OPENING THE SPACE: INVESTIGATING RESPONSIVITY IN THE EXPERTISE OF APPLIED THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the expertise of applied theatre practitioners and proposes a concept of ‘responsivity’ to define their skills, knowledge, qualities and understanding. Practice-responsive research methods were devised to analyse how artists make decisions in-action in a range of applied theatre practice in community, education and health contexts. Research included the use of reflective dialogues following observations of practice, stimulated by joint researcher-practitioner reflection on a video recording of the observed session. Working from detailed analysis of this observed practice and dialogic reflection, new vocabularies are introduced and developed, with the aim of better articulating particular skills and approaches.

The role of applied theatre practitioners is multi-faceted and primarily focussed on facilitating positive outcomes for the participants. Planning activity is informed by projected outcomes for the work and the context of practice, such as environment, nature of the participants, individual identities, etc. Practitioner skills build on art form knowledge and the ability to guide activity to create performance outcomes, alongside a concern for aesthetic and ethical issues of the work, as well as social and political awareness of the context. Adaptations to moment-by-moment activity reflect their ability to facilitate engagement and nurture interactive exchange. I suggest that, to manage these multiple demands, practitioners demonstrate heightened attendance to issues of inter-subjectivity and empathy, thereby developing an enhanced expertise in response to the work and the people and contexts involved in that work.

The thesis proposes that responsive approaches are common to practitioners and enable her/him to make good choices within the moments of practice. Applied theatre’s responsive-ness is indicative of a prioritisation of participant experience, however, the research also revealed the way in which a responsive ethos impacted and enriched the practitioners through supporting their own generative engagement with the work. The critical framework of responsivity proposed in this thesis acknowledges the importance of impact for all participants, including the artists.

Whilst the methods and outcomes of applied theatre have received scholarly attention, this research focusses on how practitioners themselves define their expertise, embracing a consideration of skills learning and development. The concepts of response and dialogue informed this investigation in a number of significant ways, and as a result responsivity is proposed as a key methodological imperative for applied theatre research as well as the substantive focus of my thesis. This mode of operating as artists and researchers is particular to applied theatre’s overarching aims to be socially responsive, politically engaged, ethically considerate and emancipatory. Responsivity is offered as a way to distinguish applied theatre practice from other performance participation and as an underpinning ethos for understanding the expertise of applied theatre practitioners.
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My gratitude to all the practitioners who kindly took part in the research - the thesis champions their voice.

Dedication:

For my mother Dee Hepplewhite with her love of new learning - she would be well chuffed.
The Author

Following an undergraduate degree in Drama, Kay Hepplewhite was an actor and workshop leader in Theatre in Education and community theatre, also using drama in youth work, participatory settings and training services.

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Kay has been a university lecturer since 2005, researching, publishing and presenting alongside teaching on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Drama and Applied Theatre. The PhD study for this thesis was undertaken part-time.

**Prologue**

**Proposing Responsivity**

Bottom: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver.

Shakespeare (1988: 3.1, 17-20)

This thesis analyses the work of applied theatre practitioners and proposes a new notion of ‘responsivity’ to offer insight into their expertise. My research set out to investigate what makes up the skills and qualities enabling practitioners to operate well and to make good decisions in action. My thesis investigates their particular expertise by analysing the work in action and through practitioner-researcher reflective dialogues.

The Prologue will outline concepts and vocabulary I have devised for the thesis with the aim of making more visible the detail of this particular blending of artistic and social performative work. Although already known to the audience, Bottom’s ‘devices’ (quoted above) serve to encourage a re-viewing of the conventions of theatre. I am examining the work of applied theatre practitioners that may be already known, but likewise using ‘devices’ to look again at how the work is understood and reveal detail that is overlooked, even by the practitioners themselves. The thesis aims to stimulate a fresh viewing of their expertise by introducing the concepts of ‘responsivity’, ‘reflective dialogue’ and ‘_’ (the underscore). These terms are introduced in the Prologue with perspicuous intent, to support analysis of the topic throughout the thesis.
Applied theatre embraces a diversity of participatory practice but is commonly distinguished by the benefits that are cited, alongside artistic outcomes, as imperatives for the work. Although conforming to Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston’s (2009: 10) definition of applied theatre as work ‘for’ and ‘with’ communities, the study does not measure efficacy for the participants, however. My research sought to identify what enables practitioners to accommodate socially-informed aims of the work (for example, relating to the personal, group or community experiences with beneficial educational, health, political objectives) alongside artistic intentions.

Proposing that the practitioner operates as more than just a theatre director or leader of workshop activity, the study examines what equips them to respond to multiple demands when making choices within the moment. Working across a range of social contexts with differing agendas and understandings can result in challenging responsibilities for those in the role. My thesis offers a detailed vocabulary to describe what goes on for applied theatre practitioners ‘in the room’. I seek to highlight the complexity of their operations and analyse whether there are common features between those working in very different fields, such as with young or old people, in schools, in community groups for women, with mental health service users, refugees, or those with a learning disability.

This thesis explores expertise, a term I have used to encompass a blend of actions, attitudes and behaviours which make up the work of an applied theatre practitioner. This linguistic shorthand is used in the thesis to encompass aspects of professional knowledge observed in the practice relating to skills, comportment, competencies, aptitudes, capacities, qualities, awareness, understanding, values, sensibilities, and so on. The researched work included aspects of facilitation, group work, artistic mentoring and direction, planning and improvisation, acting,
leading, joining in, organisation and management of workshops and participatory
drama, theatre and performance activity, etc. To manage the scope of the study, I
am condensing these within a label of ‘expertise’ whilst recognising this shorthand
is an imperfect solution to the linguistic and conceptual challenge of encapsulating
the work.

My background as a theatre worker in community contexts, and a Higher
Education teacher and researcher, has informed the objective of the project to
highlight the complexity of practitioner expertise and bring their practice into an
academic research arena. To this end, I am locating the artists’ voices at the heart
of the exploration and employing a ‘practice responsive’ research methodology
involving ‘reflective dialogues’ (further discussed in Chapter 2) with a series of
practitioners as case studies. I was motivated to undertake research that had
explicit pedagogic value, offering potential models to feed into learning
environments and support development of applied theatre practitioners.

Over the course of the thesis, I explore the concept and practice of
‘responsivity’ as a way of understanding expertise. I propose that practitioners
have abilities that enable them to respond well to participants (in anticipation and
in the moment of the work) as well as being responsible to and for the experience
of the group members. The practitioner operates at the most responsive when
they are aware of participant experience alongside the artistic, ethical, social,
personal and political issues important within applied theatre. Their own
development is also a key component. I draw on responsivity to develop a
theoretical framework as well as a location for a discussion of pragmatic
strategies, sensibilities and beliefs held in common by those researched. I am,
therefore, proposing responsivity as a key methodological and substantive
imperative of my thesis.
**Applied theatre and responsivity**

The term and concept of ‘response’ is a refrain that can be traced across a range of applied theatre literature. Helen Nicholson, for example, highlights an ability to respond as a key feature,

Contemporary theatre practitioners who work in educational and community contexts are, at best, developing practices that are both responsive to the narratives and cultural memories of the participants with whom they are working and artistically imaginative.

(2005: 152, my italics)

Nicholson juxtaposes a dual emphasis, but her discussion of response does not explore the implications for how this might be managed by practitioners. My thesis builds on Nicholson’s premise that participant response and aesthetic criteria are interrelated. I propose that the responsive practitioner operates as an artist, whilst also recognising the demands of participant-centred practice. Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton also reflect on responsive qualities of practitioners in order to consider issues of facilitation,

An applied facilitator ... will be consistently responsive to all the contextual factors at play in each session: who are these people? What do they bring with them? How are they different today from yesterday? How does this space shape what we do? What is the social health of the group?

(2013: 7).

They focus on educational applications of drama and theatre, here centred on the impact of place and space on the participants. Prentki and Preston also make reference to response in their definition of applied theatre as that which is ‘responsive to ordinary people and their stories, local settings and priorities’ (2009: 9), suggesting that the ‘very form itself is responsive to the circumstances in which it is used’ (ibid: 10). It is the responsiveness to context on the part of
applied theatre practitioners that invites further exploration and is the subject of my thesis. The overarching question here is ‘what is the make-up of the particular expertise that allows this responsive applied theatre practitioner to operate in this way?’

My thesis proposes a vocabulary in order to identify and describe particular patterns of responsive expertise. Suggested by the research, I propose common qualities that include: ‘awareness’ (of issues relating to context), ‘anticipation’ and ‘adaptation’ (being able both to plan ahead and to respond in the moment), ‘attunement’ (suggesting informed and empathetic inter-personal connection with the participants) and ‘respond–ability’ (where practitioners are themselves able to engage with, and develop through the work). These interlinked facets of responsivity are not proposed as a universal catch-all list of ‘how to do it’, but as a way of illuminating some (previously unnamed) approaches to participatory drama, theatre and performance. Each term attempts to capture multiple qualities rather than stipulate, and the naming of these attributes of responsivity aims to codify practice and suggest similarities defining a field of practice.

Practitioners in this research appeared open to a potential ‘re-interpretation’ of themselves through the work. Nicholson highlights the important pattern of constant revision within the field: ‘Applied drama has a reflexive ethos, a tradition of creative and critical questioning, and the process of interpretation and re-interpretation is central to all its various practices’ (2005: 166). She invites, but does not develop, further exploration of how this ‘reflexive ethos’ informs the work of practitioners, an opening I follow in the thesis. Reflective discussion formed the basis for the specially devised research methodology of ‘reflective dialogues’, which utilised practitioners’ own voices to identify, articulate and explore ideas.
The emphasis on dialogue and reflection (between practitioner, the work, and the participants) was evident in researched practitioners who underlined Nicholson’s ‘reflexive ethos’ not by presenting themselves as fixed, knowing experts, but by revealing themselves as open to applied theatre’s philosophy of change.

Responsivity as a term has been adopted here in part to make a conscious etymological connection with a concept of responsibility, indicative of socio-political awareness, ethical concerns and emancipatory intentions that are central to applied theatre. Responsivity’s association with these issues reflects how themes concerning power and oppression run through the work and inform the approaches of practitioners. As such, I take a lead from Kelly Oliver’s (2001) use of ‘response-ability’. Oliver suggests that, in order to begin to understand domination and inequity, we must pay more attention to who we think we are, how we perceive ourselves and how we imagine others to be. She writes of a ‘response-ability’ which allows all to become subjects, even those who are rendered as objects by oppressive actions. Bettina Bergo usefully explains Oliver’s view, stating that ‘[i]t is on the basis of the powers of invisible connections between us’ that response-ability occurs (2003: 201). I am drawing on this heightened view of the importance of inter-subjectivity and in particular following Oliver’s suggestion that dialogue, which for my purposes might be understood as an embodied and discursive practice of relation, is a space for exploring the importance of response. Oliver, for example, proposes that an ethical practice of subjectivity can be conceived and materialised through a ‘rich sense of dialogue as response-ability’ (ibid: 5). Dialogue is a key concept in my thesis: by facilitating engagement in inter-active artistic practices, applied theatre practitioners are concerned with dialogically developing ‘connections’ between participants, and also making connections themselves. My thesis posits dialogue as a practice (also
used as research methodology) that promotes responsivity. I extend Oliver’s ideas throughout the thesis to see dialogue - and also the related idea of empathy - as key to practitioners’ expertise, evidenced through skills and attitudes within their practices.

Oliver’s ideas chime with the inter-relational emphasis of applied theatre, and the intentions of empowerment demonstrated by the practitioners studied for this research. Rather than directly adopting Oliver’s ‘response-ability’, I go on to explore my related concept of respond-ability that focusses on the potential for change not in the ‘other’ participant, but that which comes about through dialogue between participant and practitioner, and that is enacted upon both subjects. Respond-ability expresses the artists’ egalitarian engagement, how they change and are grown through the work. Just as applied theatre experience is frequently premised by ethical concerns, an ethical dimension to practitioner expertise and experience is deliberately inferred here by the grammatical alignment of responsibility and responsivity. My use of the term responsivity aims to support the conscious exploration throughout the thesis of this interface between emancipatory and ethical concerns of applied theatre and the expertise of practitioners.

**Un-naming the practitioner as the ‘__’**

Introducing a further conceptual device, I propose a clearing of the site of investigation at the outset of the thesis through the use of ‘__’ (underscore) as a means to temporarily suspend the ‘noise’ created by the multiple meanings and discourses that clutter the applied theatre practitioner’s identity (names are explored in Chapter 1). The subject of the thesis is the practitioner who, ironically,
operates within a form centred on others. Outlining desirable qualities for an applied drama facilitator, Prendergast and Saxton highlight ‘the kind of person who … is able to “de – centre”; in other words to see the work as about and coming from the participants rather than from him/herself’ (2013: 5). My study deconstructs examples of how a ‘de-centred’-ness underpins what I have named responsivity and informs the expertise of the practitioners. The underscore (__) opens up a space in which to examine the identity of the practitioner through specific case studies, creating a platform or frame in order to analyse their roles from within their own context and frame of reference, enabling fresh perspectives and understanding.

Names for practitioners have been contingent on the circumstances within which they have arisen, as further explored in the literature review in Chapter 1. An individual may be alternatively labelled and there is no single noun that satisfactorily encapsulates the practitioner in applied theatre, a dilemma echoed by one research participant, who commented ‘The industry is still finding a name for it’ (Dickson 2013). The thesis serves as an invitation to re-name and re-view the practitioner through a holding-open of the process of identification through creation of __.

Many issues have arisen in using the __ in my writing that resonate with the aim of thinking afresh. __ can stand in for the practitioner’s proper name, serving the additional purpose of anonymising to eliminate associations or protect research participants where appropriate. __ can be the descriptor which communicates a particular practice of that artist in that moment, as many of those researched may not wish to be solely identified by their applied theatre activities. __ becomes a collective noun in the singular, to represent all. I use ‘an’ instinctively, as if the __ starts with a vowel and this creates an openness from its
(unhearable) sound, suggesting my opening-up intention of responsive-ness. I have used a double underscore to mark the empty space; two (__) are more present than one (_). Appearing in print as a single symbol potentially indicates a blend of the two component parts, such as the artist and the facilitator or the partnership of __ and participants. Like Mary Poppins’ carpet bag, an apparently empty, bottomless receptacle expediently provides an endless supply of needed articles, and there is always more to come.

Opening the space (as indicated by the title of my thesis) can refer to the practitioner’s ability to offer creative journeys and possible opportunities for re-definition through facilitation of performance experiences for participants. This opening-up is also proposed as a means to refresh exploration of the practitioner herself. An open, unmarked space has much to offer and a turn to broader debates on visibility and performance is useful here. Peggy Phelan (1993), for example, explores how (in)visibility and representation link with identity. As Phelan comments,

Identity cannot, then, reside in the name you can say or the body you can see… Identity emerges in the failure of the body to express being fully and the failure of the signifier to convey meaning exactly.

(1993: 13)

Notions of identity are not attributed to a physicality of form, inferring that possibilities may arise from an absence of being, or a securely-fixed identity. Phelan’s suggestion of ‘the failure of the signifier to convey meaning’ could also describe the many labels used for practitioners which __ substitutes. Each label is unable to sum up the scope, complexities and facets of practice, hence an offer of __, opening up an unstable location in order to consider function, thereby accommodating a range of potential meanings. The thesis further explores a
concept of open space in Chapter 6, with a practitioner who appeared to do very little.

Once opened, matter and meaning rush in to fill the space. Phelan’s discussion of the ontology of performance discusses the impact of time and space,

Performance honors [sic] the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience which leaves no visible trace afterwards. Writing about it necessarily cancels the “tracelessness” inaugurated within this performative promise.

(ibid: 149)

This depiction of writing’s ability to make visible concurs with my thesis aim to analyse live moments of the __ in action, and could compensate for the particular ‘tracelessness’ of activity and experiences in the spaces of applied theatre. But my documentation of the researched practitioner does not focus on the experience of the theatre participants. Nor does it propose one homogenised perception of practice through the substitute signifier of __. This analysis seeks to find detail in commonality and draw interest from the difference of the work explored, notwithstanding an acknowledgement and creative exploitation of the uncertainties of visibility and representation highlighted by Phelan. The thesis aims to make traces which suggest patterns within the detail. The reflective dialogue research method (discussed in Chapter 2) serves a reflexive function, as it allows for a close re-viewing of the live event with practitioners (using audio-visual recording), although recognising the poor substitute that words provide for actions. My aim in this writing is to utilise the concept of __ to make more visible the work of the applied theatre practitioner using their own words.

The theatre practitioner, being ‘applied’, is required to answer to the demands of context, adding to the role’s identity as multiple, unfixed, indefinable. Because the work, by the very nature of its applied-ness and responsiveness, transports an
already contested phenomenon (theatre, drama, performance) into the location of another in the service of stakeholders and participants, characterisation of the necessarily flexible practitioner is additionally hard to achieve. Investigation of the practitioner in the thesis is therefore strategically not made through a single theoretical framework and any foregrounding of a conceptualisation from the outset is avoided. Reflecting applied theatre’s pattern of responsiveness, my use of reference points stays open throughout the study. It is expedient to operate with a responsive, diversely constituted, and evolving theoretical framework, as this maps onto my aim to resist the frames by which applied theatre practitioner, and his/her skills, are understood.

Whilst proposing ideas about their actions and motivations, in using the label of __, I am contesting the fixed or certain meanings of the names used for the work of applied theatre practitioners. The __ opens up a potential separation between an identity and a label. By using the __ I am able to re-view the manifestation of the being that inhabits the name, whatever that may be for this blended practitioner in applied theatre. Jacques Derrida, in an essay that explores the ‘name’, comments that ‘you are not your name, nor your title’ (1995: 12, italics in original). Derrida’s writing is self-reflective, discussing the name of the author/himself through exploration of the nature, function and existence of the very thing it is. Differentiating the application of a name and the being him/herself, he suggests that a name, or label, may identify something/one but can also be used elsewhere, or even negated, ‘[w]hat returns to your name, to the secret of your name, is the ability to disappear in your name. And thus not return to itself’ (ibid: 13, italics in original). This disruption of identity and examination of being provides a useful model for my research objectives. In using the underscore ( __ ) to look again and differently at the practitioner’s identity, it becomes possible to
explore that which has existed within the name(s) of all practitioners. I can examine the work, thoughts, actions, motivations that make up their expertise by detaching their naming from that which is examined.

By establishing the notion of the __ as an analytical function, I also aim to take apart and make-strange the idea of what a practitioner does. This will allow investigation of that which is unseen through familiarity, as with the Mechanicals’ proposed explanation to the audience of the representation of killing with a sword. Sarah Jane Bailes identifies ‘an eradicable duplicity in live art practices, evidenced through theatre’s materiality and its ambition: that it can at the same time both be and not be the thing it is portraying’ (2011: 10). The underscore serves similarly as a performative way to allow analysis of the practitioner: the __ is both being and not-being the thing that it is labelled. As is the case with the practitioners, who are not only aware of the roles they are playing but also how they are being seen, whose ‘script’ they are delivering and how they interpret or comment on it, sub-text, the audience’s reception, etc. We can ask what the practitioner as __ represents, or stands in for, when they are practicing.

In a taking-apart of the narratives of the practitioner in applied theatre in the subsequent chapters of the thesis, I am attempting to re-position views of how their work has been previously assumed to exist and function. Deconstruction, a concept associated with Derrida, is described within an examination of the uncanny as ‘[making] the most apparent familiar texts strange, it renders the most apparently unequivocal and self-assured statements uncertain’ (Royle, 2003b: 24). The use of __ introduces an ‘uncertainty’ in its formulation and allows for further readings of the role. I am suggesting that the __ can give form to many interpretations in the one site, a quality which is indicative of the responsive practitioner. __ provides the ground on which to accommodate the multiplicity of
the role arising from its responsive ethos; the non-signifier of __ makes allowance for its responsive identity.

**Introducing the thesis content and structure**

My research for this thesis examined applied theatre practitioner expertise, seeking to reveal new insights and build awareness of complexity within the work. The thesis is founded on responsivity as a common underpinning influence, bringing together for examination diversely named practitioners within the place of __, highlighting patterns (anticipation, adaptation, attunement, respond-ability) across the samples of work. Responsivity offers a means of articulating the expertise of the practitioner, and through the thesis I will map ideas of responsiveness onto the central figure within the work, the practitioner herself.

The research period covers the years between 2011 and 2014 during which there were, broadly speaking, two stages. In the first stage (2011), I interviewed 12 practitioners from across England, prompting a second stage of research (2012-14) with 10 artists in the North East of England in a process called ‘reflective dialogues’. The second set of case studies is the primary focus of the thesis, wherein the work of the practitioners was videoed during observation of activities (a weekly session, group rehearsal, one-off workshop, participatory performance etc.) The practitioners viewed the video of their practice with the researcher whilst also commenting on the rationale for their decisions made in-action. In Chapter 2, I discuss this methodology in more detail.

This second set of practitioners (analysed in Chapters 3 - 7) were chosen to represent a range of applied theatre practice that used participatory drama, including youth theatre, Theatre in Education (TIE), story-telling with older people...
with memory loss, a learning disabled performance group, mental health service users and a culture exchange group with women migrants. The sequencing of the chapters does not indicate any hierarchy of responsivity. These practitioners were selected for the research as a typical sample of those operating with experience in applied theatre. They managed the creative theatre activities as well as the developmental inter-active undertakings with the group, whether it was with older people, a youth group, refugees or those with disabilities.

The researched practitioners were chosen as those who could demonstrate sophisticated skills in performance as the basis for their participatory practice, theatre-making, directing, storytelling, choreography or clowning (for example). The practices examined within the thesis are not proposed as synonymous with the individual; researched artists had many other job roles and work practices which were rarely just participatory. For some, applied practice was only one part of their working life in theatre. Therefore, the individual practitioner does not always operate in the same mode as in the practice observed and discussed. Most identified themselves as artists and a few were resistant to being associated with participatory practice. The reflective dialogues were carried out after the observation of one session, sometimes a part of one project which may or may not be representative of other instances of work. The sample provides scope and depth of applied practice for the purpose of analysis, but does not make definitive claims about the practitioners’ work, nor suggest they are fixed in her/his practice.

The thesis contains an initial review of literature, followed by a shorter chapter exploring the research methodology. Chapters 3 – 7 analyse the practitioner case studies where analysis of the work and reflections of the practitioners are triangulated with theoretical interrogation particular to each
context. A final shorter chapter draws together the thesis and proposes implications of my argument of responsivity.

Chapter 1 discusses existing naming of practitioners in existing literatures: what they are called, and how they are described. I explore the understanding of applied theatre as an eclectic gathering, examining how the multiple and diverse names provide some clues but few conclusions to understanding the nature and make-up of the role. Qualities of practitioners are audited, and a concluding image of ‘grafting’ proposes a new way to conceptualise the so-called hybrid, blended expertise of the __.

Chapter 2 explains the research methodology and rationale of my ‘practice responsive’ approach. The technique of ‘reflective dialogues’ following on from practitioner ‘conversations’ was devised to look at the practice in part from within their own perspective. As a researcher with a close relationship to both practice and pedagogy, I developed methods which positioned practice expertise within a theoretical frame, with potential teaching and learning applications in mind. I analyse this resulting methodology and introduce the practitioner voice as a dialogically present contributor to the thesis.

Chapter 3 considers two practitioners operating in education settings, analysing aspects of responsive practice and establishing the patterns of responsivity that I have named as awareness, anticipation, adaptation, attunement and respond-ability. The chapter examines how a practitioner responded to each individual participant within a movement class for mental health service users in a higher education context and how TIE actor/teacher self-defined as an actor/facilitator. Qualities of empathy, including bodily empathy, are
explored in order to reveal detail of how the practitioners are making their in-action choices.

Chapter 4 examines how a practitioner who adopts the same, fixed methodology across various contexts of her work can also be argued to represent responsivity. A feminist premise underpins the response of this__, who uses a pre-determined participatory technique with a declared political objective in a ‘culture exchange’ group for women. The chapter uses critiques of ethics in applied theatre work with refugees along with feminist discussion of empathy to debate the role and responsibilities of a responsive practitioner.

Chapter 5 explores the grafting of a performance training method in an applied setting, discussed through application of clown teaching with a learning disabled performers’ group. Responsivity here is exemplified by the__’s artistic methods, which are consistently used by this practitioner across professional and community contexts. Concepts of risk, reward, exposure, humour and discipline are explored, and here I draw on theoretical constructs of play, failure and beauty to analyse how the__ role as artist responds to the specifics of context.

Chapter 6 analyses how minimal action and open approaches are adopted by a practitioner using story methods with older people who have memory loss. Considering the space created through the underscore (___), I explore the potential of responsivity to be manifest as a state of ‘being’ rather than a pro-active practice, using dialogism to interrogate the subjective experience of the__.

Chapter 7 uses ideas from Pierre Bourdieu (1977) to consider a ‘theory of practice’, with responsivity as the ‘habitus’ of the__. Synthesising examples, the chapter uses habitus to explain what practitioners reflect on as ‘instinct/ual’ within their work. Whilst acknowledging an inherent conflict in a theory for practice, I
argue how responsivity can offer a construct to give new insights into applied theatre expertise. Two practitioners working with different young people’s groups exemplify further detail of the approach of the __ through their in-action considerations, and I draw on the practitioners from earlier chapters to explore how they negotiate the blend of planning and responding, evidencing common strategies of awareness, anticipation and adaptation. To indicate potential pedagogic applications for the research, a reflective dialogue with two early-career practitioners suggests how expertise is developed within responsive practice.

The final chapter concludes my analysis, wherein I summarise the thesis of responsivity made through the reflective dialogues, highlighting political and ethical considerations that inform the inter-subjective nature of this expertise. The role of empathy and identity of an artist are flagged as important features for the practitioner, and a final section looks at the implications of the thesis for future research, exploring how the work of the ___ remains open for further debate.
Chapter 1
(Un)Naming practitioners in applied theatre: reviewing the role in written and live literatures

hybrid of artist, organiser and teacher … trying to work a certain alchemy in unlikely situations.


This chapter looks at how the practitioner role has been variously named and described in applied theatre and related literature, with a focus on how its applied, and responsive, nature is represented. I consider the implications of these namings and definitions, such as Johnston’s ‘hybrid’ (defined above) and propose an alternative - ‘graft’ - a term that I argue roots an understanding of the practitioner more securely as a theatre and drama artist. The concept of ‘__’ was outlined in the Prologue as a strategy to ‘underscore’ and to open up analysis in the thesis, holding in one place the multiple labels for the role and the implications of that nomenclature. This chapter explores the many and various namings which __ can substitute, laying the foundations for my investigation of expertise.

Whilst an examination of applied theatre literatures reveals concern with identification of the form(s), there is less discussion about those who practise the work and little synthesised analysis of their expertise. Applied theatre has tended not to have been defined with reference to those who work in the field, nor their approaches and concerns. This has created an opportunity that I seek to take up in the thesis. My ‘practice-responsive’ method (discussed further in Chapter 2) informs the inclusion here of my own interviews with practitioners, asserting their validity as live literatures to enrich the review of scholarship.
As well as evidence of its responsive nature, I explore how namings collected together and considered here are indicative of the origins, eclecticism and borders of applied theatre, drawn from cognate practices such as community arts and participatory performance, drama and theatre in education and health contexts. Some included texts contest the term ‘applied theatre’ offering welcome insight to the thesis topic.

Firstly in this chapter, I consider names, labels and titles, touching on applied theatre’s self-definition, in order to gather insights into its practitioners. After looking at what they have been called, I go on to examine how the roles of __ have been described. Literatures highlight qualities of practitioners, repeatedly providing evidence of response as common within their multi-faceted nature. The chapter addresses these central debates, noting what has been written and said about features such as facilitation and activism, to chart patterns of response within practice expertise. Reflections from practitioners are included to enrich exploration of nomenclature and qualities of practice.

Drawing on debates of participation and aesthetics in applied theatre, I then explore the notion of the applied theatre practitioner as a socially engaged artist. Stimulated by debates on the hybrid nature of the expertise and importance of the artist role, I go on to offer my ‘graft’ model to establish a vision for the __ that is rooted in their art form. Finally, I make observations on the role of __ as a professional.

‘By any other word would smell as sweet’: naming practitioners and matters of identity in applied theatre

Here, I consider what the practitioner is called in relation to how the practice is identified. As the subtitle citation (Shakespeare 1988. 2.1: 86) infers,
diverse labels can hide consistent qualities. Terminology in applied theatre is often disputed; Rikke Gurgens Gjaerum notes ‘the field of AT [sic] is a heterogeneous group of practitioners and researchers who do not always agree on the terms they use’ (2013: 351). My proposed notion of responsivity in practitioners is outlined through this thesis as (a) key to practices that are locked together but not homogenous.

Applied theatre has been defined as an ‘umbrella’ for a ‘broad set of theatrical practices’ (Prentki and Preston 2012: 10) which are ‘interdisciplinary’ (ibid: 11). These are ‘forms of dramatic activity’ gathered within a ‘portmanteau’ term (Nicholson 2005: 2) and can contain ‘hundreds of distinctive approaches emerging from a number of sets of complex contexts’ (Rasmussen 2000: 2). Michael Balfour argues against the urge to create any consistency of identity, suggesting that applied theatre is ‘an “umbrella” title that contains as many contradictions as it does commonalities’ (Balfour 2009: 348). With this point in mind, it is perhaps then not possible to determine a fixed idea of ‘expertise’ of the applied theatre practitioner – as the expertise in play may be as diverse and contradictory as the field itself.

Judith Ackroyd’s discussion of the ‘perimeters of the field’ of applied theatre is useful here to debate homogenous identity. Ackroyd distinguishes applied theatre by identifying practitioners’ conscious intention and shared objectives of ‘transformation’ of audiences or participants (2000: 1). Highlighting the diversity of applied theatre practices under the ‘umbrella’, she suggests that practitioners ‘see themselves working with specific skills appropriate to their work and not therefore the same as those in other fields’ (Ackroyd 2000: 1, my italics). The inference I take from this is that the ‘umbrella’ gathering of practices under a flag of convenience does not lead to uniform identity (nor name) of practitioners beyond
a shared objective for change. However, it also becomes possible to read ‘appropriate to their work’ *itself* as a common characteristic of the applied theatre practitioner. This commonality plays out firstly as a shared intention to affect or effect change ‘appropriate’ to context. Then, subsequently, the common intention is sought and manifest through a *responsive* practice.

Whilst I recognise the emphasis on context as a defining feature of practice, my analysis of the researched practitioners in this thesis and suggestion that they share a common responsive approach extends Ackroyd’s argument that practitioners are ‘not therefore the same’ in a slightly different direction, and one that I hope will be useful to those interested in developing as practitioners and/or supporting the emergence of new practitioners. Responsivity is a concept and practice which joins practitioners together and yet also allows them to be different. The ___ is a strategy I created in order to bring sameness and difference together within one holding place.

Uniformity of practices is debated by Nicholson (2010) as a potentially negative feature, but also in a way that supports my proposal for responsivity. She cautions against a label of ‘applied theatre’ becoming associated with a fixed set of practices as this can inhibit the wider potential for the use of theatre in education and community contexts,

there were ‘applied theatre practitioners’ who had acquired a battery of dramatic practices that fast became known as ‘applied theatre’. My suggestion is that this shift in meaning risks limiting the field if it leads to one, homogeneous set of practices rather than an informed understanding of its pedagogies or principles.

(2010: 152)

While her comments on the restrictive effect of a fixed set of practices may be valid, they also support the potential for a responsive medium. This study
investigates how the common values that guide the work, as suggested by Nicholson, may cross a diversity of practice.

The characteristic of shared but different approaches creates a paradoxical challenge to inform the examination of practitioners’ work. Applied theatre draws together practices with their own discourses, as Nicholson states, ‘Each of these forms of theatre has its own theories, debates and highly specialised practices which often are rather different from one another’ (2005: 2). James Thompson declares applied theatre is ‘neither simple nor singular in form’ (2003: 16). He asserts it to be an ‘imperfect’ term which casts a ‘wide net’ with a risk of ‘denying differences’ (ibid: 14). As with Ackroyd’s (2000) ‘not the same’ and Nicholson’s (2005) ‘rather different’, Thompson highlights diversity, ‘All applied-theatre [sic] practitioners apply forms of theatre that are specific to their history, community and culture.’ (2003: 16).

Some understanding of this multiplicity may be gathered by considering names that practitioners have been given, noting how literatures adopt differing titles, reflecting the diverse identity and formative origins of applied theatre. Here, I take time to consider their considerable number and variety, (also briefly noting that terms relating to ‘participant’ merit similar attention, but are not the focus of this thesis.) These include: ‘teaching artist’ (Taylor 2003) and ‘facilitator’ (Thompson and Schechner 2004), a title favoured as a default name of choice by more recent studies of practice (e.g. Prendergast and Saxton 2009, Preston 2016). The practitioners researched in my study used a range of self-labelling; ‘I am a/an artist, director, theatre maker, sometimes teacher,’ for example (specifics are discussed in subsequent chapters). Some names were dictated externally by job description (‘Head of Participation’ at a theatre, for example) and there were
often multiple identities, dictated by freelance or portfolio careers; a drama worker at a youth theatre also worked as a clown doctor, for example.

‘Practitioner’ is a frequently-used term, sometimes distinguishing the role from that of researcher or theorist (as in Boon and Plastow 2004). Nicholson states she will, ‘For ease of reference…call workshop leaders or facilitators ‘practitioners’ (2005: 5). She asserts the importance of contextual knowledge, ‘Most practitioners in applied drama are eclectic, using many different forms of improvisation extensively in their work, but also finding appropriate places for other forms of cultural performance’ (ibid: 56). This ‘eclecticism’ of ‘forms’ may be one source of the diversity of labels utilised for the role. Multiplicity is a feature often noted; when discussing emotional challenges for ‘facilitators’, Sheila Preston explores how practitioners offer changing performances of ‘self’ within their work. She writes of a blend of ‘complex negotiation of human responsiveness and the ‘professional’ role’ (2013: 230), an identity I revisit at the end of this chapter.

Offering many names for practices and practitioners, Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed is referenced by Thompson as globally ‘widespread’ (2003: 16). Boal’s ideas are a major influence on applied theatre, generating their own labels: the terms of ‘joker’ and ‘difficultator’, the latter contesting ‘ease-making’ suggested etymologically by ‘facilitator’ (Jackson 1995: xix). Chris Johnston lists ‘predecessors’ to the ‘drama facilitator’, which he groups together as ‘reference points’ for anyone ‘working among communities, [who] arguably performs a contemporary, radical and innovative function’ (2010: 55). His list with brief descriptors range from ‘therapist’ to ‘shaman’ and ‘cultural activist’ to include basic titles of ‘theatre director’, ‘political actor’, ‘joker’, ‘drama teacher’ and ‘actor/teacher’ (ibid: 55-60). The last three examples (Nicholson 2005, Johnston
2010 and ideas on Boal’s Joker) are re-visited below in my exploration of how qualities in the work of the practitioner are discussed.

A study of nomenclature can reflect the heritage of the different approaches of the umbrella term, informing our understanding of expertise and the function of the role. Community arts and theatre, drama and theatre in education, health and therapeutic uses of drama are all cited as key foundations which have been brought under the umbrella (Nicholson 2003: 2, Prentki and Preston 2009: 11-13), providing some labels. For example, actor/teacher identity, deriving from Theatre in Education (TIE), is debated by a practitioner in Chapter 4. Community arts practice (a field with which some of the researched practitioners identified) define their own interpretation of ‘artist’: community artists, community arts worker or ‘animateur’ (Infed, no date).

Continuing the discussion of terminology, it is notable that many literatures use the term facilitator, for example, Sheila Preston’s edited book, *Applied Theatre: Facilitation* (2016)*. Preston notes a lack of neutrality associated with the term, encouraging a more critical approach to the role. In an exploration of the ‘art of facilitation’ within Preston’s book, Michael Balfour describes some ‘intrinsic qualities’ (2016: 152) carried into the room beyond the techniques which have been planned into the work. Balfour points to the importance of ‘how the personal and inter-personal attributes of a facilitator have an important bearing on the group environment’ (ibid: 152), noting that this does not equate with building charisma or ego. Balfour outlines how, ‘The craft of facilitation is derived from the ability to negotiate the dynamics, to acknowledge and identify them, and to work

*My own chapter ‘More than a Sum of Parts? Responsivity and Respond-ability in Applied Theatre Practitioner Expertise’ in this text summarises some of the ideas drawn from this research.
with them towards a positive outcome or goal' (ibid: 164). Here, he refers to facilitation with the more task-focussed term of 'craft' (rather than 'art'), perhaps to enable better deconstruction of these ‘intrinsic qualities’.

Personal well-being and therapeutic outcomes are discussed as part of the remit of applied theatre facilitators, for example in Nicholson (2005: 2) and Taylor (2003: xxiv). In a further exploration of this relationship, US scholars Robert Landy and David Montgomery explore ‘splits’ between what they identify as ‘Educational Theatre, Applied Theatre and Drama Therapy’, noting how distinction has been made between ‘the social/political aims of Applied Theatre artists and the personal/psychological aims of dramatherapists’ (2012: 178). Their text argues for recognition of the large common ground which is shared by these fields of therapy and applied theatre in order to ‘hold together forms of drama and theatre which exist to facilitate change’ (ibid: xix). Most UK literatures in applied theatre separate the clinical approaches of dramatherapy from applied theatre. Connections are discussed by Sue Jennings (2009) in her edited collection of ‘necessary dialogues’ with ‘social theatre’. I suggest that the term facilitator, although providing many opportunities for cross-fertilisation with other fields such as group work, community development or counselling, exemplifies how a name can close down the features and diversity of the practitioner role. The use of the label ‘facilitator’ may not sit well where applied theatre proposes less focus on personal change and more on political/ social activism. Nor does facilitator as an

*I have made a clear distinction for this study and eliminated from the research any areas of practice or practitioners who are dramatherapists. As with drama teaching, the role of dramatherapist in the UK, unlike applied theatre practitioners, is a standardised profession with its own necessary structures of qualifications and supervision; its name and identity is clear. There is a different understanding and vocabulary for the dramatherapist in action that comes from outside applied theatre and inclusion would not aid the focus of the thesis. Some individuals do operate across boundaries, represented in my sample of conversations by Karen Eastwood who is a teacher and trained dramatherapist.
image allow space for the role of art or actions of an artist, inferring less concern with artistic exploration and aesthetic priorities, as I go on to discuss later in the chapter. This problem with the term ‘facilitator’ is one example of why the concept of __ is proposed to aid discussion and analysis without a descriptor prefiguring or inferring connotations of the role.

Labels are often inflected by the context, as Tim Prentki notes in his text on Theatre for Development (TfD),

Much of what is undertaken under the labels of Community Theatre and Theatre in Education pursues the same methodologies as TfD. If the project is conducted amongst the poor of what used to be called a Third–World country, it is likely to adopt the latter label.

(2015: 21).

Prentki’s point illustrates how labels are subject to related discourses and values of the operating environment. Notably, he adopts the term ‘facilitator’ without specific discussion of why. Also exploring the influence of location, James Thompson and Richard Schechner (2004) present a model of the ‘social theatre’ practitioner who not only understands their own working methodology, but also the ethical concerns and frameworks of the social milieu within which they operate. They use the example of prison to illustrate how practitioners can be resistant or in opposition to differing ideological approaches, even whilst working alongside them.

Having discussed some implications for the diversity of titles, I remind the reader of the central argument of the thesis regarding the practitioner: the identifying principle of responding to context and participants. We can see how applied theatre practitioners, as Ackroyd and others cited above suggest, are not all the same. However, I am suggesting that namings share a common inference of response: to the participants, to the context, and to the tasks or objectives of
the work. Evidence in literatures suggests that terminology for the practitioner is not only indicative of the influence of the location and aims, but also the extent and type of intended outcomes. These personal, social, health, community etc. benefits are additional to, and embedded within, any artistic outcomes for the practice - an issue I return to in the concluding section of this chapter.

**Qualities of named practitioners’ expertise**

Naming the nature and *qualities* of practitioners, even when drawn from related texts that do not identify with the term ‘applied theatre’, can aid contextualisation for this research on the expertise of the __. This section of the chapter explores a number of texts which highlight defining features and emphasis through their discussion of practitioner qualities. The differing qualities, as discussed above, operate in the service of particular applications of theatre and drama, and we start to see a spectrum of practice, ranging (for example) from those with a facilitation emphasis, to others with an activist emphasis. The section informs the debates of response by providing evidence of a richly detailed and multifaceted, adaptive practitioner.

Chris Johnston (cited at the opening of this chapter) describes a ‘facilitator’ as a ‘hybrid of artist organiser and teacher…trying to work a certain alchemy in unlikely situations’ (2005: v). Although his concept of ‘alchemy’ remains tantalisingly unexplained, he explores qualities, ‘mixing idealism with pragmatism, courage with sensitivity, creativity with DIY, and…determined inventiveness’ (ibid: v). Quotations from practitioners richly illustrate personalities and qualities of their work in his book, but these are not thematically analysed or connected with theory nor are personal narratives linked to his named models of practice.
Petra Kuppers identifies herself as a ‘community performance facilitator’ but encourages a relaxed approach to categorisation, viewing ‘definitions as journeys’, reflecting her views on qualities within the form (2007: 3). Kuppers’ emphasis lies on the process of community performance activity and states that the responsibility of the practitioner is not to take participants to a ‘predetermined’ (ibid: 4) end product, if indeed there is one at all. She notes use of spontaneity in the way that ‘the aim of inclusion, openness and movement towards a mutually agreed goal can only ever be improvisational’ (ibid: 14). Kuppers makes a distinction from art therapy and highlights other aims,

This way of thinking about the arts sets art work apart from art therapy. While many community art workers have experience in and of art therapy, the goals and tools are often different. Many community performance artists see their work as specifically political, designed to change wider social structures as well as the individual.

(ibid: 50).

This suggestion that a ‘worker’ has political and social impact is not further discussed, but significantly her previous use of the term ‘facilitator’ is altered in this section to naming ‘art’ and ‘worker’, indicating a blend of aesthetic and functional concerns in the role. Kuppers focusses on collaborative activity and empowerment qualities as she explores ‘leadership styles’, emphasising ‘communal creation’ (ibid: 5). Listing three possible approaches: ‘Autocratic’, ‘Group Led’ and ‘Democratic’, Kuppers notes, however, ‘in practice, most sessions will have shades of all of these ways of leading’ (ibid: 95), which suggest varying levels of abdication of power in the position of practitioner. Thus Kuppers may contest the idea that a creative process is identified by a single individual who is strongly distinguished from the community performance group (i.e. my proposal of the __).
In another example of writing on community and theatre, Eugene van Erven discusses qualities of ‘community artists’ who walk ‘the fine line between mainstream arts and the world of ordinary people’ including ‘temperament, commitment, stamina and courage’ (2013: 140). As with Kuppers, an egalitarian model of a practitioner is represented with this image of a go-between for the arts and ‘ordinary people’. This is suggestive of an artist who collaborates with, but is also responsive to, communities. Van Erven’s line, no matter how ‘fine’, distinguishes a particular approach for this artist who (at least, when practising within community arts) is neither part of ‘mainstream’ arts, nor ‘ordinary’ (i.e. not an artist). It appears van Erven wishes the ‘community artist’ not to be exempt from either grouping, but by proposing this model, he infers an artist who is distinctive. I re-visit this argument in the later section of the chapter.

Caoimhe McAvinchey also uses the title ‘artists’ in her edited book discussing qualities of practitioners in ‘communities’. She aims to offer ‘an opportunity to think not just about what they make but how they make it and why it matters’ (2014: 19, italics in original). McAvinchey, like Johnston (2005), invites practitioner voices to debate issues, origins and defining characteristics of their practice. For example, Lois Weaver (also cited by Johnston) discusses feminist activism and performance from 1970s (McAvinchey 2014: 31) alongside current work, thereby situating her participatory practice within a political ethos and a canon of performance. This activist feature of the ___ resonates with Kuppers’ (2005) note of ‘political’ objectives of some community artists, discussed above.

Other literatures specifically discussing the categorisation of ‘applied theatre’ pay attention to qualities of the practitioner in order to explain the identity of what is gathered under the ‘umbrella’ of practices. Tim Prentki, for example, highlights humility, sensitivity and adherence to democratic principles (2009: 252).
Nicola Shaughnessy touches on empathy: ‘for the applied theatre practitioner, empathy might be considered to be an important feature of their practical and ethical engagement with the ‘client group’ (2012: 5). She highlights critical empathy and affect, making an initial connection between practitioners’ attitude to their work with participants and applied practice’s imperative of change.

Thompson, whose 2009 text famously addresses issues of affect in the context of applied theatre, discusses practitioner values in more recent writing. Making links with thinking from nursing studies, (an approach I used to introduce ‘ethical comportment’ within practice skills [see Hepplewhite 2013]), Thompson emphasises a care for the whole experience of the practice, including audience relationship, within an ‘affective, sensory dynamic’ (2015: 439). He values the ‘preparatory’ aspects of the practice with ‘reciprocity of gradual creation’ (ibid: 438). Thompson explores the importance of ‘attentiveness’ and develops what he names as ‘aesthetics of care’ with a ‘set of values realised in a relational process’ (ibid: 437). Practitioner qualities are linked here to a concern for ethical issues, a feature I return to in subsequent chapters.

Indicating direct guidance for the qualities of practitioners within arts in community health, Mike White outlines seven principles (2009: 104-6), with the proviso that each practice is sensitive to context and participants. His third principle is ‘responsiveness’ to health needs whilst valuing participants’ contribution and challenging them through creating work of quality. White continues,

Responsiveness thrives in a climate of continuous positive regard. To be more than simply a ‘smiley’ culture, however, responsiveness also needs to be informed by reflective practice as a foundation of purposeful learning – taking a perspective on one’s own actions and examining experience rather than just living it.

(ibid: 105)
White is here making a connection between a responsive approach and the important role of practitioner reflection, a combination I embed within my methodology, outlined in the next chapter. His inference of practitioner development is not expanded in his text, but resonates with my own debates of the quality of respond-ability; practitioners are reflective and open to change.

Applied theatre’s imperative of participant change can be seen to influence the nature and qualities of the practitioner. Writing about Augusto Boal’s ‘Joker’ (extensive but only touched on here), for example, considers the functional nature of the role in one such outcome-focused form. Although not the key mode of researched work for any of the practitioners in this thesis, some discussion of the Joker here enables further consideration of the qualities of the __. Significantly, Boal’s own descriptions of method are accompanied by a political ambition of the practice in Theatre for the Oppressed (2000). Other writing suggests how practice choices and demeanour are informed by the goals set for the work (for example, see Boal 2002: 232-4 under ‘The Conduct of the Joker’).

Boal’s Joker first appeared as an actor/narrator for performances with a function to ‘enact interventions and interject disorientation and incongruity into the stories’ (Schutzman 2006: 133). Originating as part of Boal’s acting company, this role demonstrated qualities as a ‘live theorist … a trickster’ who connected with audience but was not initially concerned with participatory activity. Boal’s shape-shifting Joker has trickster qualities, usually bridging the fictional world of a performance and the audience’s reality (Prendergast and Saxton 2009: 70). The first form of Joker was less an aid to solving problems than in the later, evolved role in Forum Theatre where an argument is focussed through intellectual challenge for the audience of ‘spect-actors’. Maddy Schutzman (2006) describes the concept of the joker as ‘wild card’ in the pack or the zero card in Tarot
suggesting the joker’s chameleon potential. She makes links to the role of Fool which suggest aspects of adaptability and tabula rasa within the Joker as agent of change. Boal’s Joker model in Forum Theatre suggests a function of compere, or midwife role, according to Frances Babbage (2004: 142-3). Forum Theatre approaches demand a dialogic approach and egalitarian emphasis for the Joker, along with the ability to respond to specific participant concerns. Boal’s journey through a range of approaches and practices during his life’s work and related texts is itself indicative of a responsive medium which expediently adapted to social, political, temporal and locational factors.

Other literatures debate practitioner qualities within forms which are less dependent on artistic expertise, but place more emphasis on the social applications of applied theatre and drama. In a text for development and empowerment contexts declared as chiefly for use by non-theatre specialists, Julie McCarthy (2004) outlines her ethos of drama activities and acknowledges hesitance to use role-play. Drawing on work for a specific context (prisons) but using techniques also applied elsewhere, The Geese Theatre Handbook offers an approach with advice for ‘facilitators who orchestrate the sessions’ (Baim, Brookes and Mountford 2002: 21), suggesting the possibility of the work being undertaken by a non-drama specialist, for example ‘Do I need acting skills?’ (2002: xiv); answer, mostly not. They suggest twelve bullet points of ‘skills and qualities’ (ibid: 23) which are required for a ‘good group worker using drama’, including empathy, (a feature I analyse in subsequent chapters) confidence, listening well, enthusiasm, humour, trust and a belief in the possibility of change in the participant, for example. There is a concern to focus on the participants’ own experience (often through a safe practice of one-step-removed) introducing the importance of an ethically informed response by the practitioner.
Some ‘manual’ texts depict a practitioner with a solid methodological approach rooted within theatre and drama expertise, anticipating my debates about hybridity and graft (outlined at the end of this chapter). Viola Spolin’s book on the role of improvisation refers to ‘teacher-directors’ (and student-actors) in her aim to ‘show the teacher how to establish an environment in which the intuitive can emerge and experiencing can take place’ (1977: 4). Spolin goes on to note that technical and artistic knowledge will be needed to lead the group, and proposes teacher-directors should aim for a ‘deeper level of response – the intuitive’ (ibid: 19). Intuition in practitioners is discussed in subsequent chapters of my thesis, arising from the self-analysis of some researched practitioners in this study.

Other texts highlight practitioner skills that support the characteristic combination in applied theatre of theatre/drama expertise with social, educational and intra-personal features. Chrissy Poulter (1987) for example, shares advice on skills required of the session leader and makes reference to aims of group development. Danny Braverman states three principles in the work: empathy (notably, again highlighted), playfulness and an understanding of working ‘from the particular to the universal’ (2002: 14), the latter concept drawn from drama education. Sara Clifford and Anna Herrmann’s text (1999) uses Grotowski’s Poor Theatre and acknowledges their origins in education drama and TIE. Richard Hahlo and Peter Reynolds seek to emphasise ‘the ways in which the social and educational nature of theatre workshops can become more widely experienced, valued and understood.’ (2000: xi) and draw on actor training and theatre production methodology.

Whilst considering the qualities that make up the expertise of applied theatre practitioners, it is worth noting that texts focussing discussion on the how-
to of participatory theatre practice may infer a less complex expertise for the __, by over-emphasising the mechanics of activities. Nicholson cautions against the risks of a ‘battery of practices’ (2010: 152), inferring an attack of weaponry and a lack of responsiveness; notably Boal (1992: 60) refers to his ‘arsenal’ of activities. In an earlier text, Nicholson warns against applied drama being associated with instrumental and unresponsive work, touching on the issue of artistic skill for practitioners. She considers ‘whether applied drama projects always need to be run by drama specialists’ (2003: 55) and indicates that there is a more complex emphasis beyond the mechanistic, arising from a ‘close partnership with related professionals’ (ibid: 55). She states, ‘This approach … relies, therefore on a synthesis of differentiated knowledge, achieved through dialogue between practitioners and participants’ (ibid: 56, my italics). With inclusion of dialogue, an inter-active and responsive expertise is thereby suggested in the role.

Dialogic interaction was also noted as a quality for practitioners in this example from my first stage research conversations,

You enter in to a dialogue with people who interest you on or about whom you want to know things so you create situations where you are informed by them – you possibly inform them as well but principally you are informed by them

Chris Johnston*

Johnston valued the potential of ‘enter[ing] in to a dialogue’ within his understanding of one quality of practice expertise, underscoring Nicholson’s indication of the role of ‘dialogue between practitioners and participants’, cited above. Dialogue as a conceptual quality is picked up in discussion of my research method in the next chapter. In the spirit of dialogue and indicative of my research method in the next chapter.

* For purposes of clarity in referencing, citations from my research interviews give name only. See Appendix for details of interviews.
methodology, this chapter now goes on to explore further views of researched practitioners. Qualities and skills were discussed alongside their consideration of nomenclature and self-identity. The comments are collated in the following section to add evidence to my argument that practitioner expertise is informed by the responsive nature of the form of practice.

Practitioner commentary on names and definitions

The first stage interviews for this thesis were specifically set up to investigate how practitioners described themselves and their work in connection with training for the role. The twelve practitioners interviewed had no common, shared or agreed title to describe either their practices or the practitioner roles. The instigation of the use of ___ for the thesis arose in part as a shorthand to accommodate the evidence of a multi-named and multi-faceted practitioner, which was presented in these early research conversations. The particular dozen were approached because they represented a range of participatory practices in communities and outside of conventional performance venues, including theatre education and youth theatre, in hostels, prison, schools, hospitals and health services. Few of those interviewed used the term ‘applied theatre’ as a reference; many fiercely resisted categorising themselves and their work, but all identified themselves as working with theatre.

Considerations of labels and self-identity were topics which generated debate in the conversations and dialogues, although naming was, paradoxically, also dismissed as meaningless. What they chose to call themselves fluctuated, frequently adapting to an external necessity and the diverse contexts of freelance work. Many also used their skills and approaches to work in ‘mainstream’ theatre
with other professionals producing plays for audiences in theatres, as well as applied contexts. Laura Lindow, for example, is a practitioner whose community practice provides an equal share of her work, and has worked at locations ranging from The Lowry, Manchester, a Newcastle children’s hospital, a Durham prison, to a local youth theatre. She articulated how this diversity allowed her to utilise differing facets of the same expertise,

You do feel very much that it’s either participation or professional work and how do you keep your practice alive when it’s not trying to compartmentalise and say, well I’m this person when I’m in the classroom and then I’m that person when I’m in the rehearsal room? Of course you are, you are different shades of different people but you need to have a through-line.

Laura Lindow

Tim Wheeler, at the time artistic director for Mind The Gap, a company who produce professional touring theatre and use participatory approaches, also defined himself as having multiple but related approaches. He discussed this as using ‘shades’ of ‘behaviours’,

There are shades between directorial behaviour and facilitative behaviour. I think there’s a whole coaching behaviour, supporting behaviour, those kind of different ways of working with people.

Tim Wheeler

This choice of the term ‘behaviour’ presents a multi-skilled practitioner who is able to draw on resources of expertise which are very much embodied, suggesting differing approaches which are performed through this ‘behaviour’ when working ‘with people’. These ‘different ways of working’ suggest a responsive practitioner who has also developed abilities of judgement in order to make choices about which ‘behaviours’ to utilise within each moment, dependent on individual participants or circumstance. The adaptations were framed by some in terms of a performance,
Because you are working a part. You are, to some extent, a character. And it’s either - it depends on what context you’re in. It’s the hyper-real version of you, or the more playful version of you, or the father version of you, or whatever you feel that that group contacts you with or engages you with in some way, that’s the character you go with. And then you can slowly change that character within them, once they understand you a bit more and you understand them a little bit more. But I think you’re always putting different hats on, constantly.

Mark Calvert

The improvised and spontaneous performance of the __ took on a role/character in response to the participants, ‘whatever you feel that that group contacts you with’. Calvert’s own performance background and directing experience were aiding this performative view.

One practitioner, Karen Eastwood, was an experienced secondary drama teacher who was also part of a Playback Theatre company, using the method in mental health and other settings. Pastoral work with young people in her teaching job had prompted her to also train as a dramatherapist, which she then took back in to use in the school setting. She spoke emphatically about how she saw the blend of functions operating within drama with young people,

And you don’t use the word therapy, this isn’t therapeutic, but that is what is happening. They might be learning skills about theatre and that is what it says on all the literature, but actually, there’s something else going on here, as well.

Karen Eastwood

Eastwood’s comments suggest that an awareness of outcomes from the processes was informing her understanding of how her practice skills, professional roles and job titles function.

A further conversation with an early career practitioner, Jon Luke McKie emphasised his view that resisted identity as a ‘teacher’, although acknowledging
the additional function of his participatory work free-lancing in schools and youth theatres,

I might be facilitating them learning a skill but I don't see myself as a teacher and I wouldn't want to be.

Jon Luke McKie

Perhaps significantly, McKie trained on a drama degree programme in university, and, unlike Eastwood, had not trained as a teacher. The subtext to his comments suggests a resistance to more formal learning structures proposed in the label of ‘teacher’. Comparatively, Juliet Forster, Head of Education at York Theatre Royal, trained through drama routes as a theatre director, but spoke of a close relationship between the educational and artistic imperatives which informed her work and identity as a practitioner,

Because for years I’ve not felt the need to make a differentiation of myself as an educator and myself as an artist . . . I still see both those things as essentially being the same skill but with different audiences if you like.

Juliet Forster

As a theatre director and workshop leader, Forster applied very similar methods to her rehearsal processes with professional actors and workshops with young people or non-professional adults. She was one example of many practitioners who were operating as ‘mainstream’ theatre directors (in these examples for major regional theatres) as well as frequently facilitating process and product-based work with community and young people’s groups. Forster spoke about shared processes,

For me the really obvious cross-over of how I work with one group and how I work with another, it’s the quality of what you do . . . exploring a workshop around a play, or whether they create something which is brilliant that goes on the stage, it’s still about what is done in those rehearsal rooms.

Juliet Forster
This ‘quality of what you do’ challenges belief that applied practitioners are utilising less complex approaches or not able to also undertake ‘traditional’ theatre roles, such as a ‘mainstream’ director. Frances Rifkin made a direct connection between her profession as director and her connection to participatory work,

I’ve never been a director who asserts total control or authority. I’ve always been – it’s why I started enjoying workshops when I did them… I look at power relations, one way or another, subtly or unsubtly, almost all the time. It’s part of the way I see what’s going on.

Frances Rifkin

Adrian Jackson, director of Cardboard Citizens and translator of many of Boal’s texts (1995, 2008, 2011) explicitly outlined his view of himself as a director,

I make more of a connection than some people might make between workshop leading and directing. I am essentially a theatre director and when I am leading a workshop I think I am a theatre director and I am trying to make things happen in the room that I think are interesting and pleasurable and enjoyable, and if I am engaged it is much more likely other people are going to be engaged.

Adrian Jackson

Jackson spoke of the pleasure and reward he gets from the work, illustrating the notion of respond-ability which is further discussed throughout the thesis. He goes on to discuss the responsibilities involved in the role of a leader of participatory activity,

There is meaningful and meaningless interaction . . . some of what one hears about is fairly meaning-less . . . if an audience is going to do something it’s got to mean something more than just the fact they are playing your game.

Adrian Jackson

This characteristic of ‘meaningful’ work was important to many of those interviewed, and stimulated the concept of respond-ability devised for this thesis. Further reference to being open to the nurturing function of the work is picked up
in subsequent chapters, and analysed as a key feature of responsivity in the researched practitioners. These early interviews provided solid evidence for the importance of reciprocity and impact of the work on the practitioner.

One conversation was explicit with a concern for a political and ethical discourse to underpin practice,

If you don’t explore that motivation – what is your deep motivation for doing this work – and that doesn’t start translating into some sort of methodology – if you don’t do that first, then how can anybody deliver practice that means anything? How can you build a house without foundations?

I would never say art for art’s sake, because it’s never for art’s sake, there’s always something more of value than art for art’s sake – what does it mean? Art always has meaning.

Stella Barnes

Barnes placed emphasis on an ethical rationale for practice combined with an identity as an engaged and purposeful artist. This model provoked further examination of the __ identity as an artist who is socially engaged and politically defined. I go on now to consider why the term ‘artist’ is not adequate to summarise the work of the applied theatre practitioner.

The ‘useful’ artist?

Returning to the focus of this chapter on naming expertise, what the practitioners called themselves in the research conversations was linked to what they do and why they do it. There was no single solution to an appropriate title that supported their understanding of the role; they frequently named themselves according to whatever the circumstances call for, emphasising a chameleon identity. ‘Artist’ may be a more readily-interpretable term, and its use may potentially resolve issues regarding naming the __. However, I explore a rationale
here for differentiating the ‘applied’ practitioner from an artist operating with participation. Recent discussions of aesthetics and participation in applied theatre scholarship are examined, following on from an initial exploration of what happens to the artist when working in a way that aims to deliver personal and/or social outcomes for participants.

I suggest that the term ‘artist’ may encounter similar difficulties of communication as the other namings explored in the chapter, failing to conceptualise or encapsulate effectively what applied practitioners do. ‘Artist’ is a label which can contain a diversity of practices and many artists of all types seek a response to the experience of art. Within applied work, as well as the social engagement it supports, artists also value their own response to the work, as echoed in the previous section. Practitioner expertise is (of course) related to an understanding of applied theatre as an art form and process, but also - and more imperatively here - its useful-ness.

Thompson’s exploration of applied theatre outlines how he does not seek to give a final definition but ‘instead argues that it is a useful phrase for a theatre that claims usefulness’ (2003: 14). In later discussion of the form, Thompson spoke of a need to ‘rediscover its connection to other art practices generally and a radical aspiration for performance in particular’ (2009: 4). He makes a case for concentrating on the affective experience of practice as key to the aesthetic and political force of the work. Thompson argues that ‘… we must carefully consider the actions that might be inspired by the theatre process and the decisions taken by the facilitators’ (2009: 36). Encouraging a focus on the ‘intentions’ (ibid: 6) of the work, he acknowledges an ethical and political role for the practitioner within the applications of arts participation. We can begin to see how factors of art, politics, ethics, experiences and outcomes are all central to practitioner expertise.
I am proposing that focus should be given to this ‘useful’ artist; one who applies and makes use of their art, whilst considering a ‘radical aspiration’, as Thompson proposes.

The ‘usefulness’ of art is rarely examined via the expertise of the artist, more often by the impact on the participants. Furthermore, Eugene van Erven for example, suggests an objective of ‘usefulness’ (2013: 135) can draw attention away from the role of ‘art’. Francois Matarasso (1997) promoted the social value of arts participation under a title juxtaposing ‘use’ and ‘ornament’. Jan Cohen-Cruz also suggests that many feel that ‘something simple yet fundamental will be lost if applied theatre is over-framed as useful’ (2010: 10) and uses the term ‘theatre artist’ as a naming for practitioners within her emphasis on an importance of art within the work. Cohen-Cruz (ibid: 6) explores definitions of the terms ‘applied’ (which she acknowledges, albeit critically) and ‘engaged’ (which she promotes). A descriptor of ‘useful’ is also used by Claire Bishop (2012) when analysing participatory art (discussed further below) in her debates about the term ‘artist’.

Cohen-Cruz seeks to resist prescriptive and proscriptive approaches, claiming that ‘Practitioners can interact with a broad range of people and subjects and still draw from the full spectrum of performative approaches’ (2010: 7). She situates applied theatre within a wider frame of ‘engagement’ in order to place it within ‘the continuum of art’ (ibid: 6) and not necessarily beyond the mainstream. She writes to challenge an assumption that ‘usefulness is in inverse proportion to aesthetics’ (ibid: 8) and clearly asserts that

What distinguishes engaged theatre from the mainstream is not lack of technique, which many performances that fit the engaged criteria have in abundance, but rather the artists’ actively committed relationship to the people most affected by their subject matter.

(ibid: 9)
An ‘actively committed relationship’ suggests a specific role for applied theatre practitioners, one which my research investigates further. Cohen-Cruz highlights that it is not what they do but how they do it that defines the practitioner/artist, suggesting that method is not as relevant as attitude in creating work. Placing an emphasis on understandings and qualities of interaction directs research such as this thesis towards the consideration of practitioners’ beliefs for the work. Cohen-Cruz describes the ‘engaged artist’ as one who ‘embraces rigorous connection and exchange, becoming involved in the issues and people at the source of the work, not assuming the need to keep a critical distance’ (ibid: 5). Her inclusion of ‘exchange’ and ‘rigorous connection’ are useful motifs, informing notions of responsivity and analysis within this research.

The inter-personal or social imperatives arising from ‘engagement’ are viewed as important considerations for Cohen-Cruz, but not seen to conflict with aesthetic concerns for applied theatre practitioners. Her more recent text describes ‘performance methods that artists seeking both aesthetic and efficacious impact employ with people who can extend their reach into a relevant social frame’ (2015: 10). She states, ‘If an artist wants her work to lead to what it imagines, more than dancers and actors are required to get there’ (ibid: 17). She suggests that permanent change instigated by art needs a particular expertise to blend aesthetic and social efficacy. I would suggest that my thesis takes up analysis of how some ‘more than’ theatre practitioners are constituted.

Other recent writing discusses a ‘social turn’ (e.g. Jackson 2011, Bishop 2012 and Harvie 2013) where arts practices are increasingly focussing on public participation. Debates in this setting (as distinct from applied theatre scholarship) focus on identifying potentially conflicting values and priorities for the work of art. These literatures provide a view of the artist working with participation as one
whose primary concerns focus on aesthetics of the art work/processes, (albeit socially-engaged practice) rather than being informed by the *experience* of participants, inferring different emphases or priorities than an artist-as-applied theatre practitioner. Brief examination of these debates can inform my interrogation of ___ expertise.

Grant Kester, under the suggestive title of *Conversation Pieces*, recommends valuing what he names ‘dialogic’ art as working ‘discursively’ and ‘collaboratively’ rather than via an individual sensory and visual response (2004: 12). He proposes a position for the artist which is neither of ‘pedagogic or creative mastery’ (2004: 151), a conjoining of the somewhat different fields of participatory practice in fine art/performance art and applied theatre/performance activities.

Encouraging an aesthetic focus in a further text on participation and art, Claire Bishop (2012) lays out the ‘social turn’ in arts practices which, she claims, limits the aesthetic critique of the art work,

> the urgency of this *social* task has led to a situation in which socially collaborative practices are all perceived to be equally important *artistic* gestures of resistance: there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond.

(2012: 13, italics in original)

The focus on the social in participatory art, Bishop claims, has led to a ‘disavowed relationship to the aesthetic’ (ibid: 26) and a situation where ethical criteria are used to judge art works (ibid: 23). Bishop concludes that ‘social and artistic judgements do not easily merge’ and that art has the ability to ‘generate other, more paradoxical criteria’ suggesting there is not an equation between levels of participation and value of art (ibid: 279). Bishop infers that a practitioner-as-artist may be conflicted when operating both as an aesthetic and social protagonist, or
that participatory and engagement practices in art can lead to a distraction or diminishment of the artist’s function and identity. My thesis is seeking to identify how an applied theatre practitioner negotiates what Bishop outlines as ‘paradoxical criteria’, making a case that the ___’s expertise is identified and fortified by the joint concerns. These debates inform some of the reflections of the researched practitioners discussed in Chapters 3-7, where it was evident that applied theatre artists (the chosen identity for many) are regularly and successfully balancing social factors and criteria of art in their practice.

In a further, related text, Jen Harvie discusses what she names as ‘relational events’ in socially engaged performance where emphasis is on artistic output but ‘its social ‘agenda’ is often ambiguous’ (2013: 20). She is not concerned with what she distinguishes as ‘Applied projects [which] tend to emphasise socially meaningful (and usually ‘positive’) processes, sometimes more than artistic outcomes’ (ibid: 20). Her focus lies with the former, where the ‘artist’ or ‘actor’ presents and facilitates work which engages with its (usually public) audience. She highlights ‘entrepreneurialized’ aspects of the artists’ practices which blend a producer role, a topic that I return to in subsequent considerations of the ___ identity.

Some attention has been paid to the skills set of artists working in participation and social engagement projects. Pablo Helguera emphasises understanding of the social implications of the work and a need for artists to be ‘attentive to the interests of the community and … the ways in which its members can contribute to an exchange’ (2011: 48). The significance of participation for the working lives of many artists in the UK has been supported and written about by the organisation ArtWorks, reflecting the importance of this area of employment for many freelance artists including theatre practitioners, ‘The nuances,
complexities and subtleties of the work are exciting. More and more artists are actively choosing to work in this way’ (Burns 2015: 7). ArtWorks’ literatures explore notions of quality, support and standards for practices, examining areas rarely discussed in applied theatre research. Naming is identified as a problem in their findings without offering conclusive labels; a survey of artists found that there was a ‘lack of shared terminology to describe the nature and intent of the work [which] can cause misunderstandings between artists and other stakeholders’ (ibid: 13).

My research indicated aesthetic concerns were very often important and well-articulated by the researched practitioners; many explicitly identified themselves (and sometimes those with whom they worked), as artists, even when alongside other features,

practitioners that are very comfortable with having their feet in many, many different worlds, the world of theatre and education…operating as an artist, but also operating as somebody whose head is in an educational context as well, playing between the boundaries of providing structure but also areas of openness and being able to facilitate and negotiate that …you would have to come in to this work because you believe in it.*

Deborah Pakhar-Hull

Pakhar-Hull’s comments (quoted above), are drawn from a film of practitioners’ self-definitions, made at a symposium I convened, further discussed in the next chapter. In the first stage dialogues, Richard Gregory argued he was a theatre director, who had focussed at times on work with non-performers,

We don’t make participatory theatre, and the reason that I say that is because I think, it’s important, the definition . . . the only definition that

* ‘…’ indicates an edit has been made in transcribed research conversations and reflective dialogues
works for me is that participatory theatre works primarily for the people taking part and I think that’s what I’ve spent my career doing.

Richard Gregory

Others also discussed a resistance to being seen to make participatory theatre and a desired association with making quality art was expressed in two other conversations,

I don’t think we’re very explicit about identifying learning goals, we’re more explicit about the art we want to make.

Bex Mather

I’m aware for that funder we need to be more explicit, but there’s resistance because it becomes a blunt instrument and not very creative and exciting and beautiful art, because we want to make beautiful things, we don’t want to make something that’s didactic and not very creative.

Stella Barnes

These practitioners were keen that the instrumental focus which was encouraged by outcome based criteria and evaluations of the work did not deter from the important value they saw for the participants’ experience of art-making.

Applied Theatre literatures discuss the role of art and the importance of an identity as an artist. Nicola Shaughnessy (echoing Barnes’ use of the expression ‘art for art’s sake’, discussed above on p.47) situates the scope of her study of applied practice within theatre and performance, describing work which although ‘not art for art’s sake or an elitist aesthetics; its practitioners describe themselves as artists and clearly consider this role as one which is socially responsive’ (2012: 16-17). A desire for identity as an artist concurs with Mojisola Adebayo’s chapter where she considers ‘the term Applied Theatre’ [sic] (2015: 123-130), speaking from a self-defined position of ‘a politically activated and animated theatre artist’ (ibid: 129). Adebayo writes against further use of the term, claiming there is ‘no indication of its politics aside from the assumed direction of the privileged to do
good by improving the other and having no implication of its aesthetic aside from the function to correct’ (ibid: 129). Although she also paradoxically states ‘I resent the idea that some of my work and the work of practitioners I respect falls outside the umbrella of applied theatre as defined by Thompson … [etc.]’ (ibid: 129).

Adebayo’s rejection of applied theatre as a gathering of practice challenges, in part, my research aim to explore whether there are common and identifiable patterns for applied theatre practitioners. I welcome these debates and the resulting analysis which allows the field to be well critiqued. Notably, in response to Adebayo, I found significant ‘indication’ of ‘politics’ in discussions with practitioners and few of them used the term ‘applied theatre’.

Encouraging those in pedagogic and practice contexts to promote a view of themselves as ‘theatre artists first and foremost’, Adebayo quotes Augusto Boal, ‘Our quest is for Beauty, like any other artist’ (Boal 2006: 38). She also encourages further visibility for female practitioners (as is happening through this research), highlighting the little documented work of women ‘who are hardly ever mentioned in the history books and or do not write as many books about theatre as their male counterparts, probably because they are just too busy doing it’ (ibid: 129).

Adebayo asserts the fundamental role of artistic skills in the practitioner role, ‘If we are not artists, we should not be using art with groups’ (ibid: 128). This debate of ‘artist’ as a title evidences applied theatre’s (even that which does not wish to be labelled as such) concern to maintain a connection to issues of artistry. Discussion of the role of aesthetics has been prevalent throughout the documentation of applied theatre, (see, for example debates in Thompson, 2003: 112). Gareth White declares that his aim to re-focus debates onto artistry and
return to the political origins of much of applied theatre go ‘hand in hand’ with proposing a way to ‘apply oneself as a theatre maker’ (2015: 2, italics in original). The discussion goes on to consider the blended nature of an applied theatre practitioner.

**Re-modelling the practitioner: hybrid or graft?**

hybrid of artist, organiser and teacher

Johnston (2010: v)

I see myself as part of a kind of informal movement in participatory arts that sees the artist – artist/facilitator/teacher/director hybrid – as a partner.

Stella Barnes

Applied theatre intersects with many fields of practice; practitioners may blend roles and functions, as illustrated by Johnston’s image of hybrid (2010, quoted in full at the outset of the chapter). Some researched practitioners, as illustrated by Barnes (quoted above), blend an identity in order to name the additional, enhanced or hybrid nature of their expertise; her comments suggest a struggle to find easy language to name what they do. Hybrid is mentioned elsewhere in applied theatre literatures (e.g. Prentki and Preston 2012: 11 and Nicholson 2005: 2). The image attempts to express how an applied theatre practitioner undertakes multiple roles and functions. They can be diversely called upon to be an effective artist, teacher, director, facilitator, activist etc.

Building on this notion of blended parts, I am proposing what I consider to be a more precise image: a *graft* (not hybrid). Grafting is the term used in horticulture for the uniting of two plants of different stock to grow as one. The grafting process is made up of a ‘root stock’ and ‘scion’ for that which is joined to grow from the root and stem. Notably for my use of the ___ image, newly named
varieties are not produced in this horticultural blending, as both stock and scion retain their individual characteristics. In my proposition for an applied theatre practitioner, they are not an equal hybrid of component parts; the main root stock of theatre provides the media onto which the ‘scion’ plant of the applied element is grafted. I am proposing a holistic concept within responsivity which directly branches from an established, rooted and substantial foundation (theatre) but recognises a need for particular expertise.

The graft is a way of creating a more successful blend of the two elements. In horticulture, the grafted plant fruits more effectively and is more resistant and resilient because of the strength of the root stock, thriving better in diverse or challenging environments. The research here proposes that each of the practitioners have theatre or performance as their ‘root stock’ and the ‘scion’ addition enables the plant to thrive. The practitioner may not be radically (i.e. at root) a new variety of director, theatre maker or actor, but is a specialist adapted each time specifically for purpose. The characteristics of each element (the artistic practice, and the adaptations for application) are retained, but brought together by the graft.

This premise goes some way to resolving the debates about the role of art and label of artist, embracing a root stock of the art form to which is applied. Many still practise within the identity of their roots of performance as well as in applied contexts. Additionally, some challenges faced in ‘propagation’ of this hard-to-define multiple role may be less problematic if the training experience is firmly embedded through a strong root of the hybrid – that is, the medium and craft of theatre. As highlighted by Saxton and Prendergast (2009: 18), ‘Playmaking is the root theatre activity of applied theatre practice’. A graft offers a model of a
centralised stem and tap root which sources the nourishment of theatre as its mainstay.

The grafted image is not unproblematic, however. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2004), writing in \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, create a rhizomatic structure as an alternative to an arborescent model, which they describe as hierarchical, vertical, linear and having an identifiable source and conclusion. Whilst recognising the potential negativity of phallic inference and fixed start/end points which a comparison with rhizomatic structure infers, I do (unlike Deleuze and Guattari) want to note the \textit{source} of things. The use of a graft and root stock is not to negate the possible use of rhizomatic imagery elsewhere for applied theatre practice, but where their rhizomatic structures suggest flow, my proposal of underscore (__) temporarily holds a space in stasis to allow examination of the practitioner role.

Before progressing to an examination of my research methodology in Chapter 2, I am adding a coda to this chapter on the naming and identification of the applied theatre practitioner: examining the ___ as (a) professional.

**Professionalising the applied theatre practitioner**

Discussion in this final section on naming reviews debates about the ___ as a professional role, and I aim to consider some implications within education or training contexts. Gareth White considers how the identity of a distinctive study of applied theatre in universities may contribute with other factors to be ‘collusive in creating a class of “professional applied theatre practitioners”, rather than artists motivated to make work with people in alternative settings’ (White 2015: 2). Notably in this context, ‘professional’ has a negative connotation, and there is a
suggestion that the two descriptors of ‘professional applied theatre practitioners’ and ‘artists’ are not compatible, a proposal which merits further investigation and which this thesis partly addresses. Although not an examination of the training curriculum and methods in universities, nor a comparative study of those working in applied theatre who followed this route, my thesis provides reflection and analysis of the work of those potentially described as ‘professional applied theatre practitioners’.

Framing the identity of __ as a professional infers a consistent understanding of its make-up/function and provokes related questions of development/training, which could limit responsiveness within both areas. However, in the same way, there has been a debate about definitions of applied theatre. In teaching contexts such as my own lecturing job in a UK university setting, under- and post-graduate programmes exist which include modules and programme titles embracing the term of applied theatre/drama/performanc. I suggest that further analytical reflection on what the artist is doing inside these practices would support training and study. Here, I briefly consider how texts have explored the nature and status of this role as professional in relation to their expertise.

Nicholson draws attention to functions when she discusses a professional role in writing about the term ‘applied drama/theatre/performance’, a ‘collective noun’ she uses for ‘drama that aspires to be publicly and socially beneficial’ (2011a: 241). She claims the name of applied theatre ‘emerged in universities rather than developed by practitioners [sic]’ (ibid: 242), a claim which is confirmed by my research, albeit with a small cohort. Nicholson suggests there was a proliferation of careers at the start of the twenty-first century for theatre practitioners in community and education settings and that ‘the university training
of community-based theatre practitioners meant that their work was becoming increasingly professionalised (ibid: 242, my italics). Although university programmes in applied theatre exist in parts of Asia, North America, Australasia and in the UK, nationally recognised curricula for training is not seen as appropriate, unlike in professions in social, education or health work. Practitioners in applied theatre are less professionalised in comparison to those they work alongside - such as teachers, community, criminal justice or social workers - in relation to aspects such as qualifications, supervision or regulatory structures. There are good reasons why there may be an active resistance to a standardisation that could accompany professionalisation, most significantly for my thesis that it could narrow practitioners’ ability to be responsive.

Ann Jellicoe’s (1987) exploration of the community play suggests a ‘director’ (alongside other roles such as producer, designer, stage manager, musical director etc.) should be drawn from paid professionals, who have ‘professed’ their commitment, to work with amateurs*, who do the roles ‘for love’ (1987:147). However, Jellicoe outlines additional qualities for these professionals when operating in communities, for example ability to ‘relate well to people is not reckoned a necessary quality in most practising artists but is naturally very important’, going on to claim that, ‘Directing a community play demands and deserves greater experience, not less.’ (ibid: 147). My grafted model recognises how an applied theatre practitioner has roots in (professional) performance skills.

Guglielmo Schinina’s (2004) writing on ‘social theatre’ considers a disruptive specialist who empowers differences and creates solidarity through

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*Nicholson’s (2015b) discussion of applied theatre’s relationship with amateur theatre is noted here.
theatre activity with groups. In Schinina’s model, a non-theatre trained practitioner such as development worker could perform the ‘choragus’ role he proposes as,

the one who is able to build the choir in the group s/he is acting with. S/he can be an actor, playwright, a social worker, etc., but s/he always uses her or his own particular profession to better serve the construction of the choir.

(2004: 24)

Schinina’s choragus image of a practitioner comes from the chorus but is not of the chorus – they are apart from, but also with, the participants; a role which resonates with the community approaches (discussed above) outlined by Kuppers (2007). Comparatively, the examples selected for my research focus on applied theatre workers who enter the location of work with a distinct identity of expert, with the expectation both from the context and from themselves to know and perform as professionally appropriate. Schinina goes on to debate the dilemmas associated with widening access to being a choragus,

If we specify the requirements for a “good” choragus, we give up the deprofessionalization [sic] of the work; whereas if we continue not to specify the optimal parameters of the work, we endanger the practice as a whole

(2004: 27)

A desire to ‘deprofessionalise’ highlights the importance of understanding context and participants. Schinina further suggests that an artist drawn to the employment opportunity can be at risk of applying ‘acting methods and aesthetic criteria in their social work with unethical and ineffective results’ (ibid: 27). This question of whether a practitioner needs both ‘social’ and artistic training was also debated by Jon Luke McKie in one of my first stage research conversations,

People assume that because I’m working in drama and working with young people is a side-line to me wanting to be a Hollywood star! Even a lot of people within the theatre and drama world would make that assumption, which isn’t the case. People do a lot of acting and want to be actors and facilitate as a bit of ‘bread and butter’. You can spot that – when people are
really invested in facilitation or working with young people – you can tell when people are really passionate about that. And the majority of people in my line of work actually are.

Jon Luke McKie

Being ‘invested’ is indicated as a necessary qualification for the __ here. A reflective dialogue invoked similar comments using performance imagery,

I see a difference in an actor facilitating to someone who calls themselves a facilitator. An actor obviously goes through a process, goes through lines. They can fall into that trap of, ‘I am delivering a performance’ rather than delivering it for these people and their enjoyment and their input. The games can be very egotistical and for their performance [i.e. the practitioner’s].

Claire Hills-Wilson

Claire’s analysis indicates an inferior role for one who is not responsive to the group, suggesting they are lacking in interactive qualities by sticking to a script. This formulation of an ‘egotistical’ model is focussed on its own ‘performance’ rather than participants. In order to distinguish herself as a developed practitioner, Claire highlighted key aspects associated with responsive practice, in particular a de-centring concern aiming to enable participants. There is an implication of a superior practitioner being not one who undertakes the work for their own benefit (‘for their performance’). Leaving the space for the participants, ‘their enjoyment and their input’ points to a responsive approach. Claire discussed the reciprocally increased satisfaction for the practitioner,

It [the work] keeps us like thinking on our feet, if you were just to regurgitate, I’d switch off. I wouldn’t be a practitioner, I’d just be an actor who was delivering something rather than a facilitator - cause I kind of see those two things very differently you know, an actor who’s doing a game.

Claire Hills-Wilson

Claire makes a comparison with a style of work that is comprised solely of leading a structure of activities, favouring a model of a complex ‘switched on’ practitioner
who is undertaking more than just the hybrid of functions suggested by ‘an actor who’s doing a game’.

Resonating with Cohen-Cruz’s suggestion discussed earlier in the chapter that ‘more than dancers and actors are required’ (2015: 17), the comments of Schinina, McKie and Hills-Wilson here give pointers to support the training of ‘professionals’ in applied theatre, indications which contest negative connotations regarding lack of artistry. I return to these debates in my conclusion of the thesis.

Having considered existing explorations of practitioner identities, the following chapter lays out the methodology of my own research into practitioner expertise.
Chapter 2

Reflective dialogue and practice-responsive method: researching the expertise of the ‘__’

areas for further analysis have emerged: exploration of the creative and imaginative skills and capacities of the applied theatre practitioner Hughes with Ruding (2009: 223).

This chapter will discuss the research process and methodology informing the thesis. The methodology is underpinned by epistemological principles of reflection and dialogue. These principles emerged as core to the values of the researched practitioners; values that were a touchstone informing the approach of the research. As a researcher, I sought a close interface between practice and research, and devised a methodological approach which I identify as ‘practice-responsive’. The research also weaves analysis of practice into existing theoretical understandings in applied theatre.

The research methodology responded to practice through a cyclical process, wherein the method, reflection and theorisation emerged dialogically with and through the reflections of practitioners. In the following, I describe the process of research, illustrating how methodological choices were informed by practitioner input, before discussing theoretical bases of reflection and dialogue which form the founding principles of practice-responsive research. This is followed by an exploration of the use of video within the research approach, and here I examine how watching videos of practitioners in action and reflecting with those practitioners whilst watching helped bridge the gap between discursive and embodied knowledges of the practitioner.
The Research Process

The research for this thesis was based on my proposition that there are common skills and qualities which enhance good practice of theatre artists when undertaking participatory work. The foundations for the research were personal and circumstantial, arising from being a practitioner-turned-lecturer/researcher. There was also indication (in part by a lack) that research on the practitioner was required in applied theatre literatures, illustrated by Jenny Hughes and Simon Ruding, above, and more extensively rationalised here:

There is an urgent need to research the skills and capabilities of practitioners in order to support their confident engagement with the discourses of institutional environments they ‘apply’ their methodologies within as well as enhance the impact of the work (2009: 221).

Hughes and Ruding go on to outline these ‘skills’ including ‘ability to respond in the moment’ (ibid: 221), pointing to my proposed concept of responsivity as a key characteristic of practitioner expertise. The factor of ‘in the moment’ ability corresponded to my initial impetus for this research which was to investigate what goes on in the room for practitioners operating in community and participatory settings where the focus for the work is on the experience and potential change for the participants; i.e. work that fits definitions of applied theatre discussed in the previous chapter.

This combination of motivations drove a search for information about the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the work of theatre practitioners operating in this mode, to identify what informed everyday working approaches, information that I felt was not fully represented in literatures from the viewpoint of the practitioner. I also sought to involve myself with research that could serve learning activities with
students or professional development, constructing approaches that were both appropriate to, and embedded within, the sites of applied theatre.

**Background to the research**

Investigatory work at the outset of the research processes for the thesis was undertaken alongside teaching and learning activities, including exploring innovations in the use of video in learning activity with students to enable reflection on in-action choices within workshop facilitation. I made a pilot (2010) for the use of video for reflection which followed my own actions within a rehearsal for a community theatre project (see Appendix no. 2). The video was closely edited and overlaid with adjectives and verbs representing the multiple actions used within practice. This approach was stimulated by a documentary film of the French/Algerian footballer, *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2005) which had 17 cameras trained on the single player for the duration of a match. Subtitled ‘face to face, as close as you can’, the technique suggested how multiple viewings can offer insight on an individual interacting in-action and resonated with the idea of a multi-faceted practitioner that I was investigating. This was formative in the evolution of the video use for the reflective dialogues process.

In November 2008, I had convened a North East UK regional symposium of practitioners in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK (see Appendix no.1). This was a forum for debate and comparison of approaches, attended by over 30 practitioners representing regional arts organisations along with undergraduate students. Conversation groups were based around creative workshop activities, including drawing exercises which I designed to facilitate reflection and dialogue in small groups about ‘what they do’. I posed a series of questions as stimulus for
discussion which also used quotations from applied theatre and drama education writings reflecting on practitioner strategies.

These explorations and activities confirmed the depth of material to be investigated and contributed to the design of the PhD study. The research process for this thesis was supplemented by the Alchemists at Work symposium (see Appendix no. 5), which I convened in June 2012, documented in a short film *(a). The event brought together over 30 researchers, practitioners, lecturers and students for a day of papers, presentations and workshops reflecting on the work of applied practitioners. Information was circulated on SCUDD (Standing Conference of Drama Departments) email list with a call-out for contributions. The title was inspired by the previously quoted description of practitioners as those who ‘work a certain alchemy in unlikely situations’ (Johnston 2010: v). There were 4 practical workshops and eight formal papers, and opinions about expertise were recorded in an ‘alchemists’ laboratory’ where attendees were invited to respond to questions on expertise, edited in to a film *(b).

Research processes for the thesis were made up of two stages of investigation with practitioners; the first stage ‘conversations’ (see Appendix no. 4) and a second, more substantial stage of case studies, the ‘reflective dialogues’ (see Appendix no. 6). The conversations were made up of semi-structured interviews with twelve practitioners about their work in participatory settings, reflecting on what they do and how they do it. This first stage was necessary because of the limitations of available literature on the practitioner or existing

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*(b) See: Alchemists at Work: Applied Theatre Practitioners Event film, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFLOPl6Sis4
documentation that recorded practitioner perspectives across a range of locations. The conversations sought to validate the premise that their view of their expertise was a topic worthy of further investigation. The rationale for selection aimed to mix those who were figures known in the field of UK practice (for example, Chris Johnston and Adrian Jackson, both published authors) with leaders of organisations (for example Stella Barnes at Oval House and Tim Wheeler at Mind the Gap) and a range of practices (youth theatre, clown doctor, school teacher, theatre engagement/education etc.) represented by practitioners less well known to others on a national platform. It is notable that the ‘well known’ names are male and the majority of practitioners in the research overall are women, a factor which merits further attention and research.

The conversations focussed around their expertise (see Appendix no. 6 for the stimulus questions used for the interviews). These aimed to evoke the practitioners’ view of their work, reflect on factors that informed in-action decision making and their skills acquisition, both original training and on-going development. Patterns in the way they discussed their expertise emerged: themes of being an artist, getting reward, the importance of planning and responding. The conversations highlighted a focus on responsiveness as a fundamental necessity when working with non-professional participants. Many of those operating with theatre-making processes in community contexts emphasised an egalitarian impetus for them too, to change, learn and develop through the work. This was, in part, born out of a respect for those they worked with as knowledgeable co-authors of the activity. Although the practitioners were usually responsible for initiating, shaping and leading the activity, they were clear that the work was not an imposition of a fixed process model. The participants
were not seen as passive recipients in a process; likewise, the practitioners viewed themselves as potentially changed by the work.

The conversations were analysed as part of an article for a training journal (Hepplewhite, 2013). An exploration from a different professional discipline (nursing) suggested a concept of ‘skilful ethical comportment’ to encapsulate aspects of practitioner expertise and analyse skills acquisition.

**Reflective dialogue research method**

The conversations led to the creation of the second stage of research (2012-14) which acted on the information gathered and went on to investigate the particular detail of responsive approaches by observing practitioners in action. This second stage method sought an even closer relationship with reflections of practice and provided the data for analysis in Chapters 3-8 of the thesis. The process of ‘reflective dialogues’ was devised for this PhD research, made up of:

- discussion of the session and key themes and issues of interest to the practitioner
- observation and filming (where possible) of the practitioner at work
- interviews including review of footage
- analysis of the primary research material including the use of grounded theory to find thematic connections in the practitioners’ concerns.

The reflective dialogues re-viewed the action, allowing space and time for debating practice choices with me as researcher and a discussion of practitioners’ underpinning motivations and objectives.

The practitioners were deliberately chosen to be commonplace (not figureheads) and operating at grassroots whilst being experienced and expert, representative of a range across the ‘umbrella’ of applied practice. They were regionally embedded in the relatively under-researched North East of England.
The rationale for this regional focus was to seek everyday practice that would represent a cross section of approaches sampled within one region. I was able to build on those I already knew around my location of work and residence, seeking out new contacts to represent significant areas of practice for inclusion within what I considered to be a wider field of applied theatre, such as the TIE actor who was previously unknown to me. The majority of my research participants are female. Regrettably in my sample, there were no black practitioners nor any who discussed an identity as disabled. It was difficult to find male practitioners, perhaps indicative of a predominance of women in applied theatre, a phenomenon which clearly calls for further research (I take up this point in Chapter 8).

A key question for the research was how to capture for analysis the moments when a practitioner makes a decision in action, when planning and reaction come together to exemplify the skill of the practice. My reflective dialogue research method aimed to illustrate complexity through multiple ways of viewing the in-action decisions made by practitioners operating in participatory theatre work. These responses in the moment can provide a microcosm in which the essence of the work is represented. The research sought to illuminate a richness and diversity within practitioner skills not always possible through the use of written analysis.

The reflective dialogue method was made up of a series of activities. A visit to a workshop or rehearsal followed initial conversation in a pre-meeting about the context, participants, issues and objectives of the work. This observation was video recorded using discreet cameras focussing on the practitioner, with the permission of all theatre participants (fully-informed). The recording was used as stimulus for a follow-up dialogue between the practitioner and researcher; both of
us together reviewed extracts during a dialogue of one to two hours, which was also videoed. The dialogues were transcribed. A process of comparative textual analysis used the three data sources of written dialogue and the dialogue on video, along with further review of the practice session video footage.

The two sources of video material from some reflective dialogues have also been intercut as short films, to serve as a documentary resource* (see Appendix no 7). The web site documents a range of practices in a way which may not otherwise be available. This pilot resource could be developed to provide insight into practitioners in participatory and community contexts for teaching and learning use.

The research method offers up multiple viewings as data. Many ‘views’ are created (i.e. witnessed or video recorded) so several perspectives on the work can be said to be generated through the process. It is important to distinguish between the multiple views the method generated (which were located in both the time of filming in-action and post-workshop reflection) and multiple views in terms of camera angle. Unlike the ‘Zidane’ filming, these reflective dialogues were only supported by a single camera, although some of the edited product intercuts the workshop and practitioner footage. I used a small, unobtrusive video (a Flip or stills camera size) for recording the practitioners at work during my observations, which I operated myself, tracking the practitioner during their workshop or rehearsal with the group. There is potential for use of the method with multiple cameras recording a single workshop to be re-viewed by the practitioner.

*See: http://reflectivedialogues.wordpress.com/
The multiple ‘viewings’ available to the research as it was undertaken include: what the practitioner described before the visit, what I selected to record on camera during the visit, what the video played back to me and what the practitioner or I chose when we viewed it after the visit, what the practitioner and I discussed within the reflective dialogue, what was extracted from the written transcriptions of the dialogue, what the edited films created through juxtaposition in editing, and so on. Each view can provide a different emphasis or version of activity, none of which are definitive. The recorded material can give the practitioner a fresh perspective when seeing the material in hindsight. There are risks associated with using video in practice research; documentation can obscure as much as it can reveal, it can represent and misrepresent and it is not always a truthful record or a match for the full story of the event. The method of reflective dialogues enabled a triple set of viewpoints to offer a fuller perspective on the work, blending the actions of the practitioners, their thoughts on their actions and my thoughts on their actions in a triangulation of reflection.

The use of video for research, the reflective dialogue method and its implications are further discussed in an article (Hepplewhite, 2014), where practitioners’ feedback on the research process was discussed. Future application of the methods forms part of the conclusion of the thesis.

Practical and ethical considerations were considered in the planning and execution of the reflective dialogues. Any video recording raises ethical questions, reflecting participatory theatre’s premise of a safe or confidential space. The focus of the video was on the practitioner, but participants were inevitably recorded. A clear ethical consent process gave all concerned the option either not to be filmed or for the filming to be only used for private viewing by me and the practitioner. In
some cases, I was given full permission by theatre participants to use the video in dissemination (only in this case were the edited films used).

The research was approved by the University Research Ethics Committee after careful consideration of issues relating to consent; confidentiality and comfort of the theatre participants were also considered. Any intrusion of my presence as observer was mitigated by my experience of operating in many comparable settings, careful liaison with the practitioner and hosts and sensitively managed permissions. The potentially invasive nature of filming was a concern and video use was not desirable in some sensitive group contexts. For such instances (as in sessions reported in Chapters 4 and 6) the reflective dialogue method was adapted to rely on a more immediate discussion without video, supported by notes to prompt dialogue. Some feedback on the process from research participants is documented below in the final section of this chapter.

Although the dialogues were very diverse, the general pattern of topics introduced to the practitioner as stimulus for discussion was as follows:

- Your priorities –
  Which key moments would you like to discuss? Which moments would you like to re-view?

- Improvisation and spontaneity –
  Were there things which surprised you today?
  How much of what happened was planned? Which aspects were responding to the collaboration with the participants?
  Were there any key moments when you felt you had a choice about how the work progressed? What were the factors informing your decisions at that point?
  Was intuition an influence in your decision making process?

- How do you see your role in the group?

- Training/learning-
  What did you discover in your work today?
What aspects of your own training informed your work and for which aspects of the session?

- **External influences**
  Were there factors outside of the room today which informed the choices you made?

  Are there theoretical, political, ethical or philosophical influences which can be tracked through the way you made decisions today?

The reflective dialogue videos were reviewed and, following transcription, thematically coded using grounded theory to establish iterations of approaches and attitudes across the range of practices and practitioners. I noted patterns which highlighted themes of planning and responding, identity as an artist, focus on participants and context, the ability to grow and develop within the work, etc. Topics were emphasised which had also arisen from my analysis of the first stage conversations.

Having introduced research methods, the chapter now explores conceptual premises of the research methodology

**Development of a ‘practice-responsive’ methodology**

Discussing a relationship between practice and research, Johannes Sjoberg and Jenny Hughes outline, ‘if we are to understand the role, processes and function of cultural practice more generally, it is important to be able to explore through doing’ (Sjoberg and Hughes, no date). My aim at the outset was to study the work of applied theatre practitioners in order to gain new insights into the complexity of practice. The reflective dialogue method sought to capture the potential of *their* explorations ‘through doing’ by seeking a close relationship as a
researcher with that ‘doing’ of the practice. As this ‘doing’ was on the part of the researched practitioners, the research is not framed as ‘practice as research’.

I maintain a distinctive role as the researcher within this study, albeit one who is also coming from a background of practitioner. The ‘practice-responsive’ approach situates me as researcher as close as possible to the experience of the research subject through the processes of initial discussion of issues, observation of events and activity, reflection aided by video recording and dialogue. The iterative and cyclical processes allow for an accumulative depth of debate and a combining of practice knowledges and viewpoints with the objective of creating rich and robust insights into the work. Although knowledge in the document was developed with aspects of collaboration, this thesis is single authored and practitioners have not been consulted for their views on the material, although responses will be sought post completion and joint involvement in future research is planned. The cyclical exchange aims to generate productive benefits in the sharing of knowledge; practice into theory and back into practice via dissemination to practitioners as well as pedagogic use.

Practice-responsive features of the research were supported by my perspective as a former community/participatory theatre worker, which provided an advantageous ‘insider’ position from which to reflect on the work. Writing from the context of health care and a phenomenon they describe as ‘Insider Research’, Jan Reed and Sue Proctor (1995) describe advantages of practitioner knowledge in practitioner research. Understanding of the protocols and conventions of the context are identifiable by an insider researcher whose work is much less disruptive to the research participants (in my case, this also includes the theatre participants). I would argue that my first-hand understanding of applied theatre practice enriched and enhanced the research twofold. Firstly, with the theatre
practitioners (research participants), who may see me as a peer, a view reinforced by my understanding of approaches, terminology and issues. And secondly, with the theatre participants, around whom I would hope to exhibit sensitivity to the environment and processes which minimise any discomfort created by my presence or the sense of them being viewed obtrusively or as ‘subjects’. I aimed to negotiate research relationships as I would within my own participatory work, demonstrating understanding and ‘attunement’ to individuals.

Given the diversity of location, context and objectives, this study embraces the range of discourses at play within applied theatre but seeks to find a consistent way to analyse the practitioner. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, writing about communication in visual cultures, suggest ‘people often have several alternative discourses available with respect to a particular aspect in reality.’ (2007: 21). Kress and van Leeuwen discuss ‘lived human social action’ (ibid: 25) which they observed to be presented in contemporary communication as a ‘multimodal’ phenomenon. Applying language from their work, applied theatre practitioners can be seen to negotiate ‘multimodal’ dialogues to negotiate ‘several alternative discourses’ present in their operations, not only around the site of the work, but specifically in the moment-by-moment performance activity with participants which forms the substance for examination by this thesis. Focus on the ‘lived human social action’ formed an underpinning for my research methodology and ensured that the practitioners’ reflections were at the centre of the work.

The interface between practice and research is much debated in the academic community of performance and theatre. Hazel Smith and Roger Dean (2009), writing about creative arts practice as a form of research, make the distinction between practice-based research and practice-led research and use the term ‘practice-as-research’ to combine the two. They offer a model of an
‘iterative cyclical web’ within practice-as-research. Hughes et al (2011: 186) explore the complexity of a practice-research combination, ‘the prominence of practice as research in applied theatre complicates any attempt to clearly categorise “research method” as distinct from or outside of practice.’ There is a potential for this ‘web’ to be tightly tangled and, moving away from a plethora of prepositions (as, with, through etc.), current views on the connection of practice and research are now suggesting the term ‘second wave’ (Hann 2016) to embrace a range of relationships. My phrasing of practice-responsive is a particular mode which distinguishes the researcher from the practitioner but seeks an embedded relationship with the practice.

Writing more recently, Sally Mackey (2016) discusses practice as research (PaR) in applied theatre and suggests a ‘polyphonic’ image (with homo- and monophonic options) that this specific blend of practice, theory, action and reflection may offer to enrich PaR. She highlights how applied and social theatre work may contribute to discussion on ‘expanding understandings of the “social turn”, [and that] we could usefully reference extensive examples of applied theatre research in socially-engaged contexts with facilitator-led projects’ (2016: 483). I am suggesting that my research may also contribute, offering a useful focus on artists’ thoughts on/from within their facilitatory practice, situate my thesis within applied theatre research, as well as relating to debates on the ‘social turn’ and writings on socially-engaged arts.

Mackey proposes a model of ‘practical research’, which ‘insists that practice is the core method of engaging with one’s research hunches or questions: it would not be possible to engage in the research unless you undertake practice’ (2016: 480). The relationship of practice to researcher in my thesis is one that may also add to Mackey’s useful survey. Whilst not claiming a
PaR status, my practice-responsive methodology revealed very close insights on the practices and on the research focus of the practitioner. Mackey describes how knowledge of the field is important to a researcher and that ‘the facilitator as practice as researcher is likely to be more interested in privileging the substantive matter rather than his or her own facilitation skillset’ (ibid: 482). My research offers a further relationship in the practice/researcher/applied theatre facilitator triad to that explored by Mackey, whilst also addressing the ‘substantive matter’ of applied theatre objectives and looking at the ‘facilitation skillset’.

My research was motivated by a desire to recognise and prioritise analysis of practice. I recognise the challenges for written communication to fully encapsulate the dimensions, affects and embodied experiences which are present within practice, particularly when witnessing work (as I was for the reflective dialogues) as an observer. Peter O’Connor and Michael Anderson note the ways applied theatre and research can be characterised by a desire to ‘break away from old forms of writing and representation… to new and exciting modalities of representation’ (2015: 40). Dwight Conquergood (2002) also proposes challenging text as a superior vessel of knowledge, not rejecting its role but claiming, ‘textocentrism—not texts—is the problem’ and that the ‘hegemony of textualism needs to be exposed and undermined’ (2002: 147). He asserts that a false divide of knowledge exists between thinking and doing, which is particularly evident in academia. He claims performance is an overlooked, fundamental method of communication and argues that speech, writing, performance, print are overlapping and ‘metonymic’ (ibid: 152) forms of knowledge.

Although I am not involving practice with my research process or thesis submission, I welcome Conquergood’s testing of the boundaries and emphasis which encourages a closer relationship with practice as well as promoting
understanding of the depth of knowledge within practice. He highlights how ‘original scholarship in culture and the arts is enhanced, complemented, and complicated in deeply meaningful ways by the participatory understanding and community involvement of the researcher’ (ibid: 153). My ‘practice-responsive’ method stands outside of practice, as I am in the position of an observer, but positions itself alongside the researched practitioners in ‘participatory understanding’ as a fellow passionate proponent of the practice.

The research aimed to collaboratively find new ways of articulating practitioners’ embodied knowledge, and the video functioned as an assistive mirror (albeit selective and subjective), as well as a window to the processes. The co-production of knowledge through the reflective dialogue research method recognised the role of the practitioners in articulating the ideas, but the final thesis is a written submission composed (in the end) from my own subjective researcher position.

The process of my analysis and documentation can be understood to be a poor substitute that can only attempt to capture the practice and the practitioners’ articulations on their work. Derrida explores the supplementary nature of writing itself, alerting the reader (ironically through text) to writing’s relationship to speech:

> Writing is dangerous from the moment that representation there claims to be presence and the sign of the thing itself. And there is a fatal necessity, inscribed in the very functioning of the sign, that the substitute makes one forget the vicariousness of its own function and makes it pass for the plenitude of a speech whose deficiency and infirmity it nevertheless only supplements.

(1976: 144 italics in original)

In the way that Derrida suggests we need to be cautious, this research is also concerned not to produce constructs about practice that claim to substitute the richness and experiential nature of the work. I only claim to reproduce a (my own)
version of the observed practice and the ‘plenitude’ of the reflective dialogues. Although the latter aimed to be a collaborative generation of ideas, this thesis represents only my own view; while wishing to reflect and respect the ideas of research participants, these practitioners are not represented here as research collaborators.

A connection with pedagogy is at the heart of my research, as a lecturer concerned with teaching future applied theatre practitioners and one who espouses a model of continuous, cyclical development for practitioners. Jonathan Pitches speaks of ‘practitioner knowledge’ (2011: 138) and the manifestation of research within ‘the everyday work of an investigative practitioner’ (ibid). I argue that although my work does not lie within the conventions of the ‘theatre laboratory’ he frames in his chapter introduction, there is a parallel to my interface between teaching and researching practice, often via activity involving students. My research aimed to be part of my ‘everyday’ work as a lecturer, with associated connections to practice, analysis and learning.

Proposing that the practitioners’ embodied knowledge is of equal validity to any written analysis of practice, the reflective dialogues suggest further means to bring the two together. Exploring ‘practice-as-research’, Robin Nelson discusses the divide between theory and practice, mind and body: ‘bodily dissemination of knowledge… challenges the dominance, if not virtual exclusivity, of writing (or other codified language) which has long since established itself as the appropriate means of storage and distribution of knowledge’ (2006: 105). As an attempt to partially ‘challenge the dominance’ of written knowledge, I have championed practitioner knowledge through the presence of their ‘words’ within the thesis.
My research created a specific relationship between embodied knowledge and discursive reflection. I devised research approaches that observed and recorded practitioners in action and then later provided them with an opportunity to view themselves in action. In some instances, this triggered embodied memories of in-action decisions, for example Chapter 7 analyses Amy Golding’s notion of ‘kind trickery’ which arose from an observable moment of discovery when she reviewed her work on video. The methods of investigation with practitioners engaged this relationship between embedded and conscious knowledges and points to a distinctive approach that is a feature of the research.

I go on to explore some of the principles of the practice-responsive mode for the methodology, which reveal philosophical and epistemological underpinning: chiefly ideas of reflection, practice and dialogue.

**Reflection and reflective practice: principles for practice-responsive research method**

This section discusses the way that the subject of the analysis was a major influence on the method of investigation. In seeking to research applied theatre practitioner expertise, in particular with a view to dissemination with a pedagogic imperative, I also sought to deconstruct how the ability to carry out the work is developed. This in turn influenced research processes. Donald Schön’s reflective practitioner analysis of practice learning explores a process that builds on tacit know-how. Through a process of reflection, practitioners frequently apply their own ‘research outcomes’ to become more competently skilled. He outlined how the ability to learn through ‘reflection-on-action’ itself denotes an expertise, ‘skillful [sic] practitioners learn to conduct frame experiments in which they impose a kind of coherence on messy situations’ (1987: 158). The internal research process,
which Schön labels reflection-on-action, was made more visible in the reflective dialogues. If the concept of research is extended to include that which practitioners regularly apply in the generation of their skills, as Schön suggests, the reflective dialogue method could be seen to act as a means to evidence how applied theatre practitioners generate new knowledge from their own practice.

The first stage interviews undertaken with theatre practitioners in 2011 highlighted a focus on responsiveness as a fundamental necessity when working with non-professional participants and second stage research revealed the nuances of their responses within an ethos of change. Many practitioners emphasised the impetus for them, also, to learn and develop through the work. This was born out of a respect for those they worked with as knowledgeable and co-authors of the activity, as Prendergast and Saxton state, ‘key to applied theatre facilitation is the recognition that the community participants… hold the knowledge of the subject under investigation, whereas the facilitator holds the aesthetic knowledge of the theatre form’ (2009:18).

Although the practitioners were usually responsible for initiating, shaping and leading the activity, they were clear that the work was not an imposition of a fixed process model. The participants were not seen as passive recipients in a process; likewise, the practitioners wanted to be open to the impact of the work. These conversations revealed collaboratively-made discoveries which informed the design of subsequent research; reflection on practice through dialogue produced new ideas. Proposing a collaborative approach to research in their concept of ‘Participatory Inquiry Paradigm’, John Heron and Peter Reason (1997) explore a philosophy that proposes there is no absolute knowledge and meaning is partly formed through encounter with others. They suggest that the very notion of knowing is a participatory experience, and connect with a participative world
view, where experiential knowledge is made up of direct encounter and empathetic resonance with another being. They propose a collaborative method where all are researcher and researched, so a ‘critical subjectivity’ is enhanced by a ‘critical inter-subjectivity’. Although I am not claiming a role for the practitioners as co-researchers, the proposition of collaboratively-evolved outcomes resonates with my research methods.

There are also resonances with an ‘action research’ approach, frequently used in education contexts, which is defined (Dick 2006) as inquiry based, collaborative, self-reflective, involving participants in social settings, and has the outcome of developing their practice. Cyclical, progressive patterns of action are used as structural models to communicate the sequence of actions involved. Bob Dick claims outcomes of improved practice, opportunity for disseminating innovation and personal professional development are created through action research. My own teaching and related activity has been informed by my research from the outset.

The practice-responsive approaches were developed to reflect the processes and value-base of the form of applied theatre. As discussed in the prologue, applied theatre is responsive and reflexive, defined by its intention to promote change in participants and also, as I argue through this thesis within the notion of respond-ability, for practitioners. I consider concepts surrounding an applied theatre practitioner as a developing professional, i.e. one who is not fixed. I argue that the applied theatre practitioner can be viewed as using a key theme of the practice itself: change. Just as they are briefed with facilitating personal, community or social change, practitioners are themselves in a place of change, learning or development. Chapter 7 includes brief consideration of development with early career practitioners.
What emerged from the reflective dialogues was a demonstration of how the expertise of the applied theatre practitioners is regenerated by their actions through a cycle of reflection; the responsive quality that enabled them to fulfil their job role was also that which developed them. The reflective approaches embedded in the practice have consciously been embraced in my research methodology, which blends theorisation with reflection on practice. Taking a lead from Nicholson’s notion of both theory and practice being ‘integral to the drama’ (2005: 14), I examine the ‘performative dynamic’ (ibid: 15) of theorisation embedded in the practitioners’ work.

Comments from the research conversations emphasised the acknowledgement that practitioners make to the developmental potential within the work,

We’re made and informed by perspectives and concerns of the work but the projects also have an element and feeling from the unknown. Unpredictability and being open to possibility, that’s maybe an important element, that’s part of an ethos of choices and decisions in the work.

Tim Wheeler

It re-arranges your insides a little bit and you have to just negotiate your way through the rest of the world.

Laura Lindow

I think everyone’s developing. I’m developing myself in that moment, I’m developing them in that moment, cause otherwise it’s not creative is it?

Juliet Forster

I used to love that. I just waited until somebody told me to ‘fuck off’ and then I’d know somebody was listening and it was great. I am much more comfortable responding in that way than I am to talking at people, so I suppose yes, a dialogue.
Adrian Jackson

In different ways the practitioners flagged up the important role of openness to change, focusing on the ethical, creative, developmental and dialogic (respectively represented here by the four comments above) imperatives they saw as integral to their work.

The role of development and reflection is echoed through the design of research method and arises from consideration of ideas in other professional contexts. Although these reflective practice approaches and theories are consciously focused on professional developmental objectives (unlike my research), there are conceptual influences for my methodological design. Reflective practice as a professional development tool uses versions of cyclical review, deliberately creating a shifting professional in order to avoid the possibility of setting the practitioner as ‘fixed in the social/political environment’ (Bolton 2001). In her exploration of the role of writing for reflective practice, Gillie Bolton highlights the importance of external factors and a political perspective to refresh practice following reflection. With reference to training ‘informal educators’, such as community workers, Tony Jeffs and Mark Smith suggest:

Practice is developed through sustained and critical reflection upon intervention. This, in turn, contributes to the building and maintenance of a body of theory consistent with informed action and analysis of practice...we take the view that those faculties can be educated and, as a result, practice developed.

(1990: 124)

Their comments emphasise a role of ‘critical reflection’ with a profession that is also operating within communities, albeit in this context (unlike in my research) specifically developmental in objective.
Peter Duffy discusses the role of reflective practice in drama education, emphasising that an effective use of the approach requires acceptance of shortcomings; ‘that there was a need in the room that was greater than our capacity to recognise it’ (2015: 4). He suggests changes in drama education practice can arise from attending to ‘how a teacher thinkingly acts’ (ibid: 5, italics in original). Although he specifically relates thinking here to a considered action, the reflective dialogue method was established to analyse thoughts and actions made in the moment, including those made less consciously.

The research method was designed to use reflection to reveal what has previously been hidden within practice knowledge and is (perhaps therefore inevitably) less researched. This pattern of revealing emerged in both conversation and reflective dialogue stages of the research, as suggested by one comment,

So a lot of in-the-moment stuff is based on prior knowledge, and where it’s not based on prior knowledge with that particular student, it’s based on prior knowledge of working with similar students; tried and tested.

Karen Eastwood

The actions of the competent applied theatre practitioner have grown through a series of knowing actions to achieve the implicit understand s/he uses within the work. In this way, any reflective activity (such as my reflective dialogue method) can enable practitioners to deconstruct instinctive actions, revealing the expertise within their embedded knowledge as a series of developed informed choices.

Critical reflection on actions can enable objective understanding of practice knowledge not conscious in the actions of an expert at work. Michael Eraut (2000), writing about teaching, highlights how ‘expertise’ is not a process, but the term to describe the combination of explicit and tacit knowledge of one who is experienced. Michael Eraut writes of the dispositional nature of intuition,
highlighting the value of the localised expertise evidenced in experienced practitioners. He contests an interpretation of intuition as a way of knowing, replacing the definition of a way to knowing (Eraut 2000: 259). Expertise in action is presented by Eraut as a hunch or insight which then leads to a decision or creative outcome. The sub-conscious *embodiment* of knowledge was discussed in one research conversation,

> I can then kind of absorb what it is and reintegrate it and I lose complete consciousness of it . . . It's about a visceral change or a change in habitat which takes years to develop . . . There is a great difference between those approaches: people who go out to acquire knowledge as a kind of intellectual thing and those who engender or embody it.

Tim Wheeler

The reflective dialogues aimed to enable articulation of some of the less tangible abilities of practitioners, raising awareness of ‘absorbed’ expertise, as suggested here. Practice expertise is revealed throughout the thesis and I return in Chapter 7 to explore the notion of a practitioner’s ‘habitus’ (drawing on Bourdieu).

The role of dialogue and the dialogic in the research methodology

Paulo Freire’s view on dialogue is summarized as,

> To enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the others; there must be mutual respect and love (care and commitment). Each one must question what he or she knows and realize [sic] that through dialogue existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created.

(Freire Institute, 2012)

I do not make claims for my research to intervene through a teacher-student relationship between me as researcher and the practitioners as students; rather, I place emphasis on a collaborative approach through the dialogic nature of the peer to peer relationship. To reference Freire, my research sought to be personally reflexive with regard to the position I adopted as a developmental
learner/researcher. Freire talks of a ‘gnosical cycle’ in dialogic education where the teacher is able to, ‘remake their cognosibility through that of their educatees…the ability of the educator to know the object is remade every time through the students’ own ability for knowing,’ (Freire and Shor 1987: 100). With the researched practitioners, I emphasised my desire to understand more about their world of work and their expertise, whilst acknowledging my role and responsibility as a researcher.

Freire’s notion of dialogue suggests interactive exchange; the connection between reflection and dialogue are core to applied theatre and the processes of this research. The concept of dialogism as constructed by Mikhail Bakhtin (discussed further in Hepplewhite, 2015) embraces concepts of identity and self as negotiated through dialogue,

I am conscious of myself and become myself only when revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another … To be means to be for another, and through the other for oneself … I cannot become myself without another.

(Bakhtin 1984: 287)

Dialogism proposes communication is ‘responsive both to other utterances and to the rest of our surroundings, and itself provokes further responsivity’ (Shotter and Billig 1998: 16). Linking together concepts of response and dialogue, this mention of responsivity highlights a synthesis of ideas in the design and the findings of the research which will be revisited in Chapter 6.

The thesis goes on to discuss respond-ability; my naming of how practitioners evidenced aspects of learning and development in the work. The research was also an opportunity for personal development. In undertaking this whole project, I heeded the suggestion that ‘Those of us working in applied theatre tend to be alert to our motives for engaging in practice and research’ (Nicholson 2009: 269). Defining her understanding of reflective practice, Joyce
Scarfe (2010) highlights the essential role for a ‘supervisor’ of reflective practitioners to promote a congruous attitude to their own development, ‘It is a ‘do as I do’ approach where actions are consistent with espoused theory.’ (2010: 8). As an educator as well as researcher, this reflexive approach is a conscious position and one which is ethically informed by a social understanding of my role of researcher/educator. Hughes et al. (2011) refer to the implementation of ‘reflexive and critical research methods as part of wider issues of social justice and equity’ (2011: 186) often arising from the involvement of project participants in applied theatre practice research. The reflective practitioner models have been informed by my desire to connect my academic role with practice which has a wider social imperative.

The use of video in reflective dialogue research method

The reflective dialogues were set up to provide a vehicle for practitioners to discuss how their expertise was manifest in action and what informed in-the-moment practice decisions. The use of the video to trigger the dialogue enabled the practitioner and researcher to cross what might be described as a gap between discursive and embodied knowledges of the practitioner. When watching themselves on video, the practitioner or I would often notice a gesture, facial expression, movement, etc. using these embodied actions as a source of reflection or fresh insight. The video could also produce a particular kind of remembering for the practitioners. The videos stimulated rich dialogues between researcher and practitioner and can be understood as a shared witnessing of practice. Key themes of their reflections included a realisation of the detail of interaction and negotiation occurring in a small moment, new discoveries of participant response and the ability to draw out deeper, long-term issues and
challenges of practice. The principle patterns of discussion relate to the themes of responsivity which emerged in the dialogues around the videoed incidents and considered throughout Chapters 3 - 7: awareness, anticipation and adaptation, attunement and respond-ability.

I will briefly touch on some feedback on the research process in this section. Highlighting the importance of contextual reflexivity for workers in applied theatre, Sheila Preston proposed, ‘If critical awareness is not developed by cultural workers themselves, they limit their own transformative possibilities as well as the potential impact of applied theatre’ (italics in original, 2009: 306). The reflective practitioner method was established with a research imperative, and not intended as a system forming part of an evaluative or professional developmental process. However, some responses indicate that the experience does provide a self-critiquing function.

Feedback about participation in the reflective dialogue research process was sought and received by email. Comments were made on the benefits of the experience:

When I’m delivering participation workshops on my own, it can be difficult to see what went well, as I’m more focussed on dealing with what isn’t working. It was good to spend time seeing the whole picture.

Annie Rigby

Another practitioner articulated what was, for her, effective in the process. First, the researcher’s selection of key moments to review as video clips for the dialogue process, which,

served as close-ups on aspects of my work that I either take for granted and don’t appreciate, or have ignored because it’s too uncomfortable to address them.

Nicola Forshaw
She also noted the method’s ability to review her work from a distance, which operated by,

taking me back to the thoughts, feelings, activities and events. But because of the time lapsed between recording and re-viewing, I felt detached from the emotional aspects of facilitating, e.g. previous events of my own day, atmosphere and mood of the group, responses to difficult situations. This was extremely useful in evaluating my practice, not as an objective outsider would, but as another angle of my rational self. It also made me detach from the planning and delivery of the sessions and view my work, with the aid of an experienced practitioner, from another perspective.

Nicola Forshaw

The use of video recording in reflective dialogue method can be to (merely) make information explicit for the practitioner and researcher to reflect on, articulate and record the actions of the practitioner in the moment. However, as the comment from Nicola suggested above, there may be aspects of impact on the work of the practitioner; ‘extremely useful in evaluating my practice, not as an objective outsider would, but as another angle of my rational self’.

The use of video recording in the research of drama and theatre practice can add a richness and communicative complexity not fully served by written text alone. For example, Julie Dunn (2010) explores her own devised method of collaborative conversation to analyse video recording of children’s drama activities. She positions the work in a context of other ethnographic video research processes, and points to new software and networking methods which could support shared analysis. She gives examples from other methods where such conversations are not offered as research outcomes or where the conversation stage is not fully analysed. Formalising analysis of dialogues was key to her revised approaches; she explores how this had enhanced the research data, diversifying the potential for insight and interpretation.
My invention and use of reflective dialogue method also used video to enhance the collaborative and conversational approaches of the research. My reflective dialogue method differed from Dunn’s use of video in the way it was used as part of a negotiated method of research. The practitioners were invited to look at and re-view from an outside perspective (the researcher/camera’s) their own bodies within the practices. Each practitioner demonstrated a different response to the recorded material in the dialogues. The choice of viewing was offered to them: some chose to look at specific scenes and continue themes from the pre-observation discussions. Others accepted viewing of a selection which I had prepared by highlighting moments of practice that interested me for further examination. Here, my concerns and interests led the focus of the dialogues, although always the dialogues hopped from the general to the specific. Having the shared experience of a recent workshop/rehearsal/performance enabled a close sharing of their embodied knowledge of expertise through dialogue.

The reflective dialogue process allowed opportunity for the practitioners to re-view their own bodily activity in amongst the participants’ responses. It provided them a chance to see themselves as dialogically negotiated within the work with the participants, as suggested in Bakhtin’s comment (cited above), ‘become myself only when revealing myself for another’. The discursive activity also allowed this formation of ideas relating to their bodily enactment of themselves. Anton Franks discusses ‘bodyliness’ and the implications of viewing bodies as ‘mutable meaning-making entities’ (2015: 313) within the context of drama education research. Franks describes how the body permits us to ‘glimpse and sense interiorities of thinking, feeling and learning through the ways in which they are made manifest in physical form’ (ibid: 313). The reflective dialogues allow practitioners to provide a commentary of their thoughts and gain further insights.
that build on the observations of the researcher. An intersection of their commentary and my recall through dialogic reflection can build up layered conceptualisation of the work of the body.

The reflective dialogues method offered the chance to review participatory theatre practice beyond the site of practice. Kershaw (2009) defines practice-as-research as an opportunity for practitioners to undertake their ‘creative practice as research method’ where research sits both ‘a part of and apart from’ the practice. My use of video recordings offers potential development for future creative forms in an interesting blend of practice research. Although the original recordings of practice are used as stimulus and focus for the dialogues, the edited short films are ‘a part of and apart from’ as a creative by-product enhancing the research process. They offer possible ways to build on the function of video as research data, diversifying the media for documentation and dissemination, providing potential use for practitioner development or teaching and learning.
Chapter 3

Artists in education: grafted expertise and the search for the golden nugget

You don’t notice how many different things that you're doing that another sort of teacher or facilitator wouldn’t be doing. It’s not the same as being a lecturer in a classroom, but it’s still the job. There are all sorts of deliveries - it’s complex.

Nicola Forshaw, 2013

The acting’s great, the acting’s wonderful, and to do it is very rewarding, but to do it when it’s engaging! There isn’t a more rewarding aspect to it than when you are working with somebody who is there to be worked with, and to offer what they can offer. Just those moments when you are gelling in the space, whoever you are, it might be a whole audience or it might be just one person you’re working with, where you just have those clicks and you see them start to bounce off you. It’s the golden nugget.

Luke Dickson, 2013

This chapter will explore qualities of responsivity via work in two education contexts, weaving together analysis of observed practice, reflective dialogue, and theorisation (here writings on arts in health and TIE acting in-role) in order to discuss the expertise of the practitioners. Nicola Forshaw highlighted distinctive approaches that she used within ‘the job’ of running a dance course for mental health service users. Luke Dickson’s expression of the ‘golden nugget’ in his work as a Theatre in Education (TIE) actor indicated how inter-active engagement was fundamental to his expertise. Both examples are explored here to illustrate responsivity in practice, in particular demonstrating attunement with participants, and evidence for respond-ability.

* For citation from reflective dialogues, the name is given only for the first quote, or if required to avoid confusion. First names are used from here on, indicative of my collaborative relationship with the research subjects. Names of theatre participants are changed throughout the thesis.
Nicola was observed working as a tutor within a programme for mental health service users hosted in a university in collaboration with NHS services, which claimed potential therapeutic outcomes for the essentially educational experience of participants. Luke was performing in secondary schools, exploring ethical issues of human survival and co-operation through a dramatic narrative of a shipwreck, introduced via a participatory TIE play. This blending of artistic method with educational objectives for the participants is indicative of applied practices that take place in-between the different fields of health/education and performance. As I will show, the practitioners navigate the demands of these intersections by sustaining a participant-focussed and responsive ethos.

Showing a ‘tap root and graft’ hybrid model introduced in the Prologue, this chapter compares two approaches where the identity blended educator and facilitator, grafted on to the root of artistic skill. Career paths also model this pattern; Luke and Nicola trained initially in performance (the former as an actor, the latter in ballet and contemporary dance) then qualified as teachers, but both subsequently rejected a role of formal educator. The first part of the chapter looks at Nicola’s attention to the individuals, in a setting where their mental health exacerbated a wide diversity of needs within the group, analysing how she establishes conditions for each student to flourish with choreographic choices that privilege natural movement rather than imposed dance forms. The function of a post-session coffee time and the benefits of performing to an audience are debated. Drawing on writing on arts in community health, I discuss how Nicola’s in-action choices were informed by her view of the group’s illness/well-being, personality and communication style. Although not strictly defined as applied theatre, her work conforms to the remit for this study of practitioners. I consider theories of empathy to explore practitioner skills relating to the interpersonal
connections made in the work, re-iterating attunement as an important element of responsivity. I identify three kinds ‘empathy’, based on feelings, bodily-awareness and a social understanding of the experience of discrimination (here in relation to mental health), suggesting further complexity to features of responsivity.

The chapter then considers Luke, drawing on theatre and education literature to analyse how he constantly reviewed his use of drama and role to serve educational imperatives, illustrated by two specific moments from the TIE programme. The chapter concludes by considering the nature and acquisition of practitioner expertise, framing Luke and Nicola’s expression of ‘instinctive’ skill as responsive. I give evidence for respond-ability which, for example, enabled Luke’s own development through the work.

**Converge Dance course**

Analysing participation in dance in health contexts, Miranda Tufnell considers how movement re-establishes connections with a physical self,

Most of us feel at a loss when we are ill. In many ways, living in a culture which is obsessed with ‘the body’, we tend to live on automatic pilot, ignoring how the body feels and taking its functioning for granted. Only when we lose our health do we realise that we are strangers to our physical selves, confused and fearful of unfamiliar sensations of pain or discomfort.

(2013:18)

This sense of estrangement resonates with an experience of mental illness and how I observed Nicola using movement to reconcile any ‘strangeness’ of physical self for the recovering participants at Converge. I observed Nicola working as what is named as a ‘tutor’ for a course run at York St John University, described as,
arts educational opportunities to those using local NHS and non-statutory mental health services, we work with adults aged 18 years and over. Taught by undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff, with a solid track record of delivering courses to people with mental health problems, all our activities are underpinned with the necessary support. Offering a way in, or indeed back, to education for service users

(Converge, no date)

Courses include theatre, art, music and dance; attendance on the courses is voluntary and there are no formal qualifications attached to the programmes. Psycho-analytical work did not form a part of the Dance course activity, as it may in dance therapy, (see Goodall 2005, also Pallaro 2007, for examples). Neither does Converge conform to a model of Recovery College, which more explicitly develops life skills to deal with the social experience of mental ill health, using an ‘educational paradigm to complement traditional treatment approaches’ (Perkins et al. 2012). Converge promotes well-being but does not include courses directly relating to the experience of mental health. Benefits are claimed for the efficacy of the work of Converge courses; Beverley Hunter, General Manager of Forensic, Adult and Specialist Mental Health Services, York, is quoted on the website,

We have had some inspiring service users’ stories of how people have made huge progress in their recovery because of their connections with Converge. The continued funding from the NHS for the partnership is evidence that even a budget and outcome driven organization is being given the evidence it needs to justify the continued funding.

(Converge: no date)

Unlike a clinical setting, the participants were described as ‘students’, avoiding the use of language of medical or social professions, such as ‘patients’ or ‘clients’. Discussions that highlight their treatments or medication, for example, were discouraged, although students can be referred to Converge by their doctor.

The Dance course is advertised on the web pages,

Dance is for everyone and everybody can dance! Why dance?
No complicated steps or routines to learn
Dance is great fun!
It’s a gentle form of exercise
You will experience different styles of dance and methods of creating movement
Dance can be a wonderful form of creative expression
Dance is suitable for all ages, abilities, shapes and sizes

(Converge: no date).

The accessible focus on performance participation highlights alignment with concerns of arts in community health, wherein, according to Mark White, ‘there is frequently a common purpose to enhance the physical and social environment with arts that provide positive messaging in support of health improvement’ (2009: 75). White makes a distinction between art therapies based within a medical and a clinical model of individual healing, highlighting the ability of the arts to contribute to a, ‘supportive sense of place’ (ibid: 75) in community health locations. Converge courses attempt to avoid any stigma or discriminatory responses within the partially public setting of a university; emphasis is placed on an inclusive welcome. White describes a ‘congenial space and a climate for meaningful engagement’ and the generation of well-being from a sense of community and responsibility (ibid: 105 - 6), definitions applicable to the work of the Converge project. His assertion of the ability of arts to act as a ‘social tonic’ (ibid: 104) was very evident in the work of Converge, and I noted the social conviviality generated in the whole evening’s experience of the Dance course, including the post workshop coffee feedback in the canteen, explored below.

The __ blended practitioner demonstrating attuned responses

Nicola Forshaw described herself as a dance artist/educator, with a background as an experienced ballet teacher who returned to learning as a
mature contemporary dance student and became a lecturer/freelance practitioner, including working with children. She attends specialist community dance practitioner events and training. Nicola discussed her use of somatic practices, which work from an inner impulse to unite mind and body, rather than a dance tradition that imposes movement externally and through imitation. Nicola expressed her interest in the new skills developments the Converge practice was demanding of her, highlighting the diversity of her role. A ‘complex’ delivery (her term, cited at the outset of the chapter) was evident in Nicola's observed session, which I examine here, situated near the end of the termly cycle for the group.

Nicola worked with a group of seven participants plus two BA Dance students. The theme of the termly performance was ‘Lean on Me’ and this particular session combined the potentially conflicting objectives of individual experience and preparation for impending performance. After an initial warm up, Nicola spent much of the time watching the class run through sections of the choreography; she intervened to set up task-based activity to recall material and create new sequences, which the group ran through and discussed. The group worked together with techniques of sharing weight and contact, using motif and gesture in an abstract and expressive, rather than narrative style. Overall the atmosphere was lively, with a good sense of enjoyment.

Nicola's differentiation of approach and ability to attune to the participants was remarkable. She exhibited positive, but different, response to individuals in the group, adapting qualities of movement for the diversity of each, no matter how rudimentary. This personalised approach visibly built confidence, which in turn improved students’ dancing through a more relaxed and less self-conscious engagement as the session progressed. Although she privately acknowledged that some students were able to perform more successfully than others, Nicola did
not indicate any hierarchy in her feedback to the students within the session; her
verbal interventions were gently suggestive rather than instructive, encouraging
each individual to find their own movement identity. She explained,

Nicola: It’s probably my - something to do with my personality but also my
belief that everybody can do this and they are all worthy of being in that
room.

Kay: And you want them to know that?

Nicola: Yes definitely

Nicola’s responded consistently positively and patiently to each person’s style and
attempt, where I perceived a huge discrepancy in the range of ability to perform
movement tasks. I noted that she rarely demonstrated examples physically,
possibly to avoid exposure of an individual’s inability to imitate. Nicola spoke in
detail about the diversity of the group, noting how their stages of recovery
impacted on the way they were interacting with her and each other. The
participants appeared less or more ‘ill’ in my perception; some seemed anxious
and withdrawn in their verbal interactions and their movement work, others very
vocal and playful (e.g. Richard was rather loud, Victoria very quiet). Nicola
mentioned that participants’ well-being in the sessions shifted week by week.

Nicola evidenced patience with behaviours that may have been in part due
to the participants’ mental health. She tolerated what I saw as a testing moment
when class ‘banter’ was critical of her; her steady tone and calm demeanour
resisting apparent provocation from Richard that she had forgotten details of the
choreographed dance. One older participant (Jennifer) was quite eccentric in her
interactions both verbally and in her movement work. Nicola spoke of ‘how she
sometimes comes out with some gems’ as well as ‘some lucid comments’. Being
hard of hearing, it was evident how Jennifer was copying those around her; Nicola
commented that, ‘she is probably not hearing every instruction’, adding, ‘sometimes it’s not the language, it’s because she can’t process the task.’ The detailed sub-text of her work was only revealed to me through the reflective dialogue. Nicola observed,

It is hard work when there are different levels of ability in there ‘cause Jennifer doesn’t remember things and even if it’s fresh she might go and do something else anyway which puts a strain on whoever her partner is. She paired Jamie and Jennifer, neither able to deal with the nuances of choreography and seemed unlikely to be able to co-ordinate fine detail when it came to the performance. Jamie appeared the most withdrawn of the group,

Jamie is only in quite early stages of recovery and [probably] still on strong medication. And he giggles quite a lot and we don’t know why and it makes you turn and then you realise that it’s not something that’s happened in the class ... It’s not just me dealing with it; when I am dealing with it I am saying how the rest of the group should deal with it at the same time. Many complex inter-dynamics were managed in Nicola’s facilitation of the group, underpinning how she responded to each individual and how her co-responding behaviour was manifested to the group.

I observed how Nicola demonstrated sensitivity to the participants’ general well-being and their immediate temperament, adjusting the work accordingly,

Moods influence the process ‘cause they don’t shy away from being sullen or voicing negative emotions that dancers wouldn’t. You wouldn’t be able to do that in a choreography, in a company, and it’s not like school children behaviour ... I suppose I do deal with that, people being put out, I am aware of that a lot, that maybe their movement didn’t get used.

Nicola evidenced a tolerance of the group dynamics, and also patience with their intolerance. In one incident, three men working together devised a sequence using a foot stamp, but one (Richard) was annoyed as the other two were inconsistent about which foot to use. Nicola had calmed the debate, an action she reflected on,
I know him (Richard) very well. So it’s probably why I could, why I stepped in and said ‘don’t worry about that at the moment’. But he needs to know that the right leg is this [demonstrated movement] and if you change it then he'll pick up on it and it'll annoy him.

She managed to simultaneously encourage the group with positive feedback about their choreography at the same time as settling the debate. She also used humour effectively and demonstrated a playful adult sarcasm at one point,

I’d just said that ‘being a perfectionist about it’ [meaning that] - you can’t be at this stage. It’s training them as well in the process of choreography - that this is how it is. And I did say it with a smile on my face and they took it as humorous - they do because they know me quite well and know I have a dry sense of humour which I think they quite enjoy.

Nicola was consciously and strategically using sophisticated and non-patronising styles of approach, revealing her use of personality in the qualities that made up her expertise.

The role of empathy within attunement

This observation with Nicola highlighted empathy as an important factor of attunement, identified in the Prologue as the ability to respond to individual participants and a key component of responsivity. I explore here how the interpersonal connections made by a __ with participants appear to be formed by a blend of both social and personal understandings and qualities, which I analyse here using different theories of empathy to help construct my proposal of attunement. Subsequent chapters re-visit and theorise how features of empathy manifest somewhat differently across the reflective dialogues.

Qualities of empathy could be seen to inform what Nicola described as the ‘feedback sessions’, when she facilitated individual contributions and gave value to social interaction over coffee within the feedback activity. The approach
exemplified in-the-moment planning where Nicola responded directly to what had come from the session and the group’s reactions to the work,

I plan on the way across [to the canteen]. They need a stimulus to talk about it … Sometimes they peer assess and they try and say one thing about the session. They probably need to know that at the beginning of the session so they remember to look for something in the session. And that it’s not in the studio, that it’s over coffee, that’s so [important]

In the canteen, Nicola sat in the centre of the gathered group, sometimes chatting in small groups, at other times drawing the group together for discussion, asking about their choice of music, for example. She appeared to have a central importance for the group’s dynamic, shifting from peer to leader as appropriate to the moment. Different ways of communicating were evident with individuals, with quieter approaches used, for example with Victoria, or a jolly banter with others such as Richard and a direct instructive communication with Jennifer. Their warmth for Nicola seemed very palpable; the personal relationships appeared to be an important factor for bonding a rapport within the group.

Verbal interaction, personalising and differentiating her interactions was a key part of the responsive role Nicola shaped for herself. She reflected,

even if they haven’t spoken in the sessions they will speak at the end… [although] I’m still conscious that some people don’t ever speak, and I don’t know if it’s because they don’t feel they’ve got the language to speak about it, or if they’re too shy to say something about it or that it’ll come out wrong, ‘cause some of them are very eloquent so it makes others feel maybe a bit more self-conscious about what they say.

Observing that some may be intimidated by the ‘eloquence’ of others demonstrated further empathetic response. In the canteen, as in the studio, Nicola spoke quietly one-to-one with Victoria, who had seemed very nervous, although expressive in her dance work. Nicola explained that Victoria’s anorexia made her very self-conscious, observing,
Victoria always is very eloquent in what she says in feedback sessions—
they do want to perform and they are always conscious of, ‘there’s
something wrong with me and it’s stopping me’, so it’s good, it’s good that
she hasn’t said ‘no I don’t want to be in the performance’ as well.

Nicola’s empathetic response to Victoria’s illness enabled her to simulate a
representation of those experiences, which in turn supported careful handling of
Victoria’s engagement.

Nicola drew on the term ‘instinct’ to make connections between her feelings
for the participants and an impulse for facilitatory behaviours. She discussed key
aptitudes that support her individually-centred approach and desire to prioritise
participant experience,

just like a teacher there are personalities that are good at teaching and I
think my personality is more suited to this sort of facilitating than perhaps
classroom teaching sometimes. But this isn’t through training is it, this is
through - all this is through instinct and experience and building on the
values that I work with - and caring I suppose, but not in an overly motherly
way!

In Nicola’s conceptualisation of her practice, she made a direct connection
between her ‘values’, ‘instinct’ and ‘caring’, positioning all three as contributing to
her ability to facilitate. She suggested the attributes arose from personal qualities,
although benefitting from ‘experience’. Facets of her expertise were developed
and grown from an impetus, not wholly latent or inherent, nor able to be ‘trained’
without experience. I return to the issue of skills acquisition in subsequent
chapters, but here consider Nicola’s use of ‘instinct’ in relationship to empathy.

Nicola’s responses as an experienced movement practitioner can suggest
what is described as ‘bodily empathy’ by Miranda Tufnell (2013), a concept I offer
for exploration here as an alternative to the inferences of ‘instinct’, where a well-
tuned, bodily awareness may be informing the work. In an outline of practitioners’
abilities in a guide published by the Foundation for Community Dance, Tufnell
focusses on those working with non-trained dancers. She discusses the value of making connections with individuals through awareness of the body:

As an artist, taking time to tune to another's story, their 'body-story' beneath the words, feeling for the direction in which a session needs to go, is a delicate and challenging process requiring every tool in your improviser’s box.

It calls for bodily empathy and the capacity to identify imaginatively with a range of individuals – also the utmost sensitivity to their fears and vulnerabilities.

(2013: 46)

Tufnell connects empathy with skills/tools of improvisation in a physical response to participants, proposing attention to a ‘body story’, one which is embedded and embodied. Her emphasis on the need to ‘take time to tune’, resonates with Nicola’s work and what I am articulating as attunement. Nicola placed an emphasis on inter-personal readings and reactions in the analysis of her work,

I know that they’re picking things up off me, as well as me picking things up off them. If there’s anything negative, it comes to me but I need to turn that round so positive goes out to them. Which is quite complicated isn’t it?

[laugh]

Her discussion indicated how Nicola paid close attention to the physical messages given in her inter-personal response to participants, suggesting ‘bodily empathy’. I observed careful interaction where she tuned in to individuals, demonstrating Tufnell’s ‘sensitivity’ to ‘vulnerabilities’. Nicola’s physicality was evident through a mirroring physical gesture and dance tasks, but also closeness and some contact around the group, always undertaken with demonstrable care. I witnessed how the exercise tasks were adapted to group members. What Nicola described as ‘instinct’ could also be credited to her ‘imaginative identification’ (to paraphrase Tufnell) with the group.

Nicola spoke of a specific quality that the work demanded,
maybe you need a greater level of empathy at this stage, with this sort of group

Empathy to individuals in ‘this sort of group’ was re-enforced by Nicola’s discussion of the nature of mental illness,

I know enough about the mental illness that this could be anybody

Her expression of empathy suggested an intersubjective imagination, which projected the possibility that ‘this could be’ [me] as a vicarious response of compassion. This empathy differs from a (less direct) acknowledgement of an impulse to another person with a different, fixed, social identity. Surrogate projection of empathy (which I am speculating was at work for Nicola here), relates to another as if it were possible to be in their circumstances. We can draw inference that Nicola’s choices in the work were made through a blend of this surrogate empathy and application of a social understanding of mental health. This contrasts with an understanding of an ‘instinctual’ response, which suggests a more animalistic or physiological impulse.

Writing from a psychological premise, Amy Coplan lists many interpretations of empathy as *processes* or mental states, most of which are concerned with feeling, caring, emotional affect and imagination in relation to another (2011: 4). She proposes three elements necessary to produce empathy according to her analysis. One is an ability to differentiate self from other with awareness of difference of experience in both directions. The ability to experience the same type of emotion or affect as the other premises this differentiation, which can then enable the third component, that is, the ability to then take the perspective of another. This leads to a summation of empathy as experiential understanding (ibid: 17), which acknowledges how the experience of the observer
represents the experience of the target. All elements of this definition can be seen in Nicola’s connections between her action and the rationale for practice choices.

Nicola’s work was also informed by the importance she gave to ‘the values I work with’. This empathic statement combines personal and social frameworks, here sited in Nicola’s awareness of issues involved with living with mental health problems. Her imagination of their experience was informed by knowing about social stigma and discrimination. At one and the same time she recognised the participants as individuals and also as a product of their illness. Her values were socially-informed - ‘this could be any one of us’ - and articulated with an inclusive, emancipatory imperative regarding the performance activity - ‘my belief that everybody can do this and they are all worthy of being in that room’ (cited above).

Nicola’s empathy and work can be seen through the three domains of personal, bodily and social, all informing her underpinning ‘values’. I witnessed a group that I knew to be long-established being stimulated by each other’s company through the creative practice nurtured by Nicola. The bodily sharing (and Tufnell’s ‘bodily empathy’) with the class reflected this bond. Nicola’s ability (as Coplan outlines, above) to feel for the other whilst accepting difference gave rise to empathetically informed choices around the practice. Nicola valued the social aspects of the work, both for participants and for herself, enabling further awareness and attunement. These three aspects of empathy were all evident in making a connection to enrich her work, contributing to relationships with the individual participants, which, in turn, informed practical approaches and interactive decision-making. Reciprocally, Nicola’s work offered personal, social and bodily learning outcomes for participants within the Dance course. We can see how the ethos of the work is (not surprisingly) informing the work of the practitioner within it and the experience of participants.
Adapting the choreographer: the __ as responsive artist

This section addresses development of the performance form to suit the needs of a participatory setting, a key component of the *grafted* expertise of an __. Here I pick up on debates introduced in Chapter 1, regarding the identity of the __ as artist. Research of all the practitioners suggested that facilitation and aesthetic concerns were not separately negotiated but operated as mutually beneficial concerns. Evidence for this was suggested by how Nicola was observed to test and expand choreographical techniques in response to what she perceived as the needs of the group, detail of which I explore here.

Because of their medication and the nature of some of their illness, Nicola indicated how movement memory is a particular challenge to some participants and the group as a whole, therefore, had problems accumulating choreography and making performance. Determined that the content be generated by the group, she noted,

I am very conscious when it comes to this stage of devising, I think that I am impressing ideas...They sometimes come up with things... I'd rather -- [use their ideas] that's giving them the agency and it should be their piece.

This imperative of ‘agency’ informed Nicola’s concern not to impose the performance, although needed for an audience. It is also suggests adaptations are responsive to the site and nature of the work; for example, Nicola fixed the final content for the dance just before the event, accommodating the challenges of set choreography to the participants’ body memories. There was a rationale for the creatively open approach,

If I had a very set idea of how this choreography was, how [it was] going to look at the end, I would be very disappointed and failing. So it will be what it will be, and I’ll bring it out in the last session.
Nicola demonstrated an approach which contested the traditions of choreographer who prioritised attaining the best product; she alternatively tailored her plans and structures to the nuances of what she perceived to be the group’s needs and abilities. She suggested that the product should prioritise their experience, thereby making more demands on her choreography,

it should be their piece although I can refine it with my knowledge

Specific strategies were applied in order to enable the maximum benefits of a theatrical experience for participants. A similar balance of factors is articulated in Chapter 7 with Amy Golding’s decisions making described as a process of ‘kind trickery’.

Nicola highlighted a dichotomy that may arise in relation to critiquing the performance work, expressing some ambivalence to the suppression of the mental health identity of the participants. Although clear that their illness was a recognised factor influencing her work, she was keen that it was not pathologised to the detriment of the experience, rewards and challenges of dance. I had remarked on the amount of praise and positivity in the feedback and commentary, an approach I presumed was aimed at building confidence in the work, encouraging physical relaxation and reducing inhibition. There was a potentially contradictory effect,

they are so lovely and so bright…in some ways I dismiss their mental illness…I don’t know if it helps that I put across that everything is [good]

Nicola was considering how their illness impacts on the standards by which she critiqued their work and provides further evidence of her use of empathetic instinct. She needed to balance support and challenge appropriately to develop skill whilst acknowledging the mitigations of their health. Negotiating these
objectives requires a practitioner to make continuous judgements to respond appropriately in the moment.

Merits and demands of working to a performance and exposure of work to others were debated with an awareness of the group’s enthusiasm to perform,

They do, I do, really [want to present the work to others]. The whole performing thing with ‘non dancers’, let’s call them, is always aesthetically questionable; what people expect and who is the audience …Converge audience is a benevolent audience - always say ‘well done’, ‘how far you’ve come’.

Discussing aesthetic concerns for the outcome of the final performance, Nicola selflessly turned any issues of lack of skill not on to the group, but on to herself,

It’s partly my responsibility to get a really good piece of choreography together that uses those natural movements, which I am still learning to do … Choreographers who work with non-dancers would purely use movement tasks.

Concerned to match the aesthetic of the performance style to the participants, choreography itself becomes a responsive process. Nicola drew a comparison of work with dancers who have impairments,

Choreographers that work with abled/non abled bodies make work differently, there’s a different sensitivity there.

Through her comments, Nicola was demonstrating the imperative of adaptation and an emphasis on finding appropriate choreographic skill, as occurs with disabled dancers to avoid a deficit approach. Her identity as an artist was clearly of importance to her, as a constantly developing set of skills. Debating whether/why it was of value for the group to present their work to an audience, Nicola articulated the mutual benefits of process and performance,

the process comes across in the final choreography, the process and what we’ve - they’ve gone through. Every week they are practicing new skill. If we didn’t make a final piece of choreography I don’t think they would learn the things they do, so, [for example] working with each other, working under pressure, communicating, things that are barriers to them at the
moment. If they do [manage] that in performance, that's massive and I am sure they do move on from that performance.

Premised as an education experience, the observation of Nicola highlighted how she made choices to manage artistic and personal skills as outcomes of the Dance course through attention to the art form experience. She reflected on the particular session I observed, hoping that the participants were,

still having a chance of self-expression and creativity even though we’re doing quite structured tasks, getting it ready.

Her concerns suggest a shift from teacher to one that fulfilled an arts in health facilitation role and choreographer, balancing factors of welfare and art, process and product in the context of mental health.

The chapter will go on to explore Luke Dickson’s practice before returning to discuss both examples in relation to their role, attunement and responsivity.

**The actor becomes facilitator: Luke Dickson and Theatre BlahBlahBlah**

In this section, introduction of writings on TIE will help further analysis of the expertise of the ___ as a blending suggested by Luke’s self-definition as an ‘actor/ performer/ teacher/ drama/ theatre in education worker’. As suggested by attention to the detail of Nicola’s session, Luke’s practice is also rooted in, but supplements, his use of a performance form. His responsive adaptations made in the moment were motivated to fully exploit what he perceived to be the potential beneficial outcome for the participants. This section will consider the practice of a TIE actor, exemplified by Luke’s use of role within the dramatic structure of a participatory TIE programme, including facilitation of the school student audience/participants. Luke’s practice suggests responsivity as an expertise
shared in common with other practitioners in this study, including the phenomenon of ‘respond-ability’.

I observed Luke working with Theatre Company BlahBlahBlah (also known as The Blahs), a long-established TIE company in Leeds, performing a programme for schools called *Raft of The Medusa*. The project was based on a painting by Theodor Jericho (1819) depicting a real event when the wrecking of the French ship *Meduse* caused a scandal because less socially privileged survivors were abandoned on a raft. The painting explores issues of social corruption, and through the narrative of the play we hear the story of the days at sea when most survivors died unnecessarily in terrible circumstances. The performance is targeted at young people aged 13 plus and described by the company as,

A participatory theatre event

- The students are introduced to the world of the story and the characters within it.
- We work with a small group of students so each individual can contribute to bringing the story to life. They will experience it not just as themselves but ‘in role’ from the viewpoint of people inside the narrative.
- The students’ investment grows with the story because they see their ideas being incorporated.

(The Blahs. ND)

The audience was made up of drama students from years 9 -13 at Allerton Grange, a school in a suburb of Leeds, Northern England.

Nicholas Whybrow describes The Blah’s work, as ‘recognising the importance of learning as an active process of inquiry within a structured framework’ (1996: 19). Former director of The Blahs, Anthony Haddon explained the choice as a vehicle for moral debates with school students, ‘*Raft of The Medusa* is a potent image and story which is used constantly as a political rallying
call for communities of people who have experienced abandonment by the state.’ (2013: 24).

The potential connections with current issues were not explicitly drawn in the programme, although as audience I was very much reminded of images of refugees travelling to Europe, suggesting the ethical debates could engage the students with contemporary issues. Teachers were present, but any follow-up would be subject to the constraints of the school system and the fact the audience were drawn from several different classes. Luke’s reflective dialogue suggested his primary concerns lay in his acting and making immediate connection with the students; the ‘clicks’ when he was ‘gelling in the space’ (as quoted above), which will be explored through discussion of incidents in the observed work.

TIE director Cora Williams states a TIE actor to be one who ‘perceives the pedagogic function of theatre and the opportunity it offers to explore, express and test social opinion through the art form.’ (1993: 94). Luke’s reflective dialogue debated how best to use performance techniques, his own and for the students in role, to further the learning potential for the audience. Although fitting Williams’ definition (above) of an actor in TIE, I will explore how Luke evidenced choices to suggest actor/facilitator may better express his blend of expertise.

Luke’s skills were built through the root stock and graft model. His training/education focussed on ‘experimental theatre’. Working in schools evolved from acting opportunities which arose,

The doors that opened were TIE companies, also community arts ... All the work was interactive and mostly not based in theatres: prisons, festivals, youth clubs, schools.

Luke spoke of a building expertise that was required in participatory work in education contexts and the development he made in gaining his expertise,
I kind of see that skill of actor/teacher/drama theatre in education worker...that’s kind of like a 15 year long thing. It’s been a real journey to get to a point... I feel more skilled as someone who can facilitate within a drama or theatrical place than I see myself as an actor really. And that’s just how it’s worked out – just because that’s what the work demands.

He emphasised that he was not just, but more than, an actor, and ‘more skilled’ as a facilitator. The observation certainly evidenced sophisticated skills in both, a requirement of the TIE form. Tony Jackson and Chris Vine describe a TIE programme as a school performance of a ‘coordinated and carefully structured pattern of activities…around a topic of relevance both to the curriculum and to the young people's own lives’ (2013: 6). Fitting this description, Raft of The Medusa was a half-day programme, marketed to make curriculum connections to English, History and Citizenship. The audience were invited to consider the experience on the raft, as highlighted by the original director of the project, ‘Was this a story of bravery and triumph or was it one of desperation and savagery?’ (Haddon 2013: 18).

The programme required each of the three actors to shift between many styles of interaction with the audience. Jackson and Vine describe TIE as, ‘involving the audience directly in an experience of the situations and problems that the topic highlights’ (2013: 6, italics in original). It is worth acknowledging here the role of a TIE director in the making of the programme; the actors were responding to contributions, however the structure (presumably, as not the subject of this research) would have been carefully prepared, with rehearsal of both performance and anticipation of patterns of participation/audience response. The audience were given guidance to ‘perform’ many modes in role as painter Jericho’s models: sit and watch, make verbal contributions from their seats, volunteer individually to come on to the stage to take part in sculpted poses, and all becoming part of the action or discussion on stage.
Within the story, the artist and his assistant welcome one of the few survivors from the raft, Corriard (played by Luke), to the studio to pose as a model for the painting, where he acted out incidents from the ship wreck as flashbacks. Corriard enabled the shipwreck to be seen through the eyes of a survivor, highlighting injustices and inequities of class and race. Luke shifted seamlessly from acting scenes to enabling an experiential encounter for the audience in the participatory sections, to encouraging a dialectic examination of issues arising from the incident; he was character, narrator and facilitator. He brokered many of the discursive sections, asking questions both rhetorically and directly, responding to suggestions, and managing physical movement of the audience during participatory sections of the programme.

John O'Toole discusses the function of an actor/teacher role in TIE,

The teams (that is those who practise TIE) need to have the communication skills of both teacher and actor (the controlled energy, understanding of his medium, absorption, projection and sensitivity and colleagues of the good actor; the sensitivity to children, ability to be absorbed and project that absorption, understanding of his medium and controlled energy of the good teacher).

(1976: 14)

This model resonates with Luke’s emphasis on communication; however, Luke distinguished himself from any teacher identity, speaking of a ‘triangle of communication’ between the student, teacher and himself/colleagues. He had worked as a full-time drama teacher, but had distanced himself from that role,

I found myself completely constrained by the system I was caught in

He perceived advantage in a temporary relationship afforded to the visitor,

We’ve got so much freedom here to come in ... How can they not pick up on that freedom ‘cause we are only here once? We have an energy that we bring with us.
Luke’s work was complex and nuanced, I observed his ability to adjust the level of ‘acting’ and the presence of his characters at the participatory moments, when he used an appropriate tone of delivery (vocally and gesturally) to create a facilitation role. He generated intense theatricality and atmospheres through the drama when discussing issues such as violent experience of slavery or how survivors ate the dead on the raft. Luke valued the participatory in-role function, describing the students as,

the fourth characters in the room as the models [as well as the three actors]

Luke guided the audience to create on-set still pictures, including the (imagined) moment they are cast adrift from the other lifeboats and a re-production where students selected characters from the painting to embody the experience of the abandoned, dying and dead.

**The ___ responds as both actor and facilitator**

One particular moment in the programme provides opportunities to explore the grafted qualities of expertise in the role taken by Luke in pursuit of educational outcomes. His complex ability to shift from teacher to actor was very evident in these passages of the drama. In a conceptualisation of a related form, Gavin Bolton wrote about the teacher in role within ‘drama in education’, suggesting a blend of performative skills which resonate with Luke’s work,

For the teacher in role can establish through the use of gesture, tone of voice, physical stance, choice of language, both the particular and the universal. This is the most important kind of teacher ‘thinking’, to think on one’s feet, in role, to particularise and universalise at the same time.

(1979: 145)
In the reflective dialogue, Luke highlighted an aim of the participatory experience as,

just about getting them to think about how big a question we are asking them, and what a hugely difficult situation it was for them [the Medusa raft survivors].

Although Luke operated from within acting a ‘character’, he was also called on to work as a ‘teacher in role’ as described by Bolton (cited above), demonstrating the ability to ‘universalise’ the questions thrown up within the ‘particulars’ of the narrative of the play. In the first, the audience debated the moral dilemma (the ‘big question’ Luke described) of how to use the small supply of wine on the raft. Shifting from a character/spectator relationship, the actors turned to ask the audience whether the wine should be used to support the survival of the fittest, or given to those who were most needy and vulnerable. The audience were asked to take sides, each with an actor in a facilitation role, invited to rehearse their arguments on the stage/raft and then a debate was chaired. Luke spoke of enabling the students’ proximity to the performance as a unique strength of theatre,

And that’s something that the Blahs, we make sure they are in the space, not outside of it, there are times when we are literally on top of them. Well, we make it happen.

This sense of immersive experience demanded the actors sought to create a close encounter with the topics for the young people. Luke highlighted,

In that moment it’s a very equal balance between being actor and facilitator.

He analysed his dual function of being in role as Corriard discussing the dilemma of which survivors should get the wine, and also needing to facilitate a debate with the students,
I'm in role as Corriad, getting them to come up with their ideas, as much as possible trying to elicit something... And yet it is also facilitating, it is that teacher role as well. I am trying to make it as much in character as possible and give them the confidence...

I noted how the other actor encouraged her side of the debaters into a louder, more assertive response to the question, in my view less effectively managing her facilitatory function. Luke developed an increasingly softer and more intense discussion, gathering his participants close to review the complexities of the moral argument. Asked if he wanted one side to win (without mentioning my view of the two actors’ approaches), he replied,

It’s about letting that argument wash over them.

Luke highlighted here one challenge for the actor in TIE; to embed a facilitatory function within the character, staying within the reality of the situation and at the same time, deepen the learning possible around the dramatised dilemma without simple solutions. Larry Swartz observes,

The theatre experience offers young people a great opportunity to think about sensitive issues, because they can be dealt with in the safe zone of ‘the world of the play’ ... Good theatre opens doors rather than providing answers; it is not prescriptive.

(2003: 204).

Luke spoke of a constant reflection in action, stating,

I must remember not to close that down or allow that to happen.

He emphasised how he worked to build an engagement that would allow the students to be absorbed into the task. Luke’s management of the participatory debate was seeking a genuine dialogic encounter, facilitating a form of participation which did not seek a single response, but an opening up of agency to participants.
Luke discussed the metaphorical function of the survivor debates provided by *Raft of The Medusa*,

We can only imagine that, we can never really be there. Several days in we would see a different argument on the raft because of the reality. We start them on the track to think towards that, the extremity of the story ... we are only really scratching the surface of what these people - [experienced].

I witnessed some of the young people in the wine debate verbalising a connection to contemporary examples, such as sick or elderly people in hospital, suggesting Luke’s facilitation of the debate enabled them to see real life application of the moral dilemma. These comments from the students suggested that the programme was not demanding a full immersion in the reality of the nineteenth century story, but that learning was evident through Bolton’s ‘particularise and universalise’ function (quoted above). Luke had desired the students to make further connections with the drama and narrative, although the design of the programme was not adaptable (therefore beyond the choice of the actor in role),

I’d also like them to characterise themselves - I am setting myself a very ambitious target ... I’d love for them to just put themselves in the place of those characters, and adopt that role [survivors] as well.

An empathetic strategy is at work here. Luke suggested that a deeper connection with the drama could enhance the impact of participation, perhaps indicating his own value of the experience of characterisation and the importance he places on acting in role.

Role-play is claimed by TIE director and writer Chris Cooper to be a ‘safe’ mechanism offering the ability to explore issues impersonally - and therefore more richly - through drama,

Frame, role, task and enacting moments or dramatic situations enable the participants to bring their whole selves to the TIE programme, it matters to them because they are in it and they experience a felt understanding, this is something that cannot be handed over, it has to be experienced. But by utilising the safety that fiction provides, the participants are protected in to
the material. Physical participation, the manipulation of time and space in a TIE programme, has many of the characteristics of learning in real life.

(2013: 46).

The close and complex interplay of real-life concerns, personal experience and safe reflection through fiction and role is all facilitated by the TIE actor. Luke allowed the audience to select their level of engagement, balancing role and task. Their age and self-consciousness may have caused some resistance to the level of play involved with in-role work, but Luke accepted and worked with the audience’s choices as a route to Cooper’s ‘felt understanding’. Luke as a facilitator was testing the boundaries of the use of role with participants, and it was the facilitator rather than actor function that enabled him to achieve the best outcome.

Cooper goes on to discuss the notion of ‘frame’ as both a ‘role function’ for the participants and a viewpoint through which events are explored,

Frame gives participants a heightened consciousness of the significance, implication and understanding of the event. It is also a means for providing dramatic tension.

(2013: 58)

Within Raft of The Medusa programme, I witnessed Luke’s management of the students’ ‘significance, implication and understanding’ of issues arising from the shipwreck. However, Luke’s focus on his acting (the root stock of his skill) rather than the (grafted) facilitation function at times dominated a rationale in the reflective dialogue. His emphasis on providing a secure ‘frame’ for the students’ own understanding was articulated,

Because we put them in to role as models, Theodore Jerico’s models, they’ve always got that as their backstop, they can always be comfortable in that role. As models we also want them to be people on this raft.
Luke’s concern with the acting function and investment in the strength of the ‘dramatic tension’ (as Cooper describes) dominated his reflections. The ‘backstop’ characters of neither models nor raft survivors were not much in evidence during my observation of the students’ participation. For Luke, the creation of role for himself and the young people appeared to be important, although not necessary (I would judge) to enable a level of learning to be taken away from the event of the play.

Luke emphasised his concern to enrich the student experience through facilitation as well as acting. He prioritised when necessary, allowing for the function of his role to give space and voice to the young people’s ideas,

There’s never a moment when you are not really asking a question of your audience and translating that. And it’s that moment where you take that idea and the skill is in not making a mess of their idea, to give their idea what it deserves, [laughs]. And that’s where the skill as a facilitator is, taking their idea and making the best of it and allowing them and others to use it and for them to use that idea in a way that benefits everybody in the room really.

These comments illuminated the role he played in The Blah’s programme, passionately situating the student-centred aspects of his work. He reflected on both his job at The Blahs and his work with another company based in West Yorkshire, Live and Kicking, describing the latter as ‘more DIE…even more interactive than the Blahs’ [DIE = Drama in Education]. He outlined how his objectives in acting were to elicit engagement and responses from the young people,

As long as we keep sacred their [students’] work and contribution – honour that and let that take precedent. That’s my super objective for all the companies I work with. In all the companies it is the person who is being interacted with who is the most important. It is their voice that is the most important thing in the room.
Luke’s choice of language (‘honour’ and ‘sacred’) exalts the practices and the participants here, creating a different dynamic from that which is traditional between student and teacher in education contexts, or an actor in a performance. He highlighted rewards and the valuable impact of the work on his own development,

when we are going in to the room and asking them to create it, I kind of almost ask them, ‘I wonder what I’m going to learn from you today?’, I wonder what I’m going to learn from this?

Contesting traditional relationships, Luke reversed the pedagogic experience to become a learner, empowering the role of the student/participant. He echoes here Jacques Ranciere’s metaphor for education structures that presupposes, rather than aims for, an egalitarian relationship, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991). For Ranciere, the student is intelligent and equally capable of knowledge, even surpassing that of the teacher, posing a provocation to traditions of superior, ‘masterly’ status. New knowledge and emancipatory outcomes are possible in this model. Luke’s view of his own learning potential illustrates a respond-ability where the practitioner’s open attitude within the practice allows for developmental potential, as well as enhancing the status of those with whom they are working.

**The grafted role of the __**

The chapter will conclude by exploring the qualities of the grafted blend of roles evidenced by Nicola and Luke to further build a definition of the responsive practitioner. Each had rejected the role of ‘pure’ teacher or ‘pure’ actor, or dancer, but grafted on expertise to their ‘tap root’ to develop a new role, which itself was multiple. Nicola, for example, redefined models of dance teacher or movement therapist, also adapting aspects of a choreographer and facilitator. Luke’s self-
description resisted the identity of actor or workshop leader or teacher operating in TIE, preferring a blend of the identities of facilitator/actor. There were major differences notable between qualities in practice, in part due to the very different origins in TIE and arts in health and perhaps the temporary/long term relationships with participants. The roles were seeking a different impact for their participants, made distinctive by the nature and make-up of each setting and participant group. However, I argue in the thesis that there are understandings and sensibilities mutually evident across the approaches of these practitioners. Here, I consider some intersecting concerns which may support the idea of responsivity as a common conceptualisation of the role of __ in diverse settings.

Both Nicola and Luke articulated that they were drawn to the challenges and rewards of applying their artistic knowledge and performance skill in participatory work. They reflected on their professional development in the dialogues, describing their journey as performance practitioners who had acquired skills in facilitation *supplementary* to their art form knowledge and performance training. Nicola and Luke both prioritised and valued the student participants, situating themselves as practitioners with humility inside the practice; not seeking a superior status through their subject knowledge or expertise as actor or dancer, nor as knowing teacher figure. They both expressed firm belief that the participatory process brings positive outcomes for the participants reinforced by their motivation to explore and develop their use of drama or dance in the context. They perpetually strove to facilitate more meaningful ways for the individual participants to make connections to the processes and gain what the practitioners saw as positive outcomes. Discussion of their facilitatory expertise was analysed in equal detail to their performance form, suggesting they highly valued the
potential impact of the work, also represented by the respect for the detail in which they attended to the participants’ experience.

Despite the student-centred focus they differed on how intended outcomes informed their practice decisions. Nicola had a conviction that doing dance and movement was good for people and that everyone could do it and improve in their own way. Performance was used by Nicola with the aim of improving mental health and allowing a positive sense of well-being, seeking ways to adapt and develop appropriate creative choreographic method. For Luke, his conviction was that exploration through the forms of the drama could enhance the young people’s engagement with the ethical concepts explored in the TIE programme, continually testing the potential of the use of role through complementary approaches of facilitator and actor to enhance the learning for the students.

Both reflected on the process of building their skills, suggesting how expertise was built through practice. Luke defined himself through experience of ‘interactive’ acting in ‘TIE companies, also community arts’ contexts that are ‘not based in theatres’,

When you get going down that route you learn all the new skills that go with that - basically to interact with the audience: know where the boundaries are with them, know how to define new boundaries with them, know how to push it, know where you can take it, where you can’t - just building up those different levels of communication when you are confronted with an audience, wherever you are. Enticing and exciting, if sometimes a little stressful!

Luke’s description of his career path resonates with Nicola’s description of being ‘suited to this sort of facilitating’ (cited above). Luke emphasised his specialism as a responsive skill which is adaptive to participants through audience interaction.
Luke suggested that the task of acting, although challenging, did not satisfy to the level he experienced through the interactive processes of TIE/DIE.

Discussing interaction with children and young people, he emphasised the facilitating aspect as being not incidental, but central to the work,

if we can make them feel as comfortable as possible so that they find a moment to feel they can come up, we want to push it, we want to challenge them. It is school at the end of the day. We want to challenge them and we want them to feel as involved in the drama as we possibly can.

Luke saw participant involvement in drama to be related to challenge and educational outcome, connecting the enhanced confidence of young people with seeing their ideas represented in dramatic form, either by themselves or by actors.

As cited at the introduction to this chapter, Luke declared,

The acting’s great, the acting’s wonderful, and to do it is very rewarding, but to do it when it’s engaging - there isn’t a more rewarding aspect to it than when you are working with somebody who is there to be worked with, and to offer what they can offer. Just those moments when you are gelling in the space, whoever you are, it might be a whole audience or it might be just one person you’re working with, where you just have those clicks and you see them start to bounce off you. It’s the golden nugget.

This language indicates an inter-connection between ideas of attunement and respond-ability, with discussion of ‘reward’ proposing a mutual benefit or outcome for the practitioner as well as the participants. His ‘clicks’ suggests development of an accord with the students perceived to aid the goal of learning, a way of connecting positively in order to open up communication, or where an idea is effectively passed between the actor and the audience member(s).

Luke reflected on his desire to connect with participants to enhance their educational experience. Unlike Luke’s school students, Nicola had formed relationships with adults, establishing a positive connection on a more long-term basis. Nevertheless, both valued a desire to ‘gel’ with participants.
A connection with participants leads to a direct reward for the practitioner; her/his ability to be open to respond to the participants nurtures his/her own growth. What I have named as respond-ability is the ___’s own capacity to be sustained, challenged and grow within the work. Luke spoke of how he had built up his facilitation expertise through practice,

And the skills I’ve developed, it’s a much more instinctual thing to some degree. You can be taught them, of course you can be taught them, I wasn’t born with them really, but I think I learned them on the job.

Luke’s view here of skills which are ‘more instinctual’ suggests a long process of acquisition of something hard to quantify, specify or describe but fundamental to practitioner expertise. Both Nicola (as discussed earlier) and Luke highlighted ‘instinct’ in connection to their ability to develop their skills and the articulation of instinct resonated through other practitioners’ comments. A relationship between instinct and expertise is analysed with reference to Bourdieu’s notion of ‘habitus’ in Chapter 7.

The next chapter takes a different perspective in the task of conceptualising the expertise of applied theatre practitioners, and connections with participants, framing responsivity as politically-informed, as well as personally responsive.
Chapter 4
The personal is political: predetermined responsivity

But because we live in an unequal society and a gender oppressive society in terms of women, there is that connection going … And that’s another thing about the techniques, it’s all about encouraging people to negotiate, encouraging people to have conversations and debate, a democracy … I think it’s a good way of bringing about personal change and then political changes

Catrina McHugh, 2013

This chapter builds the proposal of responsivity in dialogue with a practitioner who prioritises response to issues of social and political relevance over response to individual participants, exemplifying a ‘fixed’ approach to facilitating that appears to contradict my emerging thesis on responsivity. I analyse Catrina McHugh’s discussion of her work in the reflective dialogue on theatre as ‘a good way of bringing about personal change and then political changes’ (see above), using the example of her workshop with a women’s community group, ‘Culture Exchange’. Aspects of intra-personal exchange from the workshop will be discussed to illustrate how her response was informed by a feminist refrain that ‘the personal is political’ (Hanisch 2006). Using analysis from feminist theory and further conceptualisations of empathy, this chapter interrogates how political and ethical concerns inform practitioner expertise and practice decisions.

The form of interactive drama activities explored in this chapter was consistent with Catrina’s methods with different groups. Uniformity and an issue-based response could challenge notions of a fluidly participant-centred ethos I am proposing within responsivity. I explore here how a __ can draw on a political rationale (here feminist belief) to inform a richly responsive approach, addressing
both the participants' personal and social experiences. The chapter examines workshop events to evaluate how a politicised empathy came into play in Catrina’s attunement to the women in the group, suggesting her practice decisions were built on notions of solidarity, as indicated by ‘there is that connection going’ (cited above). A social perspective and political objectives are argued as important aspects of responsivity and I consider how related ethics inform the response of a __, and produce important scaffolding for practitioner expertise.

The chapter draws on applied theatre writings on refugee theatre, risk and ethics, along with theories of feminism and empathy to further analyse the notion of responsivity. To contextualise the workshop approach, the chapter starts with an introduction to the work of the company Open Clasp and an outline of specific concepts of feminism associated with Catrina’s reflections. Here, as in the style of responsivity discussed, political analysis foregrounds the consideration of practice. I go on to analyse examples from the observed practice to explore how a political perspective informs a responsive practitioner expertise that attends to individual participant experiences of the work.

**The work of Open Clasp Theatre Company**

I observed Catrina McHugh run a workshop session for the group of women in the ‘Culture Exchange’ group in Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne. Catrina is Artistic Director of Open Clasp Theatre Company, ‘the north east’s only professional all-female theatre company’ (Arts Council England, no date), which she set up in 1998, writing all of their plays to date. Open Clasp’s work focusses on issues relating to the lives and experiences of women and girls, including, as their Mission Statement highlights, ‘those who are the most disempowered in our society’ (Open Clasp, no date).
Despite Arts Council England Portfolio funding since 2012, as a community-based company, their work is little documented in academic theatre literatures (see my own short article in professional magazine MailOut, 2003: 18). Geraldine Harris makes a brief mention of Open Clasp when discussing a wave of new plays, which marked a ‘notable upsurge of cultural production in the UK that re-visits feminism of the second part of the twentieth century in a positive fashion’ (2014: 179), noting a policy of ‘putting women’s stories centre stage’ (ibid: 187). Harris proposes that this ‘upsurge’ indicates a lifting of ‘feminism fatigue’, (ibid: 180) and explores some of the ‘core challenges’ (ibid: 190) for feminism.

Under the artistic direction of Catrina, there is a clear method in the work of Open Clasp, typically made up of three distinct phases based around a newly-created play produced by a professional team sandwiched between participatory activity. The first phase of participatory workshops with community groups focusses on a topic (examples below) of relevance to their lives. A touring play forms phase two and draws on some of the life stories from workshops in phase one of a project, synthesised into fictional characters. The company’s work is notable for targeting largely non-theatre going audiences and community venues*.

Phase three workshops (one of which is the subject for this chapter) return to the groups and can include participatory making and performing by communities of girls and women, supported by drama workers, director and actors. The company has always equally valued and prioritised participatory work and making plays, producing theatre, ‘with the express intention of empowering

* An update on their work indicates a more public profile. The company have started to work outside the region and tour to more theatre venues, with a collaboration with Frantic Assembly in 2014. Key Change, a play about women in prison toured widely in 2015-16 and is the subject of my chapter in McAvinchey, C. (ed) (forthcoming, 2017) Applied Theatre: Women and the Criminal Justice System.
women, building their aspirations and giving women a stronger voice within communities and among policy makers’ (Arts Council England, 2014).

As well as designing the participatory approaches of the workshops, Catrina writes all the plays. Written and performed in a broadly realist dramatic style, the plays explicitly focus on social issues presented through narrative journeys for the characters, including domestic violence, debt, the elderly and care, addiction, prostitution, prison life, refugees and asylum. Lesbian characters are always portrayed, noting an additional experience of oppression in relation to the issues of the play, for example in a care or refugee context.

Open Clasp explicitly targets women-only groups for its participants and audience. The company works in close collaboration with youth and community or issue-based organisations to set up participatory activity; plays and workshops are also used in training professionals in care or welfare services, such as the police dealing with domestic violence. The plays tour to community venues such as health and women’s groups supported by charities or social services, with audiences including the groups from the participatory workshops. This chapter focusses on a workshop that formed part of a (third phase) community engagement project.

**Feminist principles: ‘I would say I was a political activist’**

A brief exploration of related aspects of feminism will contextualise ideas underpinning Catrina’s work, in particular her view that echoes Carol Hanish’s claim (originally voiced in the 1970s feminist movement) that women’s discussion of personal experiences has a political function. ‘The personal is political’ (Hanisch
2006) captured a precept of the women’s liberation movement in that period and inferred that ‘consciousness raising was not therapy but a radical organizing tool’ (ibid). Encounter groups exploring women’s own problems or oppressions were claimed to have a role beyond personal benefit. Feminists linked individual life experiences with a wider political setting, connected with radical movements for justice and civil rights (ibid).

The role of politics in feminism is highlighted by Kath and Sophie Woodward in their discussion of second and third wave feminisms, which aims to ‘reclaim some of the critical edge of earlier’ as well as praise the ‘responsiveness and dynamism of new articulations of feminism’ (2009: 171). Second wave (1970s) feminism not only showed how patriarchy operates in everyday life but also demonstrates a ‘way for women to recognise the emphases of feminism as their own struggles’ (ibid: 170).

Catrina’s discussed how personal stories or contributions from the women participants are always connected to the social and political construction of patriarchy. She referred to a political perspective of empowerment through women’s sharing of experiences,

I know there is a big public debate whether you use the word empowerment, but there is - something happens in that room where women are come together and they are then sharing their experiences, not in a victim way, in a life experience way of going ‘this is my experience’. But because we live in an unequal society, gender-oppressing society in terms of women, there is that connection going, I say in terms of - when you get to a patriarchy, women going ‘oh it’s the same for me’, but they don’t necessarily know it’s the same and obviously we all know - you can then just think it’s just you.

So you are looking at the world you live in, and the world you live in is unequal. Not just in terms of gender inequality, but poverty and class and culture and so, kind of having a movement. And to me it’s like having a political movement of woman coming together, working collectively.
Catrina referenced a link between individual experience and patriarchy, ‘you can then just think it’s just you’, building on a second-wave feminist notion of the female ‘encounter’ to draw wider social conclusions. She notes ‘debate’ about ‘the word empowerment’, echoing feminist concerns. For example, Woodward and Woodward advocate a ‘repoliticisation of the personal’ (2009: 169) in feminism, and warn that notions of ‘empowerment’ can become a mere justification of individual choice otherwise. The term ‘empowerment’ is included in what Angela McRobbie describes as ‘faux-feminist language’ designed to undercut attempts at solidarity (2009: 135, italics in original). Catrina highlights her emphasis on how issues of gender, class and culture inform her work, indicated in her comment about ‘working collectively’.

Catrina inferred that she operates within a meta-narrative of patriarchy, with a ‘connection’ of gender between herself as practitioner and the participants. Her approach was built on a presumed bond between all group members. This collective image proposes a shared experience, and subsequent resistance, of oppression. Catrina framed herself as an ‘activist’,

I always get up and go ‘we want to change the world’, you know, that’s the point of the company. I suppose it’s about social change, I would say I was a political activist … our mission statement, everything we say we’re going to achieve is a political aim … But it’s all about supporting that voice, how do you empower people? How do you raise self-esteem, now how do you do that? I don’t know how you disconnect the two, because if somebody’s self-esteem is being formed negatively by experiences - domestic violence, childhood abuse - (I’m not saying all the women have that by the way, I’m just throwing an example) then it is a politics, do you know what I mean? Gender inequality, it is about people having no money, ‘cause of class. Discovering this, in your own way, is a politics.

Decisions about the work were established in response to a perception of societal structures of oppression, and the wider landscape of women’s role, here in the economically deprived communities. In Catrina’s understanding, there are direct connections between, ‘self-esteem’, ‘gender inequality’, ‘no money’ and ‘class’,
and also links between ‘a politics’ and her self-identity as an ‘activist’. Her work was framed by her firmly held belief that participatory theatre has the potential to enable social change through a process of personal agency, ‘supporting that voice’, and also operate politically as a tool within a social context, ‘everything we say we’re going to achieve is a political aim’.

One objective for Catrina’s workshop was to highlight to the participants the universal nature of their experiences, connecting experience to a political phenomenon,

it’s about me then taking the responsibility to get the fact in and to make sure that it seems as inclusive and wider and is not just that woman’s experience, so she doesn’t feel ‘my community are oppressive and nobody else is’. It’s about actually that’s a whole global situation.

An inter-connection between feminism and politics is explained by theorist Chris Weedon, who asserts that ‘Feminism is a politics’ (1997: 1). She explains,

most feminists assume an integral relationship between theory and practice. Starting from the politics of the personal, in which women’s subjectivities and experiences of everyday life become the site of redefinition of patriarchal meanings and values and a resistance of them

(ibid: 5)

In this chapter, I go on to explore, with examples, how Catrina was aiming to redefine the individual experiences of the women in her workshop, linking, like Weedon, ‘women’s subjectivities’ to a ‘global situation’. Catrina specifically drew on feminist principles to discuss her rationale for decisions about practice. Her comments infer she was not primarily focussed on the person as an individual, but as a product of their social circumstance,

In terms of the people we work with, we are working with people who were disadvantaged because of class or because of culture or because of their minority community or their sexuality - you know, we are working with people who are on the receiving end of – Women, [smiles] generally - we are, I suppose, always going to be in that politics.
This response to the participants acknowledged additional oppressions, such as class, sexuality or race, inferred an understanding of what is described as the ‘complexity of intersectionality’ (McCall 2005) within Catrina’s construction of feminism. Intersectional feminism highlights how there is a risk that other oppressions are subsumed or negated in a generic understanding of all women’s oppression being the same or equal. Elizabeth Evans highlights what she names as ‘issues’ of intersectionality, suggesting consequences for the concept of ‘collective identity’ (2015: 52) when focussing on ‘multiple and overlapping layers of oppression’ (ibid: 49). Practitioner decisions are shown here to be underpinned by a complex framework of political beliefs, referenced through the reflective dialogue commentary.

Catrina discussed her work within specific and clear political aims of emancipation/liberation, ‘we are always going to be in that politics’, a declaration which includes herself (as __ and as woman) within structures of oppression, and an implication of shared experience. A feminist perspective formed a structure that clearly situated inter-personal relationships, and the identity of the practitioner in the work, within a wider social setting. The next section uses examples to examine how Catrina’s workshop decisions were informed by her feminist beliefs. I argue that a political perspective generated an expertise, which was paradoxically evidenced in a fixed, although responsive, practice.

**Fixed response in workshop approach: ‘I've got a bag of techniques that I use’**

I observed Catrina McHugh run a session with ten women aged around 20s-30s at ‘Culture Exchange’ group, Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne during phase three of a project in 2013 called *A Song to Sing*. The group meet weekly to
support parents of young children through different activities, including the visits from Open Clasp in Byker Sands Sure Start Family Centre, run by Barnardo’s, a charity that provides services to support vulnerable children and their families. The building for the workshop was well resourced, although sited in an area of the city where many residents are economically disadvantaged. The space was comfortable and roomy. In the session there were two workers from Barnardo’s, plus one of their volunteers who was a participant throughout the workshop. The group were all recent arrivals in the city from Europe, Africa and China; one of the Chinese women in the group was acting as a translator for many of the group who did not speak English. Catrina is a white woman born in the UK. Two other women from Open Clasp participated; a designer and one of the actors from the recent show.

The observed group had been part of phase one workshops, helping to create the essence of characters of Open Clasp’s play *The Space Between Us*, which had toured earlier that year. Many of the women in the workshop had seen the performance (as had I). The company was returning to some community groups to support them to create and present their own work. Phase three projects previously created performances; this project was planning to use film and photography to create what Catrina called an ‘installation’. Catrina judged the group would benefit best from being represented through recorded material, with opportunity for anonymity and avoidance of the challenges of live performance. She described one objective of the workshop as,

> a taster, just to really see what they want to talk about that can help them to inform their final piece.

Some months after, I visited the project’s multi-media installation outcome, *Songlines*, which Catrina curated working with media artists, made up of a
gathered book of songs with audio recordings, photographic portraits and a film of two women by the sea with voice-over of women’s experiences of travel to the UK. Their web site described,

This multi-media installation is the final phase of the A Song To Sing project which informed the play The Space Between Us bringing the truth of experiences of women who are Czech/Roma, Slovak/Roma, Travellers, women seeking asylum, those who are refused and experiencing destitution and Arabic women, from Libya, Syria and Kuwait to a wide audience.

(Open Clasp Songlines project, no date)
The installation expressed the flavour of multi-culturalism I sensed in the workshop, and also addressed the issue of personal identity that was the focus of Catrina’s observed workshop.

The arrivals into the room were lively; some women greeted each other in pairs or small groups, where some appeared more reserved as individuals. The Barnardo's project workers and volunteers were hospitable and welcoming, and the Open Clasp team mingled and made conversation. There was a crèche in a different room and some women initially brought pre-school children and babies in to the space before settling them next door. The women gathered in groupings broadly related to their first language, and there was a notable sense of the diversity of cultures represented in the room. The session ran for around 90 minutes, with a coffee break included. Catrina was initially operating as part of the network of workers, gradually taking single command of the session as everyone settled to sit in a circle of chairs and sofas. As the second in a series of four before a summer break (the same number after the summer), the workshop picked up on some ideas from the previous week’s session.

Catrina’s verbal introduction placed the session within the wider context of the cycle of workshops, play and planned installation. She re-iterated the group
agreement negotiated collaboratively in the previous week, emphasising confidentiality beyond the space for stories told in the session. She spoke about agreed themes of listening, non-judgement and respect, with a reminder that the organisation’s workers were available if further support was needed for anything arising from the sessions. The group were subdued in these early stages, with an air of formality that I interpreted as partially apprehensive.

The workshop was interactive at the outset, with introductions and hand shaking accompanying a name-sharing activity. A more physical game of ‘fruit salad’ (swapping places and competing not to be left without a chair) provoked a sense of fun and playfulness to be generated across the group. A discussion exercise followed using provocative statements written on cards in envelopes given out to five small groups around the space; Catrina chaired feedback of what had arisen from the stimulus. This workshop concluded with an evaluation where each individual gave two comments, a positive and a negative, seated in a whole-group circle, with Catrina’s facilitation drawing out detail in the evaluative feedback. There was a marked relaxation and informal connection generated by the end of the session.

In our dialogue, Catrina explained that her techniques were rooted in her training about the potential of theatre to operate as a social and political tool,

I think it was always about the theatre of the oppressed, it was about people using the drama techniques for fairness, for challenging inequality. (Although using Boal’s term ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’, she did not explicitly reference his methods.) Catrina spoke of her consistent approaches in participatory work,

Since I went to university, I generally use the same sort of technique. I’ve got a bag of techniques that I use and kind of adapt them to the groups;
they are all kind of in the same area. And when I worked with people with dementia I used the same techniques but I also then really went ‘I need to find other techniques cause this won’t work with this group’, but actually it did work - I just needed to adapt them a little bit.

The workshop differed little from her plan, and she went on to use the same set of activities in the afternoon for another group in Sunderland. Catrina’s self-description suggests a well-tried formula within her approach to workshop design, inferring a ‘bag’ of tricks as resources to draw on when needed. Her observed session appeared secure in its stable identity and her expertise rooted in an established, set practice. One notable change to Catrina’s plans for the session indicated some adaptation in the moment; Catrina had set up an exercise in the previous week asking women to write stories, but only one had brought a contribution. Catrina managed the moment, moving on to the envelope discussions after making space to accommodate the single participant’s response and avoid any sense of rejection. Other activities went as planned; she reflected,

I thought that it was a really good workshop and I thought a lot of the decisions that were made, were made well.

As an observer, I would agree. I witnessed how the facilitated communication between women who were from very different parts of the world achieved an intimate exchange from straightforward but strategically chosen starting points. The workshop effectively created positive responses and managed a complexity of interactions, some of which arose from the cultural and linguistic diversity of the participants. Catrina’s design of the exercises indicated a prioritising of the women’s own selves within the work, eliciting contributions sited in personalised experiences and self-identity. The choices also potentially highlighted difference by explicitly bringing cultures and individuality into the arena of the workshop.

The name story exchange (for example) could be seen to fulfil ‘Culture Exchange’ as the Barnardo’s project’s given name for the group suggested,
thereby also satisfying criteria of stakeholders in the work. Women checked the pronunciation of each other’s names, illustrating the range of languages and backgrounds within the group. The stories fed back in the whole circle related to, for example, changing religion and specific cultural traditions, such as seen here, (names are spelt phonetically from session notes)

I don’t want to be known as the ‘goddess of love’ so I chose the name Esther as it means star

Ying Ying means white stone, because when I was born my skin was very white and clear, so my mum gave me this name….I am called Casey because people feel it’s very difficult to say my name

I am Russian, because I was born in Latvia, so it’s Victoria spelt differently [to the Ukranian woman with the same name]

[Explained through the interpreter] Her uncle gave her this name, she doesn’t like it because its common in China, lots of people in China want something special

The activity underlined difference and individuality, but also shared universal themes such as parental expectation, self-determinism and aspiration. Feedback comments at the end of the session suggested the group valued the experience.

One woman’s feedback comments in the final discussion concurred,

I agree it’s quite nice to meet new people. Taryn, I sit [sic] beside her and it interesting to learn about her name

Catrina valued how the name exchange activity encouraged the participants to make ‘connections’ (to reference her analysis quoted at the outset of the chapter) across apparent differences,

I asked everybody to shake their hand and it’s such a buzz and it’s a great feeling, and I love when we did it in the workshop cause I just really liked that everybody making that physical contact with each other and saying hello to each other and then meeting each other’s eye and I love - I don’t have a great deal of games, but I love fruit salad and I love laughter that everybody feels in those moments.
The ‘connections’ were social and personal; contact was made in a direct and sensory way through the shaking of hands, the speaking and listening in pairs. The fruit salad game also elicited a lot of laughter and a playful complicity was gained in the first stages of the workshop where I observed some genuine personal interactions that relaxed the participants. Thompson highlights the value of attending to the affective register in community theatre experiences, ‘By failing to recognise affect – bodily responses, sensations and aesthetic pleasure – much power of performance can be missed’ (2009: 7). Physical, social and experiential ‘connection’ between women was nurtured by the activities Catrina proposed and managed, building a quickly established intimacy, which could in part be attributed to the women-only circumstances of the workshop. She also suggested her own positive sensory experience of the work, ‘it’s such a buzz and it’s a great feeling’, indicating a personal reward through her own respond-ability.

Catrina highlighted the positive impact of the workshops through raised levels of confidence amongst participants, speaking of the skills of facilitation and social use of participatory theatre,

> when you say you use drama techniques, I don’t think people understand… when it’s done well, it’s a clever politics, it’s a clever way of discussing it and it is a politics because you get a movement of women - I think in terms of what we do when we’re in the workshops, I think it’s clever.

Catrina’s comments suggest she measured the quality and impact of the work using feminist criteria. The objectives of her facilitation of participatory drama experience made a ‘clever’ link between personal experience and the politics arising from ‘a movement of women’. A feminist view informed the way she framed her work and spoke about the observed exercises,

> what’s the story behind the name then opens it up about other stories about other women.
Illustrating Woodward and Woodward’s, (cited above) ‘emphases of feminism as their own struggles’ (2009: 170), Catrina was seeking to establish a political dimension arising from the personal experience of the participants, judging the success of her work through this framework.

Catrina’s responsivity was embedded in a feminist perspective on the contributions, framing the women’s stories to communicate and illustrate more than the individual story itself. She made practice decisions that positioned the women’s lives as part of a grand narrative of female experience of patriarchy whilst allowing for personal expression. The responsivity which was manifested in Catrina’s choices about the work could be seen to successfully support the women’s experience within a socio-political (relatively fixed) frame, whilst making temporally individualised and adapted (fluid) responses and nurturing intra-personalised exchange.

Catrina’s reflections considered that how she made a personal connection was shaped through the feminist understanding of identity underpinning her response, which in turn would enable her to engage with groups beyond the mere application of techniques,

you can have lots of techniques and you can do that, but they’ve got to meet you and they’ve got to go ‘I get you’ and you’ve got to go ‘no I get you’ and we’re all alright.

An ability to ‘get’ the participants could be suggested either through personal or social connection, or both. Catrina’s articulation of inter-personal attunement with participants was framed by her political and feminist perspective, in the same way that it informed her workshop design and process judgements. Her particular expertise was informed by her self-identity as ‘political activist’, and also the objective to ‘raise esteem’. The observation (cited above) ‘I don’t know how you
disconnect the two’ (i.e. personal experience and politics) can be seen played out in the detail of practice. This example of responsivity emphasised recognition of social as well as personal relationships within the work, informing motivation for decision-making of this __. I now go on to explore Catrina’s use of personal narrative for the women as newly-arrived migrants and critique role of ethics within her politically-informed approach.

(Personal) stories and (political) refugee narratives: ethics and the response of ‘giving voice’

Multi-cultural identities were foregrounded and evident in this ‘Culture Exchange’ group, where I understood the women to be migrants or refugees, recently arrived in the city. In the workshop, I observed that there were groupings within the workshop between those of shared heritage; a number of Chinese speakers sat together, as with some eastern European women. Perhaps the practicalities of first language connections and shared cultural identities offered a natural bond within a potentially intimidating setting. The presentation of the women’s nationality as well as the universality of patriarchal experience was a feature of Catrina’s reflections,

the men are more important maybe for the Chinese communities or in China, as people know, boys are more valued then girls. I think a woman [who] was speaking is from Nigeria and she was saying, you know, it would be celebrated if it was a boy

Use of personal contributions of biographical details in the workshop suggests a response to issues of context and individuals, but also raises ethical issues regarding Catrina’s approach. Thompson highlighted a concern to be ‘alert’ with work of this nature, specifically in relation to ‘a politics',

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Working with a group of refugees, for example, has a politics that needs to be questioned, but it is not, by some default process, one that is inevitably critical, or one that can claim an automatic contribution to social change.

(2009: 5)

The emphasis of a ‘politics that needs to be questioned’ infers care should be taken to address issues of individual exploitation or vulnerability but also to be aware of the meta-structures of context when working with a group disempowered through their societal status. Alison Jeffers explored issues of agency and risks of applied theatre practice with refugees,

Participatory theatre practice is commonly accepted as a process based on encouraging agency in those who participate in it as well as those who watch … How are theatre practitioners to honour the experiences of the participants in projects and to challenge prejudice against those participants without resorting to demonstrations of victimhood?

(2012: 143)

Jeffers suggests additional attention and a duty of care is required with refugees when connecting personal narratives to an objective of social/political change. Nicholson explores the exchange of narratives that occurs in applied theatre. She writes of how identity is shaped in the telling and re-telling, emphasising the role of truth and fiction,

If working in drama is to enable participants to manoeuvre productively across borders … practitioners will be alert to how different narratives – personal, cultural, social and artistic – converge in the process.


These three commentaries on use of narrative indicate how an ethically-informed response to the women in the Culture Exchange group informs a practitioner’s concerns in such a context. Asserting her own starting points (such as male violence, war, religion) with statements in the envelopes, Catrina proposed content through her position statements, which was then adapted by the group’s
differing ‘personal, cultural, social’ narratives (as described by Nicholson). Catrina stated her intention to highlight universal connections of female experience through her work, although she discussed what she perceived to be differences in cultural experience of patriarchy,

And then I think the other thing for me as a feminist, it’s about [being] human, about patriarchy within people’s cultures, and I am not sure whether I am right or wrong in saying this, cause I do obviously think patriarchy is global

Catrina’s approach with the envelope statements predicted the topics as perceived issues of shared experience of womanhood, but within the process she made space for their response to her provocations. Questions in the envelopes included ‘What makes you mad?’, ‘What does religion mean to you?’ ‘Why is there any war?’, ‘Why do men hurt women?’, ‘The child that was you?’

Conversations around these topics appeared to be embraced in an open and stimulated spirit of dialogue, suggesting that any caution of dealing with the issues did not impair the building of relationships. The women engaged with debates regarding global issues which could be seen as risky, given their diversity of nationality and religion.

Stella Barnes writes about how ethical issues implicated by the use of personal story are exacerbated by the vulnerability of refugee participants, suggesting a structure for evaluating a balance of creative and personal risk (2009: 38). Barnes warns,

Refugee stories make exciting art, they provide powerful material for theatre but I believe that the urge to exploit these stories should be resisted and should have no relation to the delivery of arts projects; the more we resist this urge, the more we are able to shift our perspective and see the participants as equals, partners and as ‘us’ rather than ‘them’.

The perspective of seeing participants ‘as “us” rather than “them” ’ resonates with Coplan’s (2011) discussion of empathy, which I explore more fully in the later part of this chapter. Barnes highlights the risks of work with refugees, whilst Catrina’s feminist framing may mitigate potential exploitation of sharing the women’s stories. In the arena of the workshop, this sharing can provide self-affirmation for the teller, for other women as audience and by Catrina’s promotion of an approach that emphasised ‘us’.

The activities offered ways for the women to speak about themselves, through her objective of ‘giving voice’ to the participants. Catrina re-iterated this intention in her reflection about the installation that was informed by the observed workshop,

Cause we are in the political theatre company as well, it’s about making that art really, encouraging people to really think about the wider community and the context where women are living… it is specifically about minority communities and giving them a voice in this way. So what is that voice? What do we, and I mean we as white people, or other people need to consider when we are maybe walking into an installation which is being made and informed by minority communities?

Jeffers also highlights considerations for applied theatre work with asylum seekers and refugees,

‘giving voice’ to refugees is not just a practical problem and not only a problem of rectifying unequal power relations. It is part of a deeply ethical practice and must be considered on this level as well.

(2012: 110, italics in original).

Catrina was making a balance of artistic choices in her facilitation, enabling a sharing of personal story between the group, anticipating narratives and also sourcing their interests for the installation, with any benefit that may (or may not) entail for the women. Analysis of Catrina’s response to the group here suggests she was aware of Jeffers’ call to consider such practice as ‘deeply ethical’, although her work choices were inevitably a blend of response to perceived needs
and interests, facilitator interests and actual benefit to participants. I would assess that this form of ‘giving voice’ arose from her *anticipation* of participants’ needs.

Responsive methods call on practitioners to negotiate a counterbalance of planned objectives (here, the solidarity gained by shared stories) and adaption of approach to mitigate risks for vulnerable participants. Catrina also noted the role of the host organisation in supporting safe practices,

> we’re always in partnership with the community workers, cause they are the people who will then pick up anything, that keeps them safe.

She was aware of personal exposure when asking people to talk directly of their experiences,

> The whole point of the session is that the women are safe, that they feel that they can have those conversations and that they feel that they can have their views heard and can be listened to … So I wanted to make sure that they had a group agreement that they feel safe to have that dialogue with each other.

Catrina highlighted her ethical dilemma of a potentially conflicting role to both protect a usually unheard voice, but to also positively enable those voices to have a wider hearing for a potentially beneficial impact for the teller.

> Risks associated with distinctive personal narratives may be mitigated through a feminist perspective of the personal as political. For example, stimulated by the statements in envelopes in the workshop, a participant spoke of domestic violence as ‘this the way it is in my country’. Catrina’s response was to highlight that there are around two deaths per week from domestic violence in the UK, suggesting it is prevalent if not socially accepted, underlining universal aspects of experience for women. In the reflection, Catrina highlighted a campaigning role for the company and her commitment to make a response through a feminist perspective,
so it’s trying to connect gender, female oppression or gender violence against women and connecting that on a bigger scale. So I suppose in that respect it’s me being political as well ... I think cause the job of the company is supporting women … it’s about the empowerment of women, I want to make women feel that they are of worth and are of value.

Catrina spoke of gender solidarity and the political perspective of a feminist discourse to support the individuals, placing their stories within a wider group or universal narrative of female oppression or shared minority experience. Jeffers writes of positive ways to use ‘the arts and cultural expression to experiment with new identity positions’ (2012: 110), and Catrina’s objective to identify the women’s experiences through a feminist lens could be a means to offer the women the chance to explore identities ‘of worth and of value’ through activity within the ‘culture exchange’ themed workshop. Her choices in practice were made by her own ethically-informed judgements.

From the evidence of the observed workshop, it was clear how Catrina’s views on women’s global oppression underscored the design and interactions in her practice. Her politics were part of her approach, made evident to the participants. Nicholson debates whether applied theatre is transformative, (2005: 12) and questions whether the experience of a drama workshop can change beliefs, suggesting that such claims may arise from a participant’s,

positive but temporary identification with a kindly practitioner whose point of view may not be actually expressed, but whose values are nonetheless clearly visible to them

(ibid: 82).

It is interesting to consider Nicholson’s assertion alongside Catrina’s declared objective, quoted earlier,

it’s about me then taking the responsibility to get the fact in and to make sure that it seems as inclusive and wider and is not just that woman’s experience ... it's a whole global situation (my italics).
Catrina positioned her response as a ‘responsibility’ to make links between the personal and political. Impact is not the concern here and evaluation of the efficacy of Catrina’s approach would require research with participants to prove/disprove Nicholson’s suggestion of ‘temporary’ influence of ‘kindly practitioners’. However, using Nicholson’s language, I suggest Catrina’s ‘values’ were explicitly made ‘visible’, presented confidently as an integral motivation and objective of her work. Catrina prioritised a strategy to make ‘visible’ the purpose of her work,

and you have to really articulate what it is you do, the impact it can have, the change you are trying to support and you have to be able to articulate that

Her overt intentions were informing the establishing of inter-personal relationships with participants. Catrina’s attitude to what I have labelled attunement was also politically informed by a social framing of participant identity. She highlighted how the power of the work rests within the ability to ‘respect’ participants and through that gain their trust,

I’ve never worked with travellers before, because you have to get all that trust and they’ve got to trust who you are, so there are things about you as a person, never mind - it’s nothing to do with your techniques, it’s about them trusting you and then you use the techniques to have this kind of discussion. In that respect, I’ve got confidence that I can - that it works.

Catrina indicated confidence in her workshop techniques as an effective vehicle to enable a positive connection with participants. Building ‘trust’ was prized and attributed in part to a personal aptitude rather than use of technique. This fixed model of response is dependent on making a ‘connection’, (to re-iterate her own phrase) personally and through a socially-situated understanding informed by feminist discourse.
Negotiating power and status as a responsive __ : solidarity and empathy

Intrinsic to an examination of the role of the expertise of a __ is a consideration of how they operate in relation to the dynamics and power structures more widely present within and beyond the work. I return here to my discussion of the role of empathy, exploring an activist role for the __. Politicised and feminist forms of empathy drawn from notions of solidarity are established as an important part of the responsivity evidenced by Catrina.

Open Clasp’s mission statement highlights how their work can animate the stories of a minority for view of others,

We want our work to make space for social debate and to encourage our audiences to walk in the shoes of women, including those who are the most disempowered in our society.

(Open Clasp, no date)

An understanding of ‘audiences’ for Open Clasp’s work could include the audience made in co-sharing through a ‘performance’ of self within the observed workshop activity with the ‘Culture Exchange’ group. Catrina’s work could be seen to enable participants to ‘walk in the shoes of [each other as] women’ through the activities such as name-sharing. The cross-cultural encounter also applies to Catrina as a practitioner who did not share cultural identity with any participants.

Returning to analysis and understandings of empathy, an imaginary process that transfers oneself into ‘the shoes’ of another is framed as ‘self-oriented perspective-taking’ (Coplan, 2011: 9), resonating with Open Clasp’s mission statement. Amy Coplan suggests that, from a psychological perspective, this is the most frequently-occurring type of empathy due to a natural egocentric bias, which can lead to presumptions of understanding (ibid: 10). Coplan states
that other factors must be in play in order to gain full experiential understanding of
the narratives of others through empathy, including an awareness of self as
distinct from other (ibid: 13). Given Catrina’s awareness of a political analysis of
race, for example, it is interesting to conceptualise how her response to the work
with the Culture Exchange group is motivated by an empathetic response to their
narratives. One woman spoke of how her name had been chosen,

‘where I am from in the South Western part of Nigeria, we count a lot of
meaning to names, we don’t just give a name... my second name simply
means, sorrow turns to joy, cause my dad just lost his father the day I
came….I was the first girl, they would rather have had a male when I came
but because my dad lost his father it was sorrow to joy.’

Catrina’s response to this story and others suggested her recourse to a political
rather than personal emphasis,

and the women involved in the project - I am trying to gauge what they are
interested in having - bigger conversations

Catrina’s focus (‘bigger conversations’) could be read as a process of imposing
universal political themes, rather than responding directly to the individual
concerns of the participants. Catrina concluded,

I think it’s sometimes interesting among this project with minority
communities who are new arrivals who are coming into this country, is
listening to how overt the patriarchy is in the countries that they come from
so it feels very much more it’s a given.

She picked up on the woman’s discussion of a subjugated status, responding to
the name story empathetically *and* as a feminist. Catrina’s response was personal
and political. Coplan’s psychological analysis of empathy cautions against
presumptions of connections, suggesting an interesting juxtaposition of egocentric
bias alongside a feminist analysis. This resonates with an intersectional feminism
that appeared to underpin Catrina’s perspectives and how she related to the
women in her work as __. Both theories (Coplan and intersectionality) caution
about presumptions in empathic understanding of ‘other’.
Nicholson highlights how the social encounters within drama-based interactions are not exempt from wider social narratives that can infect the way that the work is evaluated. Nicholson writes about the influence of, cultural assumptions in the way which drama workshops are constructed… all interactions and social identities are built on a negotiation of power, which includes people’s perceptions of themselves in relation to others (2005: 81).

Catrina’s work was particularly concerned with ‘cultural assumptions’, significantly because of the ‘cultural exchange’ focus of the group that foregrounded issues of race, although her work evidenced a sensitive approach to the power dynamics informing the group. Catrina’s approaches were responsive to the participants within a pre-determined structure of her feminist analysis, informed by imbalances of power created by society.

Catrina could be seen to reference a materialist feminist model here, which Woodward and Woodward discuss as concerned with how ‘a politics of difference has to accommodate situation and situatedness and be attentive to the sources as well as the circulation of power’ (2009: 171). Discussing the workshop leadership, Catrina highlighted a concern to ‘get it right’ so that the women were able to ‘trust this experience’. She went on to state,

Cause of my job, it feels like a politics, so I would never go - to me, those women have had experiences … there’s a little bit I can relate to but there’s a lot I can’t relate to. It’s feminist for me - but yeah, you’ve got to respect the people you are working with … they are experts …. but you are an expert in what you can bring to help that dialogue and that conversation. Discussion of ‘respect’ reveals a consideration of her social and political relationship within a generic response to participants through identity. Informed by her ‘feminist’ principle, ‘respect’ for the women was a universal, a priori response for Catrina, as opposed to an individualised concept. Catrina established a
materialist-feminist meta-structure within which she framed her inter-personal relationships, responding to the work by situating herself and the participants in a *social* relationship. Any lack of subjective knowledge attributed to not sharing an identity was compensated by having a connection justified by female solidarity, ‘there’s a little bit I can relate to but there’s a lot I can’t relate to. It’s feminist for me.’

Within these political and ethical debates, Catrina highlighted how she valued the women’s personal experience from her self-identity as a professional, stating ‘we’ve got the drama techniques, they’ve got the expertise’. Thus, egalitarian power structures were proposed by Catrina, based on a concept of *equivalence* of status. Situating the group unconditionally as experts illustrates a view of the work Catrina articulates as political, ‘cause of my job it feels like a politics’. A political response to participants - by way of Catrina’s feminist viewpoint - acknowledged the location of identity, through race and class etc. as well as gender, reflected an understanding of multiple oppressions for women and inferring (without explicit naming) an ‘intersectional’ feminist perspective. Catrina’s responses acknowledged additional oppressions or experience, conceding some personal difference within her political response. Her construction of their personal ‘expertise’ was maintained as a cultural or social identity.

I am suggesting here a direct connection between empathy and solidarity, arising from a politicised form of empathy in this example of ___ expertise. Catrina’s debates inferred an *ethically*-considered approach in terms of respect and inter-subjective relationships, with a deep deliberation about how she relates to the women in the group and their experience of life in her role of __. Coplan (2011: 5) stresses the importance of specificity in any discussion of empathy due
to its potential for many different interpretations and meanings. Acknowledging this, I consider two further notions of empathy, the first drawn from an exploration of participatory arts practices and the second discussing feminist empathy.

Grant Kester discussed contemporary art practices based in the form of conversation, and outlines that ‘a concept of empathetic insight is a necessary component of a dialogical aesthetic’ (Kester 2005:9). Kester suggests empathetic insight operates in three ways in conversational art, which involves verbal and bodily interaction: between collaborators and artists, between each other, and between the community of viewers. The first occurs,

especially in those situations in which the artist is working across boundaries of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or class. These relationships can, of course, be quite difficult to negotiate equitably, as the artist often operates as an outsider, occupying a position of perceived cultural authority.

(2005: 9)

This model could be used to define the nature of the relationship and the dialogic focus of the practice in the Culture Exchange group. Catrina can be positioned as 'outsider' as Kester suggests. She has little direct experience of the many ways group members are defined and therefore treated as ethnic minorities, either in the UK or, for some, in their country of origin. Her focus on a universality of women's issues can claim to transcend some of these 'boundaries', and she reasons a connection between herself and the women she is working with. Facilitation of conversation through the workshop, informed by Catrina's feminist perspective may have enabled interactions and 'empathetic insight' between, as Kester defines, artist and collaborators.
A second theory introduces further discussion of notions of empathy in relation to the __ role. Daryl Koehn explores empathy within what she titles a feminist ethics*, drawing one of her key tenets as ‘the publicness of the private’ (1998: 6). She notes that empathy can enable us to ‘enrich our moral discourse’ by attending to what the other may think, feel, experience on ‘her own terms’ (ibid: 57) and provoking shifts in the way we would have thought about matters, even overcome prejudices and misconceptions. This ‘vicarious experience’ (ibid: 57) can make a contribution to a sense of individuals as unique agents. An ‘ethic of empathy… celebrates difference because it has the capacity to challenge us and to enlarge our view of the world’ (ibid: 58), thus allowing, for example, solutions for problems of oppression to more effectively tackle a status quo. This use of empathy goes some way to querying a morally neutral position with use of imagination but at some point, recourse to guiding principles is also seen to be necessary to accommodate ‘major paradigm shifts’ (ibid: 65), to ensure ‘accountability of the agent’ and encourage shared ‘ethical responsibility’ (ibid: 72).

Within Catrina’s response to the participants, she could be seen to make use of empathic tools through the facilitated workshop activities in order to promote a cross-cultural and intra-individual understanding to ‘enlarge a view of the world’ (as Koehn outlines, above). Her strategies encouraged debate about given topics, offering potential moments of ‘vicarious experience’ that may or may not provoke ‘paradigm shifts’ in response to Catrina’s feminist intention for the work. It is not the remit of this research to assess how much the latter translated for the members of the group, many of whom were operating, as discussed.

*I found Koehn’s explanation of a relationship between female and feminist ethics somewhat undeveloped (1998: 5); she makes a claim for little difference and conflates them at the outset of her book.*
earlier, through an interpreter, although response to what Kester outlined as bodily interaction could be observed to occur in the proxemics and contact of physical relationships. It is clear from the reflective dialogue that for Catrina, an ‘enlarged view of the world’ occurred through her interactive practice, in turn informing her approaches.

Empathetic responses played a part in the inter-personal response of the __, leading to actions being considered within a belief system, and resulting in what was deemed as appropriate choices about the work. The dialogical exchange encouraged a sharing of personal story as a particular feature of the workshop, as such, raising issues of risk, agency and exposure as a result of Catrina’s own response to the work.

**Conclusion: fixed method and responsivity**

The assured power of the facilitator in this example comes from a place of expertise which is clearly framed by a value structure. Knowing what she does and why she does it, Catrina overtly positioned her approach as having a specifically political aim. Catrina emphasised the importance to her of having an ‘agenda’ within the work, in this case, her practice choices were informed by feminism to facilitate an individual emancipatory process specifically for women. Catrina expressed a self-assuredness which rests in an expertise and specialist technique which, she claimed, was not easily reproduced by others,

… cause you are very focussed, when you are the facilitator you keep it focussed, you know what you are doing, bringing people together, you’ve got exercises and I think there is this thing about workshops, the way we work, there is a sort of discipline, it starts here, it finishes here, we sit like this, we do this and this is what we expect, this is what you can expect of us and this is how this workshop will work and then it works. But then I think if you try to do it when we are not there I think it's a different thing.
She claimed that the workshop method could not be implemented without relevant expertise; specific skills and understanding were asserted by Catrina, with a clear formulation of the interactions with the group described as a ‘sort of discipline’. In the reflective dialogue, Catrina framed herself in position of control throughout the session. Describing the outcome of the work ('I think it's a good way of bringing about personal change and then political changes'), her model of participatory theatre work is an example of how the micro operation of skill (responsive decisions) clearly fed the macro aims for the workshop process which, in turn, serves the greater objective of ‘political change’.

Catrina placed the personal experiences of the women in the workshop into a wider aim of empowerment, (although she queried this term), and located the experiences of all women and girls in a meta-narrative of patriarchy and feminism. The dialogical interaction was structure through activities and practice choices to feed a sense of development through communal ‘connection’. In the reflective dialogue, Catrina stated, 'I always get up and go “we want to change the world”', indicating a substantial ambition for her work and a prioritising of global rather than personal aims for her workshop. The ‘personal is political’ can be used as a trope to explain how small interactions in the work are informed by how the practitioner believes the work to operate, where the minutiae of detail is informed by the meta-objective.

Catrina’s session was observed to apply a series of activities within a specific tried and tested composition, with a sureness of a frequently-visited workshop design. This fixed-ness does not necessarily equate to a lack of responsive-ness but promotes operating to an established method with a particular functional aim. There was little person-centred adaptation to the
methods and individual needs could be said to here be subjugated to a greater objective; one which is proscribed by the facilitator in response to her perception of the function of the work. However, the needs of the participants are arguably no less secured and a well-established sense of attunement was created with participants supported by a political notion of solidarity. This empathetic connection fed the work of the __ and informed a clearly constructed ethical framework which informed practice choices.

Drawing on the language of responsivity introduced in the Prologue, this example of the __ indicated her ‘awareness’ through analysis of social constructions at work in the lives of the women and ‘anticipation’ of plans rather than ‘adaptation’ to in-the-moment responses. Although the participants' contributions appeared to have little influence on the fixed methodology, the work was devised by the practitioner to respond to her interpretation of their needs. Attunement in this example is concerned with ‘that connection’ (as Catrina discussed, above), intra-personal links created by a gender-defined bond of feminism between the women participants as well as with herself as woman and as __. Responsivity operates here as a structured platform of practices driven by political meta-objectives arising from the facilitator's own feminist beliefs.

No matter how much the __ adopts approaches to mitigate inequality, the work of applied theatre is underpinned by any factors of social dis/advantage experienced externally by participants. This status can create a power imbalance in the inter-relationships of a workshop situation, with ethical implications for the role of __. Practitioner decisions have wider resonance beyond the apparent immediate inter-response made in-action. A somewhat formulaic and universalist approach of a self-defined ‘activist’ may appear to be neither individually flexible
nor contextually adaptive. However, this model of expertise demonstrates a politically motivated response where the decisions of the __ were secured by the fixity of carefully designed and managed practice structures and an underpinning feminist politics. Highlighting the importance of a political influence at the heart of responsivity for some __s, issues of agency and ethics have been introduced with this example. The use of conceptual frameworks from applied theatre sources allowed an exploration of how personal risk associated with the exposure of participants’ stories can be compensated by a response that is guided by a feminist analysis of power and an objective of seeking solidarity.

The next chapter explores how a further ‘fixed’ method of responsivity is applied in a different community context, with analysis of how emphasis on expertise in the performance medium informed participant-focused choices.
Chapter 5

The beautiful mistake and the __ as clown

I like to create an environment and a world where people can go in and play ... they step out of that world, they go 'ooo I discovered that' ... I think people should be challenged and taken into those areas and it doesn’t have to be an unsafe place it actually becomes a really beautiful funny incredible place to be.

Pady O’Connor, 2012

[the fool] experiences the world as a constant process of flux, of becoming rather than being

Prentki (2012: 19)

The chapter draws on imagery of the fool to suggest an improper but effective model of expertise, using theories of beauty and failure in performance to critique this form of __. Here, the rigidity of a disciplined trainer role combined successfully with a playful approach, challenging (more proper) expectations of care to provide a further dimension to the nature of responsive expertise. Pady O’Connor was observed using clown, commedia dell’arte and physical theatre with the Fool Ensemble, Gateshead, a non-professional performance group for adults with learning disabilities. Pady’s work utilised a specialist performance training method within applied theatre practice; his in-action decision-making combined the rigour of these techniques alongside developmental and nurturing objectives of a socially emancipatory function for participants. Pady tested his relational nature with participants, shifting between play and discipline, proper and improper, fooling and being wise, operating as part of and apart from the ensemble of the group. The chapter explores how his own use of a clown-like identity offers a __ who is exploring ‘becoming rather than being’, as Tim Prentki suggested (referenced above).
Pady was observed both as an authoritative teacher with a powerful guru-like aura that distanced him from the group, and, alternately, as lead clown of a band of fools enacting a chaotic and carnivalesque inversion of teacher-pupil status. He managed a strict training regime, interjected with hilarity and shared humour. Neither suggests the more properly expected facilitatory model of practitioner. His work confronted some orthodoxies of care associated with applied practice, for example, in a playful moment where he locked all the participants in a cupboard! The chapter considers the balance of discipline, challenge and risk within the training approach and how these can impact on supplementary benefits associated with applied practice. Rather than impose or exploit a directive role inappropriately, it emerges that Pady’s adherence to a traditional artistic role of clown teacher respected the participants with an equality of status they may not receive in an external context, facilitating an emancipatory emphasis.

Pady drew on his own training with renowned clown Philippe Gaulier and the chapter explores how he empathetically used his experience of being a student to inform his conceptualisation of the __ role. Pady’s style of work utilised theatricality, improvisation and a spectator-performer relationship to create a strong sense of play and ‘le jeu’ (the game), in accordance with Gaulier’s pedagogic method (Murray 2003). For Gaulier, ‘beauty’ is a concept to be sought through performance and mistakes are exploited for the benefit of humour, which can involve exposure of the individual performer. A clown teacher is critical of any conscious effort or knowingness demonstrated by trainees in performance (Murray 2013: 216), patterns that were evident in Pady’s modes of interacting as __.
The chapter utilises conceptualisation of beauty’s wider function in society and the affective role of joyful practices of clown to critique an observed event which Pady described as a ‘beautiful mistake’, referencing Gaulier. The incident tested an individual’s performance skill and highlighted how aspects of clown training inflected Pady’s relationships with participants, provocatively challenging notions of risk and care in the role. I propose that this paradoxical model of beauty and mistake here offers insights to the ___ as a person who embraces opposites.

Although predetermined by established training methods - notably those he had experienced as a student himself - I argue in this chapter that Pady was also responsive to participants, and that this enabled them to draw on their own personality to shape their clown persona. Comparison with previous case study examples already analysed is useful here to build the bigger picture of facets of responsivity. Pady’s relatively fixed response through consistent application of a training method (regardless of community or professional contexts) contrasts with Catrina McHugh’s politically-motivated approach sourced in a concept of solidarity. He used the individuality of participants as a starting point for the work whereas she drew on the common experience of gender oppression. As in Chapter 3 examples from education contexts, Pady’s responsive expertise is affected by his performance training. However, the authoritarian relationship of clown teacher with participants contrasts with the more egalitarian person-centred attunement demonstrated in Nicola Forshaw’s work. In different ways, both acknowledged vulnerability and social exclusion of participants. Pady made no observed connection in the session to participants’ social status as learning disabled. I argue here that his work was responsive to their different personalities and, although being aware of participants’ experience of social discrimination, not defined by a response to their learning disability.
The model of the clown teacher develops my conceptualisation of responsivity in several ways. The blend and switch between authority and playfulness, vulnerability and potential for beauty within mistake can provide a useful model for facets of responsivity in the expertise used by the __. This chapter illustrates how a fixed method and responsivity can inhere within the moments of facilitation, helping to balance benefits of discipline with supportive potential in the creative environment. Evidencing an approach that was at times provocative and demanding, Pady analysed his practice as consistent with professional method and standards in its ‘challenge’ (to paraphrase Pady, cited above) for the non-professional community group whilst highlighting potential socially developmental benefits for participants.

Being situated in a ‘beautiful’ place, one can make ‘discoveries’ – an ethos applicable both to participant and practitioner. Pady emphasised his own continuing development through his performance training, suggesting a respons-ability in his work. The model of the fool, including the image of Prentki’s ‘process of flux’ (cited above), are explored in the conclusion of this chapter to conceptualise developmental features of responsivity for performance practitioners.

The chapter explores Pady’s work firstly through examination of Gaulier’s clown teacher role, then with discussion of the function of beauty and mistake, followed by debating the role of risk and vulnerability in the practitioner’s decisions with examples from observed practice. I conclude with examination of the fool to offer insights for understanding the __.
Fool Ensemble and Gaulier’s qualities of clown

I visited Pady O’Connor working with the Fool Ensemble, a group of adults with learning disability in Gateshead as part of Lawnmowers Theatre Company, where he had been artistic director for five years. The group met regularly to explore techniques, develop skills and make performances that they frequently present to public and invited audiences.

Although not specifically discussed, I would speculate the name ‘Fool Ensemble’ also makes a knowing reference to the learning disabled identity shared by the group members. Fool conventions play with identity and invert social status (Prentki 2012). Imagery drawn from theatre and other cultural references make suggestions for the fool: as a clown, an outsider, disabled, a shape-shifter, paradoxically wise and innocent, a challenge to understanding and belief, having restorative powers (Janik 1998: 4-7). The descriptor ‘ensemble’ makes connections with company structures and aspects of physical theatre. Pady has also trained with commedia dell’arte in Italy and (Theatre de) Complicité. The latter discuss ensemble practice, ‘There is no way to fake this ensemble feeling. It takes many months of playing games, doing physical exercises, improvising and working together.’ (Complicité: no date). Chris Johnston (2006: 134) discusses the uses of ensemble structures in applied contexts, citing examples from commedia traditions to illustrate the importance of building relationships within groups. At my visit, there was a clear sense of a long-standing relationship between Pady and the group through the work I observed, using red nose clown activities and use of commedia half mask for directed exercises.
As a visitor I was welcomed and encouraged to be part of what appeared to be a small haven; the workshop space had a balcony stuffed with costumes, masks, set and props. The all-male performance group appeared confident and secure, working effectively within the dynamic of Pady as a clear leader and artistic director. There was a well-established relationship evident in the disciplined approach and unambiguously ‘directed’ activities that made up the observed session. For example, Pady set up improvisational tasks all performed ‘end on’ to the rest of us seated as audience. He verbally instructed and visually demonstrated activity from the front of the space; there was no discussion or eliciting of ideas from the group during these directed tasks.

The performance work did not use spoken word, reflecting a considered approach to working with the group’s strengths and also re-enforcing a difference in Pady’s role. There was clear permission during the session for moments of enjoyment between participants and director, with laughter, fun and cheeky comments. At other times the mood became serious and disciplined. The tone of the relationship was led by Pady and his performance of the director role was either contrastingly strictly instructing or consumed with laughter.

Pady spoke of the influence of his training,

The philosophy of the clown is that it’s all about play and it’s all about lightness and it’s all about finding the child within and it’s all about making the audience laugh or at least experience a level of different emotions, because there are different levels of clown.

The notion of ‘the child within’ introduces aspects of vulnerability in performance, resonating with some of the work I observed. During the session Pady exacted a constant striving for improvement in the performance detail, which was to be tempered (paradoxically) by an apparent ease of presentation, as in Gaulier’s approach. Simon Murray wrote, ‘Gaulier extols the pleasure of playing to his
students, at the same time demanding a lightness that he believes to be an essential component to the challenge of playing’ (2003: 66).

Pady’s facilitation focussed on this ‘playful lightness’ in what he demanded of the group, at the same time he presented an authority in his directions, pointing out a detail and gesturing instructions to demonstrate a performance quality. In the workshop, he mixed critique with compliment, for example blending critical comments with praise, such as, ‘do you not even have an inkling that you are doing something wrong?’, ‘gentle, none of this [demonstrate an extreme pose]’ and ‘what have I said to you?’, ‘really well done’ ‘I can layer a lot of information on you and you take it on board really well’, ‘it’s nice to watch, it’s funny to watch.’

Discussing the wider benefits for the group’s work on clown, Pady’s use of language highlighted a connection with ‘lightness’ and Gaulier’s training approach,

[a group member said] ‘I used to have to cross the street because I was laughed at and I was laughed at for all the wrong reasons but now I’m laughed with for all the right reasons’ It’s about getting them in themselves to be able to be a bit lighter and actually be lighter about situations and not only laugh at themselves but go, ‘it doesn’t matter’.

He suggested that his work took on a greater significance for the participants. Pady relocated a performance aim (creating laughter) and applied the idea for social and personal benefit, to ‘be lighter about situations’, indicating how he was operating within broader developmental objectives of applied theatre.

Pady emphasised how his approach was being made in response to - rather than an imposition on - the participants or performers,

You’ve got to look at them as people and you know what they bring with them as the beautiful things they’ll bring with them into what you want to create. So you know that each person in a group is individual and they have their individual looks and traits and character and it’s about being really interesting and looking at that and starting with that as a base and
what I think that’s really, really important is that you’re not coming in and putting something on people.

A person-centredness concurs with Gaulier’s approach where trainees are encouraged to find their own clown, ‘the clown which you would enjoy playing’ (Ecole Philippe Gaulier, no date). Pady highlighted the importance of challenge and emphasised the ability of clown performance to be developmental for the performer, acting as a process of self-knowledge or discovery. Simon Murray and John Keefe write about a ‘heart of pedagogy’ inherent in physical theatre training, which is, ‘an affirmation of knowledge accrued through movement. This is both self-knowledge and knowledge of the world in all its material, ideological, and conceptual complexity’ (2007: 146). Pady suggested a person-centred nature to his work encompassed both in professional and non-professional settings, embracing an open attitude to whomever he worked with,

My starting point, and a lot of the time for my theatre, is to work with the people you have, you know they are the shape they are, they look the way they are, they are the size they are, they carry with them the personality that they do. Now you can play around with that emotion and that personality and that character but at the end of the day you work with that kind of sculptural mould and you go ‘right’, then you find out who they are, so of course you work with a sort of sensitivity, more with some.

Working to the diversity of the group, Pady aimed to bring out personal features in creation of clown performances. Pady’s view of ‘I just only ever see them as people’ and use of Gaulier’s method premised on finding the clown in each personality, ‘work with the people you have’, resonate strongly with an ethic of diversity and inclusion found in applied theatre.

The status of clown teacher can be authoritative, knowing, critical and unchallengeable. Pady described the personality of Philippe Gaulier,

He’s hard, he was a hard French clown teacher and you know, inevitably [I thought] ‘ah I’m going into this now!’ It’s like going into the lion’s den!
It is possible to speculate this view formed an influence on Pady’s own approach and personality in the work. Pady also laughed a lot,

Why I laugh so much … what you saw was actually quite tame! They are now in a comfortable position so it looks quite comfortable … I’ve pushed them a lot further.

Use of ‘pushed them’ indicates a specific relationship less familiar within the generally understanding of applied theatre as a nurturing environment. Pady acknowledged this role and its function,

They’re also aware of ‘Pady’s a director so then we knuckle down’, so nothing is personal really, it sort of all merges.

Using the title ‘director’ freely suggests Pady was comfortable in the connotations of an authoritative role, also inferring his authority enhanced the relationships and the work.

During the session Pady used a party ‘tooter’ as critical voice, sounding disapproval when a performance within the group did not satisfy the criteria of ‘lightness’ or a performer enthusiastically repeated a gesture that had at first received a positive response. He used the phrase borrowed from Gaulier, ‘and now I try again’,

You’re wanting to play and be light…if you hear that little toot you’ve failed, ‘and now I try again’.

The group’s ‘mistakes’ were exposed by his critique and I observed a heightened concentration in participants to attain the tasks and real disappointment when unsuccessful, emphasising a vulnerability in the performers at times. Pady reflected on the role of this teaching tool when discussing the observed session,

The clown always has a provocateur or a voice, or the teacher, or the guru …they are the person who plays the game. The other night that became the little hooter I blow – [laughing] it’s ridiculous….clown teachers use a drum.
His description of ‘le jeu’ offers several definitions applicable to a formulation of the __, indicating how Pady defined his role: provocateur, voice, teacher, guru, all suggestive of authority and control.

In the ‘down time’ prior to and after the work and during a break, Pady withdrew as leader and the participants were my hosts, demonstrating his performative approach to the role of clown teacher who remained aloof but unassumingly self-contained, preserving interaction for the activity. The dynamic could be interpreted both as preserving the powerful status of teacher or empowering the group’s role – either possibly being consciously implemented by Pady. Potentially describing both himself and the participants, he spoke of self-perception and use of the performer’s own identity; celebrating the individual but ensuring the performer is not self-celebratory,

It’s not about ego …you just come with an honesty of who you are - where you come from and who you are.

The lack of pretence sought as an asset in clown performance produces a complex relationship with regard to self-awareness and authenticity in performance. Within this description, Pady was denying a dominance of egotism for both clown student and clown master, giving his responsiveness a particular resonance.

I am proposing Pady used his own clown performance training to enact his __ role. When I commented on his performance levels in the session, he indicated he was aware that there was an aspect of self-presentation involved,

I also think that makes a good teacher, I always felt that, going [i.e. teaching] for sixteen years and training, and I still go and train even now and I always will
Aspects of clown were recognisable within Pady as a responsive practitioner, adapting clown into his __ role. He drew on qualities of openness and ‘lightness’, with use of humour but without the ‘conscious effort’ or ‘knowingness’ that Murray (2013: 216) states is desired clowning (cited earlier). Pady related advice from Gaulier about teaching qualities in the reflective dialogue,

he said ‘a good teacher is always waiting. A good teacher isn’t putting things on people and going, ‘do this, do that’ because they want an outcome, no, they are giving people these kind of little strands, little things to - and the teacher is always waiting, he is always waiting or she is always waiting to - for their students to be beautiful.

I discuss the role of beauty below, but a clear ethos of clown teacher is expressed here, suggesting Pady’s self-definition and objectives as __. It is worth noting that Pady’s metaphor of strands is incomplete here, perhaps indicating the challenge of fully describing the practitioner’s work, which itself can be seen as never complete. However, when asked about his advice to less experienced applied theatre practitioners he went on to refer to a tapestry,

I would always say an openness, just a complete clean slate an openness that when you go into that room you sort of expect the unexpected and you’re willing to go with that and play with that and have an openness to that. I have a repertoire and a base and I suppose my base of work is I work very visually so when I go and work with professionals I bring a lot of objects, bring a lot of costume, people have described it as a big dressing up cupboard you know and that’s I suppose my repertoire, my little tapestry of things

Pady highlighted his art form as a core skill, framed within qualities of openness and response (images I have taken up in the title of my thesis). He viewed himself as an attendant practitioner who can recognise valuable moments, echoing Gaulier’s qualities of selection and opportunism with regard to a theatre form, blending openness and offering (objects, costume). Notably for this thesis, he emphasises the value and vital-ness of response, to ‘expect the unexpected and
you’re willing to go with that’, along with one who is able to add value to human experiences; ‘then they discover’. Pady outlined the offer he made with artistry,

...ok I have this tapestry here but actually I’m going to start with you’ and I start to always look at the people as themselves – the way that they move, the way that they work, the way that they are – and then you start to unlock those lovely things within them and then you are able to bring to them your knowledge if that makes sense

This is language that infers qualities of artistry through sensitive human interaction and using the participant as a starting point, taking what is offered and applying skill to create something of detail and value (a tapestry). Pady underpinned his concept of his expertise as embracing a recognition of those he is working with as part of his expertise, not an addendum,

it’s potentially quite a difficult one to explain … you have to realise that you know the people you work with are the people you work with… what they bring with them as the beautiful things they’ll bring with them into what you want to create… and then you are able to bring to them your knowledge… when I bring my masks in … they’ll play with them and then they learn more about life and what’s going on.

The iteration of both parties of practitioner and participant contributing something to the process is significant, brought together ‘into what you want to create’.

Catrina’s expression of both parties as experts discussed in the previous chapter resonates here. This emphasis on collaborative engagement potentially conflicts with a disciplined performance approach of clown. Pady’s view of a responding practitioner grants a greater power and role to the participant than a clown teacher/director and pupil image would initially suggest. The responsiveness is sited within the art form, locating a starting point of valuing the individual performer and all offers as ‘beautiful things’.
The role of laughter and the beautiful mistake

Mistakes - whether they be in life or within theatre, you know - the clown - it’s called the beautiful mistake ‘cause they can be real gems, they can be gems that you use. They’re not actually seen as faults, they’re not seen as mistakes, you can go ‘ah, that’s brilliant’.

Pady closely related the method of clown training with outcomes gained from the work for the participants, highlighted (as one would imagine when exploring clowning) through the significance of laughter. This laughter is potentially at the expense of the participants, as exemplified in the cupboard anecdote above, and Pady’s exploitation of a ‘mistake’ in the incident described here explores how his role tested the boundaries of traditional (supportive) models expected in community practice. Pady’s description (above) of ‘gems’ or moments (in life or theatre) is resonant of Luke Dickson’s expression of ‘golden nugget’ (cited in Chapter 3) describing successful moments of practice, sought like the golden chalice. In his description of a golden moment, however, Pady makes a paradoxical pairing of beauty and mistake, drawn from clown performance. I use the blend to build an image of the ___ within the thesis of responsivity, drawing on theoretical writings on mistakes and failure, applied theatre and beauty.

The incident in the observed session explored here evidences how Pady’s attunement with participants was nurtured by humour. There was a great sense of pleasure in the workshop I observed; the group’s enjoyment of the processes was clearly evident, with mutual teasing both ways. Pady spoke about how the laughter in the session and the pleasure they could create for an audience may support the individuals in the world beyond the group; the apparent happiness within the work was directly linked to the pleasure they may experience as a result beyond the work itself,
And ultimately it is about them feeling confident and it's about them feeling happy and content with the journey that are taking, they are taking some of that experiences [sic] in to their own lives.

As observer and audience, I experienced both the source and the impact of the laughter. Some of the humour (and there was a lot during the session) was aimed at the participant Jim's inability to 'get' one task required of him. Pady used the found party tooter and 'tooted' at Jim's unsuccessful attempts to get the timing right during a red nose exercise. Sitting in a row, the group had to lift their hats in turn to an increasingly high level, and then replace them in unison. The task demanded a synchronicity of timing and action; Pady was pacing in a directorial role, beating the rhythmical timing of the performers actions by clapping to the underscored music. Pady laughed at Jim getting it wrong, and singled him out to critically re-direct his performance of the exercise. There was a focus on the mistake rather than the achievement in the task, which had evidently challenged the performer. Pady had a rationale for his critical response towards the individual in the session,

I certainly yeah pushed him... because then suddenly you see somebody in quite a - I think, a safe but vulnerable state but then that becomes their clown in that circumstance, does that make sense? But I think I’m quite sort of strong mind in the sense that I think people should be challenged and taken into those areas and it doesn’t have to be an unsafe place it actually becomes a really beautiful funny incredible place to be ... where people go, ‘wow, I’m ready to take some new steps’ ... ‘I don’t just stay within this world I live in’... it’s about opening people’s minds a little bit more.

Pady’s emphasis of a 'safe but vulnerable state' focussed a paradox of his facilitation of the performance processes involved with the Fool Ensemble. A balance of challenge and gain for the performer was re-iterated in the concept of the 'beautiful funny incredible place to be', which Pady asserted as contributing to the experience. Pady spoke of how in clowning there is a search for the 'beautiful' but it is made unattainable.
In Gaulier's clown training as soon as the beauty is knowingly performed, it is knocked back down. Purcell Gates described how Gaulier's approach included sending students on stage with minimal instructions and 'if they fail to be 'beautiful', sending them offstage unceremoniously with the bang of a drum' (2011: 231), echoed by Pady's use of the tooter. During the exercises I witnessed how if the group made something 'beautiful', it was only fleetingly present, because they were not permitted or encouraged as performers to be complacent or egotistical, illustrating the negative qualities of, 'trying too hard', 'knowing too much' as described by Murray (2013: 216). Pady justified his choice to create challenges with potential rewards, 'it actually becomes a really beautiful funny incredible place' and 'opening people's minds'. In his ___ role he explored boundaries of safety and vulnerability with beneficial intent.

The close relationship of the performer and 'the game' with something 'beautiful' is emphasised by Gaulier's training approach on the school web site,

Philippe Gaulier teaches Le Jeu, the pleasure it engenders and the imaginary world it unveils, bang, bang, just like that. Actors are always beautiful when you can see, around the characters, their souls at play, opening the door of the imaginary world.

(Ecole Philippe Gaulier 2014)

Both Gaulier and Pady speak aspiringly of the performer's potential to be beautiful; however, this does not come without risk. There was a fine tuning to be managed between conscious mistake and a deliberate theatrical conceit, as illustrated by Purcell Gates’ (2011) 'fumbling fools' image cited above. Pady articulated 'beautiful' in connection to the challenge, both as experience for the performer and as key to the performance,

It's the same with Jim, you know it's a great scenario and you could use it where you know, five clowns are getting it spot on and there's the one
clown who never just quite gets it and that becomes very funny. Again it becomes that beautiful mistake…

Pady had translated Jim’s ability to get the timing right during the hat exercise from an error into something an audience could enjoy, find humorous, and furthermore perhaps ‘beautiful’. Jim’s grilling from Pady was testing the performer’s ability to make use of the ‘beautiful’ mistake in a fine balance of conscious knowledge and lightness.

Elaine Scarry, writes of one function of the beautiful within the world, as engendering a sense of vulnerability, ‘the fact that something is perceived as beautiful is bound up with an urge to protect it, or act on its behalf’ (2006: 80). Pady’s articulation of a ‘safe but vulnerable state’ created within the Fool Ensemble observed session resonates with Scarry’s ‘urge to protect’. Scarry goes on to comment about the function of beauty in relation to justice, arguing that there is a wider impact to the beautiful thing, ‘It is as though beautiful things have been placed here and there about the world to serve as small wake-up calls to perception, spurring lapsed alertness back to its most alert level’ (2006: 81). She writes of how the interruption provided by a beautiful person can provide a reminder of the existence of others and serves as a connection to those we may ordinarily overlook.

Thompson discusses Scarry’s ideas of beauty, noting how this alert has an expansive effect and can increase our sense of interconnection. Within the context of applied theatre, the impact of beauty may influence ‘an urge to share, communicate and offer other people the same sense of pleasure ... Beauty in this formulation is stimulus to collaborative work – it is an invitation to participate’ (Thompson 2009: 145). In this way, we can see how Pady’s own training spurs his
work to make connections, share the experience of clown work and its potentially inherent joy of beauty.

Pady spoke of beauty as a performance objective,

But your desire is very strong and you mustn’t lose that sense of play and desire: ‘I’ve got to be beautiful against a little horn!’

His approaches to clowning with the Fool Ensemble may reflect a desire for the group (stemming from Gaulier’s influence) to grasp a beautiful moment for themselves, for them to be able to access the benefits of experiencing beauty as a ‘small wake-up call’ (from Scarry) from less inspiring aspects of life. His aspiration for the work to be about pleasure echoes the wider impact claimed by Scarry, ‘one’s daily unmindfulness of the aliveness of others is temporarily interrupted by the presence of a beautiful person, alerting us to the requirements placed on us by all persons’ (2006: 90). Pady’s interpretation of clowning, ‘it doesn’t have to be an unsafe place it, actually becomes a really beautiful funny incredible place to be’ (cited above) makes close connection between an urge to protect and beauty as Scarry suggests.

Clown training involves elements of risk, failure and discovery, and in clowning, getting it wrong can be a powerful source for humour, potentially creating a ‘beautiful’ performance. The exposure involved with the teasing direction of a clown teacher role could be perceived as humiliation, as stated above, and anathema to a role of supportive facilitation. Pady, however, charted a close navigation within his work between these borders through his carefully chosen response to the group. Getting it right in clowning, paradoxically, is a fine line between mistake and beauty expressed in a notion of the ‘beautiful mistake’. Pady speaks of these borders not as a risk to be avoided, but as an objective for his work with the Fool Ensemble, especially resonant because of, as he defined,
their ‘vulnerability’. In directing the performance activity, he was encouraging the group to experiment with the close interface between the experience of self-protection and allowing vulnerability as a beautiful experience. He nurtured this experience within the group from a position of embodied knowing as this is a set of sensations he also has known. Pady spoke of Gaulier’s approach,

you know it's gonna be a hard man but at the same time he is the first person in that room to acknowledge when you are beautiful and he's the first person to try and bring that beauty out in you and that pleasure, even if he has his way of doing it.

Pady’s reflections imply he too sought beauty in the clown student, suggesting Thompson’s drive for joyful work. Responsivity can explain how Pady’s approach with the group extended Thompson’s ‘invitation to participate’ (cited above) in the sharing of beauty, to reward both teacher and student.

Thompson makes a case to pay more attention to beauty, ‘Why can we not collaborate in creating something beautiful as the very point of departure for this type of performance work?’ (2009: 140, italics in original), premising a concept of beauty as opposed to more instrumental application of theatre methods in participatory contexts. The very human and profound experience Pady claims for clowning is tempered by a ‘lightness’ of humour, and these contrasting qualities were also evident in his manner of interaction with the participants. The beauty Pady nurtured in the creative practice was a motivating factor informing decisions about his practice, for example pushing Jim in a disciplinarian manner. Pady suggested the discovery of beauty is related to a quality of experience, ‘it actually becomes a really beautiful funny incredible place to be’, emphasising participatory benefits that are a feature of applied theatre.
Throughout the thesis, I frame notions of practitioner satisfaction as respond-ability, a pattern evident across very different practitioners. Joe Winston writes about how an awareness of beauty could have a liberating energy for teacher researchers, emphasising that ‘the aesthetic’ should be integral to a concept of teaching as a practice. The impact of this could, he argues, have wider benefits for educator practitioners, because, ‘… to attend to beauty, to one of our deepest human concerns, is to focus on pleasure as opposed to duty.’ (2011: 584). Pady highlighted the pleasure he experiences from his work through his reflective dialogue commentary, a position congruent with Winston’s proposal, for example stating,

> Now as a director and practitioner I go this is where something magic is going to happen, this is where something exciting is going to develop, we’re on a journey, we’re a bit in the dark here, this is brilliant. So I think, to try and find a confidence in that environment yourself is a wonderful place to be in, some things I know, a lot of things I don’t, and that’s it.

Pady’s language suggests he values and enjoys a personal response through his practice (all his practices), echoing Winston’s ‘pleasure as opposed to duty’.

Pleasure was positioned within the work as a facility to be open to new discoveries and self-knowledge,

> if you create a different environment for a young person or an adult and a person with learning difficulties then they are willing to change, they change themselves because they go ‘wow I’ve never seen this’ or ‘what is this?’ and they want a sense of discovery then, so I would kind of say you know openness and certainly a place within yourself where you go ‘at any moment this could change and I’m happy to go with that and take that journey to wherever that’s going’

Here, Pady communicates a connection to be able to respond (‘happy to go with that’) and a sense of pleasure arising from the discoveries made by others.

Pady’s insistence on an exacting discipline within his work reflects an adherence to a professional method, as indicated through this chapter; his
approaches are motivated to preserve an aesthetically powerful experience for the participants. Consideration of the role and impact of art, I argue, is an important component of responsivity, profoundly informing the approaches of responsive, applied practitioners. Discussing aesthetics in applied theatre, Gareth White encourages reflection on the artistry involved, making a case that it is not a diluted art form, but ‘can create occasions of theatre as pure as any other’ (2015: 2, italics in the original). White debates interpretations of the term aesthetic, making connections with notions of beauty, claiming, ‘The place of beauty in applied practice has been quite confidently and eloquently asserted’ however, not [until now] necessarily in ‘the experiential structures of applied practice’ (ibid: 60).

He discusses experience via the potential for an applied participant in lieu of audience to have ‘an aesthetic experience in relation to their own actions’ (ibid: 62) and emphasises the function of the practitioner’s role,

participants themselves, working in collaboration with directors, facilitators and other professionals, have personal experiences of beautiful moments throughout the creative process, benefitting from the individual genius that is sufficient to create and activate these moments (ibid: 66).

White highlights layers of experience that contribute to an aesthetic experience, exploring an inter-connection of doing and feeling. White’s description of ‘individual genius’ points to an ability to create art. In Pady’s practice that takes a professional form and utilises it without dilution, the ‘individual genius’, I argue, could be Pady’s or the participants’. White concludes,

…there is art in participation that invites people to experience themselves differently, reflexively and self-consciously, and that is shaped both by facilitating artists and by participants themselves (ibid: 83).
This connection between the experiential aspects of the process through a conjoining of artists and participants and the potential for generation of beauty aptly concurs with Pady’s frequent use of ‘beauty’ and ‘beautiful moments’. White suggests that, ‘the value of beauty, in one of its most challenging manifestations, can be read in relation to the creative work of participants’ (ibid: 82). Pady’s use of his chosen performance medium is enabled by a responsive view of the ‘beautiful mistake’ within his egalitarian application of performance form.

Pady illustrated a personal warmth with comments about how he felt the work had conclusively made some changes in individuals,

Sean … he’d go completely red, like beetroot red, and he’d laugh [does impression] like a nervous laughter. I noticed over time that that laughter become less and less to the point where he was actually up there doing substantial things and without feeling that he was doing something wrong and you know like ‘oh my God I’m gonna get told off, I’m gonna get done’ …, so that’s why I think it does change people a lot. I suppose, you know as a practitioner you always veer away from that area, ‘cause you imagine that’s an area that you’ve got to prove to people so you always go ‘right ok now I’ve got to prove the outcomes’ but in fact the outcomes are very important because they do happen.

Although not wishing to connect with instrumental interpretations of experiences of participatory work, he nevertheless placed emphasis on impact, ‘the outcomes are very important because they do happen’.

Foregrounding the pleasures of participation, Thompson proposes that ‘affects’ such as joy are not apolitical within applied theatre and highlights work that fits, ‘less comfortably into a regime of action and analysis’ (2009: 115). He particularly sheds light on ‘the aspects which practitioners and participants might relish, such as joy, fun, pleasure or beauty’ (ibid: 116), warning that side-lining these features can produce practitioners, ‘with great knowledge of the issues to be communicated or awareness of problems faced by participants, but with little capacity ... for uniting a group in joy.’ (ibid: 118). Pady claimed the work equipped participants to tackle social exclusion and disablist insults, establishing an
egalitarian environment. In his approach, there was less focus on barriers or hierarchies based on dis/ability, with more emphasis on the shifting relationships and identities explored within the performance form.

**Fool identity and the function of failure**

Pady (cited above) explicitly outlined how his policy is to ‘work with the people you have’ in all his work with clown, an attitude which has particular resonance with the learning disabled performers. Learning disabled performers, even those who are trained, will be seen through a lens of society’s expectations and pre-conceived ideas. Paddy Masefield wrote of social disadvantage experienced by those with learning disabilities,

> People who have learning disabilities may lack an extensive physical voice but still possess sensitive powers of communication … It is further assumed…that they should be treated like young children … not be allowed to live independently, make clear their adult sexuality … not be allowed to speak for themselves when decisions are being taken about them

(2006: 76)

In utilising some of Gaulier’s approaches, Pady made direct connections to the personal benefits for the participants, citing evidence such as Sean’s development of confidence (cited above). He linked method to outcome for the Fool Ensemble participants, noting their specific social experience,

> There’s a big philosophy there about the clown and the provocateur and what that brings out in them. But you see, for them as people having learning difficulties or disabilities, they’re already told a lot of the time in life that they’ve failed and they’re already told in life that ‘oh you can’t achieve that’ or ‘you won’t achieve that’. When we’ve worked with the clown they’ve found that they’re natural clowns because they’re very kind of open because they’ve had to be.
Pady demonstrated concerns for the social welfare of participants, which indicated his role with the group was more complex than just a clown teacher. The ways he debated the concept of ‘failure’ in his way of working is illuminating to a view of his responsivity. The impact of the tooter and clown teacher role to challenge aspects of knowing or ego in performance had an additional resonance because of Pady’s assertion, they ‘are told a lot of the time in life they have failed’. There is a double exploration of ‘failure’ discussed by Pady (above) which challenges expectation of a facilitatory nature of __, bringing a different perspective to traditions of encouragement in the role. Although explicit that challenge is integral to his approach, Pady spoke both about the participants being ‘already told in life that “oh you can’t achieve that” ’ but also discussed his intrinsic use of failure in his performance strategies, ‘if you hear that little toot you’ve failed’.

Sarah-Jane Bailes discusses intended examples of failure within exploration of the genre of slapstick, looking at conscious mistakes staged to provoke laughter in an inclusive way through the ‘blundering practicalities of failure’ (2010: 39). Slapstick is premised on incongruous and illogical relations (ibid: 44) where mistakes can reverse natural laws or interrupt narrative trajectories. Bailes suggests ‘the gag might provide a ‘framework for accommodating what might generally be perceived as “difficult,” or “other” (ibid: 45). In this way, Pady’s use of the form of clown allows exploration of identity for the group, as explained by his discussion of ‘the game’, which can facilitate benefits outside of itself,

They know the game, we understand the game, and we’re going to play the game… it projects itself in a very theatrical context as a clown, but it also for them in a huge way projects it massively into their own lives and has done in a confidence way, you know, find that game. We all find that if we’re in life and we find ourselves in a vulnerable situation maybe to just have a little game in our lives would give us that bit more confidence and that’s - that’s what they’ve found.
Pady emphasised his passionate commitment to a ‘clown philosophy’; doing clown work can have universal benefits that Pady as practitioner claims are not exclusive to this group.

Beyond the workshop context that was the main focus for the reflective dialogue, the participatory performer had the potential to gain ‘that bit more confidence’ in presenting a re-defined role of themselves for an audience. Pady was identifying and projecting an experience for the participants first and foremost as performers, which powered his motivation for the work and was fed by his first-hand knowledge of the form, indicating he had an empathic response to the participants. He was additionally sensitive to (and had perhaps experienced) how the ability to play out a role may help anyone in ‘a vulnerable situation’. His experience of clown training fed in to a sharing of the joys and built his respond-ability with participants. This empathic connection was very evident in the bond and relationship built on humour.

Further analysis of learning disabled performers is considered here to inform analysis of how Pady negotiated an interplay of support and failure in the ___ role. Posing questions about the criteria audiences use for judging learning disabled actors, Matt Hargrave comments provocatively that, ‘He may perform but will he always perform one thing’ (1998: 48). The exploration of clown roles has an additional resonance for the Fool Ensemble, where playing the fool was a conscious and deliberate provocation to resist the implication of Hargrave’s assertion. Colette Conroy writes about a workshop with disabled trainee actors, premised with the suggestion that disability is often viewed as a lack, or loss, which can result in exclusion (2009: 11). The actors articulated their aspirations for how they wished to be viewed by an audience,
The trainees hoped that they could develop their performance skills to the point where the audience saw what they were intended to see. The perception of disability against the artistic grain of the piece was regarded as being a limitation of the audience member’s capabilities, and as a response that reflected badly on the quality of the disabled actors’ work.

(Conroy 2009: 8, italics in original).

Conroy communicates a desire of the performers to have autonomy to play with their identity through performance. Pady’s comments suggested that within his work with Fool Ensemble he was aware of a thematic play with performance and identity, ‘they are natural clowns because they are open, because they have had to be’.

As established in Tim Prentki’s study of representations and functions of the fool in theatre, ‘Where the rest of humanity relies upon notions of status in relation to occupation and function to be accorded the means of survival, the fool relies upon the opposite’ (2012: 18). Those in the Fool Ensemble are not identified through any job identity, and are not valued as economically productive members of society. Pady’s assertion that playing with one’s clown role can illuminate the human condition is enriched by this image of the fool whose status ‘relies upon the opposite’, for example those not given status with full employment, adding poignancy to his work with Fool Ensemble group. A fluid potential of the fool role extends to applied theatre participants who are most often drawn from society’s ‘outsiders’; those without status or occupation.

In a more recent text, Hargrave discusses the genealogy the role of fool within an exploration of historical precedents for learning disabled performers, citing the power in the ambiguity which the role of fool offers, potentially liberating the learning disabled performer from Hargrave’s prior (1998) assertion of a fixed role,
To accept the fool as both one who knows and does not know, and who is both of and not of the stage, is potentially liberating because it frees fools (and non-fools) from having to accept static categories.

(2015: 133).

This view of a chameleon potential is interesting to apply to the Fool Ensemble, and a feature I am suggesting Pady himself also evidenced. Pady too, resisted acceptance of Hargrave’s ‘static categories’, as I debate further at the conclusion of the chapter. Tim Prentki (as cited at the outset of the chapter) claims the fool ‘experiences the world as a constant process of flux, of becoming rather than being … [meaning that] certainties are always illusory’ (2012: 16). Learning disability can also be viewed as a state of ‘becoming rather than being’. Building on acceptance of who the group are, ‘natural clowns because they’ve had to be’, Pady aims to enable a ‘discovery’ of who they may ‘become’. The fool in performance illustrates for the audience their own human limitations and that, ‘wisdom is the capacity to see how little we can see’ (Prentki, 2012: 19).

In equipping the Fool Ensemble members to play as fools, Pady enabled participants to play with the idea of being a fool and, through confidence as competent performers, to potentially resist being associated with a fool, thereby breaking down binary categorisations of dis/ability and associations of capacity to achieve. An atmosphere of diversity and inclusion was very evident in my visit to the ‘workshop’– here meaning both the environment of the studio and the actions of Pady and the participants. Within this space all, including Pady, were able to play with their own being, identity and expertise. He invited them to explore identities through performance, also enjoying the potential to play himself. I am suggesting the role of __ has the potential to be, and not be, what is expected in the role, as further evidenced by my reaction (outlined below) to Pady’s testing of the expectations and boundaries of care and challenge, nurturer and critic.
The chapter goes on to consider issues of vulnerability and how this paradoxical inversion of applied theatre practitioner’s duty of care actually fulfils a fully responsive role.

Risk, vulnerability and failure in Pady’s use of clown method

Pady’s firm directorial and critical approach was a shock to me as observer, as I brought to the visit an expectation of care arising from an existing sense of vulnerability of those with a learning disability and pre-conceptions of enabling approaches. His criticism of the group’s performance work suggested a relationship of a stern director which I did not expect to encounter. However, it could be argued that the disciplinary structure enacted by Pady provided a safer space where practitioner and participant explore their own vulnerabilities and strengths with use of the clown form, further aiming for beneficial outcomes for participants.

Pady was aspirational in his role with the group through an intense commitment to the artistic forms he used and its wider impact on their lives, and his own,

There is this whole area that, one, you’re aware of the whole group and two, the individuals there and three, the journey that they’re taking within this. And ultimately it is about them feeling confident and it’s about them feeling happy and content with the journey that they are taking, they are taking some of that experiences in to their own lives … and that’s a philosophy I want to live by … it’s definitely is about them being happy, having fun, pleasure of being and then that reflecting into them as a person.

Pady’s work was underpinned by his own clown training, and Gaulier’s methods re-enforce the fundamental impact on students. Gaulier’s own book title The Tormentor (2006) suggests these methods can be antagonistic and challenging for student performers. Simon Murray analyses the relationship between play and
lightness in Gaulier’s training, writing of direct and exposing approaches and ‘a constant destabilisation of the student actor’ (2013: 216). Laura Purcell-Gates’ article described the desperation in a dynamic, ‘as students frantically attempted to please the teacher, an irony was… they actually experienced themselves as fumbling fools grasping after praise’ (2011: 236). This ‘irony’ is explained by Purcell Gates as pedagogically intentional, with vulnerability a key component in the training approaches specifically designed to ‘disorientate the student’ (ibid: 233) in order to challenge artifice in performance. The form demands a focus on ‘failure’ in performance, as Purcell Gates describes, and also on finding a way of being that is neither ‘knowing’, nor ‘trying’, as Murray describes. Purcell Gates’ image of ‘fumbling fools’ is doubly pertinent when the performers’ disability identity is seen by society as a failure, and their being as an unalterable kind of ‘fool’.

Pady transferred a subjective experience of his own training with Gaulier, with the Fool Ensemble, they’ve been with me five years, they know me, they have a rapport with me, you know you can play with them and go ‘ah that’s rubbish’ and they always take it in a lightness and another thing is, nothing you ever do (and it was the same with Philippe Gaulier) is ever personal.

Pady’s first-hand knowledge of being trained as a clown enabled him to relate to the challenge experienced by all students of clown (as highlighted by both Purcell Gates and Murray, above). He claimed the critical voice of the director to not have a ‘personal’ or damaging impact, citing a humorous incident in the session I observed where he made fun with a participant following an accidental burp.

it was his straightness like, ‘was that a burp?’ ‘yep’ ‘were you playing around?’ ‘nope’ … I think that’s a brilliant place to be, to be so confident so happy so content in yourself, not that you can just let a burp out anyway but that you can be so honest. And believe me, five years ago working with the Fool Ensemble you know there was a lot of them not like that - there really, really wasn’t. What I see now is a set of completely different people in many ways.
Pady made a strong case the work impacted on the participant's confidence; he was vehement that the nature of the group would not necessitate a fundamentally different approach,

When I began working with people with learning difficulties and disabilities - I just only ever see them as people and I see them as I would see a university group because I would - they're just people that I'm working with who can achieve and do the kind of best they can so it's not any different really … I don’t think I’m, what can I say, what's the word? I don’t think I’m precious of them. I don’t think I’m precious at all in that way.

Pady’s style of responsivity exploited potential benefits of the form whilst making only necessary adjustments to ‘different’ groups. He acknowledged the importance of finding the right tone within a participatory setting, adding a condition to what he called ‘sensitivity’ (cited above) to propose an approach without compromising the positive benefits from performance,

You're obviously aware of people and a group and of course you’re not going to go into a very vulnerable group and be like ‘ra ra’ [loud]. It just wouldn’t work; you find your other ways of doing it. But no, no, I believe that people should be challenged and people should be pushed in a very safe and fun way and I think that it's important because I think when people are taken to those places, it’s the place where they really do discover things. [partly cited at the outset of the chapter]

It was particularly the challenges confronting a performer in clown work that had the potential to facilitate change; to create the place for the participants where, ‘they really do discover things’. Pady did not allow the process to be ‘precious’ regarding participants and thereby temper positive impact,

it’s about them feeling completely confident and happy and safe in themselves and vice versa with me and then happy then to be in that space and go ‘wow we can do anything, we can literally do anything’ and then taking that then out into their own life and go ‘yeah we can achieve that’.

He was passionate and emphatic about how the processes of clown training in all contexts can have a greater influence than just developing skills of a performer,
So all those things that you do with people will change people, it’s inevitable. I suppose it’s just that with me being a theatre practitioner I always talk about the journey of theatre … the journey for those whoever you work with is also really, really substantially important and you’re also aware of that… I let that naturally happen and take its course, I don’t then try and analyse that. I don’t try and then tweak. I think if you bring people there and you offer people that and you take them on that journey all of this happens and it sits alongside it anyway.

Participant change was not cited by Pady as the main objective of his clown work. He avoided making personal benefits the objective of the practice and did not suggest the training had therapeutic imperative but, ‘sits alongside it anyway.’ His style of approach resisted over adaptation to context, (or dilution as White may suggest), indicating enhanced efficacy of performer training which then, in turn, benefitted participants personally and socially.

Pady’s role contested boundaries; he challenged participants to gain the ‘change’ involved with clown training. The function of risk and safety are discussed elsewhere in participatory drama literatures: Chris Johnston notes, ‘There’s a balance to be found between being challenging (setting goals which will stretch the group), and being safe (playing to existing strengths)’ (2005: 21). Stella Barnes’ describes creative risk balanced with personal risk and proposes the use of ‘challenges and risks agreed with, rather than for the young people.’ (2009: 40). The ‘creative risk’ that Pady utilised as part of his role enabled the participants to explore modes of performance through a playfulness and ‘le jeu’, with him in role as clown master. He spoke of playful activities in previous years, resulting in him banishing group members to a cupboard,

P: I had a group of like twenty-five and that cupboard ain’t big. I put the lot of them in there and it’s the most funniest thing you know, to open that door and it literally was twenty clowns in the cupboard like [imitating enactment].

K: So you’ve got them all in the cupboard, you’re firing water pistols at them?

P: Oh, this was right at the beginning yeah, all sorts of things, we had all sorts of things in. And they say often now ‘you’ve gotta bring those things back.’
The incident illustrated a secure but adaptive status of Pady’s __, enacted by a ‘hard teacher’ who is also paradoxically playing with formality and play, cruelty and fun through such actions. Petra Kuppers presents disability and performance as a mirror to reflect on ourselves, ‘In disability culture settings … I often watch or engage myself in wayward, unusual behaviors [sic] … which offer me ways of thinking about what is excluded from the norm’ (2011: 4). Pady’s role almost appeared to transcend usual ‘behaviours’ of ‘the norm’ (to paraphrase Kuppers) and struck me as so much a part of the group that he was like an honorary member of their exclusive club. As Barnes proposed, Pady’s participants agreed with (albeit tacitly) the challenges and risks set within the work. There was, however, little evidence of the group testing the rules of ‘le jeu’ during the session I experienced, suggesting that his status could shift between dictator and compatriot, but always maintained a distinctive role with default ‘master’ status.

The __ as an improper role

The conclusion of the chapter considers the play with identity exemplified by Pady within his clown teacher role. The essence of a clown persona lies in a shifting playfulness. Pady spoke subjectively of the joy of performing,

I think it’s the most magical place when you’re either an actor or a director or a teacher, which is where you enter into this area that doesn’t have those words. It’s not about skills and it’s not about your philosophy, yet those things are always there. It’s about feeling it.

His analysis of the ‘magical’ experience for participants suggests he is speaking personally, projecting empathetically and reflecting on his own experiences. The fluidity of identity of the fool character, discussed by Prentki as ‘flux, of becoming rather than being’ (cited at the start of the chapter), chimes with Pady’s claims for the experience he manages through his approaches, ‘when they play then they
discover… either about myself or about the work itself. We can extend Pady’s view of the process to see how it impacts on his ‘becoming’ and, within this thesis, propose a practitioner who is constantly re-forming through his/her own practice.

Tim Prentki’s book (2012) reveals how the figures of the fool in theatre can knowingly poke fun and reveal deceit; revelling in paradox, forming a strong social commentary, the fool does not offer solutions. This shift between success and failure, certainty and flux resonates with practices I observed in many diverse functions of the __. Pady’s reference (above) to ‘gems’ arising from ‘mistake’ are part of the terrain and vocabulary within which he operates with the Fool Ensemble, also inferring a generative and developing sense of his own performance in the role of __.

The forms of the performance Pady used served to enrich his work and to feed the practitioner. Pady’s sometimes playful status within a teacher role enabled interaction of ‘le jeu’ within his own role and a testing of enactments of power. He established a controlling relationship which was ironically empowering, where normally empowerment of others is signalled by failure as an authoritarian. Sarah-Jane Bailes re-visits a story in Walter Benjamin’s writing about a ‘crooked crown’ observed in a child’s performance of a king, ‘the failure of representation made visible to him through the unconscious ineptitude of the non-professional: the actor with a crooked crown fails to perform his task properly’ (2011: 33). In this moment the real punctuates the conventions of theatrical representation, albeit unintentionally, to ‘illuminate the duplicitous systems entangled in its operations’ (ibid: 34). Bailes speaks of the ‘slippage of accident as an illuminating disruption to the economy of the theatre event’ (ibid: 34). Discussion of the slipped crown here is not just to suggest that the work of Pady in Fool Ensemble lacks ‘professionalism’, a debate I explored in Chapter 1, but to explore the disruptive
potential within Pady’s work. In his role as clown master and sometime fool, Pady consistently encourages construction and de-construction of powerful and playful roles, including his own. This ‘slippage’ is part of his ___ persona and, as such, a component of Pady’s expertise. In this world, despite an egalitarian ethos, the teacher was king, albeit with a ‘slipped crown’.

Bailes’ proposal that ‘the actor with a crooked crown fails to perform his task properly’ offers a rich model for viewing the ___. Pady can be seen to be failing to do ‘proper’ (to translate Bailes) facilitation with a wholly ‘decentred’ approach, enacting a ‘representation’ in a carnivalesque, non-professional setting. Wider application of this image of improper practitioner – one who operates as a professional in a non-professional world – could be fruitful within applied theatre’s championing of work with non-professional performers. The research process discovered many examples (like Pady) of those undertaking a rich, complex, joyful, relational, responsive, and developmental performance practice. Synthesis of these ideas will be addressed in the conclusion following further exploration of ___ roles.

Respond-ability is a concept that illustrates how the ___ is able to find growth and reward. The next chapter goes on to illustrate how one practitioner was able to develop herself within the work, through dialogic practice with participants.
Chapter 6

Responsivity and the art of doing little.

There are some sessions where I’ve hardly had to say a word … it has to be spacious for the individuals you have in the room

Kate Sweeney

Throughout this investigation of the expertise in applied theatre, I have used the empty space denoted by __ to describe practitioners. This lack of description is aimed at refreshing the identity and discarding connotations of labels: of facilitator, workshop leader, artist, director, actor, teacher etc. The site of analysis is opened to allow a multitude of possibilities to populate the space. In this chapter, I extend the notion of responsivity by emptying out the actions of the __, with an example of one practitioner who appeared to be doing very little. Kate Sweeney was observed using pictures to stimulate storytelling activity in a care home with elderly residents, many of whom have memory loss. There was a conscious minimalism in her approach that was effective, demonstrating the possibility that in participatory work ‘less is more’ and also providing an opportunity to extend the discussion of the responsivity of the __ in this thesis. The __ is framed here as one who was seeking to take up less space and be seen not by their actions, but as primarily engaged in a dialogical practice. Despite her apparent inactivity, I will argue that the __ here makes strategic choices in the work, demonstrating an expertise which allows for richer expression of self to be authored by the participants than the setting normally allows. This leads me to propose that the responsive expertise of __ is less concerned with doing and more about being.
This chapter will draw on Mikhail Bakhtin's writings on dialogism to analyse Kate’s session, exploring how her expertise allowed the participants to develop a discourse of themselves through the story telling and how she dialogically shaped her own identity through the work. I suggest the practitioner is not a fixed model of self/subjectivity, but a shifting co-produced protagonist formed dialogically through the work. Bakhtin proposed that in any aesthetic event there exists an author and a hero, and these figures are produced intra-textually through a dialogic dynamic to produce a discourse and further that, ‘a hero is not only a discourse about himself and his immediate environment, but also a discourse about the world’ (1994: 8). I extend this idea from Bakhtin to consider dialogism as a mode of philosophical exploration and a feature of both life and art (as described by Hirschkop 1999). For Bakhtin, the two distinct voices, for example of hero and author, are present and intersecting within any single utterance, asserting that understanding is dialogic by nature and that ‘[m]eaning is produced by the fully social interaction of all participants’ (cited in Morris 1994: 8). These interactions are here taken as the exchange and response within the participatory performance of applied theatre.

As introduced in Chapter 2, dialogism proposes that each utterance, which can include physical or gestural communication, is ‘responsive both to other utterances and to the rest of our surroundings, and itself provokes further responsivity’ (Shotter and Billig 1998: 16). This responsive interplay resonates with Oliver’s (2001) concept of ‘response-ability’ outlined in the Prologue, an ethically situated response which is informed by anticipation of inter-subjective connection. This thesis concerns itself with establishing responsivity in the expertise of the __ with examination of what is said and done within the space in response to context and participants. Useful for understanding Kate’s activity of
story-making, this notion of dialogism is based on the premise of interactive exchange, that ‘what we experience as meaningful, we experience dialogically, as an event of communication’ (Hirschkop 1999: 3). Through her dialogue practice, the ___ ensured that the work was made (as cited above) ‘spacious for those in the room’. In this chapter I lay out how Kate’s open approach and dialogical interactions meant she ‘hardly had to say a word’. This formulated a ___ who made space for participants to author themselves and furthermore, for her identity as ___ to be authored dialogically through the interactions of the work.

Kate Sweeney trained in fine art and works in video, photography and cross-arts projects, also collaborating in performance and theatre. She refers to herself as an artist. She has worked in many community contexts using performance and media with non-artists, including work with women, young people, prisoners, refugees. The observed activities used dramatic narrative processes with performative aspects of storytelling with the elderly. Working with an approach developed by TimeSlip in US, Kate explained

...it’s about using images and working with people with Alzheimer’s… the underlying principle was if somebody can’t remember a story, then we shouldn’t force them to remember anything. And the idea that the descriptions or the ideas or just the thoughts that people have whilst looking at a picture do not have to bear any err, conjunction to what I as an artist might want people to say out of that picture. That it was ok for people to just see whatever they could see. And we would capture it all on a piece of paper. And then whatever that was, was okay to become a sto – that was a story. And it works a treat!

TimeSlips’ own website promotes the approach, described to use

... open, poetic language of improvisational storytelling [which] invites people with memory loss to express themselves and connect with others. TimeSlips is more than an activity – it is a way of being in relationship.

TimeSlips (n.d.)
Equal Arts, who had employed Kate to work in the home over a period of months, is a long-standing organisation in Gateshead that uses arts with the elderly. They have an international profile and links with May Basting, the founder of TimeSlips approaches. Their mission is to ‘improve the quality of people’s lives by helping older people articulate in high quality arts activity’ (Equal Arts no date). The room was light and spacious with clusters of chairs and coffee tables, with gardens and a hen run outside the window (Equal Arts projects include ‘Hen Power’ which claims to increase well-being of ‘hensioners’ who are involved with all aspects of their care). During the visit, participants arrived after lunch and there was some coming and going within the group.

Kate was supported by an assistant, Lisa [not her real name], who additionally took on a scribing function throughout the process. Lisa’s contribution was very enthusiastic and kindly but she appeared over jolly and consciously performed by comparison to Kate. Kate was more low-key, contributing just enough to gently guide the interactions. Lisa spoke a lot, serving to highlight how the little Kate did say was constantly opening up the participants’ suggestions. Kate allowed the participants’ contributions to dominate and lead the narrative by avoiding intrusion on their dialogues with her own comments or concerns.

The session I observed used a reproduced photograph; copies were circulated and many peered very closely for some time, returning to the picture throughout the session. The image was a boy standing on the back of a horse wearing a uniform, which appeared to me to be an early twentieth century Eastern European photo. The group sat in a circle and discussed the picture, and their ideas were written down and read out at points to recap. Kate asked questions: ‘who is the boy? What is he doing on the horse?’ Kate stimulated the process by
accepting all responses as fact – the replies became the facts of the image, a commentary or a story based on the picture.

Responses developed narrative about a circus and a runaway, but the story did not particularly hold together or conclude. Delightful insights and inventive imagery were conjured, sometimes because of the juxtaposition of random contributions and styles. The horse was anthropomorphised and there were obvious fictions, for example a man clearly not old enough confidently described his time working with horses in the army in World War Two. Other ideas were more cohesive, but as an outsider, it was hard for me to tell which residents were more lucid in everyday life; some had little use of language or chose not to speak. Later, the group enjoyed the reading by a resident of the story which Kate and Lisa had typed up from a previous session, with a different photo that was recirculated while they listened.

**Person-centred care in dementia and Kate’s person-centred responsivity**

Very little else actually happened over the two hour-long session, although the interactions and contributions were carefully attended to by Kate. Paul Dwyer writes about how ‘slower’ practice is about deepening dialogue, reminding us of applied theatre’s ‘need to simply dwell in a context long enough to become aware of possible contradictions’ (2016: 146). Kate’s work was a long-term intervention, illustrating the way in which the whole process functions to acknowledge how the participants are as opposed to how they were or could be. As the descriptor on TimeSlips’ web site, ‘a way of being in relationship’ suggests, acceptance is a vital concept in the work, and as such the storytelling method reflects contemporary attitudes to dementia care. Kate discussed, for example, how contradiction or
correction is problematic for interactions with people who have Alzheimer’s, a disease which militates against remembering or accuracy.

Writings on dementia highlight how arts approaches are rooted in dementia care needs. Anthea Innes suggests ‘person centred approaches’ for the treatment of ‘sufferers’ of dementia (2009: 3), to compensate for their ‘loss of personhood’. Innes contests the value of arts interventions which claim ‘visible signs of well-being increase’, as information is framed as ‘anecdotal accounts…not based on empirical research’ (ibid: 16). Despite the recognised value of a person-centred approach that can suggest one-on-one attention at times, Innes emphasises the role of often poorly paid and undertrained staff in the treatment of residents in care settings, highlighting that neither parties have a status recognised by society. She notes that person-centred care planning can be ‘difficult to achieve if the basics of a person-centred philosophy are not understood’ (ibid: 17), and even relatively simple steps to care improvements within such an approach need support and mentoring (ibid: 16). Given the challenges of this wider context for working meaningfully as a person-centred practitioner, it is remarkable to note Kate’s approach successfully allowed individual expression through creative, imaginative stimulation.

Describing TimeSlips, Allen Power argues that ‘sensory stimulation or creativity’ can act as ‘potential back doors for people whose speech has been affected by dementia or other neurological diseases’ (Power 2010: 165). Arts and creativity are described as, ‘successful approaches to connecting to people with dementia’, and storytelling based on the TimeSlips idea is cited as a person-centred approach (ibid: 163). Therapeutic benefits of activities are emphasised for those with dementia that can relate less to an activity, which may mirror the
concerns and drives of a younger person’s world of action, and more to the notion of share in a creative, sensory experience (ibid: 117). He continues,

the interaction of memory and creativity in this social environment was important in preserving a sense of self. By non-judgmentally tapping in to imagination and using a facilitative style, the creative ability thought to be lost in people with dementia care can resurface.

(ibid: 165).

The storytelling process contrasts with reminiscence practices where an object, music or other trigger helps participants to recall past memories. Power discusses those who, ‘objected to the overuse of reminiscence in people with dementia, because it brought to mind what he [sic] had lost or forgotten’ (2010: 161). He also highlights the importance in social contexts to avoid embarrassing questions which may expose otherwise less visible shortcomings of poor memory or social awareness.

Kate focused on this ‘being rather than doing’, emphasising how the pictures allow any contribution, including listening. Many in the session were inactive, just sitting in the company of the few who were talking about the picture. Each participant was given space by Kate to contribute individually and diversely as all suggestions were taken on board in a collectively authored narrative.

Nicholson, describing her own work with an elder, declares an interest in ‘a slower process of inhabitation, experienced affectively, over time’ (2016: 250), a description which aptly sits with Kate’s practice here. This was reflected in storytelling process; everything was scribed as said and the story built from the collective ideas from the group, nothing was ruled out, all answers to questions were the right ones, every meandering path was the right turn to take. Kate described her work as a ‘gentle process’ because there is ‘no need to get anything right’. Kate’s leadership role seemed withdrawn from the foreground in the session, with decision-making seeming invisible and minimal.
Refreshingly, there was no pressure for outcome of artistic product or measureable social gain, although it is important to note that this was not normal in Kate’s experience of work. To draw a comparison, she spoke about becoming disillusioned by the outcome-focussed aspects of some participatory arts work, which in particular she experienced when working for Creative Partnerships (an Arts Council/government funded initiative linking education outcomes to arts participation in schools). Kate claimed artists were encouraged to anticipate and seek particular responses to the work, and to document them as confirmation of the validity and worth of the project. Contrastingly, she was refreshed by the lack of instrumentality in the observed work, where there was no requirement to make a product or to measure responses. This may have come about in part because of the nature of the participants and challenges to their memory, but for Kate it was an intrinsic part of her favoured approach and it led to an extended offer, rather than limitation, of creative opportunity,

These sessions mean – because the outcome really is what we discuss – and the fact that it gets penned down is partly because it helps us remember as we go – and it is partly because the week after it’s nice to read back what we’ve done. But it is only just because it’s nice. It’s nice because sometimes Winnie’ll read it – even though I’m not sure that she’s brilliant at reading – but when she shares that, it’s such a lovely thing. So it helps makes the present of the next session nice. And then sometimes the residents themselves – and they’ve done it in the past – they want to make a book out of it. They want that, you know, and that’s nice as well. But because it never has an outcome attached to it at the beginning, it’s so freeing.

Kate welcomed the freedom offered by a practice liberated from pressure of production (‘never has an outcome attached’) and that offered positive experience by mere recall of the previous session: ‘it helps make the present of the next session nice’. Kate placed a value on nothing more than the experience of the moment. Nicholson describes an ‘affect’ (2016: 253) occurring between applied
theatre participants as part of a *relational* ontology she proposes for applied theatre. Nicholson writes about a change which ‘does not rely for its efficacy on action that is subsequent to the theatrical encounter, but acknowledges that the encounter in itself holds potential for new forms of relationality’ (ibid: 253). Kate’s suggestion that Winnie’s reading is not prized for accomplishment but the ‘sharing’ which is ‘a lovely thing’, and ‘nice’ in ‘the present’ appears to share Nicholson’s value of ‘relationality’. In terms of responsivity, Kate’s attunement to the group has developed a response appropriate to their way of being, and her language suggests she takes joy in the mutual ‘encounter’ (to reference Nicholson), feeding a respond-ability that draws reward from the work.

The open nature of the work, which she described as ‘freeing’, was extended to Kate’s open attitude to the residents’ attendance at the session. She spoke of not wanting to pressure them to attend,

So, sometimes I think that residents, or the people you work with, it’s a small performance for them to find the energy to want to come but also to be able to refuse. And then to be able to do you a favour, and they *are* doing me a favour; I can’t do the sessions if they’re not there. And it’s nice to be able to let people know that?

She interpreted their actions as a performative act, and her own response, here tentatively described (suggested by a rising intonation after ‘know that’), suggested she performed an acknowledgement of their actions. Kate highlighted how she sees the role of visiting artist not as a ‘giving to’ the participants, but that they are giving to her. Their performance is always valued, even if it is a non-performance (as in non-attendance), a negative is equally valid. She spoke of how the lack of required outcome was a liberation that was unusual in her experience as an artist operating in participatory settings, and how she could establish a relationship based on expressions of power in the performative agency of
participants. There was no obligation for them to return ‘a favour’; Kate suggested this contrasted with the powerless and dependent nature which can define their lives within residential care. Premising the commentary with her understanding that, ‘most situations are performative’, Kate went on to suggest,

It’s a subtle or gentle thing that they can control, a power that they can have, and a situation that they don’t have that often. And, you know, those small things, they make up a practice really – they make up a piece of work – so we’re all sort of performing, a little bit.

Kate approached the wider context and activity around the setting up of the actual participatory arts process as a performance of power for the participants, and a performance of her own self. Naturally-occurring drama was demonstrated through attendance at the session and the roles taken, such as playful participant, withdrawn or absent group member, persuasive or supportive facilitator. There is also a performative ability for participants to create an alternative sense of the real within the storytelling which transcended their material conditions: being in World War 2, for example. The work gave an opportunity for participants to act out what was lacking in their living conditions and social status. Kate’s definition of their participation in the activity as a ‘gentle’ act of ‘power’ infers a substantial focus on the perspective of the older people, and an empathetic view. The comment, ‘they make up a practice really’ underscores how the workshop was not concerned with imposition of designed activity, but there was actually much happening within the participants’ small contributions, recalling Power’s suggestion (discussed above) of sharing an experience. In apparent passivity, then, there was much occurring.

What also ‘made up the practice’ was the challenge to just be part of the group. Kate outlined how, for the older people, the experience of the event is a gentle performance that goes on which is about everybody finding a little bit within themselves to do something that they’re not totally comfortable with
at first. Whether that's because maybe they're a bit deaf or they've got some stuff going on or they've been alone a lot so they – which is a bit like being an artist in the studio – so they're not kind of in the mood for talking – they're not in the headspace. And that takes a little bit of encouragement to do.

Making parallels with the experience of the participants' lives, presumably drawn from her own subjective experience of ‘being an artist in a studio’, Kate is demonstrating an empathetic concern for the wider conditions of existence, possibly aligning her own experience of creative solitude arising from visual (not performing) arts training. Kate’s roots as a visual artist* may infer less tradition of collaborative practice and could suggest a different, less active social sensibility to her practice, influencing her use of ‘spacious’ practice.

Recalling prior discussion of the role of empathy in practitioner expertise and motivations for decision making, we can see how Kate modelled altruistic pro-social behaviour to project a feeling on the participants which she knew for herself. She spoke of the particular ways that the older people were disempowered in their lives, with a brief interjection about finding motivation in her own life, suggesting the challenges she also faces,

And for a lot of them I don’t think they’re there [in the home] for choice. But also that you’re in an organisation – a business or whatever - there are small moments for those people to regain control over their lives. So there’s a small performance that we all do – and I do it every morning of a session, where I have to convince myself I want to go – I really do – It’s like, I don’t en- - And I try to remember that when I see Tommy sat at the door waiting to go out for a fag and I say ‘do you want to come?’ and he’s like, ‘no’.

… [I'm] letting you have that moment of power where you can say ‘No, I don’t fancy it’. Because I think care homes lack a lot of that opportunity for people to just get a choice. We’ve had sessions there when May and Jessie have just been rolled in and, everyone’s left the room. And they’ve just been left there waiting for us to do an activity around them. And it’s –

* Opportunities for this thesis to open up future investigations are discussed in Chapter 8, considering whether/how responsivity manifests in other art forms.
you know you have to be careful not to over-read that as a tiny tragedy, otherwise you’ll really upset yourself. It’s like, how do you give a little back to that situation?

She used an image of ‘tiny tragedy’ (a performance term) to express her concern for the participants’ lack of power or agency if they are not able to withdraw from the location of the workshop. In this framing of the wider activity as a ‘performance’, she recognised the roles of reluctant participant and allowed herself to play a role of persuader. Her own need to ‘convince myself I want to go’ infers an empathetic projection which supposes that the participant may (as she did) have a need for encouragement to be part of a greater ‘organisation’ and do something which they eventually are pleased they had done. Kate hesitates to continue to discuss how she doesn’t ‘en- [joy]’ but still feels the need to ‘give a little back’, inferring a challenge which is conquered through recognition of the value of participation – her own included.

**Dialogism and the applied theatre practitioner**

The practice itself appeared to be about clearing the air, marking a ground to allow contributions which were all elicited equally so that, as Kate said,

the space that’s created through the storytelling, with the photograph, is one that any truth goes in

In creating a space for ‘any truth’ regarding their stories, Kate was also enabling the older people to propose any ‘truth’ within the narrative of the session. The group’s shared story was rambling and multi-routed, at times contradictory. The scenario was based on an apparently simple dialogical exchange and interaction which allows participants to author their own ‘truths’, even about themselves. The process equally welcomed all contributions without judgement, in order, as Kate said in the reflective dialogue, ‘to hear the person’. Through a concept of
dialogism, we can see how this ability to hear Kate’s person is also a process of the work. Her comments about her reluctant attendance, above, suggest that her own presentation was a version of self - ‘truth’. An encounter with a reluctant participant explored below provoked a particular moment of responsive self-discovery for Kate and outlined an aspect of respond-ability. My concept of respond-ability suggests the ability to grow from the work as a practitioner as well as participant; this includes a satisfactory reward but also to develop from challenges the work throws up, as explored here.

Response to other, and anticipation of the response of the other, are integral to dialogism. As Bakhtin wrote:

I am conscious of myself and become myself only when revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another ... To be means to be for another, and through the other for oneself.

(Bakhtin 1984: 287)

Kate’s narrative of an experience she encountered with a participant informed her own identity, evoking Bakhtin’s view that ‘a relation is never static, but always in the process of being made or unmade’ (Bakhtin, cited in Holquist 2002: 29). Kate discussed an incident with a woman who had declined to join in over several weeks:

and she just grabbed my hand and said: ‘Why do you come here?’ And I said: ‘Oh well ... It’s actually my job. And I just get paid to.’ ‘Cause I was a bit annoyed with her and I was just like, you know? And she went: ‘Oh so you’re not a Christian?’ And I was like: ‘No’. And she went: ‘So this is not like just namby pamby volunteering?’ And I was like: ‘No, no. This is my job.’ And I said: ‘Do you not think I’m very good?’ She said: ‘Yes I think you’re very good! But I just – didn’t - ’. And she was flustered. And then the last two sessions ... she was great.

Kate later spoke of her preconception that the woman’s resistance:
was because her Alzheimer’s was making her aggressive, which it can do. Actually … she just thought I was a do-gooder. And it was great! [laughter] And that’s what art should be because nobody wants to be a do-gooder as an artist. You want to be an artist.

The participant accepted Kate’s professional motivation – not as a ‘namby pamby volunteer’ motivated by religion, but someone who was fulfilling a contract of work. The resolution (an artist doing a job) formed an agreed inter-personal transaction. Kate allowed her pre-conceptions of the woman’s views to be re-positioned so that here, in terms of dialogism, relations were made and un-made. And as a result, both artist and participant were able to make self-discoveries within the work. The negotiations around the work became the place for the __ to negotiate relationships, enable participation of a reluctant resident, affirm expertise (‘I think you’re very good’) and provoke a reviewing that enabled change through discovery of each other.

Kate was able to articulate her views through the reflective dialogues, both (reprising Bakhtin, quoted above) on the ‘immediate environment’ of the storytelling activity and its wider ‘discourse about the world’. Her interpretation of residents’ ability to not attend the session as a performative act illustrated how the work is not just concerned with the particular activity and value of participant experience, but also wider personal and social outcomes for participants. As author of her reflection on the work, Kate composed herself as central protagonist within the practice, creating the role as required in order to shape the experience for participants. Bakhtin discussed the author’s ‘special, temporal, evaluative and meaning-related outsidedness, making it possible for him [sic] to draw together the entire hero’ (1990: 14). In the reflective dialogues Kate debated her own ____________

*I engage in a more extended discussion of the __ as hero in my journal article (Hepplewhite, 2015)
‘performance’ as well as the responses within the session, vocalising in-the-moment reflections on her own practice from a position of ‘outsidedness’. She moulded herself as a practitioner through the work, a drawing together in Bakhtin’s terms.

Kate directly related a connection here between her open-ness of approach and how it enabled a role for her to fully participate ‘on an equal –’. She could become facilitator and participant in a dialogical co-presence as artist in a process which was able to be constantly re-negotiated, and as she said (introduced in the previous chapter) ‘different every time’. She allowed her own spontaneous response to the work, and was open to the possibility that the work can change her.

**Doing nothing as a response**

In this chapter, I propose that Kate’s dialogical interactions formulated a __ who made space for herself and participants to author. Nicholson wrote about the art of stillness,

re-assessing stillness in relation to applied theatre and drama education opens questions about how an ethic of ‘being with’ as well as ‘doing with’ might be reconsidered alongside discussions about stillness. The values of empathy, care, trust and compassion are central to many discussions and practices in the field, and they often mark a moment of stillness that ‘punctuates the flow of things’.

(Nicholson 2015a: 427)

Nicholson encapsulates many of the priorities which Kate articulated regarding her approach. Kate’s process was ‘gentle’ (as she named it) and open; interventions were brief, soliciting the groups’ contributions with occasional questions and re-iteration of their words and ideas. During the observed session
Kate negotiated a significant absence of her own presence, an absence that arose from limiting her own interventions in order to leave space for the ideas of the participants. As such, she demonstrated a heightened sensitivity to prioritising their contributions. In the reflective dialogue, she resisted the image of her role as an organiser. I commented on the idea of the story telling process being like a folding in, a plaeting of every strand in to the middle. Kate’s response clearly rejected any sense of neatness or completion,

I see it as running away at the edges because – when you lead anything – you’re always fighting against yourself wanting to fix it. …You try to wear a second hat, looking in. And I really try in those sessions not to do that [i.e. fix it]. Partly because of just allowing whatever comes out. But I’ve also decided, for my own practice and stuff, it’s easier when the pressure’s off to allow things in and – and that folding in process feels very natural. Rather than feeling that I’m doing it because – like I said before – ‘I’ve got this idea of what the project should be like’. I’m fully participating, on an equal - The equality is that I’m doing that because that’s the thing that I instinctively, at that moment, feel, the thing – I’m hoping anyway. I’m heading toward that - where you free yourself up to allow it to be different every time.

Kate’s responsivity can be framed as an anti-facilitation model which resists an imperative to be ‘doing’. Her alternative to doing, as with the person-centred care for dementia, is to promote a philosophy of just ‘being’ within the work, a space which could allow responses to be ‘different every time’. Her comments suggest she seeks to view herself – and be viewed – as one of the group rather than a separate or different identity, ‘I’m fully participating, on an equal’. Her hesitation to claim to be an equal could arise from the recognition of difference and the responsibility in the role, re-phrased to equality. Her style encapsulated her aim to do less, to shrug off an identity of __ based in action for one of being, a state based in something she ‘instinctively, at that moment, feel’. I witnessed the way Kate operated and noted that she seemed to be seeking at all times to make her presence and technique invisible or minimal, just accepting each contribution from
the group when she asked the questions: who is the boy? What is he doing on the horse?

This is an ontological model where Kate’s ‘being instinctive’ and operating within the work takes on a more substantially philosophical perspective, pointing to an existential proposition, incorporating ‘being’ within expertise to propose the actions of __ are more appropriately framed as a state of being. She presented a function of double-activity, both being in the moment and reflecting from beyond/outside the practice: ‘You try to wear a second hat, looking in’. Kate’s comments suggest that her practice was very much focussed around an existential experience of being, mirrored by her own small actions,

You know, there are some sessions where I’ve hardly had to say a word. It just comes out. And that’s - there’s no way to make a single methodology except for it to be that. That it has to be spacious for the individuals that you have in the room. But there is - there is a structure. And it’s useful and it’s one where it helps – you would describe it as keeping it on track – or it might just help about the different - people in the room: how do you make sure everybody’s feeling like they’re able to participate and stuff like that. But just trying really hard to not be on the outside of that as much – it’s not easy to facilitate – but I really want that. I want to feel like I’m with them.

Kate’s expression of desire not to create a ‘single methodology’ points to fundamental multifaceted aspects of a __ role. Approaches which work for the ‘individuals that you have in the room’ links with other practitioners’ concerns for individualised practice, for example Nicola in Chapter 3 and Amy in Chapter 7. Kate, however, further situated herself with the participants, seeking not to identify as an outsider who has a differing experience of the process; she expressed a desire not to ‘be on the outside of that’, but to ‘feel like I’m with them’.

Thompson interprets Emmanuel Levinas’ notion of the face to discuss inter-relationships and ethics or responsibility in relation to applied theatre: ‘the acute awareness of the body of the other as it impinges on our sense of self. It is the
feelings that flow between people as they share space: sensations that exist in one body as a result of the care it feels for the other’ (2014: 126). Kate’s expressions of wanting to ‘feel like I’m with them’ suggest an ethically driven desire to connect in the way Thompson describes here. She develops an empathetic sense to transcend subjective/objective notions of practitioner/participant. Her personal investment I witnessed demonstrated how her work resonates with this statement.

The thesis is based in part on the premise that what artists operating in participatory settings do is complicated and difficult to identify. One interpretation of Kate’s approach suggests that perhaps it is the opposite; her work is minimalistic, clear and simple. The work is not small, however, but big and capacious. Kate’s objective of a ‘spacious’ methodology resonates with my proposed concept of the __ and discussion of the empty space considered in the Prologue of the thesis. As the underscore aims to accommodate many ways of being for a practitioner, Kate’s desire is expressed as locating a ‘spacious’ way to accommodate all who are in the room, an objective which may include herself. And she suggests that this has occurred when ‘I’ve hardly had to say a word’.

This dichotomy of insider/outsider-ness throws up paradoxical images of practitioner models in a ‘performative’ interpretation (as Kate introduced within the reflective dialogue). If her work is a performance, it is a performance of few words and actions. The open space of __ allows the __ to become author or character, director or actor, subject or, indeed, just another participant. She ‘fails’ to take on a fixed or traditionally understood role of an active facilitator. As discussed in the previous chapter, Sarah Jane Bailes explores ‘new conceptions of virtuosity and mastery’ by using failure to expose the ‘business’ of live performance (2011: 12). The notion of failure resonates here and opens up an opportunity to further
explore Kate’s reflections on her work. Bailes writes of ‘an eradicable duplicity in live art practices, evidenced through theatre’s materiality and its ambition: that it can at the same time both be and not be the thing it is portraying’ (ibid: 10). If Kate’s ‘performance’ could be viewed as ‘portraying’, I am suggesting recognition of a ‘duplicity’ where she sought to ‘not be’ (as defined by Bailes) seen in a role. This was a conscious and deliberate act within which she tried to minimise a presence as different to the others in the work, as suggested by, ‘I’m fully participating, on an equal –’. She spoke of diminishing, rather than aggrandising her work, describing, ‘small things’ that make up her practice. She suggested a reluctance to attend or to conclude activity, ‘always fighting against yourself wanting to fix it’. In summary, Kate demonstrated a conscious attempt to fail in playing a role. Bailes writes of

Skill that is difficult to locate, because of its manifestations, its operations, and its methods of transmission and distribution are less recognizable (according to specific criteria, that is), does not readily surrender its abilities according to a predetermined yardstick.

(ibid: 194-5)

This proposes a challenge for my investigations, which set out to ‘locate’ ‘skill’. The story telling in Kate’s session created space around the activity, so that the notion of engagement became all that was there to be discussed in the reflective dialogue, suggesting an essence of engagement practices. Bailes suggests that failure to ‘appear, show up properly, to show off or show well’ (ibid: 195, italics in original) can rejuvenate performance. This sentiment (although not encouraging failure of duties in the role of __) may refresh how we recognise the skills, and therefore how we construct, applied theatre practitioners.

With this example, we see that responsiveness is individualised, responding to environment and also one’s own training, perspectives, politics and personality. Kate’s response to the work was different to Lisa’s, motivated by an
internal drive to calm and silence. Response is illustrated here as a set of individualised choices, pre-dispositions and assumptions, which are only partly related to factors of location and the moment. Experience enables a practitioner to move from (consciously) doing to being, so they are no longer acting out a role but merely being who they are within that work place.

My conclusion takes up implications of this discussion, revisiting analysis of how the responsive expertise of practitioners operates to dialogically enable engagement and potential change of both artist and participants in the processes of applied theatre. Before concluding my arguments, I make a final visit to case studies for one further chapter that draws out ideas of responsivity through close deconstruction of moments of practice. The thesis develops in the next chapter where I use theories of habitus (Bourdieu 1977) to propose how the expertise of an applied theatre practitioner is embedded and embodied.
Chapter 7

Responsivity as a theory of the practices of the

God, it’s complicated, isn’t it? …
It’s a kind of trickery - but *kind* trickery.

Amy Golding

Actually the reason I’ve been doing it is because it feeds me, I feel a bit
more connected to the world.

Annie Rigby

The work of the applied theatre practitioner is seen as ‘complicated’ by
those making the decisions and this thesis aims to clarify and summarise the
‘trickery’ in their expertise. Previous chapters have identified a proposed pattern of
practitioner responsivity, (based on analysis of practice and practitioner
reflections), made up of awareness, anticipation and adaptation, attunement and
respond-ability. With this naming, labels for particular skills or qualities were
observed as common to the researched applied theatre practitioners. In this
chapter, I want to build on and bring together this explication by developing a
‘theory of practice’ (informed by Bourdieu 1977) based on the concept of
responsivity. Acknowledging the challenge of articulating complex aspects of
engrained, embedded or habitual actions, the chapter will lay out an
understanding of responsivity as the self-nurturing ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977) of the
__. I suggest that a notion of habitus provides new insights to define practice, and
also explains how patterns of responsivity are primarily applicable to context and
practice in the moment, i.e. responsive.
Several reflective dialogues are synthesised in this chapter, offering a number of practitioners as common in the field of applied theatre. Some of the precise observations made in preceding chapters are generalised and summarised as everyday aspects of response in the work of the __. Naming and identification was explored at the outset of the thesis, building on Judith Ackroyd’s suggestion that applied theatre practitioners ‘see themselves working with specific skills appropriate to their work and not therefore the same as those in other fields’ (2000: 1, my italics). My research has drawn together examples of practice from a range of contexts typical of applied theatre suggesting responsivity as something which can identify practitioners within the ‘field’.

Pierre Bourdieu’s use of the term ‘field’ is concerned with a structured system of social positions, defined by physical, economic and symbolic power relations (1998: 68). As well as wider socio-political factors, the ‘fields’ of context for this study embrace what is immediate to the locations, participants and stakeholders of practice. Concerns relating to the role of artistry were also raised by researched practitioners, causing me to propose the grafted artist to identify one who facilitates participatory practice within a field of applied theatre. Drawing on Bourdieu, I propose that each moment-by-moment action of the practitioner is subject to a set of worked out strategies and ‘logic’ arising from understandings relating to the field, which are then embodied in their actions and practice. This iterative process will be considered in this chapter in order to explore the embedded features of responsive expertise that were discussed as ‘instinctual’ by many of the practitioners. I suggest here they were in fact constructed (if not always consciously implemented as such) from a habitus of practice.
Habitus was developed to explain ‘active intention and inventiveness in practice; to recall the creative, active, generative capacity of an individual social life… as well as the capacity for individual invention and improvisation’ (Mahar 1990: 35). These influences of ‘invention and improvisation’ tally well with my concepts of anticipation/adaptation, blending knowledge of contextual factors that influence planning with in-the-moment inter-subjective responses to make work choices in *accumulative* development of an expertise. Respons-ability in the __ has a nurturing, ‘generative’ function; these are cyclical processes within responsivity, which not only name the qualities of expertise but also suggest how they are created and grown. Examples of practice in this chapter illustrate ‘generative’ development of responsive skills, including (at the end of the chapter) the generative building of expertise through analysis of a reflective dialogue with novice practitioners.

The chapter is made up of five sections: a brief exploration of Bourdieu’s theories of habitus, two new reflective dialogues, a synthesis of previously discussed work to understand the importance of planning in response and a final section on novice practitioners to consider skills acquisition in the emergent habitus. I draw on two examples of practitioners operating in different youth/theatre contexts, Amy Golding and Annie Rigby, to explore how a ‘de-centred’, responsive focus on participants is nuanced and suggest how identification as an artist (theatre director) is adapted to the role of __ in an applied theatre context. Amy worked over a long period with an established youth theatre group making a performance. Annie visited a youth group for a one-off workshop as part of participatory activity related to a performance project for her theatre company.
This chapter consolidates how, within the concept of responsivity, the work of applied theatre practitioners is primarily concerned with the process and experience of the participant/s (as individual and group). As introduced in the Prologue, Prendergast and Saxton propose that the applied theatre practitioner is one who ‘is able to “de–centre”‘; in other words to see the work as about and coming from the participants rather than from him/herself’ (2013: 5). Amy’s attunement to one individual’s needs is deconstructed to show how her in-the-moment choices were informed by a considerable combination of intersecting issues, only a small proportion of which were evident, iceberg-like, during the session. She used an image of ‘kind trickery’ to illustrate aspects of her internal thinking around practice decisions. Within the room, she revealed only one part of what informed her choices and her internal thinking was more detailed, involving a participant-focussed - and not just aesthetic - rationale. She aimed to meet perceived needs of the group through a heightened state of alertness that she described as akin to a ‘ball of energy, with loads of eyes’. Here, we see how the is a flexible, multi-facetted and changing construction, which is able to shift in intensity or style of approach from moment-to-moment.

Reflective dialogue about a workshop run by Annie Rigby revealed how her self-framing as a theatre artist enabled her respond-ability and the nurturing value of the work, suggested by Annie’s comment (cited above), ‘it feeds me’. The theme of de-centring is explored through Annie’s relationship to the presence of the youth club pool table and how she centred creative practice in a potentially resistant environment. The reflective dialogue explores respond-ability and how reciprocal satisfaction for practitioner is a feature of the habitus the work.
Penultimate in the chapter, a section on planning synthesises reflections from several of the reflective dialogues to bring together further evidence for responsivity as a theory of practice. Comparative comments on instinct and analysis of anticipation and adaptation highlight how responsivity is a blend of planned and improvised actions and sensibilities. This illustrates some key strategies in responsive practice and reveals differing rationales for in-the-moment practice decisions, bringing the discussion back to the dyad of fixity/fluidity that has been present over the course of the thesis.

Finally, habitus is finally used to briefly analyse one last reflective dialogue with two co-working novice practitioners (contrasting with the other – all experienced - practitioners in the study). Where skills are more consciously forming, we can see how self-growth and expertise is nurtured through reflection and within a responsive approach to the work, allowing pedagogic themes of the thesis to be foreground prior to concluding analysis of the final chapter.

Habitus and practice of the __

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ can help conceptualise how the __ makes choices in their work. Bourdieu suggests a model of social ‘practice’ where rules that govern and generate conduct are seen more as strategies bound up in an organising framework of cultural ‘dispositions’ (1977). Bourdieu’s ‘dispositions’ suggests attitudes and ways of interpreting that encompass both cognitive and affective factors of the habitus, for example classificatory categories or a sense of honour (Jenkins 1992: 76). Included within the scope of ‘expertise’ outlined in my Prologue, a concept of dispositions may aid a view of practitioner’s work as socially-situated; they make decisions within an ethos of practice that is informed
by their own social/cultural/political framework. Habitus can be useful to aid an understanding of the __, by recognising how cultural environment informs all interactions of individuals as ‘social persons’ (Bourdieu 1977: 82). In this chapter, I am introducing habitus to suggest and explore how these ‘dispositions’ have become absorbed in the __. Behaviours are shown to be informed by a set of understandings or sensibilities grown from experience in the location of work of the ‘field’ of applied theatre.

Bourdieu outlines how ‘the habitus is an endless capacity to engender products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production’ (1977: 95). Used by Bourdieu originally to explain cultural and societal practices, habitus is used here to theorise the work of the practitioners within the field of applied theatre as a generative location which shapes and nurtures its own practitioners (through respond-ability). Bourdieu offers habitus to explain unconscious absorption of practices as natural phenomena, ‘In practice, it is the habitus, history turned into nature, i.e. denied as such, which accomplishes practically the relating of these two systems of relations, in and through the production of practice’ (1977: 78). Habitus can allow us to see how, although not definitive, patterns form a body of work. The detail allowed by the reflective dialogue process in my research revealed many elements of shared understanding; there appears to be custom and practice within the field that forms a ‘history turned into nature’ evidenced by the rich, complicated, and in part shared, thinking behind the work.

Bourdieu suggests practice ‘has a logic which is not that of logic, if one is to avoid asking of it more logic than it can give’ (1977: 109). Heeding this call, I suggest that although the term ‘habitus’ may suggest an edifice that could
apparently contradict a notion of responsive practice, I am giving evidence of responsivity as a *common* approach, but one that arises from the field within which the practitioners are working.

**Amy Golding models responsivity**

Amy Golding was observed at an evening session for one of Live Theatre Youth Theatre’s ‘outreach’ groups (i.e. not at the theatre venue), based at a school in the west end of Newcastle, an area of high social deprivation. There were six young people present on the snowy night I attended, along with a ‘support’ worker, concerned with collating material and taking responsibility for sub groups. The school drama room was a spacious, carpeted and comfortable large teaching space.

The young people were devising a performance around the theme of favourite toys and games; they had a read-through of their script sitting in a circle for the early part of the session, then presented material placed on a designated stage area under the guidance of Amy, with herself and the co-worker as audience. Amy commented that it was rare for her to ‘sit and direct’ within the sessions, but this was a final get-together before a ‘sharing' of part-rehearsed material with other groups later that week; a performance for the public (usually friends and family) happened on the main stage at Live Theatre’s space several weeks after. This youth theatre group were less interested in training to be an actor, stating a preference for theatre-making aspects of the work.

Amy described her role as one that would facilitate self-expression,

*Creating a space that is safe and comfortable for them to be able to speak about things that are important for them and taking that to other places.*
She expressed her role with the group as a director or ‘conductor’,

trying to get them united ... the first bit of the process is all about that for me, it’s all about laying down, creating the right environment, an environment that’s open, trusting and that’s accepting and where people listen to each other.

This image suggests one who creates the conditions for the group to function and flourish successfully within a supportive ecology. Asked to describe how she sees herself when operating within the context of the youth theatre sessions, she spoke of being,

Like a ball of energy, I become different in terms of my energy, as an energy ball, I am giving out energy. That’s my style, I am a heightened version of myself, [gesture] ta dah! The way that I move and the way that I speak, I am performing a different version of myself and that is different whatever context I am in. If a ball of energy - it adapts differently, has different energy. It’s about how present I am - sometimes standing back is the right energy

Being able to ‘adapt differently’ illustrates how the __ is sensitive to differentiated inter-personal connections and from moment to moment.

Amy adjusted intensity of ‘how present I am’, aware of how she controlled her levels of intervention in the dynamic of activity. When responding, even ‘standing right back’ is appropriate, demonstrating a ‘de-centring’. However, Amy’s ‘energy’ was not just concerned with a facilitator’s responsibility to generate a dynamic for the group, for the satisfaction of others; it inferred the energising she experiences. The work was satisfying for herself as a facilitator and artist, but without taking focus from the central concern of the participants. Repeating the same phrase but extending the metaphor, she went on to describe herself as,

A ball of energy with loads of eyes, picking up on the little things, picking up on that person twitching over there, which you are aware of in your peripheral vision, at the same time as focussing on this person making sure they are feeling valued and listened to. And thinking about what happens next.
Amy demonstrated a sense of multiple selves, possibly a reason why she suggests that so much energy is required in the role. The energy nurtured her attunement, allowing her to notice detail about each individual.

Amy also highlighted a performative element, using ‘a different version of myself’, suggesting a multi-facetted practitioner who is able to engage differently in relation to context and also in direct response to individual participants and their contributions. There is a complex play suggested, with performed roles for differing modes of operation and shifts that are not necessarily consciously considered in the moment by the __. Amy was aware, in reflection, of attending to her physicality of her communicable body language,

I think the ability to allow people to open up, it’s about body language and eye contact ... it’s about learning to ask the right questions ... being able to have good conversations with people, being a good communicator and a good listener.

She outlined a performed and conscious presentation of self, with performed communications that may conflict with internal thoughts,

I think that’s about listening and there’s different ways of listening, there’s listening actively as well and showing that you’re engaged and also it’s about disconnecting your thoughts from what’s you’ve got on your face.

There exists concurrently both an inner activity and an awareness to attend to an outward presentation of self.

Returning to habitus, we can see how Amy demonstrates layered and embodied responses in her work. Habitus is an habitual embodiment of behaviours manifest in (and a part of) the bodies/minds and ‘practices’, including ways of walking, talking and moving, for example; rules are absorbed within ‘practical mastery of the symbolism of social interaction’ (Bourdieu 1977: 10). We can usefully adopt these ideas to suggest expertise as an embodied as well as
cognitive and discursive process, such as illustrated by Amy’s observation about how the participants were reading her physical communication.

Amy spoke of multiple functioning in the __ role,

a constant kind of thing going through your head, ‘what do we need to do to achieve that aim we’re looking for, what do I need to do next?’ So sometimes I am disconnected slightly from exactly what’s happening in-the-moment although I’m trying to do both.

Amy part-consciously presented her engagement as an act to disguise the other, possibly actual business of her work, including paying attention to time and task management, responding to what is happening and how it moves towards prepared objectives, planning ahead, etc. There is a tension evident here between a de-centred self, multiplicity of selves and ‘core’ responsive self, all of which were articulated in reflective dialogue about the session. In the incident with Aiden deconstructed below, Amy details a more complex negotiation within this layered framework to reveal how the ‘trying to do both’ is further complicated by interaction with individuals.

An incident of ‘kind trickery’ reveals responsive practice

Amy’s comment in the reflective dialogue ‘It’s complicated, isn’t it?’ suggests that any methodical consideration of procedural process for the __ would not be feasible within the processes of practice. Expertise may be applied in the moment but is rarely fully deconstructed or articulated, even on reflection. The incident described here illustrates how one of the young people had taken up much attention in the session.
Amy directed the six young people to run their own section as their ‘toy characters’ concurrently. They were then questioned ‘on stage’, partly in-role and partly as themselves. Aiden demanded Amy’s focus more than the others and I observed a tolerant patience on the part of the rest of the group, who had to sit inactive for some time. Time was given to his attempts to explain a dramatic concept; Aiden had devised his ‘toy’ character as a bear, planning how to jump off a shelf to show to his owner that he was actually real. Within the dramatic structure as I understood it, this was a very abstract and hard to stage. Aiden made suggestions as a flight of imagination more realisable as an animation than in theatre production, describing complicated visual effects, which Amy tried to translate in to achievable ideas using stage lighting. The discussion became bogged down in conceptualised discussion between the two. Amy had said in reflection she understood Aiden to have aspects of autism, although she was not given any specific profile or identity information in her job role. The extended passage here introduces the multiple layers of concern in Amy’s role exemplified in that moment,

He’s an extraordinary young man; he has no awareness of himself in the world, but in a brilliant way. He doesn’t sense himself or he doesn’t change himself to fit in, which is sometimes quite sad sometimes, ‘cause he came in last night and said he’d been beaten up this week which is a bit horrible. He’s always got ideas and he takes a long time to explain them and again, when there’s the pressure of time - but then there’s also the responsibility of valuing and listening and taking on board contributions but also it’s about creating a piece of theatre that’s going to work so there’s all of these things that you’re kind of juggling and it’s being able to value that but you might in the back of your head go, ‘this is an idea from my years of experience in the theatre - it’s not going to work but I need him to be able to say it and I need him to know that it’s being considered and that it’s being valued and it’s being listened to by everybody’.

Because actually sometimes he comes up with some absolute, absolute gems and it’s making sure you remember those and you feed those in. But yeah it’s kind of a process of weaving in a way, like weaving these ideas in
a very sensitive manner, weaving some of them out as well, so that you
can get a coherent piece of theatre and get something of good quality
because that is just as important because of the responsibility to the young
people that they actually look good on stage, and so their ideas are wacky
and wild and that’s great, we can use some of them, but some of them are
too wacky and wild put it on stage - you know the piece isn’t going to hold
together. Yeah. And that’s kind of the process that I’m doing with this group
at the moment.

This flow of thought indicated a complexity of processes that laid out the
management and balance of temporal, group, individual, production and aesthetic
concerns inter-dependent in the work. She demonstrates an empathetic response
to Aiden’s experience of bullying, attuning to his circumstances as part of a
considered response. Amy used the ‘weaving’ image when she highlighted her
tasks as a director of a devised theatre production, one of the multiple roles she
also considered within the discussion of how to manage inter-personal and
facilitation aspects of her work. All of these functions represent the habitus of __.
We can recall habitus as the (previously cited), ‘capacity for individual invention
and improvisation’ (Mahar 1990: 35), emphasising a multiplicity of responsive
actions.

The *grafted* expertise of applied practice is evident here in Amy’s ‘invention
and improvisation’, firmly secured to the root stock of a theatre maker; there is no
separation of areas of expertise. This is a blended expertise and Amy noted the
risk of compromising of any of the elements. Although Amy as the root stock
theatre-maker knew the contribution was not viable, the grafted aspect of her as
__ chose to make space to hear (Aiden’s) ideas. She analysed the strategies she
had used to balance directorial responsibilities with the concern for the welfare
and development of the individual,

I feel that’s it’s almost like a trick when you are working with young people,
it’s maybe a bit cruel, but it’s also for the good of the piece of theatre.
Sometimes it’s about trying to manipulate the situation so people feel - they still feel valued and they’re making a contribution but actually you’ve got an idea in your head that you are kind of trying to manoeuvre, but maybe it’s, yeah, trickery in a way. It’s a kind of trickery, but kind trickery.

She found a way (‘kind trickery’) to ensure Aiden’s voice was heard, even though it was an unrealisable suggestion and a concept the rest of the group were not vocal in supporting. She prioritised allowing him to speak and ‘still feel valued’ over devising and directing the work for performance, without neglecting concern for the latter.

The ‘kind trickery’ image encapsulates some concerns of an applied artist. It suggests that the __’s blending of role functions (the root stock and graft model) is more than just a combination of two occasionally oppositional objectives. It suggests there is a performative element to the __ where one role consciously masks the other; Amy argued about an aesthetic matter whilst making choices of facilitation. Focussing on her visual and vocal communication, Amy deconstructed what was going on when she had ‘performed’ the words and actions of ‘kind trickery’,

what I was thinking at that time was, ‘I’ve no idea what he’s talking about, I’ve got to find some meaning in this so I can give him the response he needs’ but it was about not showing that on my face so it’s about going, ‘okay’ like I’m listening, and I’m listening in an active way, in an open and friendly way in with a smile on my face but yeah, my internal is trying to work out what’s going on and effectively respond and not be like, ‘I don’t know what the hell you’re going on about!’

Although stating, ‘what I was thinking at that time’ much of this process is likely only to be evident on reflection, layers suggested by her statement elsewhere in the dialogue, ‘God, it’s complicated, isn’t it?’ Amy’s recall was supported through the process of the reflective dialogue by the re-viewing of parts of the session on video. She recognised objectively how there was a level of deceit (although well-
motivated) involved in performing the role of a positively responding practitioner, as Amy stated, ‘so I can give him the response he needs’.

Practical influences were also a factor in the management of the incident, as Amy also stated,

You know what I might do sometimes, and which I probably would’ve done if we’d had more time here, would’ve made a decision to say, ‘let’s try it both ways’

She demonstrated concern to be egalitarian, facilitatory and fulfil an artistic function by following the theatre-making adage, ‘try it’. Amy reflected further on the functions of __ role as both facilitator and director, discussing an objective of the youth theatre group to encourage confidence,

I think I struggle with that and I think it’s because I’m a facilitator but I’m also a director, the kind of director that is quite collaborative, but there is also a moment where as a director you just have to go ‘I need to direct now’, for the good of the piece, for the quality of the piece… that’s always an interesting balance.

Amy suggested here, disclosing ‘I struggle with that’, how the blend of facilitation and director ‘behaviours’ (as labelled by Tim Wheeler, cited in Chapter 1) can conflict. Amy’s attention to responsiveness may impair aspects of her role; despite her (most likely accurate) claim to be ‘collaborative’ in all theatre directing, applied theatre can impose additional concerns for participant experience that layer additional strategies (of response) for the practitioner. Her ‘interesting balance’ through application of ‘kind trickery’ may fall short of providing strategies to fulfil all aspects of the role. She gave Aiden time to contribute, sensing the need to listen and support the individual’s attempts to describe his ideas for the devising process, whilst (mostly) enabling the rest of the group to be actively engaged. Bourdieu’s ‘dispositions’ suggests factors such as values are embedded in behaviours, such as evidenced in Amy’s reflections. Establishing a habitus of
practice is a strategy that acknowledges the complex and sometimes conflicting priorities informing decision-making.

**Respond-ability: benefits for the ___ in responsivity**

This second practitioner, Annie Rigby, provides an opportunity to further explore the habitus of a ___ role, transferring practice knowledge as a theatre director to an applied (and somewhat difficult) context. This section will show how a responsive impetus helped Annie negotiate challenges in the situation and help to sustain her as a practitioner. Her processes in the work were informed by facilitating positive experience for participants but also, through respond-ability, resulted in rewards for the ___. By attending to issues of how a practitioner feeds and cares for herself as a working person, the thesis offers a ‘cycle’ of exploring responsivity. Annie’s reflective dialogue suggested a close concern with the identity and work of an artist. Here I pick up the debates seeded in Chapter 1 of the concerns to name the ___ as artist. I outline how the practice choices and ‘theory of practice’ of an artist (here theatre director) can be seen to change when operating as ___.

Annie Rigby ran a session at Cramlington Youth Centre, North Tyneside, one of the community workshops that were part of engagement activity for *Best in World*, a new performance she directed with professional performers for her company, Unfolding Theatre. I observed Annie in a day-long workshop with a youth group for older teenagers with disabilities, some connected to their mobility, others with behavioural problems and some with learning disability. Many in the group had limited use of language, including one young man with cerebral palsy who had little vocal clarity and worked closely with a carer who voiced some of his
ideas. Annie’s session was made up of initial whole group exercises, followed by small group devising scenes and presentations based on what they felt they did ‘best’; the latter included stories about an experience on a zip wire, a wedding and fishing, utilising a range of verbal and physical presentation styles including use of song, comedy and mime.

Housed in a purpose-built modern youth club, the drama-based activities took place in a large hall (with graffiti mural) where a pool table was at times a distraction for the participants. The day workshop allowed breaks for refreshments, time out for socialising and to care for some young people’s needs for regular medication. Part of a week-long programme during school holidays, there was no level of obligation to attend or stay with the workshop and the numbers who returned after each break dwindled, suggesting a diminishing interest from the group. The circumstances were very challenging to a practitioner working with a very diverse group. The young people on the whole engaged well with the tasks and those who did stay became increasingly absorbed in the drama activity.

Annie remarked on the careful negotiation involved in pitching a session appropriately when meeting a group for the first time,

I put a plan of games together … when I [first] met the group I kind of thought some of these are a bit complicated actually - and they aren’t, they’re just a bit heavy on instructions

Anticipation of the plan was made through prior research about the nature of the group, whilst adaptations were finely tuned during the process of the workshop. She reflected how awareness of the context was enhanced by how she ‘read’ ‘body language’ in the moment.
Annie seemed not to be fazed by any of the diverse ways the participants connected with the workshop tasks. Small groups evolved differing approaches of dramatic style in response to the task implicitly, rather than being suggested by Annie. She, in turn, responded to the ideas the groups came up with, changing the activities to suit the suggestions they offered and the ways they were demonstrating diverse approaches to the brief. Annie spoke about how adaptations to her plan ‘supported’ the engagement of the participants, reflecting,

what the group responded to better was things where very quickly they got what their object was and what it was they had to do.

I observed how those who remained in the workshop had become increasingly engaged with the activity as it progressed. She captured their attention and there was a great sense of pleasure in the activities shown by those who participated all day.

Annie debated the sense of responsibility she felt for the success of the workshop, exploring how the multiple factors of context can influence the outcomes of the work,

if you’ve had a tricky sessions sometimes the workers will be quite keen to apologise to you … I usually feel like my structure wasn’t the right structure or I wasn’t able to respond to this group in a way that kind of held them. Which is sort of in a way a kind of egotistical approach because sometimes there are just bigger things that are going on. But I do think that the responsibility is yours to kind of make something happen in that moment and respond to where they are, and not work against where they’re at.

As a visitor, the __ may have relatively little impact and the ‘bigger things going on’ may not be prepared or able to make space for theatre activity. Annie’s claim to be egotistical in taking responsibility for success is more a self-effacing comment, indicative of her desire to work hard at finding appropriate responses within the given (difficult) circumstances. Her phrase ‘responsibility is yours’
indicates how she values clarity of knowledge about what is possible, desirable and appropriate to the __ role. The sense of ‘responsibility’ is indicative of ethical concerns within applied theatre to be participant-centred and responsive.

Annie had outlined a creative agenda through the theme, potentially conflicting with Prendergast and Saxton’s suggestion of ‘the work as about and coming from the participants rather than from him/herself’ (2013: 5). There is a possibility that when participatory activity serves a role of research for a professional theatre production it may be subjugated to a minor role with a potential compromise between participant and practitioner experience. The practitioner may not be fully ‘de-centred’ (ibid: 5) when they have a stake in the creative explorations. Here, however, the play was already touring and the brief was sufficiently open to allow for the participants’ own responses. The topic Annie offered, ‘Best in World’ was developed by each small group to relate to their own interests and concerns.

Articulating an image to represent herself at work, Annie described herself at the centre of web, being able to make inter-connections and (as with Amy, above) nurture good conditions for the work,

I’m kind of sending out or listening to lots of different things ... the image of myself is trying to create a safe environment and actually it’s about creating space as well that gives people space to operate within, you know carving out a bit of space, holding the pool tables at bay or whatever the other world or other interruptions might be. Err, it’s quite a nurturing image I think

Her view suggests a desire to make a more sympathetic environment for participants in a resistant space, in order to nurture creative practice, as her theatre director role would suggest. She may be empathically motivated by what she knows as an artist to be a satisfying process from her own participation in theatre-making processes. Here, as __, she was additionally ‘holding the pool
tables at bay’, as the physical and auditory presence of the pool table dominated the space of the hall.

Annie suggested that targeted outcomes were not a priority for her practice, because for me participation work is rewarding because it’s interesting to be in another setting and it’s interesting to meet people I don’t normally meet. It’s to me more rewarding to have an experience in that space where I feel that I’ve connected with somebody and I feel like I’ve heard what they’ve got to say about the world and who they are and what they’re interested in, rather than I’ve got them to achieve something that I wanted them to achieve because that to me feels sometimes slightly unnecessary: ‘so what? They did that exercise I wanted them to do’.

Satisfaction is not primarily concerned with the process or product but most rewarding when both practitioner and participants are engaged, affected by, and steering the work.

Although she is primarily a theatre director, Annie suggested that when operating as a __, some criteria for practice choices are different, potentially generating a new rationale or logic of practice for her identity as artist. She emphasised the concerns of a creative artist and theatre maker within participatory work,

I don’t think it’s useful for me to have a pre-existing sense of what’s possible for people and what isn’t, and what people will enjoy or not enjoy. I prefer much more to be in the kind of setting and meet those people and discover things with them, rather than to be in the role of a kind of informed expert … usually the best projects are the ones where those things really meet and there’s a kind of shared interest in investigating something together and for me I don’t feel that it’s useful to go into that setting with a load of parameters around it.

Annie declined the role of ‘informed expert’, alternatively wanting to ‘discover things with them’; the process was ideally a balance of interests for both participant and practitioner. Thompson suggests, ‘One of applied theatre’s strengths is its status as the outsider, the visitor and the guest’ (2003: 20). Annie
avoided being over-briefed for work with a group, citing an incident where drugs awareness training prior to a project with offenders with addiction issues offered proscribed models of drug users that she found to inappropriately pre-determine the identity of the participants and their creativity. Accepting her outsider status, as Thompson suggests, Annie avoided the potential limiting of the discourse constructed within the location.

Annie articulated a clear motivation for facilitating participatory work,

Actually the reason I’ve been doing it is because it feeds me, I feel a bit more connected to the world.

Change in herself was a motivating force for undertaking the work, echoing Adrian Jackson’s comment from the conversation phase of the research, referenced in Chapter 2: ‘I am fed’. Nicholson (2005) explores the contradictory image of a gift in relation to applied theatre practice, reflecting that it can both give and take, with potentially mixed blessings for the recipient. She critiques the motivation of practitioners,

What do we, as practitioners, expect in return for our labours? Artistic satisfaction? The participants’ acquisition of skills or abilities? Do we ask participants to adopt new ways of thinking or behaviour or different political values? Do we expect them to change their behaviour in some ways? In turn, how far might our own perspectives alter as a result of the work?

Nicholson (2005: 161)

Although applied theatre aims to have an impact on the participants, a sense of intimate and affective connection impacts on facilitators through a respond-ability, in turn influencing their work and practice choices. Highlighting the ___ as an artist may avoid the pitfall of over-emphasis on practitioner impact suggested by Nicholson (above). In focussing on the processes of art (or, indeed, the dialogue it enables) this mode of ___ appears to promote satisfaction for both practitioner and
participant. Adrian Jackson went on to describe himself as not self-less, but selfish in his practice, challenging accepted understanding of practitioner motivation. Annie’s primary excitement about creative processes and an artistic exchange may also conform to this analysis; her response was reciprocal to those she was working with.

When practitioners are engaged fully with the work as an artistic as well as social, intra-personal venture, it is possible to see their own ability to be nurtured, challenged and fortified. My research evidences how expertise is composed not just of what the practitioner does, but also by an ability to grow the work and grow within the work. The artists’ facilitated practice aimed to promote change for the participants; they also valued the potential for change that enhanced creativity and rewards for themselves, emphasising an egalitarian, collaborative approach. This self-engaging aspect of responsibility, proposed as respond-ability suggests that both participants and practitioners are set to gain from the experience; the dialogue between artist, participants and the performance practices have a defining capability within creative practice. Annie suggested she invests in the work; being receptive to the collaborations enriches her in turn, indicating a key motivator for practitioners being drawn to applied theatre.

Before considering examples of novice responsive practice, the chapter now opens up to draw on comparative views from several practitioners to scope some key patterns of instinct and planning as the habitus of responsibility.
The role of instinct within attunement and responsivity

Spontaneous response was discussed by several of the practitioners, perceived as part of the expertise enabling them to operate well. In this section, I use ideas of habitus and improvisation with the aim of scaffolding a rationale or practice logic for what many described as ‘instinctual’ practice, referencing quotations drawn from different reflective dialogues in a synthesis of practitioners’ commentary, mapping ideas across previous chapters.

Amy Golding discussed how, with accumulated skills, she felt that an experienced facilitator becomes more intuitive within the work and less troubled by making the in-the-moment decisions. She used a metaphor of learning to drive to describe her developed ‘instinct’; how the choices she used to consciously take had become embodied within the responses to the group,

I feel like I follow my instincts and I’m not necessarily going, ‘I’m going to do this now because this is a technique that’s going to work in this situation’. Often it just happens or I just do it, and I don’t kind of think about it. It’s like learning to drive I guess, you think about all of the manoeuvres and all of the things you need to do at a specific point and now I don’t think about that very much, and I’m much freer with being more flexible and yeah, I just take those decisions as and when they come. I think I used to stick to a plan a lot more as well, and I’ve been able to throw that out of the window.

A conscious plan for the work can become less important with senior expertise, where skills of decision-making had been absorbed and were therefore less visible and more intuitive, drawing on tried and tested strategies such as specific techniques or activities. As Amy stated, above, ‘I just take those decisions as and when they come’. This is not to imply planning diminishes exponentially with increased experience, but aspects of the work become more embodied and less consciously considered as a response. For example, the use of what she called ‘instincts’ enabled Amy to improvise through what the individuals offered in the observed session, supporting the group in devising their performance. Her theatre
making expertise also contributed to making ‘what next’ and ‘how-to’ type decisions.

Annie also highlighted an ‘instinctive’ aspect of function that monitors on-going engagement with activities through reading evidence of participant behaviours, connecting instinct with what I have named attunement. Annie noted that the particular nature of the group as inclusive, with a very diverse make up of young people, was challenging to her adaptability and functioning,

One of the things I suppose I found enjoyable about the day and rewarding about the day is when you’re working with people who have kind of a range of difficulties and disabilities it’s that thing of how we read each other’s body language. Actually when you’re trying to read the body language of somebody who has a disability or an issue and you’re meeting them for the first time, it’s quite hard to read what’s going on with them. Because they’re giving you all kinds of physical signals that aren’t anything, you know the ones that we read without even consciously programming them, so sometimes I was thinking ‘oh he’s not interested anymore’, or ‘he’s struggling a bit’, and then actually that wasn’t the case at all. Or he was just kind of looking around or whatever and then was completely listening, was completely engaged so it’s quite nice.

I suppose in a sense it kept me on my toes during the day because I felt that I couldn’t relax in my, kind of, assumptions of how people were getting on. And it’s a funny one that, cause sometimes you do think you’re right about - you just imagine what somebody’s feeling and you’re totally wrong anyway so - It’s quite an interesting one to me, I felt I was on my toes all day.

Annie framed the additional challenges positively, where the diverse nature of the group’s abilities was ‘challenging and ‘rewarding’. Her reflections indicated her prioritisation of on-going monitoring by ‘reading’ of participants’ reactions via ‘body language’; her attention to the detail of response was tested in the particular workshop.

Kate Sweeney’s discussion of instinct aimed for the work to be ‘different every time’, suggesting a positive impetus for participant experience, measured by her own feelings. A spontaneous experience can be more satisfying for the __ as
well as the participants, connecting to notions of respond-ability. Instinctive qualities were highlighted by Pady O’Connor, with his discussion of a ‘natural area’ or ‘sense’ connected to ‘feeling’ in relation to performance expertise. He discussed instinct in relation to ‘the most magical place is when you’re either an actor or a director or a teacher’, viewing it as a reward and part of many of his roles. Luke Dickson’s spoke of his use of ‘instinctual’ skills to respond to young people in his work in TIE as ‘learned on the job’ (skills acquisition is further explored below). This contrasted with Nicola Forshaw’s view of facilitation expertise being built on part ‘instinct’ and part ‘experience’. Although there is no shared single understanding here of what the notion of ‘instinct’ described as part of their expertise, many practitioners valued the ability to respond in the moment, and to the given stimuli of the work. Their use of instinct possibly refers less to a biologically embedded reaction and more to sub-consciously drawing on a learned response – a habitus.

Instinct, as articulated above, may be connected with skills and qualities of improvisation, touched on here. A connection between qualities of responsivity and improvisation is worthy of more detailed attention, and there are some resonances with my observations in the thesis. The ability to operate spontaneously in-the-moment is part of acquired and performed skills of response, as discussed in analysis of improvisation in music,

Spontaneity relies on a discipline of readiness and an awareness of one’s environment. Hard work and commitment underlie the seemingly impulsive spontaneity of a performer’s gestures. Consider improvisation as ebb and flow between internalized skills and extemporaneous utterances, a continuous probing of acquired knowledge to pursue an adapted, and adaptable, form of expression.

Arroyas (2013: 1)
Frederique Arroyas highlights the importance of the combination of ‘internalized skills’ and a spontaneous response of ‘extemporaneous utterances’. Amy’s abilities in responding had developed in conjunction with her ability to lead activity, make good directing choices and be sensitive to the individuals in the group. Her skills enabled her to be more fluid with her planning as she grew more experienced. Arroyas’s ‘adapted, and adaptable form of expression’ could also describe Amy’s responsivity developed to a level where she was able to ‘trust myself a bit more’. This phrase carries a sense of a repeated experience leading to confidence rather than instinct. This suggestion of an unmediated response resonates with the ‘dispositions’ demonstrated within habitus.

Arroyas also emphasised the importance for an improviser to have ‘an awareness of one’s environment’, resonating with my proposal of awareness as a key component of responsivity. In applied theatre practice, this ‘awareness’ of ‘environment’ is complicated by the importance of context and focus on outcomes for the work. The improviser in applied theatre is also concerned with a wider responsibility they, as __, hold for the experience of the participants. They are not just concerned, as in the music (or other) performer with creating and presenting through improvisation. In applied theatre, awareness of environment is a key factor that, ironically for a component of improvisation, is planned-for.

Amy’s reflective dialogue made connection between how much she planned for the young people to shape the work and for individuals to influence her in-the-moment choices. Amy emphasised how and why she thought it was important to differentiate her responses to the participants, supporting the concept that attunement to the participants is a significant aspect of this expertise. Her reflections indicated how she prioritised attention to individual participants’
responses and on-going revision (improvisation) of the moment-to-moment activity,

from their responses, you know when it’s not the right thing ... [asking herself] ‘how are each of these people as individuals responding to the decision I’ve made just now and how are they responding as a group and because they all work in different ways?’ That’s something I’ve become much more aware of, is the individual needs of how different people, young people particularly, learn [gives examples within the group]

so it’s trying to balance up what everybody needs as well, kind of gauging, ‘oh no I’ve made that decision and those people are really engaged now but I’ve just made it more difficult or I’ve isolated that person and they don’t feel comfortable anymore and it’s like going ok, how can the next decision I make - can I support them or bring them in?’ - God, it’s complicated, isn’t it?

Amy connected the concept of her responsive-ness to her attention to individuals and their response. Her comments underline how she saw each participant and their changing responses as an important feature of the work.

Amy highlighted how, presumably with experience, she has ‘become much more aware of’ the significance of attending to participants’ development through the work; ‘how different people, young people particularly, learn’. In this context (youth theatre) of being an adult working with young people, there could be a heightened emphasis on an educative focus for participant development, as with Luke Dickson’s concerns for participant learning in TIE. Here, Amy directly connected their learning with her responsiveness to their responses, linking in-action decisions with objectives and enhanced outcomes of the work. She allowed for participant behaviours to adjust her practice. She made links between her attention to their responses, her actions in-the-moment and questions of impact. This prioritisation of participant response suggests a practitioner is focussed on reading detail of body language and needs to attune to the participants individually. Amy demonstrated how such abilities are important to a __fully
functioning in a cycle of in-the-moment inter-action linked with productive outcomes for the work.

The role of planning in responsivity

Although the focus of response infers attention to spontaneous decision-making, planning, somewhat ironically, plays an important part in the notion of a responsive practitioner and the habitus of the __. Returning briefly to Bourdieu’s ideas of habitus, he states that ‘the structure which has produced it governs the practice’ (1977: 95). Within my phrasing of responsivity, we can propose that planning of the __ governs the structures of practice and plays an important role in the ‘structuring’ of their expertise, a useful association that I go on to work with in this section on planning. Habitus operates generatively through a ‘socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures’ (ibid: 76) and also as ‘structuring structures’ (ibid: 72). According to my proposal of responsivity, planning is informed by socio-political knowledge of context (awareness), and the participant-focussed, collaborative ethos that balances initiating work (anticipation) with being guided in the moment (adaptation). The ‘structuring’ (here planning) of practice forms the ‘structures’ of expertise, and planning is explored in the following section that synthesises practitioner reflections.

In the reflective dialogue, Amy detailed how her design for the session had blended pre-prepared activities with responses to the group’s contributions. She discussed how the skill to operate in this responsive way was developed over time working in the field, indicating that an open approach was a feature of senior expertise,
I generally have it [a plan] in the back of my head. I know now - I plan a session less rigidly. When I first started facilitating, I probably thought about exactly what exercises we were going to do and how long each of them was going to take and now my plans are much more open. So I might still plan some exercises that we’re going to do, but be very aware we might not get through that, or we might bring some of that back next week. I don’t know how long that’s going to take, so it’ll be just there. Who knows what’s going to happen? Or it might go off in a direction. In my planning, there’s much more flexibility within the structure of a session, so I guess I am subconsciously planning for that flexibility of what might happen with the participants.

Amy was paradoxically ‘planning for that flexibility’ with her practice choices, anticipating the need for the work to be dictated by the participants’ responses, both expressed and as she perceived them. The ability to go with ‘what might happen with the participants’ meant Amy had to prepare to go off plan, respond through an ability to improvise in-the-moment, as it was important to allow space to value each participant’s contribution and creativity. This was detailed with the previously discussed example with the participant Aiden, where Amy’s personalised, adapted approach was essential for the engagement of the participant. She demonstrated a participant-centred ethic in her mode of practice.

Amy reflected on how detailed preparation used to be more important for her as a less experienced, or less confident, facilitator,

I feel confident about going in with a loose plan whereas before I would’ve been like, ‘I haven’t spent ages and ages thinking about exactly what I’m going to do and exactly how I’m going to deliver this and will this be clear instructions and how long’s that going to take and have I got enough material to fill a session?’, and all those things. And I don’t worry about all that any more, I trust myself a bit more.

Amy emphasised how she could see that her ability to respond in-the-moment was an indication of increased experience and enhanced expertise. The process was complemented by Amy’s confidence to ‘go in with a loose plan’ and her articulated ability to ‘trust’ in her response, making links between self-trust and instinct.
Illustrating a comparative attitude to planning, Catrina McHugh suggests her use of a pre-prepared alternative,

I always, the type of worker I am, I can change my plan but I know what I am changing it to [(laughter) ... [I plan] how could I creatively support discussion. ... I’ll have a plan but I will also have a back-up plan. It’s not written down but it’s one, but it’s the one I know in my head so I understand what I’m going do and where it’s going to go. And I generally, I can respond to this situation but I still think that I think about it before it happens.

Catrina’s additional plans illustrated a general awareness of the nature of the group, evidencing anticipation for challenges in the work resulting from a knowledge of context. The planning approach tallied with a politically, rather than individually, motivated practice and a more fixed, although responsive mode of work. Catrina emphasised the work she undertook before the session appeared to start,

if something really altered I would be trying to do it just before the session so that I can make the session run well and maybe tap into the support worker, if I needed to just to find that lay of the land ... before I even started I was going round and people who I hadn’t met before, I was introducing myself to them … so really just letting those people know who don’t know who I am or what the session is about

Catrina could be seen to prioritise her adaptation to the circumstances; she paid greater attention to ‘improvising’ around establishing the conditions of the work so that the experience of the workshop was protected for the participants.

Pady illustrated a relationship to planning that allowed for a strategically-used open approach, planning ahead to respond in-the-moment, as a theatre director might, to what the participants bring through their performance work.
Performer-centred, improvisational strategies at the heart of clown techniques consistently underpinned all his work with groups, whether they were professional actors or community performers. Pady had developed skills to trust in the
openness of the approaches and he was now able to allow space for the creativity of the group’s contributions,

I began with everything on a piece of paper and I’d go, ‘that hasn’t worked so where should I go now?’ Whereas now you know I’m in a fortunate position where I feel I could go in a thousand different ways. I think what’s a really important thing as well is to not fear, not fear as a practitioner that you are also learning in that moment. That’s the exciting thing to me...When I don’t know what’s happening it’s the most exciting point for me now as a director and practitioner. I go ‘this is where something magic is going to happen, this is where something exciting is going to develop, we’re on a journey, we’re a bit in the dark here, this is brilliant!’

Pady’s relationship to planning was underlined by his role as ‘director and practitioner’, allowing space for the unexpected and ‘something magic’. This planning and responding is by the benefit of the creative product and the participant experience, as well as reward for the practitioner - ‘the most exciting point’. Improvisational approaches of clowning assign a creative authorship to the individual characteristics of the performer and align well with an ethos of applied theatre, which values the diverse contributions of each individual participant.

Within an application of performance method, Pady’s plans were open to contributions within a specific structure.

Annie illustrated how having a detailed plan from which to depart allows her a confidence to be more responsive in practice,

I always have a written plan for a session. I always kind of write down what the exercises will be and what the steps are, and I quite rarely totally follow it. I quite often adjust it as I’m going. But I feel really stressed if I haven’t got a plan, I feel really, really stressed if I haven’t got anything kind of written down.

Annie gained satisfaction from not locking down the processes, and allowing space for the individual interests, energy and creativity of the participants to shape the work,
I am interested in sharing my skills but I’m interested in creating structures for other people to be creative and seeing what journeys they might go on through that. I suppose that informs my planning a lot in what I choose to do in a session.

This language suggests a relationship to planning as a means to set an agenda for the practice through creative processes that are equally shared by practitioner and participants, explored (above) in discussion of Annie as __ operating with emphasis on an identity as an artist.

Planning, responding and temporality

Responding in the moment to participants requires practitioners to make decisions around the factors of time; merely keeping time is a fundamental skill for the __. Bourdieu suggests, ‘practice is inseparable from temporality, not only because it is played out in time, but also because it plays strategically with time’ (1990: 80). Temporality adds a further dimension to the consideration of aspects of responding. Annie’s thorough planning allowed her to be more responsive within the circumstances by ‘buying’ time; the preparation ironically allowed her to be able to not to stick to the plan,

I find it much easier to be in-the-moment if I know I’ve got quite a clear plan or a set of activities and sometimes it’s slightly about buying myself headspace because of course you can completely re-write a plan and take a totally different direction but I find I need to have built something, a little headspace to do that thinking.

She valued playing with time and being opportunistic with the group, deviating from the planned session of activities in order to respond to a particular way. Amy also spoke of re-planning processes in the moment,
Often I’m definitely multi-tasking in terms of sometimes I’m speaking at them thinking about ‘what’s going to happen next, where am I going to take this next?’

Amy shifted herself through time, thinking between now and then to inform planning for practice. She discusses (further explored below in relation to a driving metaphor) how she makes decisions ‘as and when they come’. Temporally, these are not decisions that can be made prior to the (often unanticipated) arrival.

Annie went on to describe a similar ability to be re-planning ahead whilst in the process of carrying out the plan,

there was a point where I was getting them all to feedback on something and I was really conscious of one person feeding back (and it may have been Cally or somebody like that who I was really confident that they would feedback fine and they wouldn’t kind of need any kind of extra help) that I wasn’t really listening to her that much and what I was really doing was thinking about, ‘okay how’s the next exercise going to work, what shall I do?’, and kind of finding those little moments of head space after you’ve set a task off and to kind of do a bit of processing time in your own head there and I think yeah, I suppose it is quite an instinctive thing looking round and going, ‘are people enjoying this, are people engaged, does the energy feel right, is somebody feeling left out, and what would I adjust in terms of my plan to respond to that?’

Annie’s reflections indicate how a practitioner is concerned with forward speculation and planning informed by responses to the session up to that point, suggesting a temporal complexity to her thinking. In any given moment there are a series of considerations the practitioner makes in action, thinking about decisions for the session ahead in relation to what she now knows about participants from their past actions. Annie may be planning ahead for the projected outcomes of the session, looking back over her creative aims or policy plans for the work or previously discussed strategic concerns of stakeholders. The train of thought and description of detail again brings to mind Amy’s declaration (cited above), ‘it’s complicated, isn’t it?’
Encapsulated in Annie’s ‘looking round’ (above) is a complicated facility for multiple reading around the room for signals of participation from group members, indications of engagement which may be differently presented by individuals. This was also reflected in a comment from Amy where she proposed a self-description of a ‘ball of energy, with loads of eyes, picking up on the little things’. The practitioners are processing temporally diverse concerns which think back and forward, temporally and topically, in a web of complexity; their practice could be said to ‘play strategically with time’, as Bourdieu suggests.

Annie made a judgement that she reflected post-practice motivated by a decision mid-practice to pay less attention to aspects of the work or members of the group. In this example, the judgement was to not listen closely to, ‘Cally or somebody like that who I was really confident that they would feed back fine and they wouldn’t kind of need any kind of extra help’. Although Annie’s phrasing indicates a tone of justification and perhaps regret that she cannot focus on more, she highlighted the necessity to prioritise and make a judgement in that moment, having weighed up the choices between where to give most attention. This echoes a concern suggested in Amy’s comment (above) ‘sometimes I am disconnected slightly from exactly what’s happening in-the-moment although I’m trying to do both’. She suggests being temporally in two places at once. Annie outlined how several elements of practice required her attention at the same time: participant enjoyment, group engagement, energy levels, individuals’ sense of involvement.

Annie commented that the reflective dialogue research process had perhaps called to her attention the ‘complexity of thought’ she analysed (above). She stated, almost as an aside, prior to the above citation,
I really noticed it, there was a point today and I don't know if it was because I was being observed or just that process of thinking about what I'm thinking about, but it's interesting there was a point where ... [etc.]

This was the preface to the discussion where she had positioned her detailed reading of the responses in the room as ‘quite an instinctive thing’. The research process encouraged a level of self-awareness not normally apparent to Annie; her logic of practice could be said to be revealed in that moment. Her attention was called to a dimension of her thought processes, suggesting that, perhaps because it was, as she said, a ‘processing in your head’ connected to ‘an instinctive thing’, this complexity and detail of expertise may often pass unnoticed by the practitioner.

**Self-recognition of responsivity as part of the habitus of expertise**

A final visit to a reflective dialogue of what may be identified as early-career or novice practitioners (around five years practicing post-graduation) allows reflection on how decisions are made in-action, lays bare the mechanics of the ___ and provides evidence for what makes up responsivity as a theory of practice. The explicit discussion of developing skills indicates awareness of what is more embedded, taken for granted or ‘instinctual’ in senior expertise. This reflective dialogue reveals how their habitus of expertise was *consciously* responsive. Discoveries of techniques in these two ___s makes their reflections particularly useful for supporting pedagogically-related deconstruction of skills acquisition, reflecting the teaching/learning interests of the researcher and motivation for the thesis. Analysing expertise that is more consciously forming, the reflections (rather than the work) of the two practitioners is deconstructed following an initial brief introduction to the context in order to aid exploration.
Claire Hills and Laura Baxendale worked as early career practitioners with the Focus Group at Lawnmowers Independent Theatre Company, a project for adults with learning disability. Ali Campbell charts a history of Lawnmowers that outlines projects since its foundation in 1986, noting ‘a rich synthesis, bringing a formidable array of participatory theatre techniques to bear on the challenges of learning disabled self-determination, advocacy and activism in wider civic society’ (2013: 76). The company run weekly sessions programmes using aspects of performance and other arts from their own building based in Gateshead; some groups perform publicly and facilitate Forum Theatre in training contexts. Many participants have been part of the long-term advocacy of disabled rights activity that utilise performance and workshop processes.

The observed session explored use of shadow and silhouette to make visual storytelling, illustrating significant landmark images from the region; small groups devised their own sequences of shadow versions of famous buildings and locations around the city, processes which took some time to develop. Final stages of the session were structured with small numbers of performers experimenting with shadow performance behind a screen with projected light; others became audience and offered suggestions alongside Laura and Claire.

All stages and performance-making aspects of the session were discussed, reflecting on how it was important to find ways for the different individuals to ‘perform’ and participate well. Claire (C) and Laura (L) highlighted learning around this process with reflection on previous performance making,

C: I think in earlier days we would do more tokenistic kinda stuff because we were dead excited about a certain theme but I think we’ve learnt to have a thing that’s more broad, that you can put a lot of strength into.
Their own thematic concerns were found not to reciprocally offer ‘lots of strength’ for the group’s ownership. Growing knowledge of ways to generate response that were ‘more broad’ suggested a diversity of engagement options and ways to enable the group to present more effective performance,

L: We’ve watched previous shows back and cringed at the fact that people are just repeating lines. There’s no deep - no ownership to it and no kind of meaning and no depth to it. We’ve kind of learnt over the last couple of years what works and how to kind of tease things out of people.

Laura reflected on how her enabling abilities had grown, meaning she was able to offer a more appropriate and richer approach that was valued by the participants.

Direct correlation was made between their growing skill, the group’s connection to the work, and the quality of the performance. They also reflected on working at a slower pace and how more consultation enhanced the quality of the activities,

C: In the early days we used to have about thirty games wrote down. We would go ‘that’s not working let’s move on’. But we weren’t giving them enough time.

L: And now we’ve got more confidence to go ‘why isn’t this just working?’ To just ask the guys this, ‘how can we make it better? How can we make it work?’

C: And they come up with - And there’s power in that, cause it’s their brains, it’s their environment, their community, so they’re going to know which way is best to do that exercise.

They had not been able to improvise through a challenging situation when they were aware it was not going well, now were starting to make links between the ability to plan and respond more freely. Asking ‘why isn’t this working?’ suggests a growing expertise. They increasingly trusted in consultation and collaboration (‘just ask the guys’), allowing the group to set the pace (‘we weren’t giving them enough time’), indicating the importance of listening and awareness of signals regarding the tempo of the work. They allowed for the participants’ journey within the tasks given. Their recognition of how to use the expertise of the group
improved, ‘they’re going to know which way is best’. Their attunement to the group had grown and they were better equipped to read the messages communicated by the group, recognising potential enrichment of the work by allowing for the participants’ response within the tasks (‘a power in that’). A more collaborative relationship was suggested to be both practical and appropriate, ‘their brains ... their environment ... their community’. Being less fixed to a plan allowed space for what the group offered, asking ‘how can we make it better?’ However, retaining a connection with their plans still gave them a security in the practice.

Laura and Claire demonstrated an awareness of their own developing skills acquisition. Advice to new practitioners was connected to the ability to respond more to the circumstances,

L: And don’t be afraid! We used to have scripts of what to say and we’d time everything to the second
C: because we had that fear I suppose
L: and now we might have a list, it’s like a cooking pot, it’s like ingredients, just to have things up your sleeve in case things don’t work. And if something doesn’t work, not to beat yourself up.

Flexibility was now seen as a valuable facilitatory tool. Previously, the ability to take decisions within the changing circumstances of the work had been an issue, (‘we had that fear’). Without a developed level of responsivity they still found it difficult to change the course of the planned work, even when they wanted, as they did not have the bank of experience to enable them to draw out new plans in order to restructure the work mid-flow. As early-career practitioners they were able to re-structure ‘ingredients’ but were not totally able to leave all plans behind.

Waiting for the processes of the group allowed for the participants’ journey within the tasks given,
C: It might be a sort of awkward sort of jarring moment in the room, but to know that is just what’s happening in the room, there’s a thinking process going on. Their perception of the ‘jarring moment’ suggesting an initial discomfort and impatience with the pace and engagement, was now recognised as, ‘a thinking process’. What had been seen as a challenge was now a potential source for deepening participation and enhanced opportunity for contributions. They discussed a metaphorical image of their growing ability as facilitators,

L: Yeah, have more of like a bat and ball kind of relationship so you throw something at them they throw something back rather than just going deliver, deliver.

C: deliver, deliver.

L: It’s nicer that way as well cos they come up with little gems of ideas. They were motivated by the groups’ ideas to increasingly take a less dominating and more relaxed approach. They now avoiding the pressure to generate all the work, not ‘just going/deliver, deliver’. Through analysis of their relationships in the working structure they were starting to see value of leaving creative space for the contributions of the participants, articulating the benefit of an enriched reciprocal (‘bat and ball’) and dialogical (‘they throw something back’) relationship with participants.

The ability to allow space and time for the unknown can be seen as a key characteristic of facilitation in applied theatre contexts. Allowing for contributions supported an ethos of practice that valued each individual and, in turn, enables richer work. Recognising participants’ significant contribution to the work (‘little gems’) valued their creative role, allowing each individual a creative space for authorship in their own way. The value of attunement may be particularly important where there is a diversity of communication styles, as in this group
where vocal and physical abilities differed. Attunement is a quality which
recognises both sameness and difference to enable __ to make connections.

Research methods for the thesis were designed as ‘practice responsive’ to
indicate the intention for a close relationship between practice, theorisation and
potential pedagogic and development applications. In this context of early career-
practitioners, there was particular evidence to indicate some additional insight
regarding the work was offered by the experience of the reflective dialogue
process. Although not intended as a professional development experience, the
methods may offer potential application for such a context.

Prior to the observation Claire and Laura highlighted aims of ‘giving voice’
and ‘encouraging access’ through theatre activity as key objectives for their work.
These themes re-emerged via unanticipated observations, provoked by the
viewing,

C: What I find interesting with watching this back is everyone seems
engaged yet I remember feeling annoyed in that moment that there was so
much going on that you’re losing all these amazing ideas and I remember
going, “Right guys let’s have one voice at a time” …but it’s only through
enthusiasm that that’s happening - but it’s not disruptive, it’s like, you know,
they’re all quite passionate about what’s happening in the room.

The video footage caused Claire to re-visit her in-the-moment frustrations and
revise her experience of the circumstances, noticing participants’ ‘enthusiasm’
highlighting a ‘passion’ evidenced by not having ‘one voice at a time’. Her
interpretation concluded a positive outcome for the ‘disruption’, which was in
accordance with their stated objective of ‘giving voice’. Re-viewing her work from
a new perspective allowed Claire to make discoveries about a moment in support
of her wider aims for the work.
The use of video within the reflective practitioner method does not necessarily offer a more definitive view of the practitioners' expertise, but throws up a multiplicity of viewings, as discussed in Chapter 2. I had originally chosen the clip for reviewing because the cacophony of diverse activity at that point in the session had illustrated my pre-conception of the worker as one whose expertise includes an ability to manage multiple creative journeys within the social/theatre activities. Subsequent to the actual witnessed event, I made several judgements from a researcher perspective, shifting in conjunction with what the practitioners contributed. The video element of research did not reduce the possibility of multiple discourses. I was not able to conclude any definitive ‘theory for practice’ with the participants, although deeper insights emerged.

A logic of practice and discerning expertise

A complexity of expertise can become embodied and scarcely visible until deconstructed. This has impact on research such as this, particularly because of pedagogic intention to identify skills to share with new and emerging practitioners. Bourdieu’s notion of habitus aims to reveal what has become embedded, potentially aiding the challenge of making evident the practices of __. The nature of facilitation is etymologically grounded in making things easy and the work of the __can be seen as desirous of invisibility. Expertise builds in such a way that it is not often noted, as discussed during the exploration of Donald Schöhn’s reflective practitioner analysis in Chapter 2. Regarding analysis of practice, Bourdieu writes that

Practice has a logic which is not that of the logician. This has to be acknowledged in order to avoid asking more logic of it than it can give,
thereby condemning oneself either to wring consequences out of it or to thrust a forced coherence upon it.

(1990: 86)

This particular approach to formulating a theory of practice is discussed in this last stage of the chapter as having particular usefulness (a concept I return to in the final chapter) for interrogating the work and gaining new insights regarding applied theatre practice. Bourdieu credits systems with having a coherence based on a logic that is economical, embracing of fuzziness, irregularity and incoherence alongside unity and regularities. Objectification through an ‘agent’s’ reflection on ‘the truth’ evades the ‘essential point, which is that the very nature of practice is that it excludes this question’ (ibid: 91). Results are more important to the practitioner than reflexive attention to the action itself and therefore practical logic is a contradiction in terms. This is not to negate the value of how practitioners deconstruct through reflection; in the process of this research they were able to articulate conclusions that conceptualised their work choices. Bourdieu’s view of an evasive ‘truth’ may explain why the practitioners sense their work is intuitive or instinctual. They may see that aspects of practice defy logical analysis.

Bourdieu’s habitus specifically discusses examples of what might be seen as everyday practice and cultural understandings, not a consciously formulated activity such as that created, adapted and sustained by the ___ for perceived benefit of others. The nature of intention within the work of the ___s means some of their activities and behaviours are consciously selected to be observed externally whilst others are deliberately covert or dissembled, making them even more resistant to explanation. Researched practitioners spoke about their actions, making new discoveries in the process; however, even this could be an act of obfuscation. Aspects of responsive practice may solely obey what Bourdieu calls
an ‘economic logic’, just answerable to its own ‘practical coherence’ of few ‘generative principles’ (ibid: 86).

Bourdieu suggests that both learning and socialisation function to imprint features of habitus, which is inculcated through aspects of experience rather than explicit learning (Jenkins 1992: 76). This absorption through practical experience may have implications for the teaching of ___ expertise; only so much can be explained, the rest has to be learned through doing or being around others who do. It is difficult to put practice in to words, or even construct logical constructions to represent doing (in this case the work of applied theatre).

This study is concerned with finding the origin and nature of specific expertise drawn from, and responsive to, the contexts of their applied theatre practice. Within the perspective of habitus, it is possible to explain how the ___s carry and enact understandings, actions and reactions acquired through their experience of the world, as well as from the environment and culture of each diverse work location, which then impact on their practice choices. ‘Practical taxonomies’, structures providing recognised logics of practice, are at the generative heart of the habitus, making sense and being rooted in the senses of the embodied person, according to Jenkins (1992: 75). The ___ makes decisions by responding to the ‘practice’/activity of their work and to the collaboration with the participants, informed also by habits and beliefs of their cultural perspective and embodied life experience. This is not to suggest that the ___ becomes part of the habitus of each location in which they operate, as Thompson suggested by his status of ‘visitor’ (2009, cited above). But an exchange of culture is evident if one accepts a porous ability of the ___ to seek out and take on understandings, language and practices from within the particular location of the work. The actions of the increasingly skilled practitioner are acquired through accumulative
experience with participants, within the creative and interactive processes and the
nature of each contextual environment. These are then drawn on to make work
decisions, resulting in what so many of them described as an instinctual process.

There is, although, a risk with identifying a ‘logic of practice’ - which
Bourdieu suggests ironically ‘understands only in order to act’ (1990: 91).
However tantalising, my seeking of a system (via this thesis) for responsivity
remains an oxymoron. Bourdieu points out that ‘theoretical replications transform
the logic of practice simply by making it explicit’ (1990: 93). My intention with this
thesis is to see how any ‘logic’ of practice was constructed, in order to deconstruct
its make-up, asking how it came about and how it might be analysed in order to
inform how it might be developed in others. As pedagogues, we can observe how
dispositions (individual personalities) impact on any development of sensibilities
within expertise. Indeed, building one’s own facilitation style can be
advantageous to a grounded practice. Although his views are seen to be rooted in
objectivism, behaviours are explained by Bourdieu’s habitus neither as individual
decision-making nor supra-structures of objectivism. He writes,

> Each individual system of dispositions is a variant of the others, expressing
the singularity of its position within the class and its trajectory… It relates
back to the common style not only by its conformity… but also by the
difference (1990: 60).

We can view the work of theatre practitioners through a proposition that they
conform to responsivity whilst also allowing for ‘different’ actions through their
responsive choices. Richard Jenkins outlines how, ‘habitus explains the source of
‘objective’ practices, but is itself a set of “subjective” generative principles
produced by the objective patterns of social life’ (1992: 82). There is a responsive
element to the understanding of habitus; it generates, and builds upon custom
and rule through individual adoption. Responsivity is not proposed as a formula for effective expertise in the applied theatre practitioner.

Having framed and critiqued responsivity as a practice logic, Chapter 8 goes on to consolidate the thesis of responsivity and considers how it may be located within wider narratives of applied theatre.
Chapter 8

A conclusion of responsivity

This chapter concludes the thesis, suggesting responsivity as a theory of practice, even as I am inclined to distance myself from this fixing being possible or appropriate with research of a field recognised as engaged, facilitative, contemporaneous to the source of its being, circumstantial, adaptive to participant groups and individuals; indeed, responsive. The ‘theory’ is welcomed as flawed; without a single mode, the template of responsivity may offer an appropriately adaptable analysis framework to be applied to the practitioner operating within applied theatre. Here I reflect on how the researched practitioners, within responsivity, demonstrated a blending of aesthetic, political and ethical concerns in their expertise and choices in practice. I discuss the practitioner as professional and as an artist, touching on the significance of inter-personal relations of subject/object in the dialogical concerns of responsivity. My research is informed by Thompson’s (2003: 14) questioning of the ‘useful’-ness of applied theatre, and I provide suggestions here for further research of ideas relating to the useful-ness of responsivity and practitioner approaches, including maintaining an open interpretation of the expertise of the __.

By bringing together for this thesis the sample of observed practice as a representation of a wider field of applied theatre, I was working from a proposition as a practitioner, pedagogue and researcher that there was a structured, common, set of processes which accompanied practitioners’ work. This thesis is not making a claim of homogeneity of practice; indeed, responsivity is a concept with in-built diversity of approach as a pre-requisite in the work. But I am suggesting that there are similarities - patterns and informing principles - that can
be tracked across work which is very different. A lack of examination of practitioner expertise in applied theatre research motivated this PhD study. The thesis has set about filling out this claim; naming and giving language to what practitioners do and how they do it, what they think when they are doing it and how they reflect on what they have done.

The research has revealed ways that the practitioners manifested applied theatre’s aspirations of impact within the very operation of their work. Their choices made in the moment of practice were informed by a desire to effect change and exploit the capacity of theatre to be socially engaged, politically responsive and to enhance agency for those disempowered in/by society. Studying the minutiae of practice echoes macro debates within applied theatre discourse; a microcosm of the over-arching ambition of the form was played out in the day to day activities. There is a wider dimension to the expertise of practitioners than just facilitating the experience of art. In responsivity, I am exploring the self-evident maxim that why practitioners do this work informs how they do it.

I will consider arguments of previous chapters to aid my concluding reflections. In order to pursue my investigations I established the premise of practice-responsive methodology. Conceptual openness and receptivity in practitioners, I claim, links directly to the proposal of responsivity as a fundamental principle of applied theatre practice. My suggested notation for the practitioner throughout the thesis of the underscore enabled a temporary escape from the connotations and inferences of names and labels, the implications of which I explored in my literature review in Chapter 1. Choice of nomenclature reflects discourses; use of multiple labels can also obfuscate analysis. The use of the naming device of __ aimed to open up a space within which to hold together the
investigation of applied theatre practitioners, allowing suspension of meaning for
the duration of the thesis, thereby enabling, through debate, a fresh viewing and
re-authoring of their actions and processes.

Tracing some of my research leading up to the PhD, in Chapter 2 I
discussed how the thesis was drawn from a specially-devised methodology that
wanted to honour the central position of the practitioner in applied theatre. I aimed
to work with elements of dialogue to find a new way to articulate practitioners’
embodied knowledge; however, the final thesis is a subjective document.
Chapters 3 - 7 have traced differing facets of responsivity through a series of
reflective dialogues. Here, senior practitioners were observed in order to review
those who were established in their practices and could reflect on the moments of
action with informed analysis. Each example evidenced expertise for that
practitioner and with a specific group in a particular place and time. The reflective
dialogues analysed the following approaches evidenced by the case studies:

- individualised adaptation
- use of role for educational development
- fixed method used with a specific political objective
- grafting of professional performance teaching
- implications of an open approach
- complex decision-making in work-a-day activity
- synthesised strategies of planning and responding.

This was a small sample, none of which was proposed as more responsive and
the range does not suggest a hierarchy for the spectrum. The scope of work
included differing participant groups: mental health service users, secondary
school students, women refugees and migrants, adults with learning disabilities, old people with memory loss, youth groups. My proposal of responsivity suggests the range of work can be abstracted to outline modes of practice that offer insights of more generic relevance. Significantly here, all the case studies showed, in their own way, possibilities for effective de-centring of the practitioner and impactful strategies that prioritise participants - even the most didactic was making a considered response. Each example represents core approaches that I believe to be typically concerned with responsive patterns of applied theatre: awareness, anticipation, adaptation, attunement, respond-ability. I will touch on themes of each reflective dialogue analysis in order to recall and consolidate some of my argument.

In Chapter 3, the work of two practitioners in key fields of applied theatre (education and health) was analysed, revealing an emphasis on the way the practitioners’ art form skills were embedded into how they worked with participants. The first example of Nicola Forshaw and a dance course for mental health service users explored how she established relationships through effective attunement with participants. Her work choices were seen to accommodate individuals, being aware of how health, social and personal features impacted on the way participants engaged with the dance and movement processes. The chapter introduced ideas of empathy, including discussion of bodily empathy, to explore what the practitioner suggested was ‘instinctual’ in her practice.

The work of an actor in TIE, Luke Dickson, revealed an imperative on adaptations in the moment, based around anticipation of the learning outcomes designed as part of the TIE programme in a school. He evidenced detailed attention to use of role: his own acting and the roles he facilitated for the school student audience to enable their participation. He suggested the rewards and
motivations of his work through description of ‘gems’ and a ‘golden nugget’ of outcome, which I connected with a formulated concept of respond-ability. We saw with both examples in Chapter 3 how a model of grafted expertise drew upon the main stem of their art form practice and training to further pursue the objectives of the applications in their respective settings.

The example in Chapter 4 illustrated how feminist perspectives informed a response which, although fixed in regard to method and from group to group, was concluded to be personally responsive because of awareness arising from a social and political analysis of the women’s experience. Catrina McHugh was observed working with a community group for women migrants and her expertise was also analysed through interrogation of empathy, additionally considering how different feminist viewpoints could be used to analyse how she constructed her response and create what she described as ‘that connection’ with the participants. Applied theatre discourse about ethical use of personal narrative and work with refugees informed my analysis. The chapter highlighted an assertion of responsivity as an ethically- and politically-informed conceptualisation of practitioner expertise, which I go on to debate later in this chapter.

Applied practice in a non-professional context was seen to embrace the criteria of theatre training methods in Chapter 5. Pady O'Connor’s work with the Fool Ensemble, a group for adults with learning disabilities, gave evidence of how expertise was drawn from the wider field of theatre, without revision for the community setting. Aspects of risk and exposure were embraced in Pady’s work, challenging expectations of care within approaches that offered outcomes of self-discovery for trainees. Pady’s playful testing of conventions of facilitation was analysed using imagery of the fool to offer accent to conceptualisation of the ___.

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Kate Sweeney’s work with older people with memory loss was examined in Chapter 6 to further interrogate practitioner expertise using a theory of dialogism. Like the creative, open method of the session, dialogue offers a conceptual possibility of re-writing identity of both participants and the __. The story-telling activity used by Kate allowed any truth to be (re)told. Framed as doing very little, I made further links with respond-ability to propose how a practitioner is not only enabling change for their participants, but also open to the possibility of change in themselves through the work. This open-ness arcs back to the initial premise of an opening up of the practice through the research, and the derivation of the device of ‘__’.

The final examination in Chapter 7 of several practitioners, including two working with young people, was set up to illustrate how a ‘theory of practice’ could explain much of the sub-textual decision-making processes that my thesis set out to analyse. Here, I explored the work-a-day decisions made by practitioners and revealed the complex rationale underpinning their negotiation of in-action choices, drawing on some previously analysed practitioners to aid recognition of strategies of responsive practice. A ‘habitus’ of responsiveness was proposed to scaffold an identifiable logic for the work, as well as a means to recognise the environmental, cultural, social influences on practice. Two novice practitioners were included as complementary evidence of how the iterative reflective actions of practice inform the development of the practitioner.

Discussion relating to aesthetics and the artist in Chapter 7 returned to the debates introduced in Chapter 1 that art is a guiding principle for many practitioners. The role of an artist was valued by many of the __s, and, as the main stem of the work, suggests that to compromise this impetus is to the detriment of the whole grafted activity. The objectives which premise applied
theatre experiences (positive outcomes for participants and for the __) can be endangered by an over-emphasis on that which distinguishes it. Usefulness alone may not, after all, be a useful perspective to get a full picture of the expertise of the __.

**Responsivity embraces aesthetics**

Premised by this identity as artist, I move now to consider the responsive practitioner holistically. Responsivity proposes a more cohesive packaging of expertise with roots in the medium of theatre. *Awareness*, as the first principle of responsivity, indicates how knowledge of context is key to distinguishing applied theatre practitioners, allowing them to respond appropriately. Conventional wisdom regarding community and engagement practices suggests it is useful to have an understanding of the field within which a practitioner is operating; knowledge of their ‘audience’ allows them to ‘perform’ well in their role. But there are contradictory indicators here which arose from the research. A good practitioner can facilitate work in the same way, regardless of context and it was seen to be counter-productive to be prescriptive in anticipating the work. Integrity in art practice is, first and foremost, a guiding informant supporting altruistic objectives. The methods the practitioners used drew on their artform practice, training, and aesthetic understanding to address the social and inter-personal questions posed in their applied practice.

Gareth White highlights layers of experience and a plurality of interpretation that contribute to shaping an aesthetic value for applied theatre. He concludes,
there is art in participation that invites people to experience themselves differently, reflexively and self-consciously, and that is shaped both by facilitating artists and by participants themselves (2015: 83).

White highlights the relationship of all those involved in shaping the work; a collaborative aesthetic exchange was evident (in different ways) within my observed practices. Acknowledging the prioritization of participant focus, I develop White’s inference with my concept of respond-ability to foreground how the practitioner does not have to be a selfless or invisible part of the creative process. Indeed, omitting the role and motivations of the artist in the formula for practice risks losing much of the possible value to the work as a whole. ___s are situating themselves within the work in the same way they hope the participants also contract in. Respond-ability recognises reward and motivation through a cyclical blend of many factors: the practitioner’s own participation that draws on prior experience and therefore embodied knowledge, their desire for engagement with art, and reciprocal positive experience and personal development. Through promotion of the responsive medium, the rewards for the practitioner can also lead to a greater enrichment of the participant experience.

The research highlighted motivational experiences for the practitioners in youth or early career, recalled in both first stage conversations and reflective dialogues, which had made an impression through first-hand participation and positive engagement with theatre. This blueprint was described to be significant in forming a passion for the work and is acknowledged as part of respond-ability. One can propose here how an empathetic connection might be established
through a projection of practitioners’ own past experience, making a substantial contribution to the expertise of the __.

**Empathy as a motivation: rewards for the __**

The role of empathy has been highlighted throughout the thesis, noting different ways it influences the work of some practitioners and outlining empathy’s connection to the concept respond-ability. The way those researched for this study discussed empathy - frequently alongside instinct or intuition – made links with their motivations for the work and rationales for individual decisions taken within their practice. Empathy enriches the __s’ ability to be attuned to the participants. There is further potential for more comprehensive review of practitioners’ work that sets out to research into the role and function of empathy, and how it relates to scholarship on emotion and applied theatre research. I sum up some debates here.

My thesis explores how the role of empathy is connected to both egoistic and altruistic behaviours which share potentially pro-social outcomes. Here, I recall Adrian Jackson’s declaration (cited in Chapter 1) regarding his motivations for his work as ‘selfish not self-less’. Annie Rigby, discussed in Chapter 7 speaks of being ‘fed’ by the work. Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie write about multiple interpretations and concepts of empathy, making connection to historical understanding of sympathy (2011: x), a link which endures. They discuss how psychologists since 1960s have explored ‘the relationship between empathy and pro-social responding’ (ibid: xxiii), finding evidence of a strong connection. If we consider applied theatre as potentially included within behaviours which are
motivated by a perceived benefit to others, empathy clearly has a role to play for these practitioners.

Social psychologists have attempted to distinguish empathy acts which are undertaken for the sake of benefitting another and those motivated by increasing the subject’s own welfare, others highlight a moral role for the influence of empathy in pro-social decision making (see Coplan and Goldie, xxiv-v). I am not suggesting a blunt correlation and pure self-interest, but aim to illustrate that empathy and ethics are seen to play a role as a motivator. There are close connections between that which is seen to have positive outcomes for others and a positive outcome for the subject. Both parties can benefit from the experience of activity which is perceived to have benefits for others, as captured within respond-ability.

The researched practitioners demonstrated care, evidenced through small gestures in the actions of their work. I witnessed emotional responses to the participants in many locations: a concern for the lives of older people potentially disempowered within the ‘care’ setting, feminist solidarity for women who had travelled across the world and were experiencing multiple oppressions of economy, patriarchy and race, a connection with a young person feeling outside social circles, awareness of those who were socially disenfranchised through prejudice merely because of difference in how their brain worked. I witnessed affection, concern and respect alongside a passion for how the work can affect and effect (to reference Thompson’s [2009] debates). The work honoured difference and consolidated connections with the __ her/himself.

Empathy is a particular quality which suggests a heightened concern for the experience of others, and potentially an emotional and bodily experience.
Sara Ahmed writes about the role of emotions and outlines how investing in emotion is seen as characteristic of some bodies more than others. Suggesting that emotions circulate between bodies, she writes that ‘attending to emotions might show us how all actions are reactions, in the sense that what we do is shaped by the contact we have with others’ (2004: 4). This image echoes responsivity’s premise of response. Her reference to empathy suggests a way to have a fellow feeling as someone who is cared about, giving the example of wishing to take away the pain of a loved one (ibid: 30). She makes links to related ideas of pity, compassion and sympathy, each potentially suggesting a greater or lesser sameness for the other. Within applied theatre practice, I would suggest that the empathetic imperative is most frequently a connection made with little regard for sameness, functioning as a way to share emotional connection with others who are often very different.

__ as a political and ethical space

Responsivity, as a conceptual principle for practitioners, emulates features of the work itself: engaged, expressing initiative as well as reaction, relating to issues and individuals and the context of operation as well as the wider world. As such we can assert that it is political, even when not overtly premised as such. There is a balance to be made between all these potentially conflicting interests. Thompson writes about how such issues create a ‘politics’ of applied theatre, the care exhibited in those settings becomes linked to a particular ethics, and in turn politics, of applied theatre practice. A politics that is in danger of being lost in the instrumental implications of the notion of application and an apparent eagerness to apply performance at the service of the various institutional, social and discursive regimes that surround and contain the communities in which the practice takes place.
Thompson argues that sensual and aesthetic concerns can link to notions of social justice, and that a focus of functionality may risk what is important in the form. In the space created by __, I am (re)claiming the identity of applied theatre practitioners to re-connect with the ‘particular ethics, and in turn politics, of applied theatre’. The __ may be ‘in danger of being lost’, subsumed by the discourses surrounding each iteration of identity. Replacing the ‘name’ of the practitioner contested connotations of labels; with use of a particular name, (director, facilitator, artist etc.), work can be evaluated, tested or judged by related criteria, risking the other rich qualities and potential within the work. An absence of naming aids the practice and practitioners to elude categorisation and reduction of complexity.

Jonathan Neelands (2007: 312) highlights the range of motivations in applied theatre, from the radical to the therapeutic, arguing that ‘what is needed is a political theory for AT [sic]’. In order to capitalise on the potential for social change, he saw that the ‘political/artistic question for AT is how to equip and sustain participants’ (ibid: 316). My research suggests that ‘political theory’ for practitioners can be suggested and supported by the nature of responsivity, which evades a single vision. Practitioners researched for the thesis were acutely aware of the theoretical structures within which they operated and were able to subtly shift priorities within their work choices to allow them to satisfy multiple demands: to collaborate with institutional discourse, pursue objectives dictated by funding, follow their own creative and activist ambitions and (not least) respond to perceived and communicated interests and needs of participants, supported by consideration and use of aesthetic criteria. The proposal of responsivity acknowledges the social, economic, artistic, ethical and political responsibility
embraced by the practitioner in regard to the participants and the context. This
duty of care, arising from Neelands’ ‘equipping and sustaining’, as well as
Thompson’s call to resist instrumentalisation, was evident as part of the expertise
of practitioners in my research who were able to respond using their practice
within a critical framework (albeit with different discourses and more/less overtly
activist for each example). The practitioners were reflexively aware of their own
motivations whilst addressing the perceived concerns of the participants and
championing a vision, sometimes an overtly political one, for the work.

Responsivity offers potential ways of conceptualising the work in order to
explore the research subject (the practitioner/the ___ of applied theatre) within the
world, a process reflecting a political and ethical consciousness. A repeated and
enduring metaphor arising during the research was of the exchange, or dynamic
between the practitioner, the work, the participants, and the wider context,
expressed in the thesis through ideas of response and dialogue. (I would also add
the role of researcher to these dialogues, reviewed below.)

In the Prologue, I introduced Kelly Oliver’s (2013) concept of respons-
ability through subject/object dialogue. The responses of the researched
practitioners to the participants within the work were ethically-informed, echoing
Oliver’s ideas. Indicated by the title of her book, Oliver proposed moving ‘beyond
[mere] recognition’ of the ‘other’ to embrace a dialogue with, and response to, the
other as a move to counter inequities. Within this study of the work of
practitioners, I am suggesting that the connectivity that responsivity engenders
through practitioner’s engagement with ‘others’ served diverse purposes. The
researched practitioners cited many aims for their work such as education,
agitation, developing confidence and skills, creating connections. Some were
involved with creating performance for an audience, but all their work was situated
within the experience of practice in direct, interactive relationship with participants. They spoke of their own response within the intra-personal relationships as a source of potential self-change, and I highlighted the etymological and thematic connection, influenced by Oliver, between this response-ability and responsibility.

Oliver’s text suggests the related ideas of Emmanuel Levinas, who argues that ethics are fundamental to philosophy and that individual ‘response-ability to the face of the other’ is an ethical gesture, located within the wider context of society and therefore ‘inextricably bound up with the political’ (Burvill 2013: 202). Levinas established the principle that responsibility for ‘the other’ is seen as being a requirement rather than optional. Using these ideas in relation to applied theatre, Tom Burvill argues that, through the performance event, it may be possible to transcend merely experiencing sympathy or empathy for the other via embodiment of ‘an experience of the ethical encounter with alterity’ (ibid: 204). Burvill suggests this experience can transitively create a relationship or connection with otherness, leading to a responsibility for the other. Most of the practitioners in this research are aware of the potential of the work through an embodied experience themselves. This interaction with ‘other’ creates closer potential bonds with participants and can ‘transcend’ empathetic response through an ‘ethical encounter with alterity’, as suggested by Burvill.

The performative engagement of the __ with participants is frequently but not always long-term and can create significant relationships in the moments of performance based activity. The concept of respond-ability explored in the thesis proposes that the sampled practitioners evidenced an imperative for change in the subject/practitioner relationship, which is politically and ethically situated. The evidence of the research case study examples in previous chapters indicates an underpinning desire in the responsive approaches of practitioners to embed
aspects of emancipatory approaches within their work, because it is responsive. We can say the __ answers the call to response. My thesis proposes that this response informs the moment by moment actions, evidenced through how practitioners frame their reflective consideration of practice actions. I suggest we pay more attention to what practitioners do. There is still much mileage in investigating how they think about what they do whilst they are doing it, which could inform what it is that applied theatre can do.

The concept of respond-ability suggests there is further scope for investigation of this form of artistic practice in terms of the impact on the practitioners themselves. As their own ability to respond to the work became evident through the research, further questions arose about how this fuelled their engagement with others through the practice. Applied theatre’s ethos of change has potential positive and significant impact on the artists who facilitate these imperatives for others. Exploration of responsivity and other artists working in socially-engaged practice could also benefit from further research. Follow-on work is planned to pursue these investigations, in collaboration with practising artists.

Epilogue: responsive-ness, proceed with caution

In Chapter 1, I discussed the __ as a professional. Full analysis of a practitioner’s working life and role within a wider social-economic context lies beyond the remit of this study; however, it is important to note that not all inferences of responsiveness positively align with my intentions. Within an understanding of the precariousness of labour in a neo-liberal economy in the UK at the beginning of the 21st century, responsiveness has a very different connotation, briefly discussed here with some positive suggestions regarding application of this research.
Being a flexible worker who is responsive to a swiftly changing labour market is placing increasing demands on workers, especially those in cultural industries and occupations. There was a relative flourishing of a new creative economy with positive impact on applied theatre practices in the past two decades or so, but economic recession and cuts in funding for local authority and public services have impacted on employment patterns and conditions. This raises many issues for the type of workers considered in my research. Angela McRobbie has observed that the working patterns of artists are suggested to be a ‘model’ for an appropriate job/career (2016: 70), however, she writes about potential self-exploitation and the risks associated with the demand for reflexive practice (2016: 23). McRobbie notes that socially engaged artists ‘are deeply aware of the circumstances of their own artistic labour’ (2016: 80) and that a string of part-time jobs and multi-functions can cause an unpredictable lifestyle for artists.

The thesis was motivated by my own blend of identity as pedagogue, researcher and practitioner (with the ordering reflecting the prioritisation of time given to each activity). As a university lecturer teaching specialist under- and postgraduate modules in applied theatre, I wanted to enrich the theorisation of practice and bring further detail of practitioner knowledge into training and education of applied theatre practitioners. With further publication and dissemination of this thesis, I hope that this research may also be of use to others. I am responsible, along with industry partners, for shaping the best ways to develop and nurture experiential learning for students as novice practitioners. They should be ready to enter the world of work, precarious or otherwise.

My proposal of a responsive practitioner is not examining matters such as work opportunities or labour conditions introduced by McRobbie’s discussion, nor is it exploring a responsive approach to entrepreneurial or self-employed status.
Although not within the scope of this research, such issues of responsiveness and labour are concerning in relation to my proposed patterns of responsivity. The ethical and political framing of responsivity I offer in the thesis could provide a way of navigating this exploitative context in a way that is true to the work of applied or other artists. Respond-ability highlights enrichment and may suggest means to consider how to avoid exhaustion or burn-out. Responsivity could also provide a basis for a critical and dialogical understanding of applied theatre practice, with emphasis on the enriching potential for the intersubjective and relational aspects of the work. There are further research possibilities regarding a relationship between the nature of the expertise of applied theatre practitioners and the nature of their employment.

**Future application of research methodologies**

A further pedagogical application of this research resides in how the thesis is embedded in the languages and concerns of practice, drawing on a dialogical approach which invited practitioners to engage in a process of reflection with me as a fellow practitioner and researcher. I devised a practice-responsive methodology, with creation of the reflective dialogue approach to enable reflection on practice using video recording. I aimed to conduct a research project which was embedded in, and responsive to, professional practice. My analysis hopes to privilege spoken reflections within a traditionally written academic format.

Video footage from this research has been intercut as short films for a documentary and teaching resource. Many of the reflective dialogues, including the work discussed in this chapter, were made into edited videos, some intercut with footage of the observed session. These are available freely on the web for use by practitioners, academics and students; piloted via a university web
location, the practitioners reflect on aspects of their work and some dialogues are synthesised thematically to explore comparative topics across the conversations. The videos allow some insight into the practice-responsive research process of reflective dialogues and can serve as a learning resource for students, offering mentoring potential as documentations of work and creative ways of capturing reflective practitioner commentary. The Alchemists at Work symposium (2012) for practitioners, academics and students produced evidence of interest to explore practitioner expertise in applied theatre. Based on Chris Johnston’s comment comparing practices to alchemy, the forum elicited positive response to the opportunity to examine work from the perspective of the practitioner. Documentation of the workshops, presentations and filmed responses in the ‘laboratory’ suggest popular interest in forums for further exploration of the practice.

I am planning further use of reflective dialogues and practice-responsive methodologies in ongoing research and practitioner development projects. The reflective dialogue material suggests potential further use of the methods and processes of video in training and education contexts, also offering opportunity for digital publication. To date there has been no cross debate between each reflective dialogue subject, suggesting wider development to host artists’ debates about how they think in their work processes, also in other contexts beyond applied theatre.

Responses to the reflective dialogue methods suggest there was an impact for the practitioners themselves, indicating potential application for development and training. The reflective method could operate as an evaluative tool or be viewed as part of a practitioner critique. The reflective dialogue methodology was consciously not set up to offer a professional development function, although
further consideration of this implementation is possible. All the practitioners approached to participate in the research (both the conversations and the reflective dialogues) welcomed the opportunity, many citing that the possibility to view the video outcomes would provide them a rare opportunity to be a ‘fly on the wall’ within the work of other artists.

Identity and artists’ reflections on their ‘situatedness’ in their work is one potential area for more dialogic investigation and academic research. What draws practitioners to the field and are there gendered differences in facilitation approach? It is interesting to consider why women are so strongly represented in this sample. As discussed in Chapter 1, Mojisolo Adebayo comments on the lack of representation in literatures and Nicola Shaughnessy (2012) also notes a gendered pattern of practitioners. My informal survey for this thesis also suggests a predominance of women writing on applied work.

Following the exploration and analysis of expertise, intuition, empathy, features of habitus, dialogism and practice theory I have utilised to discuss the work of practitioners, I am still unable to conclusively name either practitioners or practice more clearly and propose retaining an open site of ___ to continue investigations. However, having journeyed along the way, I feel more equipped with a series of images and language to consider the processes of this collection of activity. The work of practitioners seems more accessible in terms of expressing the detail of what is going on. I feel better equipped to teach the work with students. I have been inspired by the work of others and hope to carry this forward in my own future practice and research. For that I thank all those who gave time and energy to collaborate in the production of these ideas; their work and their words must be credited as the last word.
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Appendices contain information in chronological order about research participants and illustration of research-related activities informing the thesis.

Appendix no.1

Live Theatre Undercroft practitioner and researcher event, 2008

Practitioners from Newcastle/Gateshead were invited to discuss their work, sharing ideas in small workshop groups, based around creative activities.

Event was attended by 30 practitioners, students and academics. Workshop questions included:

- What are the skills you use to engage the participants in your work?
- Are their aspects of your work where you share skills with a teacher, a youth/community worker, a therapist, other work roles?
- What are the differences between this work and the job of an actor or director?
- Do you adapt your skills to the group or location within which you are working? How?
- What are the hardest aspects of your work? And what are the most enjoyable or rewarding?
• Do you work in a range of contexts? How do the experiences vary?

• Are there times when the aesthetic concerns of the work come into conflict with your role as facilitator?

• Is your focus on personal or social development through theatre experiences?

• Do you think there is a common understanding of applied theatre practices? Are there areas of conflict?

• Are there shared rules or ethics across applied theatre workers?

Topics of concern became evident through the dialogues with practitioners, such as: naming and identity by self, interests of employers and project stakeholders, multiple and conflicting objectives within the operations of the work, the influence of ethical issues, the role of art and the identity of the artist.
Appendix no. 2

Short self-reflective video (2010) exploring modes of operating in practice

The video served as a pilot to explore ideas for the reflective dialogue method, inspired by the film Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait (Gordon and Parreno, 2005).

Images: Film poster and stills from my own ‘Zidane’ video.
Improvising

Engaging

Listening
Appendix no 3.

Use of reflective video and images in teaching and learning with Facilitation undergraduate students, 2011

Images here summarise a teaching and learning project at York St John University as an example of research-informed teaching strategy. Comments record student responses to the use of video and photographic images as part of their reflective learning experience on module teaching facilitation. The project piloted use of images as a reflective tool and supported development of reflective dialogue method.

Students on YSJ Facilitation for Applied Theatre module used video and stills images as part of their reflective practice.

Photos Jen Todman
‘It just gave you pointers about your body language.

‘It sort of refreshed my memory, looking at the space.

How I interacted with people, just through gestures…’
‘...It is also what you say, but it’s also how you perceive yourself, present yourself.’

‘I think it makes you be really more detailed’
...because, I think, being a facilitator, your body language is the main key...

‘...it was like it put you in a different mode, in a different frame of mind for 'looking in', rather than 'being in'.’
Appendix no. 4

First stage research conversations, 2011

Research Participants
Stella Barnes  Director of Participation, Oval House Theatre, London
Karen Eastwood  Head of Drama, Boroughbridge High School, North Yorkshire
Juliet Forster  Associate Director, York Theatre Royal
Richard Gregory  Co-Director, Quarantine Theatre, Manchester
Amy Golding  Drama worker, Live Theatre, Newcastle
Nina Hajiyianni  Associate Director, Action Transport Theatre, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire
Adrian Jackson*  Artistic Director, Cardboard Citizens, London
Chris Johnston*  Co-Director, Rideout, Stoke on Trent
Laura Lindow  Clown Doctor, Tin Arts, Durham
Bex Mather  Director, Mongrel UK, The Sage Music Centre, Gateshead
Tim Wheeler  Artistic Director, Mind the Gap, Bradford
*Telephone interviews.

Prompt questions were sent in advance and used as a basis for the conversations:

   How do you label yourself?
   What has influenced you to do this sort of work?
   Where and how did you study theatre/drama?
   How did you start in participatory work?
   Discuss what you are working on at the moment.
   Do you work differently with participants as opposed to experienced/paid actors?
   Do you have reasons that you work in the way you do?
   Is there a place for intuition in your work?
   What is the role of planning?
Further questions were posed in response to their comments. Each interview was recorded on video and transcribed.

The dialogues were analysed using grounded theory, noting thematic connections across all the interviews.

Phase 1 conversations rationale for selection included the following,

- well known and published figures in UK and international theatre (Adrian Jackson, Chris Johnston, Tim Wheeler)
- Theatre directors (Juliet Forster, Richard Gregory, Nina Hajianni)
- Participatory and Youth Theatre (Amy Golding, Stella Barnes, Bex Mather)
- a secondary school drama teacher re-training to be a drama therapist (Karen Eastwood)
- free-lance theatre workers (Laura Lindow, John-Luc McKie).

Locations of their practice included: professionals working with young people in school and youth theatre, the homeless, learning disabled actors, refugees, professional actors, children in hospital,
Appendix no.5
Alchemists at Work symposium, 2012

A national event involving artists’ presentations, alchemists’ ‘laboratory’, workshops, performances and academic papers attended by around 60 artists, academics, postgraduate students and researchers. I convened and hosted the event at York St John University, putting out a national call for presenters:

Alchemists at Work: Applied Theatre Practitioners
Postgraduate/academic/practitioner day symposium
York St John University  Wednesday 20th June 2012 9am-5pm

Chris Johnston identifies theatre practitioners operating in community contexts as a, ‘hybrid of artist, organiser and teacher…trying to work a certain alchemy in unlikely situations’.

Alchemists at Work symposium aims to develop dialogues between practice, theory and training, with reflection on this particular ‘hybrid’ role. The event will allow participants to ask, what qualities make up the expertise of a theatre practitioner working in participatory performance?

Two films document the day:

Alchemists at Work: Applied Theatre Practitioners Event (12.5 mins) (filmed by Andy Little and Dasha Zhurauskaya), available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFLOPI6Sis4

The latter film recorded interviews made in the Alchemists at Work laboratory where attendees at the symposium were asked,
• What makes up a good applied theatre practitioner/
• What is an applied theatre practitioner
• What are the qualities of a good applied theatre practitioner?
• Is there a formula for a good applied theatre practitioner?

Photographs from workshops and presentations:
Appendix no. 6

Reflective dialogues 2012-14

Following first stage conversations, a second stage of case studies over a fourteen-month period made a closer examination of practitioners operating in the moment. Reflective dialogues were made with artists working in the North East of England, selected to represent a range of participatory practice locations within one region. Seeking to illuminate what informed the in-action choices and decision within face-to-face practice, a smaller number of these were chosen to be analysed in depth to form the body of the analysis for the thesis.

- Mark Calvert – Workshop on training programme for young performers, Northern Stage, Newcastle
- Nicola Forshaw – Dance tutor for Converge movement course for mental health service users’ group, York
- Amy Golding – Drama worker for Live Youth Theatre, Newcastle, also director of Curious Monkey
- Claire Hills and Laura Baxendale – Lawnmowers Theatre Company, Gateshead
- *Catrina McHugh – director of Open Clasp, Newcastle
- Pady O’Connor - Fool Ensemble, Gateshead
- Frances Rifkin – Lawnmowers, Gateshead
- Annie Rigby – director of Unfolding Theatre at youth group, Northumberland
- *Kate Sweeney – Residential Care Home for older people, Gateshead
Reflective dialogues consist of a shared experience with researcher observing the practice. The session was video recorded and re-viewed together as the source of the reflective dialogue. Three others (*) were not filmed due to theatre participant confidentiality. In these cases the experience of the practice was discussed very soon after the session to help recall.

Discussion was based around (but not limited to) the questions below, which had been sent prior to the observation. An introductory discussion with each practitioner before the session allowed their work to be situated in context prior to the observation.

**Questions for reflective dialogues**

Your priorities – Which key moments would you like to discuss? Which moments would you like to re-view?

Improvisation and spontaneity – Were there things which surprised you today?

How much of what happened was planned? Which aspects were responding to the collaboration with the participants?

Were there any key moments when you felt you had a choice about how the work progressed? What were the factors informing you decisions at that point?

Was intuition an influence in your decision making process?

Training/development - What did you learn about today?

What aspects of your own training informed your work and for which aspects of the session?

External influences – Were there factors outside of the room today which informed the choices you made?

Are there theoretical, political, ethical or philosophical influences which can be tracked through the way you made decisions today?
Appendix No.7.

Reflective Dialogues Applied Theatre Films - Wordpress site

Available at: https://reflectivedialogues.wordpress.com/

Several edited videos arising from the research are stored in these web pages. Some are edited versions of the dialogue in interview only; other short films are intercut with recordings from the workshops. The material has been used in teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students, offering examples of practitioners' work. Films and web site design by Jessannah Cooling, with additional films by graduate Simona Manni, Macchiato Productions.

Note: Names of theatre participants are not the same in the films as in the thesis, where all were anonymised for consistency. The theatre participants in these films were happy to be filmed and gave full permission for the use of the material.

Reflective Dialogue Wordpress films screen shots on the following pages:
Applied Theatre: Reflective Dialogues
Kay Happlewhite

Conversation
Practitioners Annie Rigby, Cathina McKee, Amy Goggin & Paddy O'Connor reflecting on their experience with planning & responding as practitioners in creative environments.
Posing questions - you're saying...

I think it's more the confidence to explore more
Applied Theatre: Reflective Dialogues

Kay Happeny-Huthe

Nicola Forshaw

Nicola Forshaw from Comorage reflecting about her practice

Reflective Dialogues: Nicola Forshaw

She leads a weekly dance course for mental health service users
They're natural clowns because they're very kind of open because they've had to be.