect in this context.
- Everyone is prepared to listen to each other and treat each other with respect.
- Everyone accepts that people may have different perspectives and experiences.

Participation

- We understand that people have different skills, interests and needs.
- We will try and use clear language so everyone can understand. You might not express your ideas in words, instead non-verbally, through body movements, or through your artwork.
- We will work as a team/ a partnership, where everyone can have a say.
- You can choose to have as much or as little involvement as you want in the focus groups and performance.

Active Learning

- We agree that this research project is about sharing our ideas, experiences and views. It is an opportunity to learn from each other.

Ownership

- Everyone understands that the artwork created and the things we talk about will be used for Holly's University degree and other university-related things.
- Holly will take photographs of the artwork, and you can take your art home after the project has finished.

Appendix 11: Participant thank you cards

To ___________________________

Thank you for being a part of this art research project!

We explored your views and experiences of belonging, identity and inclusion at school, and beyond school.

It was great to hear your views, thoughts and stories.

I hope you had fun!

From Holly Bennion

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