'Remembering the Feeling': Exploring Educational Futures with Children and Young People Through Memory Work

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Στη μνήμη του αγαπημένου Ιωάννη Δ. Παντή («κυρίου Γιάννη»)

που δεν έπαψε ποτέ να αγωνίζεται για την πρόσβαση όλων σε ένα πιο δίκαιο μέλλον.

In loving memory of Ioannis D. Pantis

who never gave up fighting for everyone's access to a more just future.

Gutachter der Dissertation: Professor Dr. Gertraud Koch

Professor Dr. Ton Otto

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Abstract

Educational futures, here defined as the "form of scenarios, projections and visions of the future of education" (Facer, 2021), are a ground of contestation in several aspects of the public sphere, from activists to the media, policy makers and the economy. Taking as a starting point the premise that future possibilities are political, this thesis explores children and young people's visions of educational otherwises, a topic that to date remains underesearched. I address this topic by asking two main questions: I) How can we use 'memory as a method' to explore education futures with children and young people, and II) What futures of education can be/are imagined through school memory work and how? Following the outbreak of COVID-19 and its impact on my research interlocutors' lives and my research design, these questions have been approached through mixed qualitative methodologies, combining a range of multimodal ethnographic methods, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and creative workshops. My research was mainly framed through encounters with 12 education activists and students aged 15-19 years old coming primarily through the Ashoka UK Changemaker Schools network. Through this thesis, I emphasise the importance of paying closer attention to the memories of childhood, echoing a call that is being increasingly highlighted in recent literature at the intersection of childhood and memory studies. Through the prism of exploring children/young people's memories of schooling, I argue for the value of adopting a multimodal approach in the study of memory in childhood and subsequently conducting memory work with children and young people as a means to foreground the educational affects that are important to them in the process of imagining education futures. The futures of education must remain open and contested sites of radical possibility. The contribution of this research is thus in its call to move away from dominant neoliberal orientations to educational futures, arguing fundamentally for the need to include children and young people's affective educational experiences in our conversations, aspirations and movements towards desired change, and just educational futures made otherwise.

Keywords: educational futures, schooling, memory work, children and young people

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"L'homme est une vague qui se forme a partir d'autres vagues"

(Journal entry, message d'anniversaire sur Viber par Ada Loueihl, November 25, 2017)

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[1] See also Chapter 8 and https://www.poem-horizon.eu/school-memory-work/.

Chapter 1. Introduction

'Education futures' is an expansive term, encompassing an equally expansive field, the breadth of which extends from the study of what education might be like in the future to how education serves both as a preparation for and a maker of unknown futures yet to come. The futures *of* education (often referred to as 'educational futures') are particularly concerned with how education might look in the future and the ways this might be shaped through a deliberate production of imaginaries fuelled by and oriented towards visions of desired change. Although it is vital for children and young people to have a stake in their own education, their imaginings of educational futures remain largely overlooked. This research aims to identify why this might be and proposes a methodological approach that creates spaces for children and young people's imaginings of educational futures to be explored, thus attending to the scenarios their imaginings draw. This chapter hence offers an introduction to this research, first discussing its background and context before moving to illustrate the research problem at hand, the research aims, objectives and questions, its significance and, finally, its limitations.

1.1 Research background and context

Educational futures (that is, the futures *of* education [cf. (Facer, 2016, 2021)]) is not an adequately mapped field of research, though it concerns diverse fields of study ranging from future studies and educational technology all the way to design, planning, politics, and economics. In this research, I focus on children and young people's participation in the envisioning and making of educational futures, drawing primarily from research developed within the fields of childhood and youth studies and educational studies whilst also borrowing from literature on anthropological studies on futures (see, for instance, Bryant & Knight, 2019), future studies (see Tesar, 2021) and memory studies more broadly (see, for instance, Pells, 2018 and Keightley, 2010). I situate my research within the framework of UNESCO's recently published *Futures of Education* report and its pledge for a new social contract of education, crafted on a reconceptualisation of learning and the relationships between students, teachers, knowledge, and the world, whilst affirming education as a public endeavour and a common good (Unesco, 2021).

Children and young people have a long history of contesting for the changes they wish to see in the future of education. From large-scale self-organised protests to smaller-scale everyday activisms, students have always been engaged in creating *otherwise* educational imaginaries. However, student activism is often concealed by schools and local authorities (cf. Cunningham & Lavalette, 2016); on a more collective level, Gubar (2018) has attributed our tendency to 'forget' children and young people's activisms partially to the phenomenon of "aetonormative amnesia"—a term coined by children's literature critic Maria Nikolajeva—according to which "age-related social norms can silence, demean,

and disempower people", in this case, children. Challenging linear temporalities that sustain the 'othering' of children is a central concern of childhood and youth studies. Recent advancements in this interdisciplinary field are calling for renewed attention to children as "*future-makers*"—a term coined by (Appadurai, 2013)—who are "prepared to take the lead, to fight, to reclaim the future from adults and imagine it otherwise" (Spyrou, 2020, p. 3). This requires a refiguration of the theoretical concepts through which children are understood and their images are constructed (ibid.). In the context of educational futures, I argue, this also requires a larger take on the political, one that expands beyond institutional politics to foreground the often invisible things and issues that matter to us (Varvantakis et al., 2019) in order to account for the political significance of everyday educational affects (cf. (Stryker et al., 2019) and reclaim the political importance of children's emotions in education (cf. Boler, 1999; Boler & Zembylas, 2016)—that is, how education *feels* to young people. Such a conceptualisation of educational futures and research into children's participation therein has the potential to challenge modern tendencies that frame the future as a "landscape for rational choice making" (Facer, 2016, p. 64) 'uncontaminated' by emotion(s), and which aims to colonise the future by shaping it according to specific, 'right' ideals of how it 'should' look (cf. Facer, 2016). Ultimately, this research joins extant endeavours to "open up new orientations to the future(s)" of education wherein education is figured "as a site of radical possibility" (ibid.).

As Blackman (2015, p. 27) explains, "the passionate attachments that move the research might derive from personal experience as much as from statements in the present that have achieved the status of truth". The majority of this research was completed during the first two years of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and in an era where many aspects of 'the world as we knew it', including schooling, were forced to stop, possibilities for educational 'what ifs' came to light (see in Chapters 2 and 8). Amid this climate of uncertainty, struggle, and possibility, my broader research intentions were set within Ashoka's UK Changemaker Schools network. Ashoka[2] is a global NGO focusing on social change primarily through the lens of social entrepreneurship; the Changemaker Schools program was first launched by Ashoka in the United States in 2010 with the aim to "enable all students to become changemakers-young people who have the skills and confidence to change the world for the good of all"[3]. After its expansion to other countries across the world in the following years, and whilst the strategic priorities of the network often differed from one country to another, the Changemaker Schools program's mission could be understood through the lens of creating a network of schools that 'do things differently'; taking the example of the UK network, this involved identifying 'innovative' practices for each school, fostering collaborations across schools and between schools and Ashoka Fellows (the social entrepreneurs members of the Ashoka network), and, in the long run, 'shifting the educational paradigm' on a national

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[2] Ashoka is a global NGO that Ashoka identifies and supports the world's leading social entrepreneurs, with the aim to learn from the patterns in their innovations towards mobilizing a global community that embraces these new frameworks to build an "everyone a changemaker world" (from the organization's website https://www.ashoka.org/en-gr/about-ashoka)
[3] Source: https://www.ashoka.org/en-pl/program/ashoka-changemaker-schools.

scale. By the time I started my PhD in October 2018, Ashoka had already begun phasing out the Changemaker Schools program and the strategic priorities and funding allocation that went with it. Within my first months in the organisation, there was no longer a reference-person in charge of the Changemakers School program. Upon my arrival at Ashoka's offices in London, where my PhD project was located in line with the POEM structure, I was introduced to a number of the schools' 'changeleaders' (changeleaders is a term used by Ashoka to characterise selected members of the schools' teaching staff—usually, although not always, from the school's leadership—whose vision and action within and beyond the school was considered aligned with the organisation's vision for social and educational change, both broadly defined). I spent a significant part of my first two years with Ashoka using document research and interviews to map out the different understandings of social and educational change across a selection of the network's schools and trying to weave these understandings into my research aims and objectives, remaining alert to any potential conflicts of interest emerging from my links with the organisation. Eventually, for a series of reasons beyond the remit of this research, it proved challenging to establish common ground as to what 'changemaking' meant to the schools. This, in conjunction with the UK national lockdowns first in effect from March 2020, led me to leave the Changemaker Schools network as a 'program' outside of my research scope. My research collaborations with some teachers and students from these schools moving forward developed on the basis of our common interest in exploring alternative educational imaginings post-pandemic and convening intergenerational online dialogues around them (read more in Chapters 3 and 8). In this way, my research evolved partially into a vehicle through which to weave together members of these school communities around possible educational futures, and I devoted a percentage of my working time to the role of the schools' 'Community Lead'[4].

My research is one of 13 PhD projects in Participatory Memory Practices (POEM)[5], a research network of 7 academic and non-academic institutions, Ashoka UK being one of them, across Europe, funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 764859. All 13 POEM projects are oriented towards the exploration of "concepts, strategies, and media infrastructures for envisioning socially inclusive potential futures of the European Societies through culture" (from the project's website). My research project specifically belongs to Work Package No2, which focuses on the relationships between people and groups, exploring how they construct memories and identities for tomorrow on the basis that future imaginings are built on both past memories and present experiences[6]. During my PhD, I was based in the Ashoka UK offices

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[4] More commonly known as community manager, the community lead role put me in charge of all communications between Ashoka UK (and its Fellows, where applicable) and the UK-based Changemaker Schools Network, sharing relevant opportunities across the network, designing and planning community building activities for its member-teachers (such as in-person gatherings and online meetings) and generally maintaining the network's cohesion.

[5] Link to the network's website https://www.poem-horizon.eu/.

[6] Refer to the POEM Image Film for a detailed description of the project and the three Work Packages: https://vimeo.com/334886273.

in London, but I also participated and helped organize (first in person and then online during the pandemic) a series of PhD colloquiums together with other doctoral students from the Institute for Anthropological Studies in Culture and History at the University of Hamburg. I completed a three-week-long PhD secondment at the University of Hamburg focused on ethnographic methods and I also undertook four day-courses on ethnographic training delivered by the Social Research Association (SRA) in London[7]. As part of the POEM network-wide joint training programme, I also participated in the 8 POEM Knowledge Hubs[8].

1.2 Research problem

Educational futures is a critically important area of inquiry in which education can be (re)shaped, analytically contested, and imagined anew. An interdisciplinary volume of studies has investigated trends in education's relationship to the future, scenarios of probable and desired futures 'post-COVID', and the ways in which these can be co-constructed. However, there is still considerable ground to cover in terms of how we might extend processes of imagining and crafting education futures to children and young people themselves. There thus remains an exigent need to develop methodologies and approaches that strive for a more inclusive and democratic envisioning of educational futures with children and young people. Neoliberal visions of education, currently prevalent in the public sphere, are partial and exclusionary, seeking to colonise the future from particular standpoints (Facer, 2016). Developing practices and methodologies that can open up knowledge production about futures of education to children and young people has the potential to resist those neoliberal visions, validating contested, open, inclusive, and plural imaginings that engender a multiplicity of possible and desired futures of education.

1.3 Research aims, objectives, questions & delimitations

Given the need to develop methodologies that facilitate the engagement of children and young people in the imagining, creation, and playing out of educational futures scenarios, this research hence aims to explore how possible futures of education can be imagined *with* children and young people from secondary schools across the UK, using memory as a method through which to do so. The objectives of this research are outlined as follows:

- To develop a way of using memory (as a method) in research about educational change and desired futures with children and young people.

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[7] Link to the SRA's website: https://the-sra.org.uk/.
[8] Link to POEM Knowledge Hubs: https://www.poem-horizon.eu/knowledge-hubs/.

- To draw conceptual and methodological links between memory work and educational futures.

- To identify scenarios of education futures as they are imagined by children and young people.

These are translated to the following research questions:

1. How can we use memory as a method to explore educational futures with children and young people?
2. What futures of education can be/are imagined by children and young people?

1.4 The significance of this research

This research will contribute to the surging body of knowledge on education futures by proposing a methodological approach that aims to engage and centre children's views in imagining a desired educational future made 'otherwise'. In doing so, I offer some remedy to the current shortage of research in this area and provide a tangible methodological approach for both small and large-scale initiatives (e.g., from schools to informal education spaces and grassroots organizations) wherein conversations on education futures, whether youth-centred or intergenerational, can be organised. Overall, this research could provide a source of inspiration for researchers and practitioners in the fields of educational research, childhood, memory studies, and other cognate disciplines. My doctoral research also seeks to contribute to the broader emergent interest in memory and childhood by addressing the primarily methodological considerations raised when researching memory and childhood and when using memory as a method for working with children and young people. On a methodological level, this research also proposes routes towards researching the intangibility of the future by engaging with memory as an 'affective methodology'. Vitally, this research hopes to serve as a humble contribution to addressing concerns raised by young people —both within this research itself and also in extant scholarship— namely, the lack of attention and interest in both how education *feels* to them and how they feel *in* their education: in situating educational affects at the core of this project and attending to counter-narratives wherein possibilities of a radical educational otherwise are valorised, it is my hope that this research does justice to their lived experiences, concerns, and imaginations (see Fine, 2016).

1.5 Overview of the thesis structure

In this introductory chapter (Chapter 1), I have introduced the context of the study and identified the research aims, objectives, questions, and limitations. Weaving together these strands, I argue that we need more practices and methodologies that are actively and intentionally oriented towards the inclusion of children and young people's experiences and visions in the imagining of educational futures.

In Chapter 2, I review a selection of literature spanning the following themes; first, I discuss time and temporality in relation to children, childhood(s) and education. I then explore the relevance of affect as an analytical framework in the study of futures before moving, finally, to address some of the central issues arising when working with and through memory with children and young people.

In Chapter 3, I explicate the methodological choices that allowed me to research educational futures with children and young people. Specifically, I justify the adoption of a qualitative, inductive research approach, drawing primarily on multimodal ethnographic experimentations, ethnographic methods, and participatory approaches in research with children and young people. It is in this chapter that I discuss the utility of the pilot research phase in establishing a bottom-up framework of meaning around the use of memory in my research. I illustrate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on my research design—particularly in terms of the subsequent reconstruction of the 'field', adaptations in my approach to participant recruitment, and the re-establishment of my research aims and objectives). In this vein, my discussion also centres the challenges and limitations experienced during fieldwork, as well as matters concerning research ethics and positionality.

In Chapter 4, I elaborate further on the pilot research phase and its processes of experimenting with personal objects to make notions of memory more tangible and accessible, discussing how this led to the co-designing of the *school memory work(shop)*, the methodology through which most of this thesis' data has been collected.

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I will follow an affective analytical framework to analyse a selection of school memories, looking at the political significance of educational affects towards the unpacking of how everyday school practices and formations (e.g., school exams, Chapter 5), objects (e.g., school T-shirts and bags, Chapter 8), and spaces (e.g., gendered toilets, Chapter 7) are shaping educational experiences and framing educational (in)justices whilst also prefiguring ideas about the purpose of education itself. Finally, across all three chapters, I contemplate the importance of 'remembering those feelings' in imagining education otherwise, and I discuss 'those feelings' at greater length in Chapter 8.

In Chapter 8, I synthesise my research findings under the prism of educational futures imaginings. I revisit my two research questions to discuss how the *school memory work(shop)* can serve as a memory-method for exploring education futures with children and young people through affect, as well as how those school memories themselves might serve as feminist pedagogical tools towards more just educational futures.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I synthesise my overall findings and research contribution and further refer to the limitations of my research, also suggesting recommendations for future scholarship.

Chapter 2. Assembling Relevant Theoretical and Conceptual Trajectories

This chapter examines a selection of theoretical and conceptual foundations that are relevant for the exploration of educational futures with children and young people through memory. It is not an exhaustive review of the literature but a selective one, aiming to map the relevant theories, discourses, and concepts upon which this research is grounded. It draws primarily from Childhood, Youth, and Educational Studies, with some fewer references to Futures Studies and Memory Studies. The chapter begins by exploring how children, childhoods, and education are being discussed in relation to 'futures' and elaborates briefly on the proliferation of educational futures discourses in the light of COVID-19 global pandemic; it continues with the relevance of 'affect' in the study of futures and subsequently concludes with methodological approaches to 'memory' towards the study of change and possible futures in the context of education. 'Educational futures' can be interpreted multiply, but here they are framed as the "form of scenarios, projections and visions of the future of education"—that is, the question of "what might education be like in the future?" (Facer, 2021). Children and young people's visions of educational futures have received little scholarly attention thus far, remaining a phenomenon rarely empirically interrogated. This chapter concludes with references to the methodological uses of memory in the context of the study of educational change, opening up lines of inquiry wherein its relevance for the exploration of otherwise educational imaginaries in research with children and young people is central.

2.1 Entanglements of children, childhood(s), education, and future(s)

"Childhood and education are probably the two most misconceived concepts of modernity"
(Tatek Abebe at Reimagining Childhood Studies seminar series[9], Nov 2020:
excerpt from fieldnotes)

We could argue that one common thread that binds children/childhoods and education in modern public discourses is the notion of the 'future'. Oftentimes, it is this forward-looking temporal dimension against which the very ontologies of childhoods and education take meaning. Children are identified with the future in public discourses, commonly featuring as the 'gatekeepers' of the future or the ones that 'hold the future in their hands'; similarly, it is commonplace for education to be framed as a gateway to 'a better future', or 'a vehicle to prepare generations for futures yet to come'. These are only two examples of how children and education are defined through their relationship to the future through colloquial expression. Other familiar images in the public imagery depict childhood and/or education as carriers of 'hope'—one of the "futural orientations" (R. Bryant & Knight, 2019a, p. 16) through which futures

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[9] Link to the seminar series website: https://reimaginingchildhoodstudies.com/.

can be explored. In times where looming uncertainty becomes a dominant public feeling, as was intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, the absence of 'hope' can also characterise whole generations. Amidst rising awareness about climate catastrophe, for example, certain media outlets, or even some young activists themselves, have depicted children and young people as 'future-less', 'with no future'. The strong 'desire' for education present in different cultures, such as the African Caribbean and Black British communities in the UK to take an example, and the search for opportunities to 'better schooling' (e.g., see Mirza & Reay, 2000) and, therefore, a 'better future', is one other affective expression of education as a container of hope. Or, to take a very different example, following the increasing marketisation of education, we see hope turning into a selling point for private education, confining it more and more into a 'future investment' and a 'preparation of youth for the future job market'. As I discuss later in this chapter, such commonly held beliefs about education, children, and childhood are central in critical debates across education and childhood and youth studies. As Tatek Abebe poignantly commented during the inaugural *Reimagining Childhood Studies* seminar in November 2020[10], "childhood and education are probably the two most misconceived concepts of modernity", to which I would also add: contestable goods in the neoliberal economy. It is notable that the 'future' as a substantive concept has received increasing scholarly attention in recent years across the social sciences and humanities (Anderson, 2010; R. Bryant & Knight, 2019b; Coleman, 2017; Cook, 2017; Salazar et al., 2017). And yet, as Matthew Benwell and Spyros Spyrou have highlighted[11], the future's complex relationships with children, childhood, and youth remain to be sufficiently explored; similarly, the notion of 'educational futures' requires further systematic exploration, and efforts to enhance research in the direction of unpacking education's complex relationships with future(s) have gained traction only in recent years (see for example Facer, 2016, 2021). Exploring how education and the 'future' are "intimately woven" with each other has the potential to essentially deepen our understanding on both education and futures but also on childhood(s) (Abebe & Biswas, 2021).

2.1.1 Engaging with time and temporality in/of children, young people, and childhoods

"Why study for a future if there is no future?"

Greta Thunberg

For this section, I venture into an evaluative discussion of the literature, primarily from a childhood and youth studies perspective, in order to discuss the relationships between children and young people, childhood, and the future as a temporal orientation. In doing so, I acknowledge the complexity of this

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[10] Link to seminar recording:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48szrdnVgvY&ab_channel=ChildhoodatUCLSocialResearchInstitute.
[11] Call for chapters on Children, Young People and the Future by Spyros Spyrou and Matthew Benwell (eds.) circulated on February 2nd 2023 via the CCYSC -Critical Childhoods and Youth Studies Collective mailing list.

venture, which, as I explain further later, has its roots in the history of the interdisciplinary field of childhood studies. I begin this section with a brief review of the more essentialist views on children that identify children with the future, percolated in colloquial language to date; I then move on to the imprint that the present temporality has had on key themes within childhood studies, in particular children's political agency, before transitioning to the re-claiming of the future as a necessary temporal condition in the study of children, young people and childhoods; finally, I weave into the discussion the role of education, and schooling in particular, critically outlining its intersections with the framing of children, young people, and childhoods, and importantly, linking this to the notion of the 'educational futures' which are central to my discussion in the next section of Chapter 2.

The associations of childhood with utopian possibilities and alternative future visions in public imagination and discourse are not new. Childhood imagery has long reflected collective aspirations for utopian societies (Darian-Smith & Pascoe, 2013), with childhood and utopia often connected in public discourse. Peter Kraftl (2009, p. 72) observes that where images of children are represented as images of 'hope' and of the 'future', they relate to a nostalgia of childhoods past, as well as an implicit biological essentialism that views children as naturally innocent and playful. The sociohistorical construction of childhood is reflected in different times in history. Throughout the history of modernity, children have often embodied societies' hopes and desires for the future (Stephens, 1996), as children, potentially more than any other social group, continued to be viewed as "central to the political, economic, and social (re)making of societies" (Piattoeva et al., 2018, p. 1; see also Baraldi & Cockburn, 2018). Such images circulate today in colloquial expressions such as 'children are the future' or 'we have hope in young people' (Kraftl, 2008). Such positions carry a risk of allowing moral space for adults to "ignore responsibility" in the present by confining children to the future (Sobe, 2020, p. 17). Admittedly though, there is much more that needs to be explored at the intersections of children, young people, childhood, and the future beyond simplistic and stereotypical identifications. And yet, childhood studies has long refrained from this topic, not least in order to safeguard the hard-earned rights of children and young people in the present.

2.1.1.1 On futures and the ontology of children and childhoods

There are a series of legitimate concerns in the interdisciplinary field of childhood studies that explain, at least to some extent, the discipline's long-standing distancing from the study of future in childhoods, children, and young people. In one of the sociology of childhood's seminal readings, James, Jenks and Prout talk about a 'paradigmatic shift', in which childhood turned into a central concern in itself instead of being subsumed under other topics such as those of family and schooling (James et al., 1998). This shift foregrounded a more sociocultural understanding of childhood in an attempt to restore, and defend, children's agency, displacing the biological reductionism and age-based determinism defining

childhood up to that point; it prompted an understanding of children as 'beings' rather than 'becomings'—social agents in their own right who shape their lives and the world around them instead of being reduced to the deficit narrative of an 'adult in the making' (James et al., 1998; Uprichard, 2008). This strong positioning subsequently established a solid basis for the advancement of social understandings of children and young people. However, the temporality of childhood continued to be contestable in the years that followed, with the being-becoming dualism being subjected to critiques for overseeing the more complex and relational ways in which time operates in children's lives (Pells, 2018; Rosen, 2017; Spyrou, 2020; Uprichard, 2008); children become different with time, as do adults (Lee, 2001), but, as Spyrou (2020) highlights, such a realisation by no means diminishes or challenges their status as beings. It is in admitting this malleability and capacity for change, shared by children and adults alike, that interdependence between the two becomes visible; children, as much as adults, are always 'being and becoming' (Uprichard, 2008).

In 2008, Uprichard argued for a consideration of children as 'beings' *and* 'becomings', laying a powerful claim for these discourses to be approached as complementary rather than conflicting; it is through an understanding of the 'child' as both 'being and becoming' that children's agency in the world can increase, she underlined. The 'being and becoming' perspective in childhood maintains the key achievement of the new social studies of childhood, whereby children are seen as active social agents who participate in the knowledge construction and daily experience of childhood. Importantly, though, it creates the space necessary for children and young people to also be seen as 'future agents' (Uprichard, 2008), as I will be discussing next. Meanwhile, another temporal consideration of childhood is that of children's past(s); Karl Hanson (2017) has argued for the need to invite the 'been child' into these discourses, thus pointing to the importance of acknowledging children's pasts as well as their presents and futures (see also Pells, 2018). But before transitioning to the interstices of the future as a temporal condition with the ontologies of the child and childhood, it is necessary to highlight the risks that an uncritical enshrinement of childhood ontologies may hold. As Spyrou (2018, p. np) has rightfully highlighted, rendering sacred the ontological production of childhood risks "obscur[ing] the interrogation of its productivity for capitalism" with the 'agentic child' being used to "bolster neoliberal projects". Aware of the politics surrounding the instrumentalization or co-option of 'agency' in children and youth, the need for a non-linear approach to temporality emerges as necessary if we are to essentially move away from dogmas of adult-superiority and deficit narratives surrounding childhoods.

The relationship between children, childhood, and the future is a complex one. One of the primary tensions dominating this relationship between the child and futurity lies in this exact 'becoming' debate (discussed earlier); this debate risks situating children in the position of 'adults in the making', deprived from their complete 'humanity' until they reach the necessary level of maturity (Coleman, 2017). But confining children squarely in the present leaves little room for considering process, change, and becoming (Spyrou, 2020) and oversees the very "transformative capacity of the child" (Coleman, 2017,

p. 532). After all, adults too are undergoing constant change, whether we acknowledge this capacity or not, and yet this does not deprive them of their full humanity (Lee, 2001; Spyrou, 2020). Acknowledging the past-present-future temporality in children and childhood is aligned with Embrimayer and Mische's (1998, p. 963) approach to agency, according to which agency is "an embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)". After all, as Rosen (2017) reminds us, confining children's lives to the present alone can serve very neoconservative purposes. It is the very linear understandings of time where childhood is perceived as so distinct and different to adulthood. If, on the other hand, "the relationship between the past and present is understood to be more permeable, then so too is the relationship between childhood and adulthood" (Treacher, 2000, pp. 137–138).

2.1.1.2 Revisiting children/childhoods' futures in the light of children as 'future makers'

The massive children and youth mobilisations around issues concerning the future in recent years have resurged the urgency to look closer at the future in relation to childhood. The collective mobilisations of child/youth-led movements across the globe advocating for social justice, as seen in the most recent example of Fridays for Future and their participation in the Black Lives Matter movement, have heeded the clarion call to revisit the notion of future(s) within childhood studies. This urgency has been acknowledged and staged by scholars within the discipline. Spyros Spyrou (2020, p. 3), for example, borrows from Appadurai (2013) to frame children and young people as 'future makers', "prepared to take the lead, to fight, to reclaim the future from adults and imagine it otherwise". Unlike many media outlets and popular opinions that tend to discuss such phenomena of child/youth activism as 'isolated' and 'one-off' events, Diane Rodgers (2020) reminds us that children and young people have been participating, albeit in different ways, in social movements through history, and yet, our public perceptions of children and young people as social movement participants are obstructed by the dominant social constructions, including 'childhood innocence' (ibid.). In this vein, Gubar (2018) offers a particularly interesting account of why we tend to 'forget' children's activism—and I revisit this later in this thesis—suggesting there is a form of 'aetonormative amnesia', which refers to the age-related cultural expectations and stereotypes often foregrounded to "silence, demean, and disempower people". This tendency to 'forget', oversee, or very narrowly understand activism at the edges of age, including older age groups, has been acknowledged by other scholars, too (Nolas, 2015, 2021; Nolas et al., 2016). What we could claim is changing in recent years is how advancements in media communications and the advent of smartphones and social media have created more opportunities for young people's political endeavours to reach the 'public spheres' of the media, making their activism 'public' and thus contributing to the reignited interest around childhood and the future. But children and young people's activism through social movements is only one way to understand their agency for social change and

future making—after all, activism can take many forms and shapes that move beyond our public and social imaginings of "students at the barricades" (Nolas, 2015, p. 162). Nolas (2015)continues to argue for the need to rethink the political agency in children and young people's participation, to look at the 'spaces' that children and youth navigate when they move through and between institutions, as well as to 'learn to listen' to their more "fluid, nuanced, ephemeral and improvised" (ibid, p. 161) acts of activism by more closely attending to the 'idioms of childhood' (Nolas et al., 2019). This, in turn, brings our attention to the research methods we use to research children as future makers and how our methods can facilitate the existence of "childhood and youth publics" (Nolas, 2015, 2021) and the possibilities they generate for social change.

The utility of the future as a temporal condition for the study of children, childhood, and youth remains limited in childhood studies. There is a growing consensus that the future needs to be reinvested in within the debates around children, young people, and childhoods whilst maintaining an awareness of the risks and dangers of positioning children and young people as future adults, overseeing their rights in the present (Evans, 2010; Uprichard, 2008). While considering this problematisation in my research design, my research takes a different focus to look at the equally underexplored relationship between children, young people, and educational futures. Rethinking the temporality of childhood inevitably invites us to rethink the temporality of education, opening up possibilities to imagine possible futures for both. As Levitas (2010) argues so eloquently, we need to be able to imagine possible futures both to evaluate our present conditions and to 'reconstitute society' for the better—this applies to educational futures too. And yet there is little, if any, available research that engages with children and young people's imaginings of possible educational futures. To frame this discussion moving forward, I will first offer a brief critical overview of how education and schooling have been discussed in childhood and youth studies, before transitioning to the next theoretical section of the educational futures in question.

2.1.1.3 Children, young people, and educational futures

Education, and schooling in particular, are places ('loci') that have historically contributed to the reduction of the child to the image of the 'schooled child' (Sarmento et al., 2018). The history of schooling is illustrative not only of how the social categories of children, youth, and childhoods have been—and continue to be—to a large extent shaped, sustained, and reproduced through schooling but also of the political forces that shape them as these are enacted and reinforced through the state and the market. In modern capitalist economies in particular, childhood has been characterised as "scholarised" (Mayall, 2007). While I acknowledge the many differences between 'education' and 'schooling', I often use the terms interchangeably moving forward, for I approach educational futures through experiences of schooling in the scope of this research.

Schools are institutions that categorise children, and subsequently their learning abilities, on the basis of 'age', thus reinforcing their differentiation from adults and justifying their positioning as 'inferior' through the knowledge they have yet to acquire. Generational order and the 'school child' are reconstructed in schools through 'time' (Sarre, 2013; see also Biswas, 2021). It is on that same basis of age that the very roles of 'teaching' and 'learning' are decided upon, framing their unilateral understandings as roles performed exclusively by adults and children respectively. Scholars with a focus on Global South perspectives and epistemologies have consistently criticised Western 'global' notions of childhood, contending that numerical age alone cannot allow for a complete understanding of a child's maturity or the 'boundaries' separating them from adults, highlighting that perceptions of childhood vary greatly across histories and cultures (Abebe, 2019). In this vein, recent scholarship calls for an understanding of the 'child' as "more than a default addressee of pedagogy", especially in the light of planetary crisis in the age of the Anthropocene (Biswas, 2021; see also Su & Su, 2019). It therefore becomes clear how formal educational settings reproduce a very constrained understanding of temporality in childhood, with several repercussions for children's lives, including services supposedly designed *for* children, such as schools. During the inaugural Reimagining Childhood Studies seminar of November 25th, 2020, Takek Abebe invited the audience into a speculative exercise, prompting them to imagine how a non-linear understanding of childhood could be reflected in educational policies. In particular, he asked: "What if educational policies anticipate children's futures not to unfold in a linear sequence but rather as an interlocking of pasts, presents, and futures?"[12]. Linear temporal understandings of childhood sustain the narrative of 'passivity' that is often so wrongfully attached to children and young people, according to which things are done *to* children—including childhood itself but also schooling. Hence, the reimagining of childhood beyond linear temporal understandings cannot be completely detached from the reimagining of education and schooling, at least in the current historical context. This highlights the importance of envisioning alternative educational futures and the ramifications this will have *for* and *beyond* the study of childhood alone.

In Childhood Studies, the need to examine school and schooling practices more closely as one important site of childhood has been recently reiterated (Prout, 2019; Spyrou, 2019). In a call for a more interdisciplinary study of childhood, Prout (2000) urges scholars to expand on the conceptual and methodological tools and frameworks they use, not least in order to reframe issues that have typically been categorised as issues of 'children's worlds' only, as 'schooling' is usually figured. In this vein, both 'schooling' and 'childhood' should be thought beyond narrow framings as avenues through which societies can be reimagined. Therefore, developing research that examines 'educational futures,' imagined by children and youth, is timely.

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[12] Video recording of the seminar available at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48szrdnVgvY&ab_channel=ChildhoodatUCLSocialResearchInstitute,
minute 1:03:58.

2.1.2 Unpacking notions of educational futures

"We can no longer treat 'the future' as a rhetorical flourish in education"

(Facer, 2021)

Previously I discussed how childhood has been—and in some instances continues to be—discussed as a preparatory stage for adulthood and how this central debate for the discipline of childhood studies has been revisited in recent years. In the following paragraphs, I highlight the central role of education in this debate—in particular, how education has been instrumentalized as one of the key projects through which deficit narratives of childhood are reproduced. Education often functions as the vehicle and the means through which children can achieve the 'desired' level of 'maturity' to transition to adulthood. Such an association is problematic, not only because it obscures the complex temporalities of childhood (as discussed previously) but also because it constrains the complexity of the educational processes: the narrow boundaries of institutionalised education, as performed through schooling, exclude the numerous modes and tropes of learning and teaching, assigning narrow, age-classed roles of 'students' and 'teachers' and oversimplifying the manifold project of education as a whole. Neoliberalism transpires in some of the most recent—and allegedly 'modern'—educational discourses, such as those that advocate for the 'modernisation' of educational curricula in ways that prepare children for the jobs that have yet to exist (or 'jobs of the future'). One of the problematic aspects of contemporary educational discourse's orientation towards the future is thus this view of 'education-as-preparation', which in many ways keeps treating children as "immature, in need of tutelage, in need of learning to properly 'accomplish' the exercise of [their] rights" (Sobe, 2020, p. 17). Such examples illustrate how the future as a temporal condition is claimed through the educational arena too, pointing to what Sharon Bessell highlighted at the inaugural Reimagining Childhood Studies seminar in November 2020 when she said that "at its core, education is political and it is about maintaining and preserving current socio-political structures"[13]. Recent literature in education and childhood studies calls for attention to how education and the 'future' are "intimately woven" with one another, inviting research that explores what they mean for each other but also for childhood itself (Abebe & Biswas, 2021, p. 118). For this section of Chapter 2, I am focusing primarily on unpacking the notion of 'educational futures' in and of itself, as this has been discussed in recent literature across the fields of education, childhood, and future studies.

2.1.2.1 Typologies of educational futures

Education's relationship with the future is the subject of significant theory, practice and research (Facer, 2021). Educational futures can mean different things and serve different interests depending on the

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[13] Source:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48szrdnVgvY&ab_channel=ChildhoodatUCLSocialResearchInstitute.

context in which the term is used: 'education' itself can refer to formal education across the different stages, or it can have broader uses that encompass informal settings; it can also take on the more philosophical conceptions of the educational project. Similarly, (educational) 'futures' can be employed with a child/youth-centred focus to mean the 'preparation' of children and youth to shape alternative/desirable futures, a viewing of education that brings back into focus children/childhood temporalities and the looming project of "deferred empowerment" (Sobe, 2020, p. 17). A slightly different framing of educational futures is that which focuses on the project of education itself, referring to the 'probable' futures, 'possible' (imaginative, creative, alternative) futures, or 'preferred' (critical, ideological, values-based) futures (Gidley & Hampson, 2008; see also Kupferman, 2020) of education. It goes without saying that these two 'versions' of educational futures are all-encompassing, and they are also very much interdependent. However, in the following paragraphs of this section, I focus more on the latter framing of educational futures, namely the one that engages with the creation of alternative futures and scenarios about the future of education. Such discussions on educational futures have become fertile ground for interdisciplinary dialogue, part of which emerges from the more recent field of Future Studies, which focuses on uncertainty to address the transformation of the future of education and of childhoods and the role of future thinking in the advancement of pedagogies (Madjar, 2020; Tesar, 2021).

As Appadurai (2013) argues, the ability to plan, imagine and dream the future is a powerful "cultural capacity" and a fundamental dimension of every culture in every epoch. The importance of being able to imagine and dream the future, and alternative futures, sits at the core of UNESCO's (2021) recent *Educational Futures* initiative, which aims "to open the imagination to a plurality of possible futures – futures that sustain diverse ways of knowing and being while enabling cooperation and collective action around common causes". In particular, the report refers to the futures of education in *plural,* aiming to "open the imagination to a plurality of possible futures" *of (*and *through*) education, with the starting point "what more needs to be done, beginning now" (reference to final and/or progress report). Before the final publication of UNESCO's report on educational futures, Keri Facer (2021) published a paper entitled "Futures in education: Towards an ethical practice" at the background of UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative. In this work, Facer makes a notable attempt to create a typology of educational futures by outlining five broad orientations for thinking about and working with ideas of the future in education. These are:

> "Orientation I: 'Educational Futures' is concerned with the question 'what might education be like in the future', it takes the form of scenarios, projections and visions of the future of education and is familiar in consultancy, policy, social movement and financial investment fields. Orientation II: 'Education as preparation for the future' is familiar in development arena and government policy, as well as characterising mainstream educational discourse, and is concerned with adapting young people to fit envisaged futures or equipping them to create desired futures.

Orientation III: 'Education about futures' engages with pedagogic questions about how students might be supported to think reflexively about futures and is concerned both with Futures Literacy and developing students 'capacity to aspire'. Orientation IV: 'Liberating education from the future' derives from new developments in educational philosophy, posthumanism, complexity theory and quantum physics and questions the association of education with futures, making the case for education as a time of suspension from futures. Orientation V: 'Reparative Futures' is concerned with education as a space for addressing the injustices of the past and for radically pluralising and provincialising western temporalities" (Facer, 2021, p. 2).

Facer's work is illuminating, not least because it provides different stakeholders—from policymakers to teachers, students, and researchers—with tangible questions with which they can engage in the context of ethically working with and towards educational futures. Facer's work is also important as she continues to suggest both clusters of techniques that can be used to approach different questions around futures and respective fields of study that can be used as starting points into one such exploration. The focus of my research is situated closer to Facer's first orientation of educational futures, which foregrounds questions of what education might look like in the future, in particular, the work of producing (child/youth-led) otherwise/'preferred' educational imaginaries, upon which I elaborate later in this chapter.

2.1.2.2 Modes for imagining otherwise

There are many ways in which the plurality of possible futures of education can be imagined, and in what follows, I make brief reference to some of them. One way is to cultivate the 'sociological imagination' (Mills, 1959), not always striving to invent something 'new' but also to looking at what's already there, inspiring from a renewal of heritage and a critical understanding of the past. Quoting Mills, (Pechtelidis, 2020, pp. 168–169) goes on to suggest that the sociological imagination can be practiced through the development of a historical, anthropological, critical knowledge and sense around education, and the systems through and in which it is performed, thus orienting us towards what education *can* be in the future. Such an approach creates a framework in which the question of 'what is education?' in the first place can be asked. Given that this thesis figures education primarily in terms of schooling—and thus offers scope for reimagining education through schooling— we could—or should—equally ask, "what is school?". To this end, Nika Dubrovsky (2019) has taken on the challenge of exploring this question in her work of the same title—"What is school?"— collaborating with young students from multi-sited locations across the world. Through the pages of "What is school?", Dubrovsky explores different educational and school models across time and space, situating them in their historical and sociopolitical contexts. The book invites children to engage with various forms and functions of schools (e.g., school as a commune, school as a factory, school as

immigration) and comments upon the different perceptions they imply about children, education, and educational practices. In its final section, the book invites children to employ their imagination in drawing and describing how they wish their future school would look.

This invitation to imagine a 'future' school evokes approaches to educational futures that work through speculation and utopia as method (Levitas, 2013; see also Halpin, 2003). We can also approach educational futures in terms of what schools are trying to do differently in the present, thinking alongside what Cooper (2014) has termed "everyday utopias", or by way of a focus on acts of educational activism and the organising of collective action towards educational reform (see Cunningham & Lavalette, 2016 for British examples and Jouhki, 2021 for Scandinavian examples). Finally, a more attentive look towards the micropolitics of educational spaces, read through the lens of prefiguration, can offer alternative routes whereby educational futures can be explored.

2.1.2.3 Who is entitled to the envisioning of typologies of educational futures: the case of the COVID-19 pandemic

Following this brief outline of some of the 'hows' of alternative educational futures, what persists is the question of 'who'—who is entitled to imagine education otherwise? As Facer (2021) highlights, today it is often actors outside of education (such as future or foresight specialists) and commercial technology companies who lead the production of visions of educational futures. This form of "commercial educational futures work", she continues, can be better understood as the speculative wing of the educational technology field rather than a principled attempt to engage with all the many different factors that might shape education in the future" (Facer, 2021, p. 5). A recent manifestation of commercial educational futures work can be traced in the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of commercial agents stepping in to supposedly make use of the 'opportunities' created by the crisis in order to bring about large-scale educational reform, primarily through technology. At the same time, however, COVID-19 expanded, and/or made more visible, the engagement of the many more, often invisible, actors who have a stake in education, and I discuss this in greater depth in the following paragraphs. In the direction of envisioning alternative educational futures, the recent experiences engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic and its imprint on the educational experience at all levels have given new resonance to the conversations around educational futures, extending and popularising them beyond the realms of scholarly discussions. Here, I take a UK focus to discuss this, for the UK is the geographical area in which my research is situated, and I draw from examples wherein I approach education through experiences of schooling. In the absence of regular schooling during the waves of lockdown in the UK, alternative 'spaces' emerged for those concerned by educational praxis to rethink the possibilities of 'education'. From the where and how learning happens, to the detachment—even if momentarily—of 'education' from 'schooling' in the public imagination, conversation circles sprung

among policymakers, teachers, parents, and students, in which speculative questions in the form of educational 'what ifs' were asked. Here it is important to highlight that the imprint of the pandemic on education and on people's lives more broadly has a much more complex nature, the analysis of which goes beyond the scope of my work here. Briefly at the centre of these complex and emergent issues sat the accessibility to education: the popular claim that technology democratises access to education was laid bare when schools publicised the numbers of children who had no technological equipment at home to facilitate access to digital classrooms. In a similar vein, education gained 'new faces' as it exposed the rising inhumanity of systematic social, class, and ethnic inequalities and their intersections when, to take only one indicative example, the ugly truth of 3.4 million[14] children in English state schools alone eligible to free school meals became exposed; amidst this situation, the neglected dimensions of 'education as a caring provision' resurged in public discussions, unearthing the extent of the political ignorance and neglect on that matter[15].

A series of initiatives with varying -and in some cases questionable- motives aligned in claiming the 'opportunity' generated by the pandemic to think differently about the future of education. UNESCO's International Commission on the Futures of Education (2020) report for *Education in a post-Covid world* staged the statement that "We cannot return to the world as it was before", and diverse voices united under the claim that 'business as usual is no longer an option [in education]'. And yet, the specificities of *what* needed change and *how* remained largely contested. Amidst this climate of contestation, the inseparability of schooling from market policies became apparent when, for example, 'lost school hours' were translated in public media to financial loss for the country, with marketisation evidenced further by tech companies stepping in in attempts to make a profit out of the crisis. Further expansion on the critiques of the different parties who claimed these educational futures is beyond the scope of this work. Rather, I wish to put the accent for the remainder of this discussion on how COVID-19 highlighted the potential for possible, probable, and preferred futures, particularly in terms of the bottom-up and grassroots initiatives that mobilised around them.

To take a UK-focused example, shortly after the lockdown waves (between 2020 and 2021), the Big Education Foundation launched the *Big Education Conversation*[16]—a cross-national campaign in which "everyone should have their say", as the campaign's slogan read, in some of the biggest questions about education. In that context, several organisations across the UK, including youth-centred and youth-led ones, were engaged and mobilised to run their local conversations, bringing "children and youth publics" (Nolas, 2015, 2020), as well as intergenerational publics, into view. In another example, the Phoenix Foundation (UK) established the project *Changemakers Collective*[17], intending to bring together and

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[14] Link to source: https://ifs.org.uk/publications/policy-menu-school-lunches-options-and-trade-offs-expanding-free-school-meals-england.
[15] See for example: https://lacuna.org.uk/politics/free-school-meals-why-did-mps-vote-against-helping-hungry-children-like-me/.
[16] Link: https://www.bigeducationconversation.org/
[17] Link: https://www.changemakerscollective.uk/

highlight the work of youth activists towards a more just educational future. In a similar vein, the same 'trend' was followed by other organisations and grassroots movements engaged in initiating conversations and publicising the changes they envisioned in the context of their visions of preferred educational futures (see, for example, Whole Education, Not a Trend, Youth by Youth, Class of COVID, and #NoMoreExclusions, an abolitionist grassroots coalition movement in education).

On April 14th, 2021, more than one year into the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO released the International Commission's progress update on their program *Futures of Education: Learning to Become*[18]. In their email release, they highlight yet again how COVID-19 "has reinforced the importance of reflection and action on the futures of education", highlighting that the "social contract for education" has undergone "radical questioning" amidst the pandemic. The Commission argued further that it supported a vision of "common" and "public" education, both of which can only materialise by way of public discussions, engagements, and actions about education which go beyond narrow consultation processes with limited stakeholders: "A coherent sense of purpose in education only comes when something common arises in a public space" (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021, p. 12). Here it is helpful to draw on UNESCO's framing of the future as "a space for democratic design that is connected to, but not limited by, past and present", but what needs further development is the implementation of participatory mechanisms that involve more stakeholders, and especially children, in the envisioning of new possible futures of education.

Recent research that discusses the reimagining of education post-pandemic and engages with the 'possibilities' that have become visible in its aftermath pays little attention to primary and secondary education, instead focusing primarily on higher education (see, for example, Kalantzis & Cope, 2020; Tesar, 2020). Most importantly, the role of children and young people as central actors concerned with the future of education remains, to date, largely overlooked. To that end, and from a future studies perspective, Tesar (2021) notices the relative dearth of methodological resources that engage with children and their alternative education imaginings, critiquing this with the suggestion that "it is children's imaginations of the future that will allow identified future scenarios to occur". Inclusion of children in the imagining of educational futures further expands to the ways in which educational research is designed. Quoting Michelle Fine (2016), Stryker et al. (2019, p. 51) draw attention to the fact that neoliberal political ideology has shaped approaches to education and educational research and highlight the importance of critical research in challenging dominant societal narratives. In this context, they invite their readers to think about "how, why and with whom we design research that can enter and investigate the claims of dominant narratives, lift up counter stories and dive into the knotty relation between the two as well as generate images of radical possibilities". If we understand educational research as a means of producing knowledge and imaginaries about educational futures, it is necessary to consider the means and mechanisms through which children and young people are invited as co-

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[18] Link to source: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370801.

creators in the process. To this end, Donna Haraway's concept and practice of "situated knowledges" and her concomitant feminist critique highlighting the political nature of knowledge are fruitful when thinking about envisioning educational futures together with children. Drawing on Carol Taylor and her colleagues' (2021) approach to Haraway's philosophy in the context of the promise of 'better educational futures', "recognising that all knowledge is located and relies on partial perspectives allows for the inclusion of lived material realities and feelings that shape our educational experiences". Through these lenses, inviting the lived material realities and feelings that shape children and young people's educational experiences needs further attention in the context of imagining educational futures. Education and schooling should remain 'contested', and one way of contributing to this is by foregrounding children's affective experiences of schooling (D. Aldridge et al., 2018). As such, this research investigates the "form of scenarios, projections and visions of the future of education" (Facer, 2021) that dwell in children and young people's affective experiences of schooling. Before attending to this further, however, it is necessary to gain an overview of the discussions on affect in education/schooling and childhood.

2.2 Exploring the relevance of affect as an analytical framework in the study of futures

As discussed previously through Sobe's (2020) reference to Arjun Appadurai, the future is not only to be understood in relational terms of *now* and *later* but also as something that exists with us in the present as a 'cultural horizon'. Importantly, the future is not an empty vessel that awaits to be filled; rather, it is "sought through with affect and emotion" (ibid.). In recent years, there has been surging scholarly attention in the social sciences that engages with the links between affects and futures. In one of anthropology's most recent examples, Bryant and Knight (2019b) discuss the future through a series of interconnected affective states framed as "futural orientations"; in these, the authors include anticipation, expectation, speculation, potentiality, hope, and destiny. By foregrounding the concept of "orientations", Bryant and Knight endeavour to "an ethnographic hold on the relationship between the future and action, including the act of imagining the future" (ibid., p. 16). Fears and hopes around what the future holds profoundly impacts the evolution of societies, and anticipation in particular has been discussed as one of the most powerful forces that shape human action(Miller, 2018). As Sobe (2023, p. 213) underlines, "how we think about, forecast and seek to prepare ourselves and/or manage future possibilities and scenarios is not an idle activity" but a form of "world-making and worlds-making undertaking", and one that is mediated by emotion.

One of the 'trademark' links between affect and futures is the former's "emerging unpredictability" as it opens up "spaces of hope and freedom from dominant ideologies or sociocultural 'norms'", creating the "potential for new relationalities, movements, and social worlds to emerge and unfold" (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020, p. 19): affect, as a "creative, unpredictable, and vital

force", can "remodulate […] rigid normativities", "re-entrench" social injustices, or do "nothing" (ibid.). Framed as such, affect can be understood as one 'gateway' to possible futures, including educational futures, creating a sense of "obligation" to attend to its "promise and threat so that things might feel and become otherwise" (ibid., p. 20). In the following paragraphs, I make a selective overview of how affect links to futures through the prism of childhood and youth studies and through education. Before doing so, it is important to make a brief note of the 'tension' surrounding the ontologies of 'affect' and emotion in the scholarship: while some contemporary affect scholars frame affect as a category that encompasses feelings and emotions (Ahmed, 2010; Cvetkovich, 2012; Zembylas, 2014), others make a distinction, characterizing affect as an immanent social force (the energies, intensities, and flows) (Massumi, 2013; Stewart, 2007) that "register on/with-in/across bodies to produce and shape personal/emotional experiences" (see Dernikos et al., 2020: 5). Whilst I pick up on this debate later in the thesis, for now I wish to foreground Ahmed's comparison of the separation of affect and emotions to the process of separating the egg yolk from its white: "That we *can* separate them does not mean that they *are* separate", she argues; the yolk and the white are "contiguous, even if they are, as it were, in a sticky relation" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 210: emphasis in original). Drawing inspiration from Ahmed's work, and from those scholars who have followed her example in relation to childhood research (see, for example Aruldoss et al., 2021), I use the terms affect, feeling and emotion interchangeably throughout this work. In doing so, I understand affect as those "feelings, emotions, sensations and other qualities that "move and matter in human life" (Lutz, 2017, p. 182; see also Aruldoss et al., 2021) and that "shape lived experiences" (Froerer et al., 2022).

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed some of the complexities transcending the relationships between children, young people, childhood, education, and future(s)—that is, how children, young people and childhoods are often identified with the future, particularly in colloquial expressions and public imagery. What is interesting to observe is how these "banalised slogans" (Sobe, 2023) are more often than not permeated with affective states, most exemplary of which is being 'hope', reflected in expressions such as 'children are the future' (see for example Kraftl, 2008) or 'education for a better future' (Facer, 2016). The fallacy that education, and schooling in particular, contributes in and of itself to the imagining of and access to better futures for young people has, though, collapsed, exposed to the public eye in a line central to the Fridays for Future (FFF) movement: "Why study for a future which may not be there?"[19]. The "emergence" of "children and youth-publics" (Nolas, 2015) and their culmination in a powerful social movement calls our attention to the political significance of young people's emotions in the shaping of our collective futures. In the context of the Fridays for Future movement (also known as School Strikes for Climate, SS4C), young people emotions' representations on media have in many cases been problematic. Quoting Lesko (2012, p. 178), Mayes and Hartup (2021, p. 19) have emphasised, young people's emotions have largely been reduced to naturalised "hormones" or worrying

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[19] Source: https://fridaysforfuture.org/.

"anxiety"—framings that risk undermining the youth's capacities for sustained and critical thinking and for responsible political action)—that is, actions that lead to "collective hope and solidarity, not only despair" (Wood, 2020, p. 4).

In this research, I want to return to the political importance of young people's emotions, of both those who self-identify as activists and those who don't. In particular, I want to highlight the range of emotions mediating young people's preferred educational futures. In so doing, I consider it imperative to offer a brief overview of the place of emotion and affect in childhood and in educational studies alike. As explained earlier in this chapter, this research is focused specifically on educational futures, defined as futures *of* education. In this context, the relationship between young people and futures is narrowed down to young people's imaginings of possible/preferred futures of education, and it is here that I situate the affects that are at the centre of this study.

2.2.1 The place of emotions and affect in childhood and education

As other scholars working with children and childhoods have stressed, children and young people's emotions *matter* and are political. Recent works, particularly from the subfield of children's emotional geographies, have focused on the importance of children's emotions: why and how they matter, and how their emotional experiences are "simultaneously constitutive and constituted" (Blazek & Windram-Geddes, 2013; also, cf. Aruldoss et al., 2021, p. 3). At the same time, however, when it comes to studies of children's participation, activism and political work—areas in which voice has been overly privileged—"the analytical focus on emotion tends to slide into periphery" (Aruldoss et al., 2021, p. 3). With regards to the study of children and young people's emotions in the context of futures, important works from the fields of childhood and youth studies have focused on affective modes such as 'anticipation' and 'hope'. For example, Bryant and Ellard (2015) have examined the role of 'hope' in shaping future practice and trajectories in young people's lives, proposing to consider "hope as a form of agency". In another example, Coleman (2017, p. 534) proposes an understanding of hope as "potential" through working with children "conceived as both themselves affective potentiality and capable of imagining the affective potentiality" of the future of an abandoned, former industrial village in Italy. In a similar vein, Blazek (2019, p. 359) argues for an understanding of childhood as a "modality of emotion" and a "powerful affective condition".

Coming now to children's emotions in the context of educational futures, scholarly literature tends to focus on the role of education in shaping young people's aspirations and hopes. In a recent example, Froerer et al. (2022) take a geographical focus on India, Indonesia, Kenya and Bangladesh, providing an ethnographically grounded understanding of the affective orientations that emerge in young people's educational experiences and how these give meaning to processes of aspiration formation. Taking an

anthropological perspective on these matters, Stambach and Hall's (2017) edited volume on *Student Futures* engages with the construction of temporality and presents ethnographic explorations of the making of educational aspirations and future horizons in students' lives across various geographies. Bringing the focus back to the UK, 'raising' aspirations amongst working class young people, such as through widening participation in higher education, is a central concern of educational research and policy (G. Brown, 2011). There remains, however, a lot of leeway for the research of emotion in modern educational spaces. Emotions, however, have a lot of leeway to be further researched in the context of formal educational spaces.

It is common for contemporary educational discourses to discuss young people's emotions as 'problematic', oftentimes reducing emotions to matters of mental health and well-being interventions alone. As Kenway and Youdell (2011, p. 132) have rightfully observed from an emotional geography perspective, education is more often than not situated as a "rational" project, as "a social and epistemological endeavour, as an abstract process, as a set of reasoned and logical practices, and as a series of formal spaces the production and use of which is as 'uncontaminated' by emotion as possible". In this context, emotions are instrumentalised to differentiate between 'abnormal' and 'normal' "rational student[s]" or to signify "emotional intelligence" and "emotional literacy" (ibid.; see also Youdell, 2006). Nevertheless, they also note the work of scholars (with maybe more seminal the work of Megan Boller 1999) with different disciplinary backgrounds who have insisted on richer engagements with the emotionality of education. In recent years, the moving of affect into the field of education—famously marked by a turn to the works of Deleuze and Guattari (1987)—has allowed for new engagements with the emotionality of education (Bohlmann & Hickey-Moody, 2019; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & Niccolini, 2020b; Kenway & Youdell, 2011; Ringrose et al., 2019). In particular, a deeper understanding of the role of affect in the imagining of *educational otherwises* has opened up by way of the theoretical and methodological affordances of the affective turn—or "return", as suggested by Hughes and Lury (2013)—in education. The notion of the 'return' has been taken up by Dernikos et al. (2020, p. 19) in this context to signify how affect studies have emerged through a continuum of work, especially feminist work the preceded them (see, for example, Springgay, 2008), and which has emphasised the importance of bodies, corporeality, and embodiment within educational, curricular, and social spaces. As with the humanities and the social sciences more broadly, the more recent re/turn to affect in educational research acts as a reminder that "what has been does not necessarily determine what is or what will be" (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020, p. 19). In this way, the affective turn in education creates the "potential for new relationalities, movements, and social worlds to emerge and unfold' within it, "open[ing] up the way to other educational imaginaries" (ibid.; see also Bakko and Merz, 2015). To this end, the analytical focus on children's emotions when it comes to their imaginings of preferred/desired educational futures requires further attention; if we engage with children and young people's affects seriously and pay attention to their political significance, what educational futures are made possible? In other words, how can we take up Facer's invitation to "plac[e]

the problem of the future at the centre of our search for educational alternatives" when working through how education 'feels' for children and young people?

2.3 Memory as a 'method' to research possible educational futures with children and young people

> "Because like every body of water, I shape myself by memory."
> Léa Roger Abi Zeid Daou[20]

The many faces of memory lead any attempt to frame it following singular definitions to failure. There is a cross-disciplinary breadth of work across the natural and social sciences and the humanities that engages with the study of memory using different methodological and theoretical approaches. There has been surging scholarly interest in the study of memory over the last four decades, and this identification of interdisciplinary attention to memory sits at the core of the emerging field of Memory Studies (cf. Brown et al., 2009). As well as being an object of analysis, memory offers a plethora of methods and methodological approaches, involving but not limited to the uses of memory as a research tool (cf. Keightley, 2010). One characteristic methodological use of memory can be traced to the social constructionist, feminist paradigm of 'memory-work,' most representative of which is the seminal work of Frida Haug (1999) and her colleagues' discussions on *Female Sexualization*; other scholars have followed Haug's example, readapting memory-work to explore gender-based experiences: in these cases, the emphasis was placed on how gendered frameworks of meaning shaped the remembered accounts, rather than their truthfulness and accuracy (Keightley, 2010; see also Crawford, 1992). Another shared element across these approaches was their often liberationist and emancipatory aims ((Marschall, 2019; Onyx & Small, 2001); for a critique on the 'emancipatory' character of memory methods, see Radstone, 2000); importantly, memory-work challenges the dichotomy between theory and everyday experience, validating personal experience as a legitimate source of knowledge (Kaufman et al., 2001). Scholars from heritage and tourism studies have more recently highlighted the differentiation between memory-work and 'memory work' (without hyphen), conceptualising the latter as a "qualitative, interpretivist research approach focused on memories, which employs a range of methodologies and techniques to elicit and 'process' memories", drawing on memory theory for the analysis (Marschall, 2019, p. 1659). An exploration of memory from a phenomenological anthropological perspective can provide us with better understandings of the workings of memory beyond questioning the authenticity of the memory construct itself; this includes *how* we remember and the materialities mediating the processes and contents of our memories (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2018). Memory work methods can account for the plurality and multi-layered nature of everyday memories.

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[20] Source: https://www.girlmuseum.org/project/female-gaze/.

Considering the many ways in which memory can be utilised in empirical research, Keightley (2010) highlights the necessity of a clear conceptualisation of memory in the context of a given study as a necessary condition for its potential to illuminate everyday social and cultural life.

In my research, I used memory as a heuristic tool and as an inventive and creative methodology to explore, together with my young interlocutors, possible educational futures through the remembrance of the everyday school memories—primarily personal and autobiographic—that matter(ed) to them (see also Chapter 3). As such, memory work became a specific way of working with and through experiences (Jansson et al., 2008). Here, it is important to highlight that although personal and autobiographical memories constitute the basis for memory work, the scope of this approach goes beyond the personal, thus also aiming to understand and illuminate social, cultural, and historical formations (McLeod & Thomson, 2009). My decision to conceptualise memory in such a way was informed by my early fieldwork encounters and the exchanges I shared with the young interlocutors during the exploratory research phase (see also Chapter 4). My approach was further informed by uses of memory in the social sciences—that is, as a resource for "the exploration of relations between public and the private life, agency and power, and the past, present and future" (Keightley, 2010, p. 55). With few notable exceptions, it is uncommon for memories to be utilised in education and childhood studies (Aydarova et al., 2016; see the same paper for a selective listing of exceptions). Memory has been utilised as a method in educational research, but the focus has most commonly been on adults: this includes teachers' memories, as in the context of teacher education and identity-work (see Mitchell and Weber's (1999) seminal work on teachers' professional development through the revisiting of their own school experiences; McLeod (2016) on 'memory and affect and teachers'; Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2018); Sonu et al. (2022) on the study of the construction of childhood through teachers' memories), and higher education students (see, for example, Rummel and Friend (2000) on the enhancement of student learning through memory work). When it comes to the uses of memory as a method in childhood research, the number of projects that engage adults who visit their childhood memories retrospectively outweighs the number of those actively conducting memory work *with* children. A notable exception to this, however, is the work of D'souza et al. (2021), who have worked with children's embodied memories in Jamaica and their role in the reimagining of children's futures. Otherwise, the more common set up in which children and young people meet memory as a method(ology) in education is in the context of pedagogy and learning, especially in heritage and history educational projects through the use of oral history[21]; such projects focus primarily on the pedagogical and social value of children's engagement with the past—and the potential this engagement holds to boldly imagine futures differently. An important observation here is the scarcity of scholarly writings that employ memory as a method to work with children and young people in educational settings and about their educational experiences (works that

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[21] Refer to Barbican's *Being a Change Maker* project for an example:
https://sites.barbican.org.uk/beingachangemaker/?_ga=2.266993230.1139847513.1622022530-1202506579.1622022530.

counter this trend include Hargreaves (2022) and Torstenson-Ed (2007), both of whom have used life history methods with children and young people). Debbie Sonu and colleagues (2020, p. 15) have argued for the potential of childhood memories to "telegraph dreams about how structures of schooling and society might be imagined otherwise"; this holds true for *children's* memories too. Mitchell and colleagues (eds) (2011, p. n.p.) have defined memory work as "the conscious remembering and study of individual and shared memories", highlighting its increasingly acknowledged value as a pedagogical tool in working with children, not least for the ways in which it allows them "to see their future as something that belongs to them, and that they can influence in some way for the better".

As scholars who engage with the study of memory have pointed out, memory is never only about the past; it equally concerns the critical examination of present conditions and future imaginings, desires, and orientations (Keightley, 2010; Macdonald, 2013; Pells, n.p.; Sobe, 2020), leading Sobe (2020, p. 15) to argue for the utility of treating memory and futures thinking "in many of the same ways". When thinking about the past, present, and future, memory can offer "a tool with which to think" (Bowker, 2005, p. 15) and a methodology that works across past-present-future temporalities to situate the personal within the public and connect it with the political. As Julie McLeod and Rachel Thomson (2009, p. 49) have discussed, "the idea of memory as connected to a sense of future possibility" makes it relevant to concerns about and methodological approaches to social change. To this end, this research makes a case for the value of children's (alongside childhoods') educational memories in the envisioning of otherwise educational imaginaries and the ways in which these can be envisioned through memory work with children and young people in the present (see also Moraitopoulou, 2022). Memory work has traditionally been used to pry open dominant societal paradigms (Kaufman et al., 2001) through the revisiting in retrospect of childhood—or, more broadly, past—memories. This research proposes to use memory work with children as a heuristic tool and imaginative methodology to revisit, discuss, and think critically upon memories of schooling to finally ask what futures of education are envisioned through children's memories of schooling that matter to them.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter synthesises a breadth of literature—primarily from Childhood/Youth and Educational Studies—that engages with the relationships between children/childhoods, education, and futures. It addresses the limited study of the future as a temporal orientation with relevance for the study of children and childhood and engages with possible historical and ontological reasons as to why this might be; it attempts to offer some clarity regarding the various conceptualisations of the notion of 'education futures' and highlights the absence of engagement with children and young people's imaginings of alternative futures of education. As such, this chapter affirms the need to consciously create 'spaces' in which children and young people can be invited as co-creators of possible educational futures and draws

a framework through which memory can be explored as a method to study young people's visions of educational futures through the lens of affect. Akin to the topic of this thesis itself, the composite elements of this chapter evolved primarily from and in parallel to fieldwork encounters and subsequent rounds of analysis.

Chapter 3. Researching Educational Futures: a Methodological Framework

In this study, I have taken an inductive approach to framing memory, drawing primarily on my research interlocutors' understanding(s) of this notion. Framed as a research pilot phase, my starting point in this process was to ask the children and young people with whom I worked about the different images they held regarding the concept of 'memory' and what it entails; it was these conversations that first pointed to the use of memory as a 'tool' through which to explore personal experience. Subsequent ethnographic material, as well as the historical moment in which this research evolved (that is, coinciding with the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdowns), framed my decision to use memory as a working concept for my interlocutors to share and reflect upon their experiences of education and schooling. As such, my research design reflects what is, in part, one of my research aims—namely, to propose a methodological approach to work with and through children and young people's memories of education in the envisioning of educational futures. In line with the reflective, participatory, and experimental nature of the research, I designed a qualitative study that drew on ethnographic methods and multimodal approaches to research. In this chapter, I detail how I traced my research path through following relationships with people and the emergence of my research topic. I begin with a rationale for the use of a qualitative research framework in research with children and young people that draws upon multimodal ethnographic approaches; I continue with a description of the research design and analysis, followed by the limitations and challenges I encountered, including the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic; I conclude with a discussion of research ethics and researcher positionality.

3.1 Defining the object of study

For reasons that include language, geographical proximity (I was living and working in London) and planning feasibility, the focal site of this research is the UK. I had not encountered the British educational system prior to beginning this research; familiarizing myself with its landscape and following its current affairs became a central priority of the study. My research design took time to develop; I was grappling with the many faces of memory and reviewing the—then very limited—discussions around memory in childhood and educational studies literature (see Chapter 2). Meanwhile, it was in my interest to understand the key priorities across Ashoka, POEM and the Changemaker Schools Network in order to inform the research design accordingly (see Chapter 1 for a deeper discussion). During the study's early stages (roughly its first fifteen months), I adopted an open research design approach to allow time to build relationships with the various stakeholders affected by the research and to gauge the interests of my research interlocutors, enabling me to make the research interesting and relevant to them. For this reason, it was later necessary to redesign part of the study in collaboration with my main interlocutors: children and young people from the participating schools. The first months of fieldwork marked the pilot research phase, throughout which my initial research proposal

took shape, moulded and catalysed by conversations I had in the field. Before I elaborate further on the unfolding of the research pilot phase, the construction of the field and the recruitment of participants, I want to make reference to the research paradigms and approaches that influenced my research design.

3.2 Multimodal ethnographic experimentations & research with children and young people

3.2.1 Drawing on a participatory paradigm for research with children and young people[22]

In the early 1990s, the 'New Sociology of Childhood' introduced the premise that children are 'experts of their own lives', pointing to the need for more participatory approaches in research with children and young people and culminating in a disciplinary paradigm shift within the field (Christensen & James, 2017; Coyne & Carter, 2018; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008; James & Prout, 1997). This 'participatory turn' introduced the use of more 'child-centred' research methods (for example, photography, drama, mapping, drawing, and storytelling, to name a few) that were supposedly more 'fun' and 'relevant' for children. Most importantly, these methods redefined children's level and type of involvement throughout the different stages of the research process: children's participation may vary, from choosing whether and the extent to which they wish to participate to designing the study itself, choosing its methods and leading its analysis and dissemination of findings (Coyne & Carter, 2018; Thomas, 2017). Participatory approaches, however, have also been strongly problematized, especially regarding research in formal educational settings (for reference see Christensen & James, 2017; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008; Kirby, 2020), a discussion which I detail in relation to my study later in this chapter (see *Research Ethics and Positionality* later in this chapter).

In my work with children and young people, I draw from the stance that participation is as much about the techniques used as it is about the research '*attitude*'—that is, what Gallacher and Gallagher term "methodological immaturity" to refer to the "privilege[ing] [of] open-ended process over predefined technique" when conducting participatory research with children and young people (2008, emphasis in original). I join the authors in their understanding of 'immaturity', as underpinned by an ontology of "emergence, becoming, and inexpertise" (ibid., p. 511). Such an understanding of immaturity, in relation to the notion of becoming, unleashes its "*potential*" to attune more with the complexity and "messy process[es]" of the social worlds we inhabit and research (ibid., p. 511, emphasis in original). The 'participatory' framing of my study allowed room for experimentation with and through different

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[22] [22] United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) uses the term 'child' to refer to anyone from birth to the age of 18. However, the terms 'child' and 'youth' are often not used with consistency across different disciplines. In this paper I use the terms 'children' and 'young people' interchangeably to refer to primary and secondary school students, acknowledging that this does not blur distinctions that impact the conclusions that can be drawn from this thesis (cf. Christensen & James, 2017 for a discussion on the need to differentiate between the two). However, it is important to stress that I have also addressed and resolved beforehand this issue of representation with the older young interlocutors of this research, in recognition that some of them could have found the use of the term 'child' to be patronizing and demeaning of their agency (cf. Mayes & Hartup, 2021).

methods and concepts throughout the research process as well as in the building and constant negotiation of relationships with the children and young people with whom I worked. Importantly, it provided the framework for me to 'see'—and, at a later stage, embrace—my own vulnerability throughout the research process, my mistakes and preoccupations, my "incompetence and vulnerabilities", or else, immaturity, allowing for my own 'becoming' in the process (ibid., p. 512). It further helped me to situate myself epistemologically as "curious and unknowing" (Lather, 2009, p. 9), cultivating acceptance for a feeling of "getting lost as a way of knowing" (ibid., p. 4) whilst containing the anxiety provoked by this lack of certainty. Finally, weaving this participatory stance with ethnographic approaches opened space for the embodied and performative lives of children (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008, p. 506) to be included in the research process.

3.2.2 Multimodal ethnographic experimentations

The authors of 'Multimodal Ethnography' (Dicks et al., 2006), a writing that marks the appearance of this approach as a named research practice in the social sciences literature (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019, p. 366), frame multimodality as the employment and combination of different media (video, films, audio recordings, graphics, etc.) to collect, analyze, and represent data. Multimodal ethnographic approaches have been deemed particularly useful in research with children and young people as they foreground multimedia, going beyond the use of language, to explore children's experiences, meaning-making and communication practices whilst also revealing alternative avenues to the co-production of knowledge between adult-researchers and child-interlocutors (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019). In my study I understand multimodality both as the use of multiple mediums when it comes to data collection, analysis, and representation and as a 'space' for experimentation with different visual and creative methods to collect and analyze data, explore meanings, and create representations together with my young research participants; most importantly, I align in my understanding of multimodal ethnography with Varvantakis and Nolas (2019, p. 368), who stress the corporeality of practicing multimodal ethnographic analysis and figure the "multi-sensory practice" of making sense of data as a simultaneously "intellectual and visceral process". I pay attention to what Varvantakis and Nolas (ibid.) frame as the practice of "mak[ing] connections", aiming to "'re-embody' the disembodied and distanced 'analyst', the product of more categorical approaches to data analysis, and advocat[ing] for the different dimensions of analysis to remain entangled". Memory work, and the cultural act of remembering, involves ideas, impressions, and feelings which appear indistinctly in multisensorial ways (sounds, images, smells) which are, in turn, captured in inscriptional formats that can range from spoken or written words, still or moving images, sound recordings, and drawings, to name a few (van Dijck, 2004). Adopting a multimodal ethnographic research framework as outlined above is, then, particularly relevant in the study of affective orientations and of memory, not least for the ways it "open[s] up analytical possibilities of exploring the affective, embodied and sensual textures of memory", as well as

reflecting on how the researcher's own memories may impact our research practice (Pells, 2018, forthcoming; read more under the 'Positionality' section of this chapter).

3.3 The pilot research phase

As discussed earlier, the pilot research phase constituted an essential starting point for developing a bottom-up understanding of memory, framed alongside my young interlocutors, and subsequently redesigning my initial research proposal in a way that resonated with them. My wish for the pilot phase was to embed myself, over the course of a few weeks, in a school setting that would be willing to welcome me in its premises, allowing me adequate space and time to reframe the understanding of my research objectives through conversations and exchanges with its school community. Having sufficient time to build trusting and trusted relationships with members of the school community and learn about their lives thus was a central priority in my research design. As a novice ethnographer myself, the exploratory research phase was also a 'space' for me to experiment and familiarize myself with the practicing of ethnographic methods. The pilot phase spanned from September to December 2019, and during that period, I spent a total of five weeks immersed in an alternative[23] independent[24] secondary[25] school in the South West of England (I will be referring to this school as Green Hill from now on). I got to know its students and teachers through participating in the school's daily life (I elaborate more on the school's profile and the reasons why I chose this school in particular in Chapter 4), garnering the opportunity to frame my research focus alongside the young people who agreed to participate in my research, learning to work with them in respectful, collaborative, and non-intrusive ways.

Dylan (pseudonym) was one of the school's co-founders and teachers whom I had met previously during my introduction to the Ashoka Changemaker Schools Network and who had expressed interest for their school to be part of the research. Through a series of conversations, Dylan agreed to become my main research gatekeeper and, later, a key research interlocutor himself; he facilitated all practical arrangements during the pilot phase, including my accommodation during my visits in three different student family houses, a condition that created an interesting opportunity to connect with some of my participants' parents, too. During my five weeks at the school, I assisted with the daily cooking and the cleaning of the school; I observed classrooms, attended the weekly school meetings, and accompanied the students in extracurricular activities, including the school climate marches that a small group of

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[23] There is a lot of confusion around the use of the adjective 'alternative' when it comes to describing educational settings and approaches. In the English educational context, an 'alternative' school (sometimes known also as 'progressive' school) usually claims to offer an unconventional approach to education that falls outside the mainstream. Of course, ways and degree to which this is achieved can vary greatly but elaborating further on the use of the term goes beyond the scope of this work.

[24] In the UK context, independent schools is another term to describe private schools, meaning schools that are fee-paying and are not government-funded. It is also important to note that students attending these schools do not have to follow the national curriculum. (Indicative reference: https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/private-schools#:~:text=Private%20schools%20(also%20known%20as,to%20follow%20the%20national%20curriculum).

[25] Typically between 11 and 16 years old.

students attended regularly; I also taught three classes as a teacher's replacement during their sick leave. I dedicated the first three weeks of my stay to getting to know the students and teachers and participating in the school's daily life, concurrently recording fieldnotes of the aspects of school life that I observed as relevant to the research. To give an example, I quickly noticed that many of the students I met had moved to this school after being excluded, bullied, or having had a fall-out in their previous schools; some of them expressed intense disapproval about their previous educational experience, self-identifying as 'outliers' in the mainstream education system. In a similar vein, I was surprised by the number of students who were particularly articulate about their educational journeys and the ways they wished to see them changing. It was through these encounters that I became more attentive to these students' personal journeys within and through education, listening closely to their stories and memories. This experience informed my decision to foreground the students' own memories of schooling at the centre of my research design, and this is detailed in greater depth below.

During my last two weeks in the school, I organised two open meetings and several informal conversations, explaining my research to students and inviting those who were interested to participate in the co-creation workshop that would frame the research aims and examine the best approaches to achieve such aims moving forward. A student research group was formed from these preliminary meetings, and nine students, aged between 13 and 16 years old, volunteered to participate in the research workshops. Tigerlily (pseudonym), an alumni student whom I had met previously during my initial visit to the school, showed interest in the research and nominated herself as a volunteer 'research assistant' who would, alongside Dylan, support the coordination of the research interlocutors and workshops. In January 2020, the end of the pilot research phase was marked by a three-day research co-creation workshop for the nine young research interlocutors, co-facilitated alongside Dylan and Tigerlily. The workshop was framed as an extracurricular activity and was combined with our group's excursion to the English countryside, which received financial support from the school's budget. The research co-creation workshop helped to re-frame the research objectives and resulted in the design of the *school memory work(shop)*, which I later used as a primary method for the remainder of the data collection process (see below and also Chapter 4).

3.4.1 First attempt to construct the field and recruit research interlocutors[26]

In February 2020, following the pilot research phase and the initial design of the *school memory*

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[26] Throughout the thesis, I alternate between the words co-researchers, participants, interlocutors, or participant-interlocutors, using them interchangeably to refer to the children and young people with whom I worked for this research. In doing so, I join other researchers using deliberately terms such as 'interlocutors' (e.g. Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019), 'informants' (e.g., Biklen, 2004), or 'contributors' (e.g., Hoyle et al., 2020) to refer to the children and young people in their studies, in an attempt to address and resist the power imbalances acknowledge pertaining to knowledge production. Using the aforementioned terms can reflect as a good research practice that strives for

work(shop), I extended the research invitation to more schools within the Ashoka UK Changemaker Schools Network, inviting their students to participate in the study. I intentionally aimed for a diverse school sample, both in terms of age group (primary, secondary, college) and in terms of school profile (fee-paying, state, democratic, community, religious, etc.), to achieve the maximum possible heterogeneity in terms of the students' school experiences. My contact with the schools was always mediated by a gatekeeper—typically the headteacher or a teacher lead; these gatekeepers were appointed contact persons for the Ashoka Network and were often called 'changeleaders' (read more in Chapter 1). The teacher-gatekeepers were, in turn, responsible for extending the research invitation to their students, stressing that their participation would be entirely voluntary and clearly detached from other school commitments. By the end of the outreach process in early March 2020, teachers from another seven schools had accepted my research invitation and small groups of eight young interlocutors were formed in each of the seven schools. This research design would involve a week-long fieldwork period in each of the selected schools over a three-month timeframe, enabling me to run the *school memory work(shops)* and conduct interviews and observations with the selected groups of young research interlocutors; the participating schools also agreed to a shared date in June 2020 where all young people taking part in the project would convene in a co-curated exhibition of their school memories. With help from Ashoka and participating teachers, I also submitted a funding bid to a foundation to raise money and cover the expenses of the exhibition and the students' travel costs.

3.4.2 Second attempt to re-construct the 'field' and adapt interlocutor recruitment in the light of COVID-19

"[Research is] fundamentally a process of *muddling through,* sometimes feeling lost and out of place"
(Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008, p. 512, emphasis in original)

As much as Gallacher and Gallagher's statement holds true for much of social research, these words gained new resonance in the wake of March 2020. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the first UK lockdown wave imposed at the end of March 2020 left hardly any aspect of life untouched, and my research plans were, of course, no exception. School closures interrupted all forms of ongoing educational research, including in-school ethnographic inquiries (DeMatthews et al., 2020), wrecking every illusion of having full control over my research design and its future direction (Herbert, 2020). Although it was difficult to predict how long the pandemic would last, I soon had to cancel all preplanned school visits and the final exhibition. Amid a surging climate of uncertainty, I became conscious of how school communities' priorities were shifting: this included feeling overwhelmed with the transition to online learning and securing the students' safety and their basic needs. During that time, I maintained

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relationships of mutual respect, knowledge exchange and co-creation between adult-academics and those young people with lived experience on the matters that concern them.

some online contact with the students and teachers I was already connected to, but most of our exchanges had now shifted to focus on the impact of COVID-19 on our lives. Meeting new students online under these conditions and conducting online workshops and one-to-one interviews with them proved challenging if not impossible; the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)[27] certificate which I had obtained to work offline with students was not extended to online contact; each school had its own online safeguarding policy which in many cases strictly regulated or even banned the synchronous student-teacher online interaction. This condition inevitably brought an imbalance in my communication with the students—who, until that point, were my main research interlocutors—as compared to with their teachers with whom, in many cases, my relationships strengthened during the pandemic.

The mediated nature of my research encounters became more apparent as my dependency on the internet and its various communication infrastructures heightened, becoming my sole avenue for connecting to my 'field' and research interlocutors. 'Online classrooms' may come as no surprise to us today, yet our public imagery of schooling was more likely to be attached to an 'offline' space until the pandemic struck. At that point, I needed to change and adapt my research methods in ways that I hadn't yet imagined; amidst conditions marked by increasing uncertainty, and in the absence of a 'plan B', I decided to put my focus on prioritizing the shared need for 'connection' amidst social distancing and isolation. Driven by that need for connection and relatedness, throughout the first weeks of national lockdown in the UK, I developed regular online contact with six educators from six different schools from the CM school network; initially through weekly, and later via bi-weekly online calls, we forged a small space of solidarity and mutual support for the emotional and practical challenges each of us was facing both in our personal and professional lives. A few weeks later, we decided to open our small online circles to students from across the six different schools, providing an opportunity for community to those who wanted to connect with one other and share the myriad impacts of COVID on their lives. Using COVID-19 and concomitant school closures as our starting point, we co-organized a series of youth-led discussions around the impact of COVID on children and young people's education and schooling. Further to attending and helping convene these online gatherings, I also used them as opportunities for observation that would inform my research, as well as for facilitating connection with new students interested in participating in the study, who would, moving forwards, go on to contribute through online conversations and interviews. Through these online meetings, I connected to four young student facilitators from three CM schools, who agreed to participate in my research through online interviews and workshops. In parallel to what we later came to call "Our COVID Conversations" (see also Chapter 8 for some illustrations of these conversations), several other grassroots and youth-led initiatives that challenged the status quo of education in the light of COVID also came to my attention: Varkey Foundation's Class of COVID; Youth X Youth conference; Big Education Conversation; Phoenix Foundation's Changemakers Lab; Pupils Voice; and Not A Trend, to name a few. These

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[27] A UK-specific check of someone's criminal record, required for work with children.

initiatives focused, albeit in different ways, on the otherwise educational possibilities that COVID-19 had torn open. It was through my encounters with such networks and initiatives, both as an observer and as a facilitator/contributor, as in the case of Youth X Youth, that I met with other young people who self-identified as 'education activists'. Four of these young people later agreed to participate in my research, contributing to the exploration of meanings of otherwise educational imaginaries through student memories.

Through this emergent and oftentimes serendipitous process, my field of study began to take its final form. From March 2020 until June 2021, I conducted online (and, in between national lockdowns, some in-person) interviews, group discussions and workshops with 35 children and young people aged eight to eighteen from five different UK Changemaker Schools; I also interviewed 18 teachers from these same schools. Additionally, I conducted workshops and interviews with another four young people—facilitators of the online "COVID Conversations" and four education activists whom I met in my search for grassroots initiatives engaging with ideas of education futures, broadly defined. Adapting to the impact of COVID on my research design, I made an informed decision to narrow my research focus to make the analysis more manageable, thus leaving a certain volume of material outside of the main analysis. I have, however, used this material to contextualize certain arguments and to write up other relevant publications (see, for example, Moraitopoulou, 2022, 2023). In this vein, my analysis in this thesis centres around my research encounters with 12 of the young people who participated in my research, all of whom self-identified as actively concerned (and in some cases also engaged) with educational change (what I will in some cases refer to later as 'education activists'). I introduce them in more detail in the respective chapters in which their memories and experiences feature.

3.4 Methods

3.4.1 Interviews

Throughout the fieldwork process, I conducted a total of 39 semi-structured interviews, both online and offline, lasting from 20 to 90 minutes each—21 of these were with students, both individually and in small groups; the remaining 18 were conducted with educators. Following the constant reshaping of fieldwork in light of COVID, as well as the need to clarify further my research focus, I made the decision to narrow my research scope by focusing only on twelve of the young interviews conducted with young people aged between 14 and 19 years old at the time of the research (read more in the Analysis subsection below). These interviews were structured around a set of prompts that had been decided jointly, in collaboration with the group of young interlocutors, following the end of the pilot research phase (read more on Chapter 4). During the interviews, I remained flexible and attentive, allowing space for the topics and issues that my participants considered significant to emerge (Flick, 2014). All 12 interviews were conducted online and lasted roughly between 30 and 90 minutes each; they were preceded by

informal chats and complemented by follow-up conversations, offering scope to expand on particular aspects of their school experiences. The slot for each interview was agreed with each young person individually, ensuring it fit their schedule, and written consent was collected in all cases. Prior to each interview, I ensured that none of the participants were hindered by technological or physical limitations that would prevent their participation (see Fieldwork Challenges and Limitations later in this chapter). At the beginning of each interview, I allocated additional time to discuss the main points listed in the consent form, stressing that they could ask to stop and leave the interview at any point: for this purpose, I introduced the notion of the 'skip card', the idea of this being that they could 'play' this card at any point, for example, should a question they did not want to answer emerge. A prerequisite was that another adult was present at home during the interview, who would be available should the interviewees need. It is necessary to raise the issue of additional risks engendered by online interviews as compared to face-to-face; of particular concern to me was the increased difficulty in 'reading' the interviewees' body language, thus posing challenges for the detection and prevention of any unintentional psychological harm which may be caused during the interview (for example, through the recalling of an unpleasant memory) (Fielding et al., 2017). Whilst I was constantly alert to these risks, I relied on the good rapport I had already established through previous communications with each of the participants who I interviewed online as a strategy to mitigate this (ibid.). Further to consent from parental or legal guardians, I obtained an additional teacher's approval for each student under the age of 16 where the interview was taking place online. After each interview, I kept field notes, summarizing the elements that stood out for me and recording information about the interaction with my participants as well as my own emotional responses to it (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 72). To this point, Froerer et al. argue for the relevance of ethnographically-grounded interviews in the context of deepening our understanding of the affective orientations in young people's educational experiences; borrowing from Skoggard and Waterson (2015: 114), they argue for the potential of ethnographically-grounded interviews to "make possible an examination of feelings in the context of different social activities and through different forms of social interaction", hence "facilitat[ing] access to a more substantive understanding of affective ideas—those feelings, emotions, sensations and other qualities" that might otherwise be difficult to approach (2020).

3.4.2 Participant observation

My initial research design was limited to offline, in-school participant observation. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent adaptation of my research methods, I also conducted limited online participant observation in the framework of online conversations (such as in the case of "Our COVID Conversations") and workshops with some of my participants. My participant observation was initially broad in scope: during the pilot research phase, I focused on general aspects of everyday school life, interactions between children and staff and amongst children, and on impressions

from informal conversations I had with teachers, students, and parents. I used a notebook and my phone to record systematic written or voice notes, which I re-wrote by the end of each school day or week. I strived to remain sensitive and attentive to the students' and staff's reactions to my daily presence in the school and figured how to move through spaces and observe without being disruptive. In between the first two national lockdowns in the UK, I made another two short-term visits (lasting one school week each) in two other schools in March and October 2020, respectively, wherein I narrowed my observations to the scope of the research workshops. During my school visits, I took pictures and made notes on aspects of the school life that stood out to me (Delamont et al., 2014) and captured insights and impressions from informal conversations I had with students and members of staff during my stay. I also collected publicly available school documents that reflected the school's vision, discourses, and practices in order to contextualize my data where relevant.

Regarding online participant observation, this took place primarily on Zoom and Google Hangouts during group conversations and workshops with students and teachers. I attended these conversations more as "observer-as-participant" than as "participant-as-observer" (Kirby, 2018, p. 61), usually taking a step back and recording my impressions and things that stood out to me from the discussions. At the beginning of each call, I reminded the attendees of my research identity and focused my observations throughout the calls on those participants who had given informed consent for the study. However, ethical dilemmas persisted regarding the use of data generated from those who might have been present in the conversation but who had not given full informed consent to participate, such as in the case of "Our COVID Conversations". For this reason, whenever I recorded comments of a non-participant in my field notes, I avoided the use of verbatim comments or other personal details to ensure anonymity. As I discuss more extensively in the 'positionality' section of this chapter, my two-fold role as both PhD researcher and community lead for the Changemaker Schools' network further blurred my role as 'participant observer'. Working for Ashoka at the same time as doing my PhD through the organization facilitated my access to many informal conversations and debates around education and schooling in the UK, which I most likely would not have had access to if I was present only in a research capacity. All the while, I took notes of my observations, reflections, and impressions in my fieldnotes. Although not explicitly used for the purpose of this research, they have informed the unfolding and understanding of my research and I therefore consider them as integral to my ethnographic practice and the practicing of participant observation.

3.4.3 Research workshops

Workshops have been a fundamental part of my research process during both offline and online fieldwork. Rather than understanding the workshops as a prescribed 'method' or set of methods, I approached them as 'spaces' to combine visual and creative methods with group discussions and

reflections. This setup allowed for modes of expression that go beyond the verbal, encouraging reflexive experimentation, and creating room for affective dimensions of experience to emerge (see also notes on multimodality earlier in this chapter). As Kirby puts it:

> "The temporal and spatial locations of the research encounter are important for children, enabling them to talk about how they feel; affect unfolds through materiality, time and space. The creative methods 'deploy and intensify' (Abel, 2008: np) the affective moment; their material properties influencing what can be expressed" (Kirby, 2018, p. 66).

Although always underpinned by the study's aims, no one research workshop was identical to another: I adapted aspects of the workshop each time (e.g. the timings, the materials used, the activities) according to my participants' ages, preferences, and the available time we had together. In this thesis, I draw primarily from four (two online and two in-person) research workshops, each of which was attended by between four and nine young interlocutors and lasted for 60 to 120 minutes each. The workshops had the following aims in relation to the research:

- Explore the notions of memory, remembering, exhibiting, archiving, and curating and what they mean to the young people involved

- Use memory as a 'tool' to explore lived experience

- Recall, retell and make a personal school memory that matters public

In parallel to the above listed objectives, the workshop also served several more subtle, yet equally important, objectives:

- **Building relationships and trust within the student group and between the group and myself:** considering the limited time I could spend with each group of students participating in the research, trust-building was a major priority. The workshop 'space' was thus an opportunity to get to know each other outside of class hours, in a more informal setting and without the presence of a teacher, which, in some cases, allowed room for more spontaneous conversations. For each new group I worked with, we kicked off the workshop by crafting creative name tags using the art material I had brought with me. We used the name tags to indicate our pronouns and other aspects of our identity that we wanted to share with the group. We also co-authored a list of shared principles wherein we indicated what made us feel listened to and not judged and how we would create a safe space for sharing.

- **Creating new memories from our time together:** apart from being a space for personal memories of schooling to be shared and discussed, the workshop was itself "a space of commensality, of exchange and of memory creation" (Seremetakis, 1994, as quoted in

Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019). In preparation for all (offline) workshops, I took care of providing food and beverages and arranged the workshop space—usually an office or an unused room in the school—in a welcoming setup that did not resemble the classroom (laying a tablecloth on the table, arranging the chairs in a circular way around the table). I played music from my phone and a speaker at the beginning of each workshop, and my participants followed by playing music of their taste at different times throughout the workshops, usually during individual reflection times. We also took time to play games which were, again, primarily suggested by my participants.

•   **Making room for group discussions before proceeding with individual interviews:** As Flick (2014) underlines, differently to individual interviews, group discussions allow for more contingent conversations and group dynamics to emerge and be at the center of knowledge production.

At the beginning of each workshop, I suggested a rough timeline and presented the workshop's overall aim. I presented a 'toolbox' of available resources with which we could experiment; this included art material, empty postcards, a Polaroid camera, and small digital cameras in the case of offline workshops, and more playful/interactive digital interfaces (such as Google Jamboard) in the case of online workshops. Together with my participants, we experimented with different creative methods (crafting, photography, jottings, poems, objects, and the Children's Photography Archive[28]) to explore notions of memory and create representations of their school memories. The use of different creative methods was aligned with the research aims of recalling and retelling school memories; their material properties help to elicit the affective dimensions of memories that could otherwise be unnoticed or difficult to express. I sought to remain "intuitive, reflective and flexible" (Coyne & Carter, 2018) throughout the whole process and attempted to adapt my methods to the young people's reactions and preferences. This resulted in making up some methods on the spot, such as muddling through the Children's Photography Archive to respond to my participants' interests and eventually make research concepts more accessible to them. 'Free time' was purposefully part of the workshop design, too, allowing for time to regularly check in with everyone's feelings and relax—this is to say, my approach to research design was innately driven by my willingness to create an engaging and rewarding experience for all children and young people involved in the process.[29]

3.5 Analysis

I used Grounded Theory (GT) to inform the different stages of my research, particularly my research

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[28] Link to the Children's Photography Archive: https://childhoodpublics.org/projects/childphotoarchive/. See also (Moraitopoulou, 2023).

[29] I drew on previous experience I had in designing and facilitating workshops for both adults and children and followed an additional training course on creative facilitation to create workshops that addressed the research aims as much as they respected my participants' time and honored their participation.

analysis, but I did not follow all steps outlined by the theory to the letter. GT coding has gained its own relevance as a method of analysis (Flick, 2014) with different variations as to how GT is or should be applied, drawing on the different schools of thought that evolved following *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* by Glaser and Strauss (1967). For this study, I used GT to complement my ethnographic approach, incorporating the analysis as an integral component of the research process. I conducted my first round of analysis in parallel to my ongoing data collection, developing codes, concepts and categories from the data and using memos to elaborate on the codes. Using GT in this way further allowed me to focus and re-focus the questions I asked and combine different methods while remaining adaptable and guided by my participants (cf. O'Reilly, 2012). I followed the steps outlined by GT coding to analyze my material; I did a first round of open coding to identify common themes and patterns emerging from my data; I then continued with a second round of more selective and conceptual coding, during which I also related subcategories to categories. I analyzed all my data using MaxQDA, a qualitative analysis software, with which I also transcribed my interviews and workshop recordings. I occasionally also used otter.ai, an online transcription software, for this task.

Regarding the data I collected using memory-work methods more specifically, I focused on the themes arising from the young interlocutors' accounts, identifying recurring commonalities in the form and content of their experiences (Keightley, 2010, p. 64); this included discursive constructs, metaphors, and clichés (ibid.) and, at a later stage of the analysis, the affective orientations pertaining to their educational experiences: the feelings their memories evoked for them, and the feelings they wished to evoke within the future generations to whom their memory reinscriptions will be addressed. In this vein, I also looked for the verbal and non-verbal language and gestures of affected bodies, wherever I had kept relevant notes, as well as "communicative content about experienced or attributed affect" (Knudsen & Stage, 2015). In the absence of a standardised approach to analysing data generated from memory methods, Keightley (2010, p. 66) stresses the need for researchers to be clear and transparent about the conclusions they; in order to achieve this, I have chosen to cite, almost at full length, the school memories shared with me by my 12 core research interlocutors, around which my writing unfolds in Chapters 5, 6, and 7). Aside from giving access to raw data, Keightley (2010, p. 66) also highlights the need for researcher reflexivity in order to ensure analytical rigour; this includes the researcher situating herself with regards to her own social and cultural position, and in relation to the participants—"both data and analysis are fundamentally shaped by the ethnicity, gender, class or age of researcher and participant, and the relationship between them"; I elaborate further on this in the 'Positionality' section of this chapter).

To move beyond the re-imagining of educational futures as a strictly 'rational' project (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020), and in line with the epistemological foundations of the school memory work foregrounding what matters to young people in their educational experience, I have used affect as an analytical framework to help me 'read' the school memories submitted by these young interlocutors. My analysis of the school memories is situated in the affective turn, and in particular its

more recent influence in the realm of educational research. In doing so, I use 'emotion', 'feeling', and 'affect' interchangeably, joining Ahmed (2004) and other scholars (e.g. Aruldoss et al., 2021) in their approach in understanding affect simultaneously as emotions and as the hunches and visceral prompts, atmospheres, sensations, non-verbal expressions and perceptions that do not always come with a vocabulary of the feelings experienced.

While engaging with the analysis of children and young people's memories of schooling, I became aware of how my own memories of childhood and schooling as a researcher were not detached from this process; I invited some of these memories into my analysis, contrasting them and making connections (Best, 2007; Biklen, 2007) (read more on 'Research Ethics and Positionality', in this chapter). I thus remained reflexive throughout the analysis, attuned to how my own memories were informing my research practice (Pells, 2018, forthcoming). Furthermore, I understood the analysis itself as a form of memory work. Throughout the process of analysing my material, I used photographs I had taken in the field and revisited email exchanges, notebook notes, and other artefacts I had collected to facilitate my recall and shape memories of "what happened there"; through this process, I understood the analysis of my multimodal ethnographic material as a form of memory work itself (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019).

3.6 Fieldwork challenges and limitations

3.6.1 Doing research in school settings

The control of children's spatiotemporal orientations and the imbalanced power relationships by which they are governed, as happens in schools, leads Thomas (2017) to question the emphasis placed on researching children within school environments wherein they are systemically denied their agency (Christensen & James, 2017; Spyrou, 2011). Whilst my research was primarily designed to take place within school settings, my intention was to create a 'safe' space inside schools in and through which to imagine what might exist beyond or outside of them. My challenge was, then, at the first level, to create these environments whilst abiding by the schools' safeguarding policies and organisational and curricular demands, and later to find ways to transfer this environment online. Contrary to the experiences of many educational researchers who attempt research in schools, I had little difficulty making contacts and gaining access to the schools I chose to work with, owing to my capacity as a Changemaker Schools Lead within Ashoka UK, an organisation with pre-established relationships with the schools in which I researched (see also Chapter 1). Still, the aspect of having my communication with the children always be mediated by other "layers of [adult] gatekeepers who exercise power over

children"[30] (David et al., 2001, p. 351; Kirby, 2020) maintained a certain level of formality in the relationships I had with the young interlocutors, a phenomenon that was particularly intensified during the pandemic. Finally, children's already overloaded school timetables and exam commitments allowed little room for them to engage in 'extra' activities, as was reflected in some children's comments that they didn't have enough time to participate in the research due to pressing school commitments.

3.6.2 Doing research amid a global pandemic

"All we humans ever do is to impose structures onto life and being, then to find out that neither life,
nor being, follow our designs"
Mattijs van de Port in his introduction to the film *Knots and Holes*, retrieved from the editorial of
Entanglements: Experiments in Multimodal Ethnography (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2020)

As Varvantakis and Nolas continue in the same editorial, life during the year of the pandemic has all but followed our designs. Not unlike other ethnographic research projects that overlapped with the outbreak of the global pandemic, COVID-19 was the root cause of some of the most significant challenges I encountered in this study. My initial research ambitions—to work with small groups of students across eight schools and convene them around a student-curated pop-up exhibition at the end of the study—fell through, with most of my planned fieldwork coinciding with national lockdowns and school closures. While some researchers mitigated the disruptions caused by COVID-19 by transitioning to online environments, this was not a seamless pursuit in the context of my study. Working closely with children and young people, without the presence of teachers, to establish trust and safe environments for sharing school memories has been a fundamental design principle of my research, and I did not have sufficient permission to replicate this online. As such, the most potent impact of the pandemic on my study was largely the way in which it reversed my communication with my research participants, bringing me closer to the adults (teachers) and distancing me from the younger (students) participants.

After the announcement of cross-national school closures in the UK, schools began writing new safeguarding policies to secure children's safety during online class hours. My DBS certificate, which allowed me to work unsupervised with children offline, did not have the same validity online. Moreover, I observed that these safeguarding policies varied across different types of schools. Some schools allowed students a full online presence in videoconferencing environments, that is, with their cameras on, whereas others required students turn their cameras off. There were even schools where teacher-student interactions took place solely in asynchronous online environments, like Google Classrooms.

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[30] In the case of this research, these adult gatekeepers were teachers and parents/legal guardians, impacting the research various ways, for instance, when gauging my young interlocutors' interest to participate and in the scheduling of the number of interactions and the duration of my time spent with them.

Consequently, students attending schools with stricter policies, which often happened to be those located in the most under-resourced areas, were excluded almost 'by default' from participating in the study. This also meant they could not participate in any of the upcoming online gatherings (e.g., "Our COVID Conversations"), organised in collaboration with students and teachers, nor any subsequent online research workshops or interviews. Starting from this observation, I gradually became more aware of the different ways in which COVID-19 would impact disproportionately on children's lives as the pandemic unfolded, from access to free school meals, laptop devices and broadband connections, to biased algorithms predicting their (non)-access to higher education. The students with whom I maintained online contact during the pandemic, whether sporadic or more regular, were primarily those with whom I had established prior connections. Although all students were already familiar with communicating online, some felt less comfortable interacting in the virtual space and others found online communication wearing, having difficulty remaining focused for the full hour of the interview. What came to be later coined as 'Zoom-fatigue' was indeed an overwhelming phenomenon, one that I myself experienced so. The online environment thus discouraged some of my participants from continuing to work with me, and we eventually lost contact. Likewise, restrictions, bereavement, and the looming feeling of 'uncertainty' resulting from COVID-19 played central roles in the deterioration of children's and young people's mental health[31]. Accordingly, this was also a major factor for some of my participants' disengagement from the study moving forward. The young people with whom I worked repeatedly reported their fear of infecting older relatives, their anxiety about the state of the world, and how much they missed seeing their friends and meeting them outside. Remaining attentive and sensitive to my participants' emotions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic became a central priority, outweighing other research activities and monopolising many of our conversations moving forward. As data culture scholar Annette Markham (2020) poignantly wrote about a project she finished amid the pandemic, in light of these unprecedented conditions, "[her] job as an academic shifted from 'collecting data' or 'writing up findings' to facilitator, troubleshooter, platform builder. Towards the end goal of greater awareness for the participants". Attending to my young interlocutors' needs and priorities and how these shifted in the light of COVID-19, was an act of taking the ethics of care seriously.

3.7 Research ethics and positionality

In their key messages to researchers doing research on emotions in education, Day and Harris (2016) highlight the sensitive nature of this work, emphasizing the researchers' responsibility to be conscious and in control of their own emotional histories and how these influence the assumptions they bring to their work; they also emphasize the relational nature of emotional experiences, stressing the need for researchers "to be sufficiently aware and skilled to create a safe and supportive enough relationship so

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[31] You can read more here: https://www.barnardos.org.uk/blog/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-covid-19.

that participants can share a range of experiences without being overwhelmed by painful emotions, such as same" (Zembylas & Schutz, 2016, pp. 57–58).

3.7.1 Ethical considerations

Ensuring informed consent, especially in a school context, is a complex process that requires the researcher's attention and ongoing monitoring of the participants' assent and consent (Cocks, 2006). For this reason, I aimed towards an ongoing and dialogical process of ethical decision-making, one that continued to assess and reassess ethical aspects of the research at all stages in conversation with my participants—what Neal et al. (2012) describe as "situated and processual ethics" (Nolas, 2018). All participants were provided ahead of the study with an information sheet that explained the rationale and purpose of the research; it also outlined the ways of getting involved, clear guidance indicating the ability to opt-out at any time without consequence, as well information as to how their personal information and research data would be handled. Adult participants (and young people over the age of 16) were asked to fill out and sign an informed consent form. In addition, I remained available over email and phone to answer any questions concerning the consent forms throughout the duration of the study. For younger participants, I took time to talk them through the information sheet and invited them to sign the assent form while the school sent a follow-up to their parents/guardians asking them to sign the consent form for their child (see Appendix for Consent Forms and Ethics Approval). I organized the review and signing of the assent forms as a shared activity together with my young interlocutors. The dry and formal language used in the information sheets and assent forms made them less accessible to my younger participants; we thus used the form as a prompt to discuss issues around safety, anonymity and questions pertaining to participation and opting out of the research. Some of the younger participants took ownership of the assent forms by drawing jottings on the sides of the paper and drawing smiley faces in the signature fields; others ignored the form completely, explaining they were bored by it.

Although I consistently reiterated the voluntary nature of participation in the research, I cannot assume that my participants' consent was always intact given the institutional context of the school environment, wherein consent may reflect "a desire to please" or "a fear of the consequences" of saying no (Heath et al., 2007, p. 413; Kirby, 2020). This was especially of concern in the case of my younger participants (primary school children), and whilst all 15 of them agreed to participate in the study, I remained open to the many ways, whether explicitly or more subtly, in which they navigated conformity and their participation in my research set up. During the transcription and first round of analysis of the workshops and group interviews, I often felt disheartened by what I initially understood as an 'imbalance' between children 'following' or 'discarding' my 'research agenda'; they were engaging with play and small talk with one another, often 'dismissing' my questions or offering short *'I don't know'* answers. It was not until the second reading of my data that it occurred to me that these expressions were "distinct types of

dissent" (Kirby, 2020, p. 819) related to the ethics of doing research, eventually understanding this perceived dismissal or disengagement as the children's ways to "demonstrate their agency" and "navigat[e] [the] conformity" (ibid.) of my research set up.

In my consent forms, I reassured my participants that any information they provided would be handled confidentially and that any publication of results would strive to maintain their anonymity. Although none of my participants objected to this, it raised a series of group discussions around anonymity and voice; some of the research interlocutors noted that they would have preferred being named using their 'real' names, explicitly recognising their contribution to the research. During a discussion regarding consent forms in the pilot phase, a 15-year-old participant highlighted the tension between having an 'authentic voice' whilst remaining anonymous and commented that 'unless you sign your story with your name (referring to his school memory that matters), people reading it will think "it is not real"' (Fieldnotes, January 2020). This comment was powerful and resonant, drawing my attention to the ethics of representation and recognition. The ethics of representation and recognition are particularly relevant in research involving children and young people: how could I acknowledge the young people's authorship whilst simultaneously adhering to their protection and without compromising their identity? A 15-year-old participant from a different school proposed providing short anonymous biographies to accompany each student's story in order to "show something of who we are" (Fieldnotes, March 2020). Although the school memories exhibition was cancelled due to COVID-19, the issues raised by the two participants became pertinent for the website that I curated to host and share their memories publicly.[32] According to BERA's ethical guidelines for educational research[33], researchers need to use their judgment about the appropriateness of anonymity. Having students sign their memories with their real names, however, could risk abrogating the anonymity I tried to guarantee for the study. In accompaniment to my consent forms guaranteeing the anonymisation and confidential treatment of all collected data, I created an additional Certificate of Consent/Assent to Publish Audiovisual Material for publishing the selected students' school memories. In this, the young participants (and their parents/legal guardians) were provided the option to withdraw anonymity by not pixelating or distorting the images/video and sound material accordingly shared within the context of the *school memory work(shop)*, where applicable. In this case, we used voice, image and, in some cases, pseudonyms (chosen by the students) as other markers of the students' identity that could be used to give authenticity to and offer recognition in their stories. As part of my ethical practice, I invited my participants to review their *school memories* transcripts before they were uploaded on the website; I also proposed to return all interview transcripts to my participants for review, but only three of my participants took that offer.

Mental health was a recurring theme in many of the school experiences shared by my young participants, both during informal conversations and in interviews. Besides addressing the right to opt out of the

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[32] http://schoolmemoriesthatmatter.com/
[33] https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018.

research at any point in my ethics form, these conversations with young participants made me particularly attentive towards their emotional wellbeing as an integral part of the research design, addressing this both subtly and through more explicit processes. I gave constant reminders during all group and individual sessions that withdrawal from the study was possible without any consequences. Participants could also simply abstain from a research session if they felt tired, overwhelmed, or concerned with other personal issues on any given day.[34] I was conscious that my younger participants (primary school children) might not verbalize their discomfort in the same way as secondary-school students, and thus remained particularly attentive to their body language, attuning myself to expressions of tiredness or distress as well as checking in with them throughout each session.

The beginning of each research workshop, both online and in person, was marked by time spent co-editing a shared list of principles to which all participants, including myself, adhered and referred throughout the session. This included what made each participant feel comfortable and listened to, how they self-identified, and anything that was likely to make them feel uncomfortable and should thus be avoided. Part of this process was also checking whether the memories about to be shared were likely to cause any discomfort to the participants. During each session, a teacher (in the case of in-person workshops) or a parent/legal guardian (in the case of online workshops) was always accessible and available in case a participant needed them. For the online sessions and interviews, further to parental/legal guardian consent, I obtained an additional teacher's approval for all students under the age of 16 and confirmed with my interlocutors that a trusted adult was present at home and available if they needed them. As discussed above, I relied on the good rapport I had already established with my participants to mitigate and prevent unintentional psychological harm, which is often more difficult to detect in online interviews. Finally, the school I worked with for the pilot research phase secured me an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate, granting me legal permission to work with children and young people without the need for supervision.

3.7.2 "Elina, the researcher"

"Since knowledge is one of the things that define power in the modern world, the researcher is not powerless and is not outside power, [s]he is part of the power relations whether [s]he wants to be or not."

(Sadan, 1997, p. 62)

Research is always political: as a researcher, I am entangled in an assemblage of ideas, beliefs, and values; I am simultaneously embedded in a particular historical moment and situated—at least

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[34] Three participants abstained from a session when they felt unwell, but they did not withdraw from the study entirely; two participants quit the study for personal reasons.

partially—by specific social positions, which include my gender, age, class, and nationality (Pechtelidis, 2020). Throughout this study, I was grappling with my positioning *vis-à-vis* my participants and my research on a number of levels, beginning with my confrontation with the problem of hierarchy as an adult-researcher working with children. The power imbalances that are socially ingrained in the adult-child/youth relationship have been particularly problematised in relation to research in formal educational settings wherein hierarchies between adults and children often depend, by definition, on their age and 'roles' as teachers and students. As Biklen poignantly contends, "Ethnographers apply the methodological guideline that researchers should position themselves to learn from their informants, but although this research approach means that all informants should be our teachers, it does not take the unequal power differences between adults and youth into account." (Biklen, 2004, p. 722). As an adult researcher walking into a school setting, my age (given that I was 20 years older than my youngest participant, and at least 10 years older than my oldest one) differentiated me instantly from my student participants, positioning me as more akin to their adult teachers. Conformity towards my 'teacher-like' figure might entail feeling the need to give (what is believed to be), as well as giving consent to participate in the research in the first place. In navigating issues of conformity and hierarchy within my research, I engaged the strategy of reflexive experimentation with my research methods, and I was diligent in positioning myself as "least teacher" (Dunne et al., 2005, p. 62) when with the children. My approach included encouraging all children to call me by my first name alongside foregrounding my curiosity about their school experiences as a means of building connection. It also entailed designing interview and workshop spaces in ways that did not mimic the classroom environment and intentionally allowing time for informal activities, such as listening to music, playing games, and engaging in conversations led by my participants, where possible.

Figure 1: "Elina the researcher". Self-portrait drawn in January 2020 by Tigerlilly, alumni, and key research interlocutor/assistant during the pilot research phase.

A second issue relating to positionality concerned my own memories of childhood and schooling, evoked by a 'familiarity' with the school setting and my work with younger participants. Having once been a student (and a child) myself, I soon became conscious of how recalling my own memories from that period my my life might (and did) influence the research (Pells, forthcoming). Engaging my own memories in the research relates to notions of "authenticity and authority" (Gordon et al., 2001, p. 188), both of which are particularly relevant in educational research. Most importantly, personal memories, as (Biklen, 2007, p. 256) contends whilst quoting Foucault, are not only sources for sense-making but they also "regulate what we hear" (ibid.). I worked to observe and make notes of my own memories as they emerged in relation to my research, using them as material for critical reflections that subsequently informed my writing. Through consciously inviting memories of my own education into the research process, I became more aware of those emergent aspects of my experience that were previously unknown to me—what Butler (2004, p. 46) calls "my own foreignness to myself". I understood this 'foreignness' as a "source of my ethical connection with others"—in this case, my young participants.

Furthermore, turning towards critical childhood studies literature has also proven fruitful in continuously and consciously working to challenge and deconstruct my own preconceived perceptions about children and to understand the social, cultural, and historical roots of their positioning.

I also grappled with my positioning as an outsider to the UK's educational system, both as a student and as a teacher: I went through the Greek system for my entire compulsory education, and I had no prior learning or teaching experience in the UK. I was worried about how my status as an 'outsider' would be perceived, whether it would be accepted or rejected by my student and teacher interlocutors. My hesitations resolved gradually as I came to feel more secure in my researcher identity, positioning myself as someone who asks questions and using this curiosity as a vehicle through which I could establish closer relationships with my interlocutors. I took time to familiarise myself with the specificities of the UK educational system, regularly following its current affairs on social media and in the press. My regular exchanges with teachers and students throughout the study were also pivotal for maintaining my familiarity with the changing educational landscape in the UK.

As a final but by no means less vital consideration, my positioning as a researcher working with schools from the Ashoka Changemaker Schools network, whilst working with Ashoka UK as the Schools' Community Lead, raised questions around conflicts of interest, which I navigated and remained attentive throughout the entire lifecycle of this research. I engaged in ongoing conversations both with representatives from the schools' network and Ashoka UK to clarify my positioning and dissolve expectations that tied my research to either the schools' or Ashoka's strategy. To achieve this, I decoupled my research aims from the element of 'changemaking', an otherwise central dimension of Ashoka's strategy; I also clarified that my research activity was not aiming towards 'evaluation' of the schools' performance and bore no connection to Ashoka's relationships with the schools in any way. In this, the CM schools network eventually worked more as a network of school leaders who were eager to engage in the research and facilitate my access to their institutions.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss my methodological approach to the study of children's and young people's school memories, which, in the chapters that follow, I analyse and conceptualise as openings to otherwise educational imaginaries. I outline my ethnographic approach as informed by multimodality and participatory research traditions, and I dedicate a significant volume of my writing to the impact of COVID-19 on my research design, from fieldwork planning to participant recruitment and the methods used. In this vein, and whilst I discuss the various fieldwork sites (offline and online) in which I conducted research, I also explain the reasons that led me to select specific sections of my data for the analysis and writing up of this thesis. Finally, I describe the emergent process through which my methodology was shaped, taking understandings of memory as a starting point and culminating in the co-designed school memory workshop. My methodological approach avows the need to allow sufficient

time to build rapport and relationships with children and young people in order to access deeper layers of their voices (Coyne & Carter, 2018, p. 7), becoming particularly pertinent when working with and through children's memories, and I further detail the school memory workshop design process and its workings in the following chapter.

Chapter 4. Experimenting with Object Memories and laying the groundwork for the *School Memory Work(shop)*[35]

The use of memory methods in research with children and young people remains substantially under-explored to date. Within this chapter, then, I elaborate on the process that established my approach to doing research, with and through memory, with young people. I outline how I worked with ten young participants and two research assistants (one teacher and one student alumni) in order to develop a shared framework of meaning around memory during the research pilot phase, and I elucidate how this culminated in the designing of the school memory workshop later in the research process.

4.1 How do you define 'memory' in your research?

In September 2019, during an early presentation of my research progress report, a supervisor of the POEM network confronted me with a challenging question: was I asking my [research] participants to define what memory means to them, or was I walking into the field with a definition of what memory *is*? Indeed, my framing of memory within the parameters of this thesis has been an emergent project in itself, not evident until several months into the beginning of my PhD, for it was in my interest to explore the multivalence of this notion and its evocations for the young people with whom I worked. Mapping the scope and interests of POEM and Ashoka, and their possible convergences, in relation to memory was one thing; understanding the interests of the members of the school communities with whom I was going to collaborate, and thus introducing a notion of memory that resonated with them, was far more complex, with the nascence of this being something I deliberately valued in the research design. This is to say: framing memory in a way that resonates—and in ways that were accessible and relevant to the children with whom I worked—was of upmost importance.

During the first year of my PhD, I became increasingly inclined to use the notion of memory as a 'tool' through which to conduct research with young people and not necessarily as the object of study in itself—though the two are, of course, not mutually exclusive. Amongst my motives for doing so was the desire to explore the plausibility of memory 'methods' as agents to both promote and study 'change' within their contexts of application, thus avowing their 'emancipatory' potential for the people involved (McLeod & Thomson, 2009). Aligned with an understanding that "the 'who' of the memory voice is often a question of power" (Teski & Climo, 1995, p. 2), I turned to memory methods, not least for their potential to foreground the interlocutors' experiences in the process of knowledge production (Coullie, 2018).

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[35] The term *school memory work(shop)* is used here to indicate that school memory work can be practiced either individually (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, p. 67) or collectively in small groups in formats that resemble this of a focus group (1999, p. 64).

What 'counts' as memory—and the question of whose memories are being socially and publicly remembered—is subject to sociocultural and historical conventions. This equally applies to children and young people's memories, which are often silenced or downplayed, not least because of age-related social norms (see Ch. 2). Hence, I turned to memory methods both to facilitate research *with* children and as a framework to ensure their memories could be heard and seen, recognising the potential of memory methods to dissect the political from children's personal, 'mundane', and everyday experiences (Varvantakis et al., 2019). However, the way in which I use 'memory as a method' in my work with children and young people demanded further exploration with the young interlocutors themselves. Hence, I dedicated my first months of fieldwork to finding a school community interested in working with me in order to refine some of the research objectives and processes, therein undertaking a 'pilot research phase' (see Ch.3). This involved an extended stay of approximately six full weeks throughout a period of four months, building connections with members of the school community and exchanging ideas around the main concepts outlined in my research, as well as designing an approach to memory work—here understood as working with and through memories—with resonance for the participating students.

4.2 Choosing a school for the pilot research phase

Green Hill is an alternative independent school for 11 to 17-year-olds, situated in the Southwest of England. It is a fee-paying school that relies on child-centred teaching that operates on the basis of what is commonly defined as democratic education values[36], which include, but are not limited to, students managing their own learning and participating in the school governance and decision making. I first visited the school in 2019, when its community consisted of approximately 80 students, primarily from white, middle-class backgrounds, and 15 staff members. Green Hill was described by many members of its community as a 'refuge', catering to their needs and 'accepting their differences'. Some of the older Green Hill students described their former school experiences as 'traumatizing' for reasons that included bullying, repressed gender identity, and delinquency, amongst others. In that sense, and despite the relative 'homogeneity' of its student demographics, the school was identified as 'inclusive' by a large part of its community.

During an informal interview with Dylan, humanities teacher and one of the school's co-founders, he described Green Hill as a "social experiment", here referring to the experimental nature of its design, which often countered mainstream educational ideas, practices and perceptions around children, school governance, and intergenerational relationships. Similar references to school as an 'experiment' have been common in the history of alternative education, as in the case A.S. Neill's 'Summerhill' in England

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[36] You can refer to the European Democratic Education Community (EUDEC) website for more detailed readings on democratic education: https://eudec.org/.

or Homer Lane's 'Little Commonwealth' in America (Cockburn, 2013, p. 214). Another pertinent observation I made about Green Hill, and one that piqued my interest in this particular setting, was that several aspects of the school's life were organised around values of 'commoning' education, meaning that many of its everyday places, activities, and practices were "shared, communal and un-privatised" (Korsgaard, 2019, p. 445), and that all community members had equal input in decisions affecting the daily running of the school: cooking, cleaning shared spaces, participating in the weekly school meeting, and 'hanging out' in the common rooms were all 'shared' aspects of the school's daily life. Importantly, most commoning activities were also open to school visitors like myself, something I valued deeply in my research design for the opportunities this engendered in terms of relationship-building with school community members. Green Hill thus became an increasingly plausible site for the research pilot phase, particularly due to the decision-making power that adults and children shared on issues concerning the school's daily life, all of which were discussed and voted upon in the weekly whole-school meeting. To exemplify, the school meeting, consisting of the majority of the school's students and teachers, had voted for a series of actions that related to the climate emergency, including removing dairy products from the daily school meals, changing the school's energy to a 'green' provider, and creating space in the curriculum for 'climate hour' meetings. The school's commitment to defying traditional power imbalances between children and adults—in manifold ways and across several aspects of everyday school life—was apposite to the ways in which I chose to introduce, engage, and position myself in the school as an adult-researcher doing research with children and young people.

After a series of one-to-one conversations, Dylan took my research proposal to the whole-school 'meeting', and the meeting passed a vote permitting me to carry out the first months of my research there. Between October 2019 and January 2020, I spent a total of six school weeks in the school as both participant and observer. This engagement facilitated my connection to some of the school's students and staff, allowing me an initial opportunity to discuss my research ideas with them. Throughout that time, Dylan and Tigerlilly, an 18-year-old student alumni whom I met during my first visit, assisted me in navigating the school and interacting with its community in a manner that was respectful of the school's culture and operations. They helped me in convening a parents' evening, during which I presented my research to interested parents, and facilitated three exploratory group discussions with curious students, eventually leading to the formation of the research participants' group. These discussions were centered around some of the early guiding research questions and framed within my broader research interest in exploring the relationship between memory, children, young people, and educational change:

- What is 'memory' to you?

- What different forms does memory take?

- What's the relationship between memory and young people?

- What memories matter to young people?

- How do we remember young people's memories—if at all—and is this important?

- How could we work with young people to facilitate memory-making in the present around issues that matter to them?

- How can we pay more attention to the value of young people's 'small' everyday memories?

While inviting the students to share with me their feedback and ideas to these questions, I also asked them to register their interest in participating in the experimental research workshop, intending to finalise the research processes and objectives whilst developing a research 'method' that could then be implemented across other schools involved in the study. The three rounds of group discussion I held with different groups of students resulted in the voluntary recruitment of 10 of them (13 to 16 years old) following their interest in participating in the pilot research workshop. To honour their time and commitment, Dylan committed to helping me design an "interesting adventure" for the young people who showed interest in and signed up for the research project (fieldnotes, January 2020). In that spirit, he framed the experimental research workshop as a three-day extracurricular activity, financially supported by the school to run as an excursion in a countryside house over a weekend. This workshop— to which I refer later in this chapter as the 'school memory work(shop)'—evolved into my core research 'method'; it helped to both clarify and illuminate the research objectives and the creation of the specific language implicit in the workshop approach; I subsequently used these workshops across the rest of the research process, and it should also be noted that most of the theoretical framing of the study stemmed from this early methodological experimentation, too.

4.3 Paying attention to the young people's 'memory boxes'

"I keep a box full of memories at home", Jacob said to me in one of our first chats whilst standing in the school's corridor, "Is this what you mean by memory?"
(Jacob, 15-year-old student; excerpt from research fieldnotes, December 2019)

Memory has different faces: it is both "polymorphic" (A. D. Brown et al., 2009, p. 119) and complex in nature. There are different 'types' of memory, which, whilst often studied distinctly from different disciplinary perspectives, are also interrelated. Private memories are enmeshed with collective and public memories, mutually shaping and often contradicting one another. One of my aims for the pilot phase had been to approach memory with an open mind, curious to see what the children involved in the study understood 'memory' to be, thus unearthing the ways in which we could work through and with memory together. Early in the pilot phase, I observed that the very notion of memory seemed rather

abstract for the children and, in many cases, resulted in associations with memorabilia. Jacob's anecdote about his "box full of memories" provided a compelling entry point to memory in our conversation, prompting me to ask him about the content of his memory box and what made it special to him. This question appears simple, yet it forged space for him to frame memory in a way that resonated with him, that is, through the value of his personal memory box. It also created space for me to think of this seemingly simple, yet rarely asked, question as a possible entry point to the exploration of memory with the other research interlocutors, too: what would this question yield if addressed to other young people of the research group? What would each of their 'memory boxes' reveal, and how could we draw on their stories to create shared processes and patterns of meaning to do work *with* and *through* memory with them?

Choosing to foreground these open-ended questions around memory early in the research process was a conscious decision, aligned with my ethical and epistemological commitment to strive for a research practice that was less hierarchical. This stance is even more pertinent when adults conduct research with children and young people in school settings where children are expected to conform, their behaviour being regulated by adult-authored rules (Kirby, 2020). To an extent, though, Green Hill is different in that many of its rules are co-authored by children and adults together; this applies to participation, too. Children are not 'obliged' to participate in activities relating to the school, and my research was no exception. Recruiting students as research participants in an educational setting, wherein their participation is negotiated constantly, challenged the child/adult-researcher dynamics, making consent a continuous dialogical process (Neale et al., 2012), often destabilising my positioning as a researcher whilst pushing me to establish a more equitable relationship with the children. This continuous negotiation of students' participation was one contributing factor as to why it took several weeks until the student research participants group was finally formed.

Doing memory work with young people through personal memorabilia

Dylan and Tigerlilly spent several hours with me in preparation for the experimental research weekend workshop, which took place during the last week of my stay at the school. Both Dylan and Tigerlilly had expressed interest in helping me explore and shape the research since I first visited the school. Tigerlilly had just graduated from the school but remained a frequent visitor in the year after, and her interest in my research was initiated through our shared interest in educational change and the central role that children can play in it. Alongside Dylan, she also agreed to take up the role of a 'research assistant', helping to design, alongside the young interlocutors, a way of working with memory towards a shared research interest.

In exploring ways of working with and through memory, our starting point was the content of the young people's 'memory boxes'. We invited participants to bring narrative-rich, precious, personal objects from home that held salient memories for them, placing no other criteria on what the objects should be

or what they should relate to. One reason for maintaining openness here was to allow for a plurality of objects and meanings without restricting the scope of what counts as an 'object of personal value' for the children. We understood these 'memory objects' as the access point to our collective exploration of what memory means to us and the ways we might work with and through memory in the exploration of the relationship between children, young people, and educational change. Starting with unpacking the notion of 'memory' collectively through objects facilitated our creation of a shared framework of meaning around before working with and through the concept. Using personal memory objects to these ends also fashioned opportunities for self-expression, acquaintance, and connection with one another, creating conditions for listening and being present (fieldnotes, January 2020). At the same time, I was mindful that the memory object approach foregrounded personal memory as a starting point, favouring it over other forms of memory that might potentially resonate in the work with the young interlocutors. The remainder of this chapter is organised in sections that illuminate the intentions, impressions, mental perceptions, atmospheres, and processes that emerged during the exploration of memory through the memory object exercise, detailing how we have subsequently used the learnings and observations from the process in designing the 'school memory work(shop)'.

4.3.1 Exploring memory through personal objects

The design of object elicitation exercises—how we understood the exploration of memory through personal objects—needs to account for a range of different responses. As such, as the researcher and co-facilitator of the process, I needed to generate strategies to engage the young participants in reflections appropriate to the objects they brought and the spirit in which they had brought them to the space (Willig, 2017, p. 221). Asking Dylan, in his role as co-facilitator, to model the narration of his memory object first was one way of approaching this, setting the tone of the sharing and emphasizing elements that we wanted to elicit through the process, such as emotions, representations and meanings that underpinned the importance each memory object held for the young people.

Upon arriving at the farmhouse where we were to spend the research weekend, the ten young people, alongside myself, Tigerlily and Dylan, gathered around the fireplace to inaugurate our work together and begin the memory object exercise. Some of us sat on the floor, with others on couches, forming a circle around the small round table in the center of the room. While we were making ourselves comfortable, Dylan reminded us of the need to agree on a shared code of conduct for the exercise. In preparation for the weekend, we became conscious that the use of memory objects, involving open-ended questions about feelings, meanings, and everyday life experiences, alluded to humanistic forms of counselling and psychotherapy (Willig, 2017, p. 220). Although the possibility of having distressing or 'traumatic' feelings evoked through the process was accounted for in the formal consent forms and ethics approval, we saw it necessary to remind the young interlocutors of this possibility, agreeing

together on the strategies that would help us navigate such situations: we frequently repeated the right to withdraw from the process, without consequence or need for explanation; Dylan, who was the school's humanities and psychology teacher, made himself available for emotional support for anyone who might need it and committed to driving home anyone who felt overwhelmed throughout the weekend. This last point was particularly relevant since three of the participants had been experiencing anxiety and were not used to spending the night away from home. They had chosen to join us nonetheless, and thus the trusting relationship that Dylan, Tigerlily—and myself, more recently and to a certain extent—had developed with the young people engendered an additional layer of emotional security for such an event, and the value of these relationships in the research setting cannot be underestimated. Finally, we unanimously and explicitly committed as a group to take good care of one another, initiating a safe environment for sharing and listening, avoiding judgment, and honouring the stories and emotions that each of us considered significant. An open space for questions and reflections would follow the sharing of each memory object, though in practice questions were weaved more organically into the storytelling process. Finally, Dylan suggested that each memory object story be followed by placing the objects on the circular table in front of us: this was a 'ritual' practice to mark the objects' presence and importance, honouring the process of opening up and sharing. As Dylan suggested, "when we get to the end of our time together, we take them [the objects] back to ourselves, but while we're here together, we leave them in a place that honours the fact that we've all been fragile and brave enough to bring something from ourselves on the table" (workshop transcript, January 2020). Jack, a 15-year-old student at the time, was the first young person to share his memory object story:

> "I've got my torque": It was made for me by a blacksmith, I don't know his name. I got this, it's not a gift, I purchased this. And I think this is an item that represents me, in a good way, because when I wear it—it's quite heavy—when I wear it, it kind of reminds me that I am an individual person. It reminds me that I am different, in the best way in my opinion. It makes me feel individual, which is something that's always been rather important to me. I'm proud to tell people what it is when they ask what the hell it is. I'm proud to say why I wear it and I believe that it represents also another part of my life where I've got other friends and where a great deal of the best people I know come from this world, who are sort of interested in this kind of world. So, I wear this, and I hold this because it marks me as an individual person. (Jack, workshop transcript, January 2020)

As he tells his story, Jack pauses slightly between his sentences. The room is silent except for the sound of the burning wood in the fireplace, and everyone listens attentively. Jack takes the torque off his neck and examines it carefully with his gaze as he tells its story. The theme of 'identity' cuts across his narrative, the torque that he purchased for himself representing his individuality. He alludes to the sensory qualities of his torque ("it's quite heavy"), passing it around in the room for everyone to 'feel' the heaviness—its weight being a reminder of his 'difference' and individuality, which matter to him.

His torque is a symbol, 'connecting' him to people from another important part of his life—that of Norse mythology, as I would find out in a later conversation with him. Jack's story tells of a world that matters deeply to him, forming part of his identity and representing a source of inspiration for his artistic creations. He feels proud when explaining why he wears it; holding it, he says, "marks [him] as an individual person" whilst identifying with a collective heritage. The process of talking *about* and *through* his personal memory object-that-matters elicits feelings, emotions, representations, other worlds, and people significant to him and the formation of his identity. The close connection of the memory object to identity was strongly echoed in Jacob's story, too, who followed Jack in sharing the story of his memory box:

> "I've got this box…": …there's just so much in here. It's just packed in. I've collected things over the years which are related to who I am. It's full, as you can see. There's so much in here which I could pick as my one thing. I just can't do it 'cuz I love everything in here. It's got moments, things I've made, it's got things I've collected, things I'm just generally proud of. And I'm still collecting old money from wherever I've gone traveling or friends that have given me money from different countries. It started when someone gave me a wallet with this really old money in from some of their travels and I just fell in love with it, I don't know why, still don't know really, but I think, this is something that represents me. But it's all different, there is so much going on in here, it's so complicated, it's weird, it's all over the place. And I just love it, I don't know why. There's a lot of stories for each object, just of where they come from, some when I traveled. I do think this is probably the most important thing but I have got so much in here which is important to me. I'm never going to stop collecting this, for sure. This is what I would take to college, save from the fire just because I find it really important. Personally, I love it. So yeah, still deciding what it is, but yeah. (Jacob, workshop transcript, January 2020)

Jacob holds a 'box full of memories'; he has been collecting its contents over the years, and this box is something of which he feels proud. After being gifted a wallet full of old currency, Jacob began constructing his own memory box with different objects representing moments and things he has made or collected from his travels. He speaks to pride and care: "I have got so much in here which is important to me", he says, rifling through the different items in his collection, gathered over the years and all resonating with the person he is today. Even when he cannot find the words to explain why these things are significant to him, he demonstrates their importance affectively, by way of how he feels: "I just love it, I don't know why". He iterates the importance of his memory box at different parts throughout his story, marking the value this memory object holds for him by concluding that his box is the thing he would 'save from the fire' and take with him 'to college'.

Through their stories of the torque and the memory box, both Jack and Jacob frame their memory objects as composite parts of their identity, reminding them of aspects of their lives that make up who they are

and who they are becoming. This strong connection between memory and identity also resides in Tigerlily's object-story:

> "My Ticket to Independence": This is a train ticket from when I went to Germany at the beginning of last summer, it was the first trip that I took where I was traveling without any adults, staying somewhere without any adults and coming back without any adults. So it was a real push for independence. I think last summer marked a new stage in my life, the beginning of me becoming a young adult, I think it's also connected to Green Hill because at least I felt when I was at Green Hill I was always very held, in the most lovely, family way, but now I'm in a different place and it's a good place. And it's a ticket from Potsdam, where I was staying, to Berlin and I realized on the trip that Berlin is definitely somewhere I want to live at some point. And I took this from a box that I have of lots of special things… but this felt something important to bring here because this project is also part of me stepping into myself and what I want to do. (Tigerlily, workshop transcript, January 2020)

In her story, Tigerlily speaks to the significance of her first trip without adults, with this marking a push for her independence and self-determination. Talking through her object, she elucidates connections to the period of her life to which the ticket belongs, a time of transition into young adulthood in which she (re)defines who she wants to be and what she wants to do.

As the evening progresses, the young interlocutors take turns introducing their memory objects. Listening to the different stories, a range of 'mental perceptions'—ideas, impressions, insights, and feelings (van Dijck, 2004)—are emergent. Many of these revolve around childhood, independence, and growing up; others speak to connections to special places and special others, friends and family; some are associated with feelings of pride and independence, whilst others evoke nostalgia for significant people and places left behind. Each story is followed by silence, until someone else puts their object forward. Some silences are disrupted by the interlocutors asking questions about someone else's memory object, telling jokes, or making connections with their own memory object's story.

> "A Picture of Me Paragliding": So this is a picture of me paragliding. My paraglide was bought for me like 6 months ago by my mother and it was the first time I'd ever flown on my own— I've done gliding before it happens but that's with an instructor—and so it was the first time I'd ever flown on my own which means that I was basically totally in charge and it was my fault if I crashed. [It is] not really [scary] because I have a thorough understanding of the wind. I did do a spiral dive and come off around ten feet above the ground but that was 'cuz I was testing my glider's limits. [I did not hurt myself] because I came off ten feet above the ground. (Mason, workshop transcript, January 2020)

"A Pot of Aloe Vera Gel and a Wallet": Mine's a bit weird but I have a pot of aloe vera gel and a wallet, which I got last October when I was in Korea. I think they just hold so many memories of going away. And I think by going away has put me in lots of perspective and of, I guess, how lucky I am to have so much space and freedom to grow up where I do, as it's so limiting over there. I saved my train tickets and things as a way of reminding me of the trip. (Emily, workshop transcript, January 2020)

"A Picture of Me and My Sister": So I've got a picture from, like, me and my sister when we were really little and we're on a slide in the forest in Stuttgart where I come from, and I think I'm maybe four in this picture and [my sister] is like two or so, and yeah we often been to this place and it's like a really nice memory for me and also to my dad, because we often went with him in the afternoons where we did barbecues near the forest. And yeah, it's just the memory of it, a place which I left but which is still in my heart, so it's really nice but it's also a memory of my childhood in a way and to the lovely time we had together. (Katherine, workshop transcript, January 2020)

"A Fishhook that Keeps You Safe": I went with my family to America and we went to Hawai'i. And I'm really lucky to have done that. And this is a fishhook that's meant to keep you safe, and since going back for a second time to Scotland after arriving here [in England] I felt that I really connected with this, so it's a more recent item in my life that I've had since I think it's 2015, maybe? But I haven't had the courage to kind of sit down and appreciate it for what it is, because in the Māori tradition, I believe, this a very powerful item to all the fishermen, and people that voyage on the sea wear one of these for protection. (Oscar, workshop transcript, January 2020)

"A Necklace I was given by my Mum": This is a necklace that I was given by my mum for my sixteenth birthday and it's a crystal which is, I think it's apatite. That's the stone. And that stone apparently protects, holds energy, bad or good energies. I wear it most days. My mum giving it to me is quite important to me for this new age I'm at now, I need a little bit more support. I'm not sure why but it feels very different, this age I'm at. And I think it's very important. And I hope I don't lose it." (Kirsten, workshop transcript, January 2020)

"A necklace, gift from my friend": So this is a necklace and it was a gift from my friend. Long, long, long story short, she gave it to me when I was ten [years old], I lost it, and then… that I left my school she went back to her home country in Budapest, and she got another one for me. It's just a special thing to remember her about… So yeah, that's a short one for me. I'm not really sure of the story behind it. I think it's meant to protect you from jealous bits. A hamsa hand. (Elinor, workshop transcript, January 2020)

"A Deck of (Magic) Cards": These cards have a lot of value for me 'cuz they were the deck of cards that I started learning magic with at the beginning of last year. And there's still the whole deck, but they also hold a kind of value because it's something I really enjoy doing, entertainment. And there's not much more to say I mean they work for themselves, it's really a good place to start with, like if you meet somebody new, cards can really help to start a conversation or magic, just simple magic. (Oscar, workshop transcript (2nd), January 2020)

"Dear Mind, This Is The Risk Of Being Alive": This is a book that I'm currently doing in art [class]. It's the first time that I put my poems together for people to see. When I'm feeling down or feeling anything really, I kind of turn to poetry for quite a long time, trying to get out my feelings in healthy ways because I find it really hard to understand words. I use poetry to help cope with loads of different feelings and experiences. I didn't want to show anybody for a very long time but suddenly something clicked, and I thought they could help others feeling similar things, so I decided to compile them with my other passion, drawing, and this book was born. I never really let anybody see them because I felt like they're a really vulnerable part of me but you very rarely understand anything that's going on in anybody else's brain, this is kind of like a little glimpse in mine, and it's got poems from like years ago when I was in a really dark place, and it's got some more recent which is still like they're not as dark they're just kind of like little chunks of my feelings, and emotions… It represents the strength I have. (Alex, workshop transcript, January 2020)

We completed the memory object sessions across two evenings, thus allowing additional time for those who needed more space until they felt comfortable enough to share their stories with the group. By the end of the second evening, the small round table at the centre of the room was laden with different forms of memorabilia: a picture of Katherine and her sister, reminding her of the time she spent with her family in her hometown when she was little; necklaces and precious stones meant to give protection to those wearing them; a ticket to independence and a memory box full of special moments; a jar of *aloe vera* and a wallet as reminders of a trip to Korea; a deck of magic cards and a book of poems. With these objects gathered in front of us in the centre of the room, we (Dylan, Tigerlily and myself) facilitated a reflexive discussion with the group, asking, "What makes our memories important to us?". Elements we identified included:

- Special people (e.g., "a special thing to remember her [a best friend] about")

- Times (e.g., "first time I'd ever flown on my own")

- Places (e.g., "a place which I left but which is still in my heart")

- Feelings (e.g., independence, pride, freedom, autonomy, gratefulness), tied with people and places throughout our personal histories

- Representations and symbolisms (e.g., protection, individuality)

The constitutive role of memory in identity is a well-established relationship, asserted by scholars across disciplines from psychology to social and cultural anthropology (for a brief overview, see Biklen, 2004, p. 718); these interrelations were also highlighted by some of the young interlocutors in the discussion round. Aside from constituting personal identity, however, sharing memories in our group was a process of memory creation in itself; as Jack observed towards the end of the weekend, this "helped us build an identity as a group" (fieldnotes, January 2021). The memory object exercise and the reflection that ensued proved to be an engaging process for the young people and sparked their interest to ask more questions to each other but also listen attentively whilst one was sharing. It was on the basis of these questions that Dylan, Tigerlily and me facilitated the tracing of connections across the stories shared by the young people, helping distil the key-themes that emerged from them and the sensory elements that accompanied them.

Van Dijck (2004, p. 264) argues that the mental perceptions intricate to the cultural act of remembering manifest themselves through sensory modes—sounds, images, smells—which we then capture into inscriptional forms (e.g., spoken/written words, still/moving images, sound recordings, etc.). In this way, she continues, all memories—including their recall, inscription, storage and recording—are always mediated by "media technologies", including everything from writing tools to digital cameras (ibid.). In our experimentations with the young research group, our 'media technologies' were initially the objects in and through which the young participants' personal memories, as well as meanings and feelings associated with them, were accessed. Personal material objects have been used extensively as a means to collect data by facilitating participants' reflections on their lived experiences (Willig, 2017, p. 211). However, the pilot stage (which I am discussing here) was as much about the memory object tales as it was about the process through which these were shared and the mental processes they evoked. Shifting the attention to the 'medium'—here 'the object'—to access and conceptualize personal memory is what we attempted with the young research group in order to facilitate the narration of personal memories, irrespective of how 'big' or 'small' they seemed, thus creating space to honour the value they held for their owners. As Oscar[37] shared in his feedback months later during an informal conversation I had with him over the phone, our memory objects acted as "a way of accessing […] instead of capturing" the memories that were important to each of the young people to whom they belonged (fieldnotes, July 2021). Oscar's realization is in line with what Carla Willig (2017: 220) highlights when she says that objects can be used both as a "stimulus for reflection on experience" and as "prompts for storytelling". The purpose of using personal memory objects as an entry point to the exploration of memory with

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[37] A young interlocutor from the pilot research phase.

young people is then not to use them as information in their own right, but rather understand them as a "stimulus for participants' reflections about their experience and meaningmaking" (ibid.).

The primary objective underpinning this exercise was to encourage the students to 'tell' stories that mattered to them, cherishing the value of their story whilst creating an opportunity for others to honour it too. Although not directly linked to the research questions, the 'space' created by the exercise foregrounded the young people's experiences; it was *their* story being shared, without judgement as to why their story was important to them. This condition of 'non-judgment' must be deliberately designed as part of the research process and cannot simply be assumed to be in place. Further to this, the sensory qualities of the memory objects introduced an engagement with memory beyond the verbal (Willig, 2017; Woodward, 2016), calling for the group's attention to the sensory dimensions of memories that sometimes go unnoticed.

The reverberations of this memory object exercise were multiple, seen also in the way this exercise helped us to 'slow down', focusing our attention on the value of the infra-ordinary—in this sense, the gravity that small, often unnoticed everyday objects hold. For example, in the case of Jack's memory object, his torque was something he wore almost every day in school. However, the exercise was the first time that his peers and classmates heard the story behind his torque, with this effectuating new understandings of the torque and what made it so valuable to him. I had made a note of this observation during the workshop, feeling that it was rife with potentiality, but did not revisit it until much later in the analysis when more students iterated that the process of sharing their memory object stories helped them to 'notice' in ways they hadn't previously. Placing memory objects at the 'centre of attention', literally as well as metaphorically, brought focus to everyday memory objects that otherwise tend to remain unnoticed. This is reflected more explicitly in Oscar's fish-hook story when he says that he hadn't had the "courage to kind of sit down and appreciate it for what it is". In a future iteration of the memory object exercise, conducted with another group of students from a different school, Nev shared a similar feeling about her 'carefree mask':

> "A Carefree Mask": Well, I don't really know where this is from, but I've had it since I was little. Me and my sister both had one but hers was a different color. When I was little, I used to dress up all the time as a princess. I would wake up in the morning and get changed into a princess dress. It just reminds me of a better time because as I'm growing up, I'm starting to stress more about life and what's happening after school. It sort of reminds me of when I was a bit more carefree and younger. [I keep the mask] by my bed, it just sort of sits there. I don't really notice it much when it's in my room, but when I actually notice it and pay attention to it, it reflects nice memories. (Nev, workshop recording, March 2020)

Nev's memory object resides in the everyday space of her bedroom and so she typically pays little attention to it. For her, taking the mask away from the room and bringing it into our shared space was

an act of noticing and paying attention. The resonance of 'attention' associated with the memory object session here ties into another recurring observation I captured in my field notes, gleaned from informal conversations I shared with students during the pilot research phase: what I had noticed was that most children I had asked about their personal, everyday memories deemed them to be of 'little importance' or didn't really see the point in sharing them (fieldnotes, November 2019). Indeed, one of the central aims for the memory object exercise was to create conditions for 'paying attention' to the everyday and the 'mundane'. During another feedback session regarding the memory object exercise, conducted with students from a different school, Elena, a 17-year-old student, alluded to the potential of this process to function as a reminder of the importance that everyday objects hold:

> I feel like it [the memory object exercise] reminds you of the meaning of it. 'Cuz like my necklace I wear it every day, so I don't really, it's there but I don't think about it but saying it out loud makes you like realize how important it is. If that makes sense. (Elena, workshop recording, March 2020)

Forging conditions that would allow us 'pay closer attention' to mental perceptions that would otherwise go unnoticed was an indispensable outcome of the memory object exercise. Creating such conditions, wherein everyday memories and the mundane can be noticed, allows for closer observation of the matrices of public and private feelings, personal and political matters of concern, and past-present-future temporalities. This becomes further apparent in the memory object story of Alex, one of the older students in the research group. By the time we met, Alex was already several months into the process of transitioning, and his gender identity was a matter of great importance to him—although, as he later shared, he did not like it when people identified him merely through that or only highlighted that about him. I knew from Dylan that Alex's previous school experience had been traumatizing, contributing to a deterioration of his mental health, and Alex confirmed this several months later in our interview. Alex's memory object, his story, and the things that matter to him reveal a richness and depth, closely attuned to the plexus of the personal, collective, private and political. Through an otherwise very 'personal' object—his poem book—Alex talks about his mental health, an 'issue' with which other young people in the room and across the research process were familiar. Young people's mental health is often understood narrowly as an individualised and 'personal' issue. Throughout the course of my research, mental health was identified as one of the most important yet neglected aspects of young people's lives; far from being 'just a personal issue', young people's mental health has public dimensions and political implications, too. Alex was particularly conscious about the implications of mental health in young people's lives, having been himself in "a really dark place" in the past. He made a brave decision to 'go public' about this—to this point—'private concern', having compiled his artwork and poetry into a book he can share with others having similar experiences: "I didn't want to show anybody for a very long time but suddenly something clicked, and I thought they [the poems] could help others feeling similar things". His memory object elicits the different temporal dimensions of his life,

combining poems from his past and present whilst also marking the 'first time' he has put his poems together for people to see. As with the other memory object stories discussed earlier, his book of poetry is vitally constitutive of his identity and, as he says, is representative of the strength he has.

A long pause filled the room following Alex's story. Holding the book in his hands, he rifled through its pages and read out one and then another two of his poems. His voice was deep and grounded, filled simultaneously with fragility and power. It was the first time he was reading his poems to an audience, he announced, and it was not until recently that he allowed others to read his writings, too. "It's nice to be heard", he commented after reading his last poem to our small group, acknowledging the space we had created for his sharing. In a conversation I had the next day with Alex, he expressed how he often felt frustrated for being seen as "just a teenager", having his views downplayed for that reason: "People tell you [that] you act as you act because you're a teenager, that it's hormones. But it's not only that. I have strong opinions I believe in that I want to be heard", he said to me, boldly. The other young people I talked to over the course of this research reiterated Alex's frustrations; the design structure of the memory object exercise, albeit experimental, sought to create space for sharing and listening, thus working in the direction of validating emotions and seeking meaning in them and their effects, instead of only diminishing them to the flagship developmental feature of youth. Framing young people as "hormone-driven" or "acting their age" obstructs the importance of their experiences, views, and opinions, quashing their capacity to be seen and heard (see Biklen, 2004 for a development of this critique). The memory object exercise constituted a conscious attempt to counter this, instead opening space for sharing and valuing the stories that mattered to young people as these emerged from their memory objects.

In this vein, the memory object exercise—together with the range of activities and conversations that occurred during the experimental research workshop—might be understood as a 'liminal space' and a 'liminal practice' for doing memory work with young people, experimenting with and combining different disciplinary approaches and hybridized methods (Radstone, 2000, p. 13). Framing the exercise as an extracurricular activity—an excursion in the countryside—and combining it with shared activities such as the cooking of good food and the playing of music and games created "a space of commensality, of exchange and of memory creation" (Nolas & Varvantakis, 2019, p. 141; Seremetakis, 1994), therein contributing to the building of a shared identity as a research group. The memory object exercise proved that children and young people today also keep their own "shoe boxes" of personal "mediated memories" (van Dijck, 2004, p. 262); these mediated memories frame their identities in different cultural contexts and, indeed, are worth attending to. In doing research with and through memory and with young people, personal memory objects can be understood as a fruitful point of emergence, integral to accessing the notion of memory, through the prism of everyday personal memories, in a process that moves beyond "monomodal" practices that rely on language alone.

4.4 Laying the groundwork for the 'school memory work(shop)'

As I explained earlier, the experimental research workshop followed a series of steps wherein memory was framed through the lens of personal objects that hold special importance for the young people. Whilst the brief for the memory-sharing remained intentionally open and non-restrictive, the conversations that ensued shared common threads; one of these, unsurprisingly, was schooling. Whilst the idea to centralise the research focus on school memories and educational futures was not consolidated until later in the research process—inevitably shaped and fueled by the public debates and feelings emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures—the idea for the school memory work(shop) was indeed laid in that first research weekend of the pilot phase. Channelling the processes and insights of object-memory sharing to the realm of schooling, during the research weekend conversations, several students, drawing on their past school experiences, noted the absence of intentional spaces wherein children can share school memories that are significant to them. The acknowledgement of the significance of school memories for effectuating educational change and imagining a 'different' education was subsequently discussed as an inclusive approach with potential to extend the conversation around educational alternatives to more young people, valorising 'mundane' school experiences towards a shared goal. Drawing on the insights and frameworks of shared meaning we had developed through the memory object exercise, for the last session of our research weekend, we began exploring how such an intentional school memory-sharing space might look, asking: what would it yield if, similarly to the process we followed previously, we asked young people to open their 'school memory boxes'? To begin with, we framed 'school memory' as any memory related to young people's educational experience and, in particular, their time in school. To this point, we also acknowledged that school memories would not necessarily be 'accessed' through objects. Therefore, we reflected on prompts that could potentially elicit the sharing of school memories without object mediation. During this discussion, one student shared a pertinent observation regarding the challenge of framing their schooling in terms of 'memory'; memory tends to denote the notion of pastness, yet for many students, schooling is ongoing, and they are still embarking on their educational journey. Grappling with that 'challenge', and informed by speculative approaches to research as well as what Ruth Levitas calls the 'utopian method' (2013), both of which have been used in different contexts by research scholars and activists doing memory work (Chahine, 2022; Reading, 2023), I introduced the temporal idea of the 'future' into the process, suggesting situating oneself imaginatively into the distant future and looking back at the present: "Think of a school memory that matters to you to be remembered by generations in the future. It was this future dimension and its further contextualisation which elicited our first ideas as to how school memories might look. Building on the elements that make our memories matter—

identified through the memory object exercise the day before—we generated a list of prompts[38] that could frame what we later came to call the 'school memory work(shop)':

- *Why* is this memory important to you?

- *What* happened in your memory?

- *How* did it make you feel (can you recall any smells, images, sounds etc associated with this memory)?

- *Where* and *when* did it take place?

- *Who* else was involved in it?

- Is there anything you would like to *change* about this memory?

- Is there a message you would like to send through your memory?

The emphasis on the feelings, emotions and senses associated with memory was prominent following the analysis of our engagement with the memory objects earlier in the weekend. Another principal discussion point in our working group concerned the format of the 'memory text'. Traditionally, memory work involves a detailed, third-person, written description of the memory under question (e.g., Haug, 1999). Some of the young people in the pilot research group were comfortable writing; others preferred alternative modes of expression, such as drawing or oral narration. For this reason, we laid down another guideline for the school memory work, according to which the memories did not necessarily have to be written on paper; other formats, such as drawing, spoken word, or poetry, could also be part of the school memory work. We also agreed to favour the sharing of memories that 'come first to mind', without taking too much time to think about them. The memory sharing would then be followed by a round of questions and a conversation centred upon each of the individual memories; one of the objectives of the sharing round would be to identify shared patterns and/or differences across the shared memories, as well as making connections between memories, if relevant, as with the process of the memory object exercise (described above). Finally, we decided that we wanted our memories to be recorded and inscribed in formats that could be exchanged with teachers and students from other school communities who would be engaged in the research process moving forward. Therefore, the school memory work would also involve scope for the memories to be re-written, culminating in the creation of multimodal 'memory text[s]' (Pells, 2018; van Dijck, 2004).

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[38] Prompts have been reworded, also drawing inspiration from the https://protestmemory.wordpress.com/ project.

By the end of the session with these ten young interlocutors, we had designed an initial prototype for school memory work with students, combining well-established applications of memory work (e.g. Crawford, 1992) with those that emerged during our collective exploration of memory. This resulted in the first version of the tripartite 'school memory workshop': part one functioning as an introduction to the notion of 'memory', exploring it through personal objects selected by the students; part two using memory as a 'tool' for elicitation and reflection upon personal recollections from schooling; the final part employing various media as "active memory tool[s]" (van Dijck, 2004, p. 262) to inscribe school memories that matter, creating 'school memory texts'.

School Memory Work(Shop)

Step One

The group familiarizes itself with the notion of personal memory, discusses their importance and establishes a shared framework of meaning around it. Each group member is invited to bring a personal, narrative-rich object that matters to them, the story of which they are willing to share with the rest of the group. Participants are invited to sit in a circle and take a few minutes to think about the story they wish to tell. When the first person feels ready to share, they go first to describe their object memory in as much detail as possible, focusing on what makes their object important to them. When the first person finishes their story, they're invited to place their object in the middle of the room, in front of the rest of the group, if they feel comfortable to do so. The rest of the group is invited to write down key words, if they want to, of the key-themes, impressions and emotions evoked to them as they listen. The remaining members of the group then take turn sharing their stories. By the end of this process, the facilitator opens a round of discussion where the key-themes, impressions and emotions from across all object memory stories are mapped and discussed.

Step Two

"What is one school memory that you want future generations to remember?". Choose one of the memories that come first to mind and write it down. You can also voice record it, draw it, or capture it in any other format of your liking. You can use the following prompts when thinking about your memory:

- What happens in the school memory you chose?
- Why did you choose this particular memory and not another one?
- Can you recall any smells, images, colors, and sounds in your chosen memory?
- How did you feel back then and how does this memory make you feel today?

- Where and when did it take place?

- Who else was involved in it?

- Is there anything you would like to change about your memory?

- What message do you want to send to future generations through your school memory?

Now, take turns sharing your memory with the rest of the group like you did before. After everyone has gone, the group comes together to analyse their memories and ask more questions to each other; they express their opinions and look for possible meanings. The following prompts can be helpful: what does this remind you of? What picture comes to mind? Tbe group continues to identify things that could be possibly missing from the memories and identify similarities and differences across the different memories.

Step Three

Finally, it's time for the participants to 'rewrite' their school memories, again, in the format of their liking (and not necessarily in text) and decide if and in what format they want to make them publc by sharing them beyond their group.

Figure 2: Overview of suggested steps for the tripartite 'school memory work(shop)', as these where concretized during the months that followed the research pilot phase. The steps shown above are an adaptation based on (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, pp. 64–65) "Collective Memory Work" table[39].

Additional Workshop Design and Implementation Tips Given by the Young Interlocutors of the research pilot phase:

- Take the students out of the lesson: they wouldn't always express themselves freely inside school/in front of a teacher.

- Mind the room: space matters! Try to use a space that they hang out in, like the playground, and not one of their classrooms.

- If you have a group of kids that already have their history together, how can you create this environment of trust to be honest and express themselves in front of each other?

- Start with a broad conversation with them about the little good moments of the day: not every young person trusts adults.

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[39] See also Chapter 8 and https://www.poem-horizon.eu/school-memory-work/.

- Let them be and don't try too hard. I would feel embarrassed to go deep about myself in front of my classmates at school. So maybe ask them something neutral first, e.g., about summer holidays.

- Mind that students might be more 'on guard' depending on how at ease they feel in their school environment.

- A good way to break down barriers is talking about things that you do in your life outside school and your life as a teacher. Especially for ages 11–14, "it's nice to see teachers who are actually humans".

- Learn and use everyone's first names!

- Meet everyone individually before meeting in a group.

Figure 3: Advice given by the young interlocutors of the research pilot phase on how to implement the *school memory work(shop)* in school settings.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the processes, insights and outcomes of a practice that explores uses of memory as a 'tool' through which to conduct research with children and young people drawing on personal stories that are important to them. Aldridge and Dearden have argued for memory's potential to provide a wealth of methods to conduct social research in more creative ways (2013, p. 169); this also applies to research with children and young people. In exploring notions of memory together with the young participants, we arrived at the establishment of a shared framework of meaning around what memory can be and how this can be operationalised in ways that resonate with them. This involved an emergent process, beginning with the use of 'memory objects' to facilitate remembering things that hold special importance, with this developing into the remembering and sharing of memories of schooling that matter. Van Dijck argues that mental perceptions intricate to the cultural act of remembering — ideas, impressions, insights, feelings—manifest themselves through sensory modes—sounds, images, smells—which we then capture into inscriptional forms (e.g., spoken/written words, still/moving images, sounds recordings, etc.) (2004, p. 264). In our exploratory workshop with the young people, we reversed that process, using, at the first stage, objects as inscriptional forms to help us 'access rather than capture' personal memories whilst also eliciting the mental perceptions and sensory modes associated with them. This led us to design the preliminary version of the 'school memory work(shop)', a process of memory work that focuses on eliciting, reflecting upon, valuing and creating 'memory texts' of the young people's school memories that matter. In the followin three chapters, I outline the reasons

and conditions that impelled me to focus on the school memories as a primary source of data, and I delve deeper into some of the material I collected through applying *school memory work(shop)* method, individually and collectively, with children and young people from different educational settings, situating this alongside other ethnographic data.

Chapter 5. Feeling What/Who Matters in Education

Previously, I discussed how an iterative process of experimentation with and through memories in collaboration with a group of young research participants laid the foundations for *school memory work*. This method and a space underwent further refinement by way of a series of experimental workshops with young research participants from other schools (see Chapter 3) and served as my primary means of data collection moving forward. Building on the hypothesis that school memory work holds potential for exploring alternative educational approaches with children and young people, propelling us to reimagine education differently, in this chapter I focus on school memories revolving around the theme of standardised exams and school grades. Situating my analysis in the framework of the affective turn (see Chapter 3), I examine the feelings associated with those memories and what these affects *do* (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020) and *could* do towards the imagination of new educational possibilities. In this context, I draw heavily from feminist theorising of affect, particularly the work of Sara Ahmed (2004) and her theory of cultural politics of emotion, therein placing an analytical focus on the emotions connected to the selected memories of standardised tests and grades amongst children and young people; in doing so, I draw also from other scholars who have argued for the significance of affect in education (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020). Finally, I examine how these affects extend to shape exclusionary practices, reproducing and/or reinforcing injustices and creating a sense of 'non-belonging'. Concomitantly, I discuss how such affects can act as 'connectors' across bodies, making injustices felt and visible, eventually shaping feelings of what feels amiss in contemporary education and thus taking this as a starting point for envisioning alternatives.

5.1 'Why do I feel like education isn't for me?'

"I missed the first 12 years of school. And what I mean is [that] when I started high school, I didn't know vocabulary, I could just about read and write, I was well behind. I was placed into like a special unit, where you're brought up to scratch with other students. And that was at Year Seven. And then I started to discuss with my teachers say[ing] 'Why do I feel like education isn't for me?'"

(Online interview with Dave, research interlocutor and education activist, April 2021)

How would education 'feel' if we were to dwell in the sensation of affect rather than the logic of representation (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020)? What makes a young person feel like education *is* or *is not* for them, and what sits—or, rather, moves—in the "belongings that are messily somewhere in between?" (Wright, 2015, p. 399). What feelings, emotions, and sensations inhabit and create memories of (non)belonging, exclusion, and worthlessness, and how are they entangled with structural injustices associated with the institutional formation of school exams and standardised tests?

As a researcher working closely with students, I encountered the affective agency of exams, something that many of my young interlocutors talked about during the fieldwork: the scheduling of exams dictated

programming of my fieldwork, determining the days and times when I could and couldn't be at the school; some of the young people who initially showed interest in participating in the research project eventually withdrew their involvement due to heavy work-load associated with exam preparations. In offline fieldwork, I witnessed the transformation of school dance halls into examination rooms, observing the noticeable shifts in students' moods from stress and impatience to relief, excitement or disappointment, depending on their mock exam performance. On reflection, I recognise how the institutional formation of exams has left a memorable impression on my research encounters, framing the school communities' time-spaces, shaping their atmospheres and my interactions within them and, by extension, shaping my research, too.

Exams can be thought of as potent identifiers of both individual and collective school experiences. As a formation and an institutional practice, they are laden with narrative expectations about the future; they signify the end of a school year and the transition to the next, determining access to future opportunities, interwoven with the "rhetorical and affective appeals" (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020, p. 11) to young people's futures. Exams, standardised testing, and "results days" are charged with narratives of both success and failure, and, to borrow from Adele (research participant), they often trigger a "chaos of emotions" for young people. Attending closely to five young interlocutors' school memories of exams and evaluation practices reveals that this institutional formation does much more than only 'determining' young people's futures through a mark of 'pass' or 'fail'; exams, and their emphasis on performance and grades, are further felt through their capacity to shape individual and collective feelings about what—and who—matters in education, about who feels seen, included, worthy and recognised, and subsequently who belongs in education. To feel that they belong, one needs to feel seen:

> "[In mainstream education] there's so much pressure on grades, and there's so much pressure on this idea […] that young people don't often feel valued as an individual, [that] the curriculum doesn't *see*, that the education system doesn't *see* that person as an individual. And I think that's what creates these memories of 'I don't belong here', because it['s] [like], the educational system doesn't *see* me" (Online interview with Dave, April 2021)

In the wake of COVID-19 and the first nationwide lockdown, England witnessed a heated public discussion about the students' GCSE[40] and A-level exams. With schools closing to mitigate the spread of the virus, educational communities grappled with the impossibility of conducting in-person exams, generating anxiety amongst students, teachers, and parents. In 2020, then Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Education Secretary Gavin Williamson were confronted with a public outcry as their decision to implement a grade standardisation algorithm, implemented by Ofqual, faced intense criticism[1].

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[40] The **General Certificate of Secondary Education** (GCSE) is a type of examination and an academic qualification in a particular subject, taken in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Following the cancellation of exams, this proposed 'solution' would aim, in their view, to combat 'grade inflation' by moderating teacher-predicted grades. Members of the educational community denounced the algorithm for being 'unfair' and 'biased', and student protests led to the abandonment of the algorithm-predicted grades for that academic year[41]. The reasoning behind the public anger towards the algorithm highlighted what many condemned as wider biases within the UK's education system. A series of conversations began to unfold, including some Conservative voices[42], imagining this to be a turning point in education:

> COVID has shaped our education, […] I missed out on my A-levels, which are kind of like the prime of education. If you were to like pick any part of the education system that mattered most I'd say it was A-levels, because it determines people's next steps in terms of higher education and that was stripped away from me […] So I definitely think [that for] our generation, [this is] a very historical moment in terms of our lives as well. (Online interview with Annabelle, April 2021)

During the pandemic, throughout which most of the data discussed here was collected, the widespread disruption to national exams gave further prominence to public discussions about the school-exams-future triptych. This phenomenon was captured in the school memory work(shop) sessions shared with the young participants during this period; in this context, the links between exam results, self-worth, and young people's futures were accentuated in the young people's narrations:

> …a lot of people felt like [their predicted grades] would determine somehow how much they're worth, and in a sense it actually would, because it could determine whether they will or will not get into a college, which at this moment in time seems like the only thing that matters about our futures. (Lina, online school memory workshop, November 2020)

In the context outlined above, I focus on a subsection of my data obtained through online school memory work sessions with Adele, Lina, Annabelle, Dave and Ava, five young people aged between 16 and 19-years-old, conducted between November 2020 and June 2021: Lina and Adele participated in the same online school memory workshop, followed by an individual interview; Annabelle, Dave, and Ava took part in individual memory work sessions which centred around an individual interview. The five interlocutors have diverse profiles in terms of the types of schools they attended, their socioeconomic backgrounds, and their overall school experiences. I explain more about their individual backgrounds later in this chapter, centring my analysis around the stories of Annabelle and Adele. My analysis builds on the school memories shared by these young interlocutors, which revolve around common themes such as exams, performance evaluation practices, grades, and results days. Analysing these memories

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[41] See https://www.theverge.com/2020/8/17/21372045/uk-a-level-results-algorithm-biased-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-university-applications and https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/aug/14/do-the-maths-why-englands-a-level-grading-system-is-unfair.
[42] See for example https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/oct/08/tory-mps-back-ditching-gcse-exams-english-school-system-overhaul.

both individually and in dialogue with one another, I focus on the affective states enmeshed with and evoked by institutionalised evaluation practices, discussing how they open up to broader issues of structural educational (in)justice, self-worth, belonging, and ex/inclusion.

Among the five young interlocutors' school memories with which I engage here, Adele and Annabelle both identified their recollections from exams and GCSE[2] results days as the experiences that "stood out" the most. Adele and Annabelle (both pseudonyms) both attended state schools in two different towns in North West England. When I worked with them, they were similar ages (17 and 18-years-old, respectively). I conducted the school memory work(shop) with them at different times, and they have not been exposed to each other's school memories. Adele participated in an online school memory workshop, followed by a group discussion and an individual interview, whereas with Annabelle, we went through an individual school memory work exercise and a complementary online interview a few months later.

In terms of their overall impression of schooling, the educational journeys of the two interlocutors differed significantly. Adele self-identified as someone who enjoyed most of her time at school, recalling barely any memories where she struggled with her grades or performance— an outcome she attributed, at least partially, to the school system "supporting her in her way of learning". During her interview, she also acknowledged the role of her parents, and especially her mum, an aspirational head-teacher of a local primary herself, in nurturing her love for learning and for school in general. Alongside the emotional support she received throughout her school years, she also showed awareness of how her access to material and other cultural resources contributed to her more 'positive' school experience and performance within it. Annabelle's experience of school, on the other hand, feels far removed from the fondness narrated by Adele. For Annabelle, happy and carefree school memories are limited only to primary school, which she describes as "fun", a "big playgroup" for "learning without learning". Beyond that point, she does not speak highly of school and traces its value mostly in the opportunities it created for her and her friends to be around each other; this, she said, is what she'll miss the most about school. She explains that "everything [she's] learned from school is not in the curriculum", but "more [in] life lessons, rather than [in] times tables and division".

As part of the school memory work sessions, I asked Annabelle whether there was a particular artifact from school that she would like to send into the future. With a surge of excitement in her voice, she eagerly revealed her choice: a polling card. She had recently voted for the first time but, with no prior knowledge about the process, she had thrown an invalid vote into the ballot, her invalid polling card symbolising that the present education system does not teach young people the "things that they need to know". When prompted to consider whether there was something she would prefer to erase from her educational experience, she replied that she would like the education system as it currently stands to vanish completely so it can be replaced by something new. Her working-class background, with which

she identifies proudly, coupled with her struggles resulting from undiagnosed dyslexia, made school more challenging compared to other classmates.

Despite their contrasting perspectives on school and the weight of their different educational experiences, both interlocutors chose to share a school memory of exams. Their memories demonstrate the affective agency of exams in shaping feelings of (non-)belonging and producing of self-worth, a process "shot through with affect and with sensation" (Appadurai, 2013, p. 287; Stambach & Hall, 2017). In defending the selection of their school memories, both Adele and Annabelle agree in that they wish to expose the injustice done to young people when their value is dependent on their grades and school performance; they wish for the remembrance of their memories to catalyse the collective denouncing of similar injustices in the future.

5.2 Feeling injustice through discomfort

When first presented with the school memory work task, Adele was initially inclined to think of "something happy" and "rifle[d] through [her] memories", as she put it, "to try and find a more positive memory" than the ones she eventually chose. As she highlights on several occasions both during her individual interview and during the school memory workshop, her overall school experience was an enjoyable one, with many "amazing things" happening. Deciding between 'positive' or 'negative' memories was something that emerged as a discussion topic in Adele's school memory work group. Conscious of her inclination to choose a "happy" memory as more representative of her time in school, Adele finally decided to record two other, 'less positive' memories that stood out for her the most, adhering closer, as she says, to the "point of the [school memory work] task" as she understands it:

> "GCSE results day was a chaos of emotions. I was worried, naturally, but I have been taught that these results are only a tiny part of me and so felt mostly OK. And because the school system facilitates my learning style and caters to my needs pretty well, I did pretty well, but seeing others maybe not as pleased, and who felt their self-worth had changed was really difficult, because I knew that the system was not allowing them to thrive and they were so much more than the results in front of them. I also saw parents who were behaving as though they were disappointed or angry and their lack of understanding was really saddening […]".

In her memory, Adele works to capture some of the emotional "chaos" and mixed feelings that exams triggered within and around her, entangled with the self-worth of both herself and her peers. Her sense of self-worth is not influenced by her grades, though this is not the case for many of her peers for whom value is "put down to just one number", she comments in her interview. For Adele, what triggers this emotional "chaos" is a sense of injustice in how the mechanisms of examination do not allow everyone the same possibilities to thrive. Adele grew up in a supportive family environment wherein she learnt that "numbers can't measure [her]", but her own family's protective environment contrasts markedly with the image of other parents, whose expressions of "disappointment", "ang[er]" or a "lack of

understanding" regarding their children's performance instil feelings of devaluation for her peers. During the collective school memory work and the individual interview, Adele demonstrates a breadth of awareness of the fact that her 'good performance' relies, at least in part, on the fact that the school system is designed in a way that 'fits' her, facilitating her learning style and "catering to her needs". In her interview, she chooses to elaborate further on the injustices she notices in her school's evaluation system and how these made her feel. When commenting on another of her school's evaluation practices—the 'performance reports'—she denounces them as a "ridiculous" practice:

> "[…] it never sat right with me. Because my effort [at school] was more apparent to a teacher because the school system supports me in my way of learning. But there was always an awareness of 'I have every advantage'. The way the school measures effort is the way my effort is perceived. At home, I have a space to learn, I have all the resources I need to learn. You know, a classroom environment is comfortable to me. I always had an awareness that those things aren't exactly true of everyone else, especially in my class […] it was such a wide range of economic situations that I felt uncomfortable being praised for doing things that come very easily to me when [for] other people even getting to school and sitting in a classroom probably took more effort than it took me to do the things I would have done anyway".

Oscillating between notions of comfort and discomfort in this elocution, Adele teases out the ambiguous feelings she encounters within her school environment. She acknowledges that the school system is structured in ways that support her way of learning, resulting in her efforts being seen, validated, recognized and measured through the established evaluation processes and thus providing a sense of affirmation. Concomitantly, she feels 'uncomfortable' in that the very system that supports her does not feel inclusive for many of her fellow students, whose needs remain unseen and ignored. Ahmed (2004, p. 148) refers to discomfort as "a feeling of disorientation", one in which one's body feels "out of place, awkward, unsettled". What makes Adele, a student whose body otherwise 'fits well' in school, experience simultaneously a sense of estrangement towards it? Adele's recognition and understanding of this discomfort becomes a means to feel the injustices ingrained in the educational system, offering a gateway to question injustice, envision alternatives, and mobilise for change, therein directing us to one way in which affect can open up possibilities to imagine and act otherwise. Ahmed (2004) reminds us of the contingency of the relation between injustice and emotion. In order to challenge social norms, one needs to have a different affective relation to those norms, Ahmed continues, and thus feeling becomes "crucial to the struggle against injustice". In this context, and alongside Ahmed's reflections, we see how affect functions as a transformative force. Adele feels injustice through discomfort, in turn allowing her to challenge a well-established system that perpetuates inequalities in the way it primarily caters to those students who possess the linguistic means, cultural capital, and neurotypical development to meet school requirements. In her interview, Adele expands her observations beyond academic performance to the seemingly 'simple' task of getting into school and sitting in a classroom, which, she acknowledges, remains a significant challenge for many of her neurodivergent peers. During the online

school memory workshop, Adele discusses the multifaceted nature of injustice, recognising that it takes different forms and guises, manifesting in different feelings felt by and upon multiple bodies: "There were people at school who […] you could see the[ir] self-worth changing as they read their results, and you could see it happen. And it was heartbreaking". Lina, another young interlocutor from Adele's school memory workshop, echoes how injustice becomes visible through the circulation of affect across different bodies. Drawing on her own experience of exams and results days, she notes:

> "It's just very weird to see the like the change in people's behavior all of a sudden, and then being very worried about the[ir] [grades]. And a lot of people felt like this would determine somehow how much they're worth […]. [I] don't even have words for that emotion but yeah a lot of people [were] actually really, really worried […]".

Adele's understanding of this injustice is not only cognitive; she also feels it in her own body as discomfort, as "heartbreaking", as something that "never sat right" with her. Adele's discomfort is shaped by the "contact zone" in which others impress upon and leave their impressions on her (Ahmed, 2014: 194). In this idea of the impression, "acts of perception, cognition and emotion" are situated as "entangled embodied 'experiences' as opposed to individual discrete experiences (Aruldoss et al., 2020: 4, 5). In that way, the sometimes 'silent' injustice that is impressed on some students' bodies more than others becomes 'visible' and can be 'felt' in Adele's body, too. Injustice emerges as something that both Adele and Lina can *see* through theirs and others' feelings, whether they have words for that emotion or not.

Similar sentiments of discomfort, disapproval, and a profound sense of injustice resulting from the classifications imposed by the current education system's evaluation mechanisms are echoed in the school memories that other young interlocutors wish to take forward into the future, challenging prevailing notions of 'success' that rely on the perceived 'failure' of others.

5.3 Tethering success to 'failing' bodies

Sophia is a 16-year-old student and education activist from South London. Like Adele, she identifies as a "lucky" student with relatively few struggles throughout school; she does, however, still describes schoolin as a process of "jumping through hoops". In one of her memories shared during the school memory work, she speaks to an experience of what she had perceived to be a personal 'failure', calling into question how personal value can be attached to systemic notions of 'success'. Sophia's chosen memory takes her back to early days in secondary school when she was taken out of the top set class in maths, due to what she acknowledges as a 'moderate' performance:

"I shouldn't have been in top sets[43]. However, I just remember sitting there crying because I got taken out of the top sets. And like so much of my value was like, put on being the best. And like, I was so upset about it. I felt like it was an insult for me to be [in the] second set. And I [asked myself], 'Why is that'? Like, 'why am I upset'? […] In [the] grand scheme of things, yeah, that was the right decision for me, not to be in top set, because I'm not top set student for maths. But the fact that it made me feel that way, was really upsetting…".

Whilst acknowledging the 'rightful' judgment of her removal from the top set, Sophia recalls feeling a deep upset about this experience. She speaks of a moment of rupture wherein she became more aware of the way in which her value, pride, and self-worth were attached to the school's ranking system. Here it is pertinent to note that the focus of her upset shifts when she takes a step back and begins to question how this situation made her feel: the fact of feeling upset begins to feel upsetting in itself. This realisation prompted Sophia to move beyond her personal feelings, extending her disapproval to the unjust classification of herself and her classmates based solely on their performance, without adequate attention to their different backgrounds and individual needs:

"That still feels wrong to me […] Why are we segregating students off into these little corners of 'we're smart' and [either] you get [in] [or] you don't fit what we want [you] to be like? That just doesn't make any sense to me. And these little things really started to annoy me. It's like, I've been afforded the opportunity to go to Cambridge, but another student [has not], that doesn't make sense to me. That's what really annoys me about education right now: […] for someone to get a nine, someone has to fail, that's how it works. And that's wrong. […] We all have individual strengths and [we need to] stop trying to make someone else fail so someone else can succeed. I think that's inherent to our society and stuff".

In these words, she takes an oppositional stance to what she identifies as a broader societal issue that goes beyond schools, namely our modern societies' conceptualisation of 'success' as something that is always tethered to and dependent on 'failure'. Quoting Jack Halberstam (2011), Stephanie Springgay (2020, p. 151) discusses failure as fundamentally relational to and inextricable from capitalism, for it is commonly understood as "the opposite of growth, improvement, development, advancement, and accomplishment". Put differently, "for there to be winners, there must be losers" (ibid.). Halberstam (2011, p. 3) discusses this in the context of Western education systems as maintaining "the toxic positivity of contemporary life", which, in turn, preserves and perpetuates the marginalisation and exclusion of certain students who do not 'fit'—those usually labelled as 'outliers' or 'at-risk', and who do not fall within the norms of mainstream culture. Returning to a school memory shared by Annabelle, she recalls the day she began to question "why we have an education system that isn't made for me", catalysed by a brief exchange with her teacher about science exams:

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[43] Top and bottom sets are a type of 'ability' grouping in the British education system (cf. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/departments/curriculum-pedagogy-and-assessment/childrens-life-histories-primary-schools).

[About school memory work], I've got a few kinds of experiences that stand out the most. One of them was when I was doing a science exam, and I failed that exam. And I remember asking the teacher, 'why do I keep failing, I revise so hard. I put all my effort in'. And his response was literally: 'this exam is not made for people like you'.

Dave also speaks to the systemic and structural injustice imposed and perpetuated by the current evaluation system. When asked about his school memories during the pandemic, he recounts a pivotal moment of recognition wherein he "realized that we [as a system] [a]re so complacent in this idea of failing certain groups of young people based on their postcode or wherever they're from. And we're just *willing* to do it" (emphasis added). Dave identifies proudly as an education activist and young working-class man and has struggled significantly to make his way through the school system; he stresses that it is particularly minority and working-class groups who are disproportionately failed within the current system. For Dave, the context of the pandemic, including events such as the 'algorithm scandal', defining children by their postcode, proved "how young people's experiences aren't taken on board, and therefore young people have this kind of lifelong trauma of experiences through education". Here, Dave extends the notion of failure further: failure is not only talked about as something that young people *do* but also as something which is *done to* them. When we talk about certain groups of young people failing in their education, we need to consider how the education system is simultaneously failing those young people by framing them as 'failures'. Annabelle, in a similar vein, draws on her school memories to denounce the fact that the education system "fails young people that aren't a certain type of person"; in this, she condemns the way in which it operates "*against* young people rather than *for* young people", with teachers finding themselves in a system that "doesn't allow them to give young people the support they need". It is problematic, she continues, that the contemporary educational system doesn't "care about young people's emotions", and concomitantly that young people's lived experiences "aren't taken on board".

Failure is conceptualised in these young interlocutors' school memories as something that can be 'felt', and here failure as an affective encounter vindicates the restoration of the centrality of emotion in the analysis of educational futures. For Adele, Lina, and Ava, whilst the affective imprints of failure may not mark their bodies in the same way, they all sense the injustice of failure as a discomfort and irritation; as the "worry tone" in the voice of others; as a sense of something that "never sat right"; as an emotion for which there are not always words to describe it. In these ways, individualised bodies, thoughts, and feelings are bound together into a "collective jouncing" through a shared sense of unease and discomfort; framed as lack, bad performance, deficiency, or inefficiency "failure does not fit anywhere, especially in schools" (Springgay, 2020, p. 151), and neither do the students to whose bodies 'failure' is attached. Emotions of failure that accumulate over time (Snaza, 2020, p. 113) can be understood to shape bodies, selves, and emotional experiences of non-belonging and othering in the physical space of school.

The 'power' of exams to shape notions of self-worth for young people is not an isolated phenomenon. As is reflected in the young interlocutors' testimonies, the agency of exams is largely transmitted and enacted through others. Fellow students serve as 'reference points' for determining one's 'failure' or 'success'—indeed, the relationality of failure demands that one must fail for another to succeed—and parents' reactions towards their children can shift suddenly at the sight of a grade, thereby influencing a young person's sense of worth.

5.4 Obstructing relational education

In Annabelle's school memory of results day, she finds herself in the position of 'failure'. Her memory discusses how school performance and teacher-student relationships can be enmeshed with each other in the context of formal education. At the beginning of our interview, Annabelle explains that "the whole concept of education blows [her] mind" and that she has been driven by her need to "understand the education system" in her decision to pursue teacher training. Akin to the elocutions of the other interlocutors, as part of the school memory work, Annabelle chose to share memories centred around "experiences that stood out". Throughout our interview, she uses her recollections of exams to illustrate the exigencies of challenging the priorities of teachers and the education system more broadly:

> "…on results day, I had like the biggest smile on my face walking into the hall. [Then] this same teacher who was my mentor said to me, 'I wouldn't look that excited if I was you'. That just threw me off […] I open my results and I was just really disappointed; I was crying and [was an] emotional wreck. And I thought, this is the person I want to speak to: my mentor! [But] he didn't look at me, he wouldn't make any eye contact with me. And he made it so I couldn't go to him at all".

Anabelle's recollection brings attention not to her actual exam result but to fact that this grade was so laden with perceptions of failure that it created a chasm in her relationship with her English teacher and mentor, a person whom she had trusted. She illustrates how her teacher's behaviour shifted suddenly after her 'bad' test results, attributing her teacher's reaction to his disappointment with her performance. The evocations in Anabelle's memory are powerful, illustrated particularly in the image of her teacher avoiding eye contact. The crux of her memory, Annabelle explains, is that she did not have the support she needed from her teacher because her results carried more weight than her relationship with this teacher. Bringing this memory into the space of school memory work prompted a critical examination of the values and priorities of education, leading her to "think a lot about what teachers prioritise", and she notes that much of education is about teachers meeting the targets they're expected to meet:

> "[Mine] was definitely kind of the one [school] memory that stands out in the sense of *sos* (!), what are the priorities of our teachers, what are the priorities of the education system on a whole?

And why is it that the young people's mental health, their thoughts, their feelings aren't at the core of the education system?"

In an educational era marked by standardisation and accountability, teachers are compelled to teach by numbers (Taubman, 2009). This emphasis on targets and outcomes can, in turn, result in their own value and self-worth being contingent on the targets that they meet, as is the value and position that the school holds in the broader community. Annabelle explains that she never spoke to her teacher again following that results day, avoiding his classroom whenever she returned to the school to greet her former teachers. Her disenchantment here stems from the fact that her exam performance was prioritised over her wellbeing, feelings, and emotions. This sense of disenchantment finds resonance within other young people's memories, too; for Sophia, framing "school as a memory test" inhibits our understanding of how young people feel in and throughout their education. This is why, she continues, schools cannot become "an equitable environment" until they are no longer oriented to memorisation and standardised testing—only then can the needs of all students be acknowledged, heard, and met. For Sophia, then, it is the fixation on performance, quantified in results and grades, that is most obstructive to comprehensive and compassionate attention to the multiplicity of young people's needs.

During his school memory work, Dave animates Sophia's argument further, relaying a memory of being moved from bottom to top sets. Having "missed the first 12 years of school", Dave has been supported in his education for several years by his grandparents and mentors from a youth organization from the local community. Learning outside the [school] institution made him "able to fall in love with [learning]" at his own pace. It was through this process that he "taught [himself his] own way of learning", he explains. One year into formal schooling, Dave was moved from bottom to top set classes. He recalls a feeling of 'estrangement' in this transition wherein he realised the different approaches to teaching between the sets, and claimed feeling "extremely privileged" having experienced bottom set teaching:

> "The bottom set teaching, i[t] nurtures you as a person…it asks you how you are… [it has] simple questions of 'how was your day yesterday?' or 'what did you have for tea?[1]' or 'did you have tea?'… Top set learning was *so* focused on academics and attainment and success that they forgot the survival aspect of school…it was so focused on all of that that they forgot to ask the students how they were, and nurture them, and see the young person as a young person rather than just a student that was set to get top grades".

In this excerpt, Dave illustrates once again how education's heavy focus on performance detracts attention from all the other things that school can be. Dave stresses how the top sets' focus on academic attainment led to the overlooking of the "survival aspect of school". As a result, asking children how they're feeling, nurturing them holistically and recognising their personhood, is also forgotten. As many of my interlocutors agreed, this weighted focus on exams and performance operates as a reductive apparatus that obstructs *seeing* the young person for who they are, viewing them instead as "just a student that was set to get top grades".

Woven across each of the aforementioned school memories is an inextricable association of education and the purpose of schooling with exams. Irrespective of the angle from which the five interlocutors discuss exams, none explicitly suggest an education future in which exams are completely abandoned. What their memories do suggest, however, is a reconfiguration of the relationship between exams and the purpose of schooling and education more broadly: a detachment between the two and a reorientation of their recognition of who they are and how they feel as young people rather basing their school identities solely on the exams results and rankings they achieve.

The arrangements of school systems "have been both an outcome of structural injustice and a mechanism for perpetuating it" (Sriprakash, 2022, p. 4). During the COVID-19 pandemic, voices that overtly questioned the practice and formation of exams coalesced in public, forging newfound possibilities for questioning and imagining otherwise. In this atmosphere, it became pertinent and urgent to recentre our attention to the "racial, classed, gendered and ableist interests" around which schools are structured and how, by extension, "curriculum, pedagogy and institutional arrangements operate as powerful forces of social reproduction" (Sriprakash, 2022, p. 2). The school memories discussed in this chapter point to exams, grades, and evaluation practices as some such institutional arrangements which operate through affect to shape not only students' aspirations (Stambach & Hall, 2017) but also feelings of self-worth, belonging, relating, and caring.

Structural injustices can be 'felt'. If we understand affect for its potential to be a "creative, unpredictable, and vital force [that] offers a means of interrupting and remodulating dominant modes of power and rigid normativities" (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020, p. 19), then remembering how exam-induced injustices *feel* might engender possibilities for working towards more just educational futures. Attending to these embodied emotions is vital in the process of re-imagining education and schooling as more inclusive and equitable, as sites where all bodies can find their place and 'fit'. Affects can facilitate making the invisible 'visible'. In this context, school memories may be understood as affective messages to the future, as invitations to 'remember the feeling' and draw on these affective recollections to do things differently moving forwards. In their affective intensity, school memories 'stick' to bodies in ways that intellectual understandings, absent of embodiment, do not. This is not to associate emotions with individuals alone, but rather with 'signs' and how they work on and in relation to bodies (Ahmed, 2004). Partially because they do not simply belong to subjects, Ahmed (2004, p. 195) asserts, emotions cannot be installed as the 'truth' of injustice. This does not, however, dissociate emotions from (in)justice:

> "Emotions then cannot be installed as the 'truth' of injustice, partly as they do not simply belong to subjects. But our response to the model of just emotions as virtue should not be to say that emotions have nothing to do with justice and injustice".

5.5 Conclusion

The school memories of exams shared and discussed by these interlocutors negotiate feelings of (dis)comfort, (not) fitting in, sadness and heartbreak, difficulty, worry and a sense of something that 'never sat right'. What these emotions do is shape certain students' sense of belonging, individuality, and self-worth; for others, the same feelings of discomfort expose inherent injustices and conjure a sense of unease. In interrogating how exams make them and those around them 'feel', young people are questioning the very purpose of schooling. The five interlocutors cited in this chapter have diverse backgrounds and different educational experiences, and they each hold different impressions about schooling. As such, their bodies are affected differently. And yet, the different affects they feel act as 'contact points' for feeling how others might feel. As the material presented within this chapter illustrates, these 'negative' affects incite connection between the bodies of those who seem to 'fit in' and those who are marked by non-belonging. Remembering these affects and rendering them visible thus becomes wholly necessary if we are to do things differently in the future. School memories remove the silence surrounding the many injustices and inequalities engendered in the classroom and school life, and affects become contact points between the past, present, and future.

Chapter 6. Soundproof School Bags, Superpowered T-shirts, and Memories of 'Feeling Heard'

"That feeling of being heard and being understood, is something really overlooked in schools […] I think that's one feeling that [young] people either they recognise 'Oh, I felt heard and understood then' or 'I didn't'. And I think that's one thing that, more than anything, that's what you remember when you look back: How did you feel understood whilst you were there?"

(Online interview with Amelia, June, 2021)

Have we failed to listen and understand children's concerns, not just in school but everywhere? Are the images we hold of children, youth and childhood derived from everyone but the child? Depictions of the 'schooled child' circulating in the public imaginary are largely shaped by external narratives rather than emanating from children themselves. Such images are laden with power relations prevailing in schools and their intersections with the social constructions of race, gender and other marginalising factors, including age, that work invisibly upon our interaction with and conception of young people. Building on Amelia's insights, in this chapter, I attend to those school memories which shed light on young people experiences of feeling understood and listened to, or the lack thereof. Through this analysis, I discuss how such memories are intricately intertwined with and rely heavily on the power relations and hierarchies that exist within schools. I attend also to the ways in which these shape teacher-student relationships, foregrounding the question of how teacher-student dynamics and images of schooling and children could be reimagined by interrogating the affectivity of everyday school objects and practices that connect to feelings of power and feelings of being heard. I structure this chapter around the school memories shared by young interlocutors introduced previously in Chapter 5 (Annabelle, Dave, Lina, Sophia, and Adele), as well as Grace, Henry, Amelia and Emily whose school memories I introduce in this chapter for the first time (relevant information on all young interlocutors whose memories are discussed in the Findings chapters are provided in Chapter 3).

6.1 'Feeling power'

During fieldwork, I took note of the things that held significance in the everyday school lives of young people. These observations were far-reaching and included seeking permission to participate in the School Strike for Climate or being denied access to the bathroom during class; lobbying for the ban of single-use plastic in the school's kitchen; advocating for gender neutral toilets; resolving conflicts with classmates, and navigating relationships with teachers, to name a few. These seemingly 'small' aspects of everyday school life were often serious matters of concern for many of the students with whom I worked. As Dave astutely identifies, though, "it's often the smallest things that are the most difficult to change [in school]", and things like "having a meeting where children discuss what they loved about

their lessons were the hardest to implement" (Dave). For Adele, "in some cases, the questions [about what matters] weren't even asked" (Adele).

Emergent in and through these young interlocutors' memories is the idea that there are multiple and complex factors at play which work to hinder young people's participation in the shaping of their everyday school lives, preventing their voices from being heard or expressed and obstructing the possibility for questions about "what matters" to be asked in the first place. These factors also vary across different school settings and historical, social, and cultural contexts. As I explicate in Chapter 3, within this research I worked with young people attending different types of schools in the UK and I have developed my research drawing on their personal accounts and memories of schooling, in particular those they deem important to be remembered in order for alternative education futures to be possible. On several occasions, the young interlocutors recounted stories in which sound and power intertwined, where the experience of 'feeling power' entangled with feeling (not) listened to. It is to these experiences that I turn within this chapter, thinking in particular through experiences concerning the affectivity of everyday school objects and practices that encompass feelings of power and voice, exploring how these feelings ultimately hold potential to (re)shape teacher-student relationships inside schools. I consider the impact of these objects and practices on human bodies inside school, asking in turn how they affect and are affected by individuals; I reckon with both what they engender and catalyse and what they constrain or disable. I interrogate the role of emotions in social hierarchies of power as they intersect with marginalising categories, and in this context age in particular is one such significant category (see Boler & Zembylas, 2016). Further, I explore the political facets of the students' feelings in these memories, tending in particular to how they position notions of 'equality' and feeling listened to at the core of their imagination of alternative education futures.

Formal education operates within a framework governed by rules of power and authority, and indeed is and an environment in which emotion and power are intricately intertwined. In her seminal writing about emotions and power in education, *Feeling Power*, Boler identifies a two-fold role for emotions in education: as both a locus of social control and as a site of political resistance (Boler, 1999). Following from Boler's articulations then, this chapter thus discusses notions of power and listening, contextualising this line with the dual role of emotions in education.

Power is experienced multiply within schools, often mediated by embodied, spatial, social, and non-human entanglements, generating a range of feelings that often remain unexpressed or suppressed. Scholarly work associated with new materialism provides "innovative directions for understanding the materiality of entanglements, contradictions, and frictions that constitute the realities of affect and emotions in their relational contexts" (Boler & Zembylas, 2016, p. 25). This chapter is then informed by these approaches, working to understand how power and the capacities to listen, attend, and care are enmeshed in complex relationships that involve atmospheres, objects, practices, and performed identities.

Western cultural norms pathologise and individualize emotions, tending to obscure the complex relationship between emotion and power in the formal educational process, befogging how power is felt and what these feelings *do* within and to the educational process and the human and non-human agents involved in it. In schools, power can be felt in seemingly mundane everyday practices and things. During school memory work, the young interlocutors discussed a number of such experiences that 'stood out'; many of these experiences could be deemed insignificant, and yet they foregrounded these memories with a sense of import and affirmation, acknowledging the need for them to be remembered in order for otherwise education futures to be possible. The centrality of feelings and experiences of power here, both within the students' school memories and the informal conversations that contextualised them, led me to dedicate this chapter to the notion of 'feeling power'. In this notion I am here borrowing from Boler's scholarship, and it is alongside this work that much of this chapter has been developed. In Chapter 8, I elaborate further on the possibilities that lie in this feeling, rethinking how we might listen to young people's matters of concern.

There is burgeoning literature across fields engaging with children and young people focusing on their 'voice', the more critical perspectives emphasising that it is not enough to focus on voice alone, that is, without adequately questioning the role of the listener: *who* is listening, if anyone at all? What obstructs us from listening, and how does it feel to (not) feel listened to? In formal educational settings, student councils have long been featured as the flagship of student voice and participation, yet we cannot escape critiques regarding the failure of institutional formations to facilitate young people's participation in their everyday school lives (for a comprehensive critique, see Nolas, 2015). If we extend questions around student voice to consider those on the receiving end of their views, we are propelled into reflecting on listeners and our capacity to 'listen'. This becomes particularly evident in the insights of one teacher interlocutor, raising questions around adult teachers' capacity to truly listen: "you learn to listen when you feel heard; could it be that adults also feel misheard?" (fieldnotes, May 2021).

When I conducted a pilot phase of the school memory workshops with a group of primary school students, material which I do not analyse further in this thesis (see Chapter 3 for justification as to why I made this decision), I was confronted with the need to generate with more playful and engaging ways to make the memory work process more accessible to my young(er) interlocutors (Moraitopoulou, 2023). Following a round of experimentation, an eight-year-old student proposed that we could depict the process of remembering as "adding pieces of memories inside a time-capsule" (fieldnotes, October 2020). In light of this proposal, I integrated the time-capsule metaphor as a prompt in the subsequent individual school memory work sessions conducted with older students, inviting them to envision this imaginary time capsule as a repository for both the material and immaterial memory artefacts they wished to contribute. I open this chapter with one such material memory, that of a school bag, which 'tells a story' about voice, listening, and power.

In our online school memory work session, Sophia identified her school bag as a material artefact that needs to be remembered: "[the bag] kind of represent[s] to me how the schools didn't listen to students", she explains. Within Sophia's school, all students were required to carry a particular bag that could only be purchased from the school. The problem with these bags, Sophia explains, is their poor quality, with most of them breaking within one school year. Students are thus forced to spend another £25 at the beginning of each school year to buy a new bag; this prompted Sophia and her classmates to submit arguments to their school's administration opposing the obligatory purchase of this particular bag. She tells me how their arguments were subsequently outweighed by the school regulations and eventually overruled by the school's administration:

> "[My] school bag says about how we weren't listened to as students!": Why I'm having to buy a £25 school bag every year when I could [have] just bought my own, which I could either choose to get a good quality one or choose to buy any old one, a five-pounder one, or buy one that's then my choice, [and if it breaks] it's my fault? The school wouldn't listen to that every single year. And [our] school bags are still breaking. They're trying to update them but I'm like 'these school bags are still breaking!' My school bags say about how we weren't listened to as students! […] it was like we're giving good reasons but we're not being listened to and that is because the school has its [rules] and we're students, and they're going to take the thing we say not seriously (Sophia's school memory)

School bags are ordinary, everyday school objects, fundamental to most students' school years. As hallmarks of formal education institutions, they are intrinsically connected to the ordinary affects that work upon and shape student identities. For Sophia, her student identity is accompanied by the expectation of being dismissed, ignored, or not taken seriously by those in positions of power: "We're not being listened to and that is because the school has its [rules] and *we're students*, and they're going to take the thing we say not seriously", she explains. However, Sophia attributes an alternative pattern of meaning to her school bag when she selects it as an artefact to be remembered; the school bag becomes symbolic of the students' agency and struggles for power, emblematic of shared feelings that are collectively experienced: "[the school bag] say[s] about how we weren't listened to as students!", she contends. In this way, her memory of the school bag and this retelling of its story functions as a vehicle for expressing the disappointment, anger, and frustration felt by young people when they are ignored, overlooked, or denied voice when raising concerns about issues which affect them in their everyday school lives. These feelings reveal the students' understanding of their limited capacity to challenge school rules; they are also reflections of the students' "affective accumulations", the records of the ways in which their age shapes their 'non-adult' body-minds (Snaza, 2020, p. 113), thereby creating the expectation of not being taken seriously.

Within the data amassed and across the school memory vignettes, such feelings, reflective of the positionality of student bodies within schools, continued to emerge. Earlier in her interview, Sophia

clearly elucidated the unjust treatment she experienced at school, attributing this to her age. Invoking frustration at the way students are treated within the school system, she expresses her desire for school to "actually treat us [students] like adults, as individual people, not as a cohort". In her words, individuality is a feature recognised only in adults; students are denied this individuality by being treated as a cohort. Sophia's here speaks to the ways in which 'age', as a socially constructed category and a vector of social stratification, becomes a site of oppression that is also affectively produced (Springgay, 2020, p. 154), that is, through feelings of power (or lack thereof) and the unequal treatment of students. The contrast between 'feeling a child' and 'feeling an adult' was recurrent across many of the interviews, school memories and group discussions I shared with young people over the course of fieldwork. In the context of school memory work, 'feeling like an adult' equated to feeling 'listened to', 'appreciated for exactly who you are', 'respected', and 'seen as an individual person'. In Dave's school memory for instance (read more on Chapter 7), it is not only the teachers' treatment of children but also the capacities of the school space that creates this feeling of individuality that is recognized when one inhabits the adult figure. In this sense, the adult figure was also projected onto students in my fieldwork encounters through school's resemblance to the workplace. For Annabelle, the very "power struggle [of] education" is reflected on and enacted through the uses of the words 'kids' and 'children': "schools have that power struggle with young people by calling us 'kids', or 'children'", which, in turn, contributes to an absence of trust in children to design a different education, she adds. During our interview, she recalls her experience as a member of a youth organisation where she and her peers were told that they "won't [be] referred to as 'kids' or 'children', because in [the organisation's] eyes, [they] deserve a level of respect". The word "child" evokes a "level of innocence", creating this image of the 'innocent child', she avows, citing this as integral to her refusing to identify with the term, and indeed many young people feel the same. This concern surrounding use of the term 'child' versus, for example, 'youth' has culminated in efforts for more explicit acknowledgment of young people's individuality, agency, identity, with this also being highlighted in research contexts. For example, Mayes and Hartup (2021) illustrate how some young people find the term 'child' "to be patronising and demeaning of their competence and agency", leading the two researchers to discard the use of the word 'child' completely (see Chapters 1 and 3 for a discussion of how I addressed this in my research and writing).

The student identity negotiated in Sophia's school memory of the bag intersects with this figure of the innocent child in need of protection. Carrying the school bag with the official school logo on it makes it easier to identify students, Sophia is told by her school's administration. Her school uses student safety as a pretext to reject the students' alternative proposals to school bags: "They [the school's administration] were like, 'you might get kidnapped and we'll be able to identify [you through] your school bag'. [But] I'm still [from] head to toe [in my] school uniform, like... Ah, I don't know", she sighs with disappointment. Here, the school administration's discourse charges the school bag with the qualities of 'protection', and in this the school bags take on a different role—that of safeguarding student bodies. The school bag rule reproduces the well-established discourse and ideology that frames children

as in need of protection, a discourse which eventually prevents those in positions of power from listening to children fully. As such, the student identity intersects with ideas about childhood and children's safety which "frame how we listen" to children and, by extension, their matters of concern (Nolas, 2021), thereby creating memories of feeling unheard.

Affective notions of listening and power intersect, albeit from a different perspective, in Emily's school memory, too; she recalls her first week in her new school, a school she and her family had intentionally identified for her after a series of bad experiences in the local grammar school. Here it is important to note young interlocutors shared school memories centred around 'first times', speaking to the intensity of 'new' experiences and the emotions they carry. Such recollections included transitions from one school to another, the transition from high school to college, or other experiences marked by unprecedented feelings, as the youth explained. Emily's school memory can be traced back to her first week at a new school, and it is marked by the experience of feelings that are particularly unfamiliar:

> "Don't call me Sir!": So I'd just started my [first week into my new school], I think it was like three or four days in, it was about end of May so it was starting to get all summery and nice. We all went outside into the garden to play like badminton or tennis or something and I went up to [a teacher] and said 'Can you pass me a racket, sir?' [The teacher] turned around, looked absolutely like shocked, and he was like 'You don't need to call me that, call me [by my first name], it's weird!'. It made me feel really comfortable because there wasn't a hierarchy and I could see that. I felt way more comfortable than I ever felt in any education before [...] It made me realise that *I have like a place and an opinion* because every time I used to try and state my opinion [in my old school] I [would] just get shut down straight away and they [would tell me] 'Stop talking back!'. And that's not talking back, it's showing my opinion and actually caring about something. And I realised that [in my new school] I could care and not be shut down for it (Emily's school memory, italics added for emphasis during transcription)

This memory is drawn from a period of transition; Emily had just moved from a school where students were put in detention for not putting their chair in after class, culminating in feelings of discomfort and a fear of being 'shut down'. At her new school, though, these feelings were promptly disrupted, illuminated here in this encounter with new teacher. The mutual 'shock' they each feel is a revelation to Emily, opening up possibilities of a school environment where she can feel more comfortable, accepted, and equal to her teacher. She describes this sudden shift as a shock and a fleeting surprise, orienting her towards otherwise educational possibilities. Facilitated by the construction of an equitable relationship with her teacher (captured in her memory in the meaningful gesture of her teacher's rejection of the honorific 'sir'), Emily comes to understand that this environment is less centred upon hierarchy and normative structures of adult-student power. As such, she recognises that there is scope within this school for her to be vocal about the matters she cares for without being 'shut down'. Equality creates a space for listening, she explains in her interview.

Likewise, Annabelle also elaborated in her interview on the adult-child power relations in schools and the ways these relations can obstruct listening to young people; it is in the absence of 'spaces' wherein young people can 'speak how they feel', she explains, that student anger builds up:

> "I think, even when young people answer back, we're not defying the rules, we're just speaking our minds. I think it's as important to allow young people to speak how they truly feel. Because then if you're not allowing them to speak how they feel, you're allowing them to build up that anger inside and show it in other ways, which ultimately, the school [then says] 'why they behave in this way?' It is because you're not allowing them to speak how they feel. Instead, you're making them box it up inside. And then ultimately, it turns into other things that become bigger issues for the school. But if they just did the simple thing of listening in the first place, they wouldn't have the wider issues."

Annabelle here affirms that "it is important to allow young people to speak how they truly feel", and for schools to be open and willing to listen to their feelings without perceiving the youth as overemotional. Being labelled as 'emotional' and therefore a 'problem' has long been demonstrated to be disproportionately experienced by women, First Nations people and people of colour, LGQTBI subjects, children and young people, neurodiverse and other non-normative subjects (Ahmed, 2004; Mayes & Hartup, 2021). Dave's elocutions echo this, and he explains that "it [is] seen as risky and problematic for the school to genuinely listen" to young people and how they feel. Young people's emotions, which can also include anger, are often labelled as "outlaw" and are, by extension, "perceived as threatening by the dominant culture"; as such, even if young people speaking their mind does not explicitly defy the [school] rules, their emotions nonetheless splinter the "emotional rules that help to maintain our society's particular hierarchies" (Boler, 1999), including the hierarchies of schooling. Understanding how young people feel in/about their education through a feminist lens, which here is understood as valuing emotions for their political significance and as a source of knowledge, can propel us beyond the naturalisation of binary relations (such as male/female and adult/child) upon which the aforementioned presumptions about young people's emotions have been built. Furthermore, adopting feminist approaches facilitates a rejection of the pathologising and individualising of young people's feelings (including those deemed as 'negative' or 'threatening'), thus allowing us to "connect these binary relations and political feelings with systemic political and social pathologies, such as sexism, racism, and capitalism" (Mayes & Hartup, 2021, p. 4). The school memories discussed here prompt us to also consider 'age' as one of these pathologies, bearing witness to the difficulties experienced by young people whose lives are residing in political structures in which the exercise of power is age-dependent. These memories might also, however, bear witness to the imagination of alternative education futures. In a critical approach to childhood and working through a childish and decolonial lens, Iacobino (2023) stresses that ageism remains an underresearched factor in children's treatment in education:

"Many studies have analysed colonial relations of domination within education. However, few of them have taken into account ageist relations in the long history of modernity (Lorde, 1977; hooks, 2013). The concept of "ageism" thus still seems to encounter specific difficulties in its recognition as a social relation of domination".

Conversations surrounding the age-specific nature of power dynamics and the phenomenon of 'not listening' emerged in a school memory work session conducted online with five young people and one teacher. During the workshop, the young interlocutors proposed that we interpret school memories from the perspective of being adult (parents and teachers), noting how the memories held by adults are reflected upon and thus impact the educational experience of today's younger generation. The five young interlocutors discussed adult memories of schooling as a "comfort zone" where one "feel[s] safe" and therefore less willing to give up on them (Lina): adults in positions of power in today's education system, Lina contends, hold certain memories from the time that they too were students, including how they themselves were treated, and this might sometimes "hold [them] back" from doing things differently. Another young interlocutor, Grace, referred to this phenomenon as an "intergenerational educational trauma" that "gets passed down" to today's generations in education: "because I was taught like this, so should you", she explains. She figures this intergenerational educational trauma as "collective", citing it as "one of the biggest obstacles in changing education". Memories are generated by way of a "shared encounter" (Moss, 2010, p. 53), "generationally and temporally" (Pells, 2018), and in "The Problem of Generations", Mannheim (1952) proposes that memories act as a source for particular generations' "natural view of the world". As such, "the very act of noticing or seeing" becomes generational (Biklen, 2007, p. 257) as adults employ collective memories "to validate the view of the past that has become important to the individual or group in the present" (Best, 2007; Teski & Climo, 1995, p. 3). If we understand Grace's point about the intergenerational educational trauma through this framework, school memories of different generations thus "are not just resources for sense making" but, in a Foucauldian sense, "they also regulate what we hear" (Biklen, 2007, p. 256), disclosing and/or limiting possibilities of what one can hear and understand. "The world is changing so fast so there is almost like this lag between the world and how we emotionally feel about [it] almost like a sense of resentment, like I went through this—that's why I am using the word trauma—and therefore you should too", Grace asserts. Her incisive contributions about intergenerational educational trauma and its impacts on older generations' ways of seeing and understanding young people's educational experience in the present resonated strongly with the rest of the group, who shared stories about their parents' education: "it's something we've all experienced", Adele corroborates (Young Facilitators' Online Workshop, November 2020). As such, generational memories, and in this case school memories, play a crucial role in shaping and reproducing school cultures, yet simultaneously hold expansive possibilities for disrupting and changing them. Those with the power to shape our schools remember what it meant to be ignored as children, how it felt to be silenced, but struggle irrespectively to foreground the quiet revolution of listening in today's schools. "Attend[ing] to the temporal aspects of experience, including

generational relations" (Rosen, 2017, p. 378) becomes pertinent to the project of reimagining education. In her interview, Amelia attests to this further:

> "A lot of adults have gone through the system where they've been told, 'Oh, once you become an adult, then you get more rights, and you'll be able to do it'. So once, once they get to being an adult, it's like, 'Well, this power is something that I'm owed, I want it now'. So to be able to be the ones who give it to younger people, it feels like 'I've gone through not having many rights and having to go through things, so you guys have to do it too, because I went through it'. I think it seems too much as a rite of passage of 'Well, once you get to my stage, then you'll be able to do it'. And then it gets perpetuated where people [are] saying, 'Well, if I've gone through this way, then that means you might have to go through this way [too]'. It feels a bit more like, 'I didn't get it when I was younger, it's not fair that they get it too'. I think people are a bit uneasy and afraid of doing that."

Perhaps grounding these ephemeral memories in concrete objects makes them more accessible. I found that material practices and everyday school objects were integral in shaping these memories across generations, as becomes apparent in the school memory put forward by Annabelle. Anabelle recalls her last year of high school, where she and her classmates were given leavers' jumpers to combine with the skirts and trousers of their uniforms; in this memory, she explains how she was the denied right to sit her GCSE maths exam because she was not wearing her school's T-shirt underneath her leaver's jumper:

> "I was fuming, first of all, because they'd taken time away from my GCSE […] it's a time when you are anxious as it is. And they pulled me aside and said: 'You're not allowed in [class] until you get your shirt on!' And I'm thinking, 'Where am I supposed to get this magic shirt from? Because I did not bring one to school'. And it's the fact they set the rule of you don't have to wear it and then right before the exam, [they're] like, 'What if someone comes in? What if a visitor comes and sees?' This shirt, you'd think it had superpowers! I was mind blown that [the] priority was the fact that I didn't have a shirt on […]".

The intensity of her feelings were present not only in her words but in the tone of her voice as she evokes this memory. Her teacher's reaction, which remains confusing and irrational to her, could only be explained if the shirt "had superpowers", she proclaims. Akin to Sophia's memory of the school bag, Annabelle's encounter with the school T-shirt can be thought of as an affective one, the shirt being infused with unspoken power relations which evoke feelings of anger, disappointment, and exclusion as they entangle with this encounter with her teacher. As a material practice and an everyday school object that shapes regulatory relations, the school T-shirt makes up "atmospheres of inclusion and exclusion", which Annabelle *feels* as she is denied access to the exam room (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020, p. 18). In this metaphor of the super powered T-shirt, Annabelle's memory denotes the affective power of her uniform—not only on her body and her right to sit her exam but also on her teacher. Without the shirt, her body is undisciplined and therefore not in order; her body is rendered

outcast, with no place in the school classroom or the exam hall. Homogeneity and discipline become hallmarks of the image of a 'good student', and therefore a 'good school'—the respectability of which her teacher feels responsible for—and the material practice of wearing the T-shirt safeguards this. "I was fuming with anger [and] I still am", explains Annabelle: "these are all things that I kind of, as I've left high school [I] have realised, what the bleep have I let happen? […] that's [the phase of high school] where I was finding my voice. So I was happy to challenge teachers on that aspect of why I don't need a T-shirt!", she explains. Whilst the shirt in this situation functioned as a means of control, it also fosters an opportunity for us to recognise emotions as "mode[s] of resistance" to dominant cultural norms or the imposition of authority (Boler, 1999, p. xv). Reading Annabelle's reaction through this lens, then, and contextualising this in her interview and her understanding of the importance of treating young people with equality, her anger should not be reduced to a simple reaction. Instead, we can read this anger as an insurgent response to what she perceives as unjust and unreasonable treatment by her teacher, who exercises power from a position of superiority.

Annabelle's memory facilitates thinking everyday school objects otherwise. The superpowers Annabelle identifies in the shirt exist not as "inherent capacities" but rather emerge in relation to exams and the school context, as well as the roles that she and her teacher are expected to inhabit; the superpowers of the shirt in this sense lie in its capacity to determine which student bodies and identities are marked as 'appropriate' and which get rejected. Attending to Annabelle's school memory and her affective reaction creates a space of "feelingthinking anew" (Wolfe & Rasmussen, 2020, p. 190), offering us clearance to observe school practices as mediated by ordinary school objects, therein allowing other teachers and students "to reimagine their own and others' encounters" with such objects (such as school uniforms) and examine how they could be thought differently (ibid). How might the matter of the t-shirt matter differently, that is, in terms of creating space for listening differently or renegotiating power relations between teachers and students? Following Wolfe and Rasmussen's proposal, we could, then, shift the focus from the inherent capacities of the school object, turning instead to the practices that surround it; doing so may well facilitate a better understanding of the "patterns of mattering" (Wolfe & Rasmussen, 2020, p. 182) constructed around these practices, alongside the power relations in which they are rooted and the political dimensions of their concomitant affects. In the context of school memory work, developing the opportunity to share school memories in an open manner—and creating registers of these memories which can be subsequently revisited by others and discussed in groups—allows for such different patterns of meaning to be considered. Moreover, as Annabelle affirmed, school memory work granted her the opportunity to put into words for the first time exactly how she felt about what happened back in high school.

Throughout school memory work, students often chose to classify the memories that stood out to them as either 'positive' or 'negative'. This, in turn, catalysed conversation regarding the 'usefulness' of the memories positive memories and their resultant affects. As discussed in Chapter 5, Adele was initially hesitant to share the memory that "came into [her] head straightaway", observing that it was a 'negative'

one which did not represent her otherwise positive experience of school: "because I have so many good experiences, I need to think of something good", she noted: "I need to think of something positive, because there are so many [of them]". Further into the process, however, she decided to remain with the memory that came first to mind, a memory that bore more 'negative' emotions, as she explained, but which she decided was worth sharing nonetheless: "I think when we're talking about uncomfortable emotions being really valuable, then they're worth sharing almost as much or more than the positive ones, especially when they are speaking for people who maybe wouldn't want to share their own stories". Speaking of affects that 'stick' (Ahmed, 2004), Adele comments: "I think the fact that [something] stuck out makes it valuable. There's no intrinsic value in stories, it's what stuck out to you".

The debates roused during this online school memory workshop prompted Henry, another of the young interlocutors, to make the following statement: "If we're going to make change, we should have at some point some examples of what positive change looks like, [of] how positive experiences look". He moved to share a "memory that sprang to [his] mind that's more kind of a positive experience than a negative [one]". Henry describes this memory "a turning point in [his] education trail" and it can be traced back to his early years of schooling, a time when he was much younger, he says. He recalls his then shyness, noting how "anyone with authority scared [him]", including his teachers, whom he largely perceived as "detached and under-caring". His memory is of a moment of 'surprise' marking a shift in both his self-perceptions and his relationship to his teachers. His memory tells of a parent-teacher meeting he attended, where his parents and Design and Technology (DT) teacher were discussing his options for the transition to secondary school:

> "'It wouldn't suit him': I was slightly cold, the door of the DT room was always ajar, and the school refused to turn on the heating until December 1st. I focused and refocused on what my teacher was saying. "He's doing well, he should consider doing DT for GCSE". I was sleepy after a long day and bored from lack of interaction. Then, the conversation turned towards my further schooling, as my teacher was one of the more experienced in the school. I was tugged back into the conversation, jolted back into the dialogue, by a direct question from him (none of the other teachers addressed me, only my parents were spoken to). He asked me what school I was thinking of going to. After a moment's hesitation, I produced a name with relief and tentatively told him. I was shy, anyone with authority scared me as I felt most of my teachers to be detached and under-caring, and I was surprised when his expression soured, and he turned to my parents. "Don't put him in there. It wouldn't suit him," he said with a shrug. He insisted that I would do better at a different school, a school I ended up attending to the present day, and that the school we had considered was declining in its standards. He informed us that based on his observation, he had been carefully watching me and a few others, with his suggestion I would be happier and less shy in a better environment". (Henry's school memory)

Henry is struck by the realisation that his teacher has been observing him closely and monitoring his progress, that he cares enough to propose a different schooling environment that will "suit" him better. He is not used to teachers addressing him directly, and it is his parents who are spoken to during the parent-teacher meetings. In a momentary 'jolt', his teacher's attention to him draws him back to the dialogue, making him feel 'seen' by an adult who, until that point, he had felt to be a distant authority figure. He continues his school memory as follows:

> "It was one of the times in my education when I felt seen as an individual, where a teacher had gone out of their way to guide me towards a brighter educational path than I could create for myself. I was bullied and quiet at the time, so it would have been easy to ignore me for some of the more audacious and vocal students, but this teacher took time to understand me as a person and help me out of my situation. For this I am truly thankful, and I appreciate his generosity of spirit greatly. This event, this allocation of time and care, allowed me to feel more authentic, recognised and individual than I had previously, and put me on the path to become more confident and authentic personally".

This teacher's practice of 'allocating time and care' towards Henry has a profound impact on his sense of being seen and understood both as a person and a student; this practice affirms his identity, instilling a sense of authenticity and confidence within him. These seemingly small acts of 'paying attention' and of noticing have affective capacities. This momentary disruption of the normative hierarchies separating him from his teacher registers first as surprise before being followed by feelings of gratefulness and appreciation. This act of noticing translates into an inclusive practice, bridging the 'distance' and disconnect between himself and his teachers that he thus far had felt. His sense of self and positioning within school setting here shifted; adequate attention being paid to him by teachers was unfamiliar, unexpected from those in positions of power. The experience is memorable not only for how it marked the rest of his educational journey but also for its 'newness', for the novelty of feelings that his teacher's reaction generated: "I was panicked […] [I had] almost a fear of it, because I hadn't had experience interacting with my teachers on an equal basis or on a basis of friendship [before], rather than a basis of 'I'm here to give you knowledge, take it and do work for me, and if you don't, I'll punish you'", Henry remarks during the online school memory work. It felt different when, for the first time, this teacher "talked to me directly and asked me where I wanted to go", he explains: "This allocation of genuine care for a student and genuine care for me in particular really stuck out to me [as] something new, because I hadn't experienced it before". Similar practices of noticing, manifested in actions such as eye contact, and their impact on the interlocutors were prevalent both in their memories and interviews. Indeed, these experiences show how such small actions matter in redefining how young people relate to and engage with school.

The young interlocutors' testimonies and school memories reveal how acts of care, listening and noticing are often obstructed by the hierarchical structures of schooling and the student-teacher roles therein. But

when performed, acts of caring hold immense potential for 'disrupting' power structures and dissolving boundaries between teachers and students, creating a feeling of equality or even community. It is in this spirit that Amelia selected which of her school memories were worth remembering in order to imagine education differently.

> "'Sometimes it's okay not to do biology': One [school memory] that came to mind was from earlier this or last year. It was in lockdown learning so I have no concepts of timing there. But, you know, [it was] at some point in this academic year. I had a[n] [online] biology lesson, and I went to it, I open my computer, logged onto Teams, I think it was at the middle of the day on a Wednesday, we'd been in online learning for I don't know how many weeks. And my biology teacher opened up [his computer] and he just said, like, 'Guys, how you feeling, how you really feeling?'. And I think from the entire 45 minute period, it was just us pretty much ranting or just saying everything that was on our mind: how frustrated we were, how tired we were, you know, the fact that we were stressed, and just unloading all of that for 45 minutes, the entire class. And he was just there, he was just listening and saying, 'Yeah guys', he was commenting, you know, just allowing us space to just unload it. Just thinking back on it, it makes me think, if I had to compare it to something, it's like *a sigh*. It was just like (*exhales with a sigh*), that 45 minutes was *a big sigh* of everything that's going on. We hadn't seen each other for I don't know how long […] it was great just to talk to each other and realise that I relate to [others], that my mum is also shouting in the background of lessons, it was just *good*. I think back to it, and it just really made a good relationship with that teacher, like we all still can open up to him. It was a good memory from school for me." (Amelia's school memory)

Like Henry, Amelia chooses to share a positive school memory; this memory 'stands out' in the way it surprised her, and being allowed space by her teacher to 'unload' heavy feelings had a profound impact. Schooling during lockdown and online learning proved challenging for teachers, students and parents alike; the mental exhaustion caused by social distancing and isolation from peers and relatives, alongside the stressful conditions and risks of the pandemic, uncertainty surrounding the future, and long hours spent in front of screens impacted heavily upon the students' lives. At the same time, media headlines commenting on school closures emphasised the amount of teaching hours 'lost' and the urgent need for students to 'catch up with their learning', how they were 'left behind', and the worries of parents about their 'children's futures'[44]. In such an atmosphere, demanding for students, their families, and teachers, there seemed to be little time left for teachers to 'sacrifice' teaching hours to ask students "how [they] are really feeling". Amelia's teacher's decision to dedicate a biology class to asking his students this question felt, therefore, like a 'sigh'. It was a response of care from her teacher, who went 'out of his way' to step back from his authority role, willingly disrupting the lesson flow to listen to his students' feelings and forging space for them to unload and to connect to one another, voicing their worries and

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[44] See https://www.bbc.com/news/education-55859597.

concerns. Understanding her teacher's behaviour through the lens of care, Amelia's teacher paid close attention to what his students needed in that moment of uncertainty, giving space to their feelings and affirming them; following Joanna Hedva's (2022) invitation, we can say that Amelia's teacher "took seriously [his students'] vulnerability and fragility" creating the space and conditions to "suport" and to "honour" it. The teacher's decision has repercussions on his students' feelings but also their relationship with him: "I think [I felt] gratitude, it felt like he cared", Amelia remarks. This dedication of space and time to sharing feelings and being heard roused feelings of relief for her and her classmates, effectuating connection with one another and enkindling a "good relationship with the teacher". Recognition is often a condition of care; it is thus imperative to notice here that the cultivation of this space of connection and listening, wherein Amelia and her classmates can be vulnerable and open up, necessitates that, as a prerequisite, her teacher affirms the import of his students' emotions to begin with.

6.2 Conclusion

When we speak about educational change, we must take seriously the students' lived experiences of education: how they feel about it and what their feelings do—even (or especially) in the seemingly small and most mundane everyday experiences of schooling. In this chapter, I have worked to uphold this, tending with care to the complex affective capacities of the school memories they deemed to be 'worth remembering' in order to make possible alternative education imaginaries. In both the individual and group school memory work I conducted with the young research interlocutors, school memories of power and listening and their entanglements emerged as primary matters of concern, central to the project of imagining education otherwise. In the analysis, I examined the affects underpinning these school memories and the necessity of remembering those affects as we work to imagine education otherwise, not least because "we are creating affective relations anew in our recollection and retelling" (Wolfe & Rasmussen, 2020, p. 181). Indeed, such recollections and retellings are capable of challenging established hierarchies, power relations and discourses about the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship. The educational experiences of previous generations are marked by affects that 'stick', and whilst we don't always have the language to talk about or move past these experiences in the educational present, school memory work conjures an ambit wherein this becomes possible.

In this chapter, I have examined the affectivity of everyday school objects and practices as pertaining to feelings of power, listening, and feeling heard. School bags can be attributed the role of 'keeping children safe' and, by extension, school bag rules become devices that 'frame how we listen', obstructing us from hearing children's arguments. At the same time, school bags can become memory advocates, facilitating listening to children differently; within this memory work, school bags were ascribed a latent symbolism, delineating the importance of listening to children differently in education in the future and voicing how children are not listened to in the present. The frustration and anger felt by some students comprise political dimensions; such feelings can act as "sites of resistance" (Boler, 1999) when the

"power dynamics seem wrong" (Adele), therein functioning as a critical response to the unjust treatment of students as resulting from their inferior positioning in the school environment. Young people's emotions, which include anger, are often labelled as "outlaw" and are, by extension, "perceived as threatening by the dominant culture"; as such, even when young people express their feelings within the parameter of school rules, their emotions are nonetheless perceived as a breach of the "emotional rules that help to maintain our society's particular hierarchies" (Boler, 1999). On the other hand, I have also discussed two school memories, those of Henry and Amelia, which disclose how the disruption of traditional power relations can tear open possibilities of care and connection.

Chapter 7. Vibrations and Capacities of Space and Time Machines: Otherwise Imaginaries of School Time-Spaces

"Draw a plan of the school of your dreams", beckons an invitation on pages 12–13 of the online booklet '*School As*' by Anthropology for Kids[45]. Through the lens of cultural anthropology, this prompt extends a speculative hand towards alternative education futures (Oman-Reagan, 2018): what else is possible beyond what is already here, what lies beyond the boundaries of the known? The booklet invites students to consider different types of schooling through history in order to provoke imagination of how the school of their dreams might look. This imaginative journey takes the school's exterior and the design of its building—if there is one at all—as its starting point, the shape(s) and use(s) of its different space(s). This invitation has revolutionary potential, not least because the spatio-temporal arrangements of schools instigate capacities of what else is possible—or not. In acknowledging the capacities of space(s) to shape educational affects and future possibilities, young people's memories of schooling that engage with 'space' and 'time' *matter* towards otherwise education imaginaries.

As with Chapters 5 and 6, in this chapter I situate my analysis within the framework of the affective turn, drawing primarily on conceptualisations of emotion as a socio-political construct to understand how school space(s) *feel* in the selected school memories. Even though my analytical lens focuses on 'space' mattering, references to its intertwining with time and temporality in the school memories are also discussed in this chapter. Memory, space, and time are all sociological concepts with significant overlap when researching children's lives (Moss, 2010). With this in mind, in this chapter I choose to centre my analytical focus on how space feels in the selected school memories, inviting into the analysis shorter references to its temporal dimensions.

I introduce this chapter with a short overview of the theory of educational spaces and why they matter before moving to explore how young people experience space(s) and the affects generated by their spatial experiences. These include feelings of school space(s) as '(dis)comfort', as 'home and family', as 'possibility' and as 'guilt', and as 'a space where time gets lost', and I consider the relationships and histories mediating these different spatial affects as discussed by the young people. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a reflection on the possibilities torn open by such spatial school affects, that is, what they *do* in the imagining of schooling otherwise.

7.1 Feeling educational space(s)

Space is a "social construct", one that "produces particular forms of activity and sets of relations by configuring the identities and understandings of people who occupy it" (Lupton, 2009, p. 112). As

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[45] https://a4kids.org/.

Armstrong (2012, p. 611) argues, space is "transformed by the activities, circumstances and relationships which work through it", and this holds true for educational spaces, too. Educational spaces—and schools in particular—have been broadly studied across educational literature, often contextualised in relation to different themes which include learning, 'belonging' and exclusion/inclusion (Nind et al., 2022), and health and well-being. Lefebvre's (1991) seminal work on *The Production of Space* has informed much of this research, emphasising that "not only do spaces provide a background for social contact and may as such shape or influence the interactions of the people inhabiting them, they are also themselves fundamentally shaped by the social relations taking place within them" (Jørgensen & Allan, 2022, pp. 2–3). However, as Jane Kenway and Deborah Youdell (2011) observe from an emotional geography perspective, emotionality has been largely neglected in the educational research on space. Most recent advancements in human geography have engaged more extensively with the affective atmospheres produced in schools, further validating the significance of education spaces as "institutions in which emotions are produced, managed, and controlled" (Kraftl, 2016, p. 154); though such research often differentiates between *feeling*, *emotion*, and *affect*. Feminist scholarship on emotions has also engaged in extensive discussions about the feelings of space(s), particularly through the prism of 'queer feelings' (Ahmed, 2004), and it is this latter approach to the affectivity of space that I have drawn upon in this chapter, using (as with the preceding chapters) the notions of emotion, feeling, and affect interchangeably.

7.2 Discussing memories of space amidst the global pandemic

"[…] Being in lockdown as we are now, wak[ing] up in the morning… I long for the feeling of waiting for the bus to go to school and I miss that a lot" (Oscar's interview, June 2020)

A substantial number of memories submitted during the school memory work(shops) engaged with experiences of the school's spacetimes. It is important to note that all memories discussed in this chapter were collected shortly before or during national lockdowns and school closures in the UK, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This period of extended lockdowns and social isolation had profound effects on perceptions of time and space alike, with children and young people being particularly affected by this (Holt & Murray, 2021). Changing perceptions of time were often experienced through the looming uncertainty and disorientation of the pandemic, the long hours of online learning in front of computer screens, the isolation from friends and peers, and the many hours spent in the same room. These circumstances ignited conversations between myself and the students as we talked through the changing feeling of timespaces: for many students, amid uncertainty as to the pandemic's end and impacts on the lives of loved ones, and in the absence of the daily school routine, bedrooms were felt to be 'shrinking' whilst time expanded uncomfortably into the unknown. For others, this same lack of routine engendered a sense of 'freedom', allowing them to manage their time outside of school

timetables and, in the absence of mainstream schooling, to redefine what learning meant to them. At the same time, the young people with whom I spoke were haunted by the fear of 'contaminating' their grandparents or other older relatives with underlying health conditions and would, where possible, avoid finding themselves in close proximity to them. The 'desired' social distance of two meters, even in outside spaces, this mandated distance took root, remoulding young people's perceptions of space and its boundaries. Discussing school memories of educational spaces in this moment in time, marked by pandemic ruptures, meant that we were likely differently attuned to how space(s) 'felt', thus shaping how feelings of space were recalled in our memories. The school memories of space I discuss here are, with two exceptions, memories of 'first times'; the remaining two span across time—they are repetitive and habitual, embedded in the daily school routines. Though this chapter's focus is primarily on space, time remains almost inextricably bounded to space, either through direct references or through the temporality of the memories themselves.

Following a similar pattern to Chapters 5 and 6, this chapter develops around a selection of school memories that share 'space' as one of their common thematic cores, following their coding by thematic analysis. Building on these memories as the nucleus of the chapter, I occasionally weave in elements from informal conversations shared with other students about the importance of school spaces in imagining education otherwise. I focus on memories that discuss school spaces as (dis)comfort, as home and family, as possibility and as guilt, and as a space where time gets lost, rooting such discussion in how they tear open otherwise educational imaginaries. The memories I discuss here have been submitted by five young interlocutors: Alex, Adele, Oscar, and Jacob. I have introduced Adele already in Chapter 5 (and briefly in Chapter 6) discussing another of her school memories; for this chapter, it is important to keep in mind that Adele formed part of the group of young people who facilitated the online COVID-19 conversations. In the aftermath of this, she participated in an online school memory workshop alongside another three young interlocutors. Alex, Oscar, and Jacob all participated in the research pilot phase (see Chapter 4); with their input and collaboration, we co-designed the first version of the school memory work(shop), and they all attended the same 'alternative' school provision at the time this research was conducted. One identifier and a common thread of this chapter is that all the memories submitted by these five young interlocutors were memories of 'first times'; this notion of 'first times' was also a coding category in the analysis I offer later in this thesis, within Chapter 8.

7.3 Looking at space through the lens of an 'alternative' educational setting

As I have explained in more detail in Chapter 4, the school attended by Alex, Oscar, and Jacob differs in many ways to mainstream schooling: it is an alternative, independent, fee-paying school, defined by its founders and community members community as 'child-centred' with a 'democratic ethos'. As explicated previously (see Chapter 4), many of the young people attending this school share common

stories of 'traumatic' and 'exclusionary', to use their words, educational experiences in their previous schools, with their past experiences informing their decision to look for alternative educational spaces. Their common stories share references to feelings of 'non-belonging' in mainstream schooling, contrasted by more 'positive' feeling(s) of belonging in their current alternative school (see also Baroutsis & Mills, 2018). Exploring alternative education imaginaries with young people in this context has a particular resonance as these interlocutors have shown an active interest in participating in conversations about how education can be imagined differently. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of these students' memories are memories of 'first times', situated in their early days at their new school. The fact that they each make reference to space(s) speaks to the centrality of 'space' in the educational experience and, concomitantly, how school space(s) play a central role in alternative education imaginaries.

Having spent more than six weeks doing fieldwork in this 'alternative' setting, I found myself captured by the shapes and forms of different spaces inside the school, their uses and practices of space management, most of which had been unfamiliar to me until that point. The school building itself resembled a house more than a school —at least, one based on our western normative public imaginary of what constitutes a school building. Located at the centre of a small rural town in South West England, the school is a three-floor building traversed by a large, carpeted staircase, where access is strictly barefoot. A long corridor, its walls decorated with the weekly program, an announcement board, and a 'tag-wall' where everyone hangs their little hand-crafted avatar to indicate their presence or absence from the school, leads the way from the building's main entrance to the staircase and is punctuated by the presence of the registration room, a teaching room and the theatre room, none of which adhere to the traditional arrangement of classrooms or desks. A large kitchen with dining tables, a den, and a comfy couch are also located on the ground floor, at the other end of the school's main entrance.

The school comprises several 'spatial elements' that can be identified as "spaces of belonging" (Baroutsis and Mills, 2018). These incorporate "relational, material and pedagogical space" (ibid), as is reflected in the selected school memories discussed below. The school has a breadth of outdoor space: a yard covered in lawn and a few trees, a basketball court, and an area which some students have converted into a skate park. The chemistry lab is located in a small, separate building in one of the yard's corners, as is the art room and the woodwork room. In my extended stay in the school, I spent several hours exploring most of those rooms, with the exception of the 'common room'—a space on the first floor of the school, managed entirely by the pupils as their 'hanging-out' space. All school spaces, aside from perhaps the admin room, are at least to some extent managed by both pupils and staff alike. The uses of such space were constantly subject to change, and I witnessed some these changes during my stay; every Wednesday, the maths room would be transformed into a school meeting room, with desks and chairs pulled aside and most of the school community sitting or lying on its floor. Shared spaces are taken care of by pupils and school staff alike, with chores such as sweeping, cleaning the toilets, and washing dishes distributed equally during the 'useful work' time allotted at the end of each school day.

Carrying memories of how mainstream educational settings feel, students who joined this school at an older age knew that this educational setting was not 'the norm'. Alex, Oscar, and Jacob's school memories reflect this contrast between their previous and their present educational experience; one way in which this reflection appears is in the affective imprint that this contradiction leaves on the selected school memories that matter to them.

7.4 School space as '(dis)comfort': Questioning the normativity of school spaces

Schools are comfortable spaces for some bodies more than others, and this remains inadequately addressed in conversations for educational reform. Schools are normative spaces, expressed in the *dos and don'ts* of school rules, in everyday practices and discourses and how these subsequently shape behaviours and reproduce spaces. Strong examples where such normative school practices are embodied include wearing (gendered) school uniforms or remaining seated for several subsequent hours during classroom teaching. School normativities impose discomfort for many students, having to walk through and learn in these spaces every day—normativity, as (Ahmed, 2004, p. 147) reminds us, is only "comfortable for those who can inhabit it", and we cannot neglect these affective impositions. During fieldwork, I talked to students whose 'queer bodies' did not feel comfortable in their gendered school uniforms, as well as others who made enormous efforts on a daily basis to concentrate while having to remain seated throughout the school day. And yet, it is easy for such feelings to remain unnoticed in the hectic bustle of a busy school, particularly for those whose lives are *not* marked by unease—indeed, "comfort is very hard to notice when one experiences it" (ibid.).

To be transparent, these feelings can just as easily slip away even in the supposedly more attentive environment this research worked to create. In the early stages of analysis, this 'discomfort' that so many of my interlocutors evoked, often without directly naming it, 'slipped' through my fingers, making itself visible to me only after several iterative examinations of the data. The notion of 'comfort' necessitates significant unpacking and can be expressed multiply, through words, images, metaphors, and anecdotes alike. Ahmed (2004, p. 147) reminds us that comfort can suggest "well-being and satisfaction, but it also suggests an ease and easiness":

> One fits, and by fitting, the surfaces of bodies disappear from view. The disappearance of the surface is instructive: in feelings of comfort, bodies extend into spaces, and spaces extend into bodies. The sinking feeling involves a seamless space, or a space where you can't see the 'stitches' between bodies (ibid.: 148).

School (dis)comfort—this feeling of 'not fitting in', whether literally or metaphorically—is negotiated in school memories I have discussed in previous chapters, but it is Alex's school memory that foregrounds the discomfort at the heart of this chapter's analysis. (Dis)comfort lies at the heart of why

Alex chose to leave the school he was previously attending—an all-girls grammar school—seeking 'refuge' at a less 'heteronormative' school space where his body would not 'stick out' as much:

"'I poured my heart out to the meeting'": Toilets have always been a big matter of anxiety for me in public. Because if I go into the boys' [toilets], and people think I'm a girl, then that's terrifying; And if I go into the women's [toilet] people think I'm a boy then I get yelled at. And then if I go in the disabled [toilet] and people are like, 'Well, you are not disabled!', [then] I get down looks from that as well. It's like you can't really do anything! And obviously at [name of his current school] it was different and people didn't care that much. But there were some people that were still, 'No, toilets need to be separated'. [This] was a massive debate [in the school the moment I joined] [but] I didn't want to talk on it. I didn't want my first public thing in the school to be about me being trans and about my gender because I always feel like that's like something that people know me for: 'Oh yeah that's Alex, he's the trans guy!' It's always something that people kind of think of first about me which I mean I don't mind necessarily but it would be nice if it wasn't, you know, the main thing. But then I [went] just like, 'Well, it is important to me'. I don't know what made me actually able to talk. I just remember shaking a lot and when I was getting to the end of what I was saying, about why it was important to me, my voice was cracking and I was not handling it very well. Everyone was so silent and completely invested in what I was saying and I'd never really felt that before. It was extremely terrifying but I think it was good because, I mean. I managed to get it changed, which felt good." (Alex's school memory)

Figure 4: 'I poured my heart out to the meeting': School memory illustration created by Alex.

Gendered toilets 'feel normal' and are therefore frequently unnoticed by cisgender people who identify with their biological sex assigned at birth. Alex begins his school memory with the anxiogenic encounter he has with toilets in public spaces: his gender identity does not 'fit well' in the normativity of public toilets, and his efforts to 'fit' in either the male or female toilets are condemned by those who feel 'disturbed', uncomfortable, or, in some cases, unsafe by his presence, marking these spaces as somewhere he is not 'supposed' to be. Similarly, the 'norm' for school toilets is also gendered, reflecting and reproducing how spaces are "heterosexualised" and "naturalised" through the "repetition of […] heterosexual conduct" (Valentine, 1996, p. 149).

The presence of gender-neutral toilets in schools has become contentious in UK policy and mainstream media alike, raising issues pertaining to their 'lawfulness' and other concerns raised by young people and adults alike, ranging from transgender rights to the perceived implications on the 'safety' of young women. Here it is pertinent to observe how the 'public' experiences a sense of "disorientation" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 148)— in a shifting of 'normal', the bodies that until this point 'had their place' suddenly feel "out of place, awkward, [and] unsettled" (ibid.). Alex's memory is educative of the intricacies of this debate; in feeling that he "can't really do anything" to change this situation, Alex subjects himself to vast emotional labour when navigating this complexity in public, pointing to the "burden of concealment" that he bears in order to create the "availability of comfort for some bodies" (ibid.),

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prioritising this comfort over his own. His school memory and its concomitant affects creates an opportunity to "think how it feels to be comfortable" in school and why this matters, as well as to reckon with the possibilities that this discomfort and 'non-fitting' opens up (ibid.).

Gendered toilets were a topic of significant debate at Alex's new school. This was, however, the first time Alex felt to participating in such conversations. A formal debate took place during his weekly school meeting, attended by both pupils and staff, with all attendees having an equal right to vote for any proposals put forth by students or teachers alike. The normativity of gendered toilets frames what is considered 'normal' and 'usual', therein putting into the spotlight that which 'is not'. The heteronormativity of his school prevents, for Alex, the 'promise of a sinking feeling' that Ahmed describes as associated with comfort, making visible the "'stitches' between bodies" and, in this case, exposing Alex's body and its markers of difference from the other bodies around him. He recounts the experience of unease—his voice cracking and his body shaking—when considering whether to openly position himself in and engage with the debate. And yet he ultimately opts to do so, for this 'matters' to him and this is the first time he has been offered the power to do something about it, to change what had, for most part of his public life, seemed 'unchangeable'. At this moment, another novel feeling is emergent, triggered by Alex feels to be a 'complete investment' of the whole school in what he was saying: he'd "never felt [like this] before". This investment and attentive listening creates, even momentarily, a feeling of acceptance. In taking this opportunity to 'change' the arrangement of the school space in a way that feels comfortable for him and in terms of his everyday experiences within school, he momentarily exposes the artificial comfort upon which school spaces are traditionally imagined, built, and reproduced. Drawing on Sara Ahmed (2012), Peter Bansel elucidates the desire and 'longing to belong' of queer young people in schools (2018), pointing to "[…] the burdens and responsibilities of non-normative bodies to fit in, be at home and belong in institutions like home. "If institutions provide homes in which some bodies gather, then some more than others will be at home in institutions" (Ahmed, 2012: 2). Ahmed continues, and we can see this in Alex's memory: within any institution, the body that causes discomfort is "the one who must work hard to make others comfortable" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 2).

Alex's memory can be read as a constant reminder of what Sanza (2020, p. 113) has poignantly formulated as "not everyone [being] in the same place even when they're in the same space"—this is to say, "what makes one feel safe may generate feelings of fear or anxiety in another". Alex's memory exposes how the onus of comfort often falls upon those whose bodies are subject to discomfiture or unease; it is they who "work hard to make others feel comfortable" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 2) or else prevent them from feeling uncomfortable themselves. Gendered toilets may be argued as making some children feel safe(r), but in the process of imagining education otherwise it is necessary to consider *who* draws the lines around what can be considered 'the norm' and *how,* and the ramifications of this for the many bodies who are left at normativity's margins. In this context, creating spaces of dialogue wherein normative spaces can be challenged, negotiated, or thought anew is a crucial condition for inclusive

education futures—indeed, such dialogical spaces generate the possibilities to 'feel with' others through such shared feelings, enabling us to interrogate canonical visions of mainstream schooling. I now move to discuss another school memory shared by Adele; this memory is intriguing for the way it negotiates discomfort from the perspective of a student who is accustomed to feeling comfortable inside school spaces *as they are*. Her memory, "A Day Without My Best Friend", reflects a sudden shift in her perception of schooling the day she saw school through her best friend's eyes.

7.5 Feeling through absence

All seven of us are logged into our Zoom room, sitting silently behind our screens. Adele is one of the young people on this call, a school memory workshop which has been adapted for the online space due to COVID-19 restrictions. It is the second in the series of two workshops with the same group, and all young interlocutors present on the call—students in different UK schools—are by now familiar with one another. Half-way through our session, the young interlocutors are taking 15 minutes of alone-time to think and record the school memories they have selected for the school memory work. A few minutes in, my Zoom chat window pops up with a private message from Adele. She's writing to warn me that one of the two school memories she wishes to share with the group includes a reference to suicide, and she asks me to check with the other young people on the call if hearing it will make them 'feel uncomfortable'. On the Zoom call with me I have Sean, the teacher who is helping me during the online sessions as a second adult and co-facilitator. I communicate Adele's words to him and we decide together how to proceed. The 15 minutes have now passed; I unmute myself and reopen my camera, welcoming everyone back into the room. Sean takes the floor, ensuring everyone is feeling okay and is willing to proceed with sharing the school memories. Before we proceed, Sean asks whether everyone in the room feels comfortable hearing a story with a reference to suicide, and they all agree to proceed (all young people involved in this call were between 16 and 18-years-old; they had also given signed consent to participate in the research. For more information, see Chapter 3). Adele prepares to share her memory, but before doing so she again reminds to the other young people on the call that "one of [my memories has] a mention of suicide in it so if people don't feel okay to talk about that then just let me know".

> "'A day without my best friend'": I remember we had to do this NHS questionnaire in Year 9 or something, and it was very clinical, and they made us sit in the hall like we were doing an exam, [with] individual tables spread out. It was very strange. And it was questions like 'how many times do you exercise?', 'did you brush your teeth twice yesterday?', just getting a survey on the health of young people, I think. And I remember we all did it, and it was fine, but then we were like 'that was a bit weird, wasn't it?' For a bit of context, I had a very very small friendship group in high school. I [only] had one best friend who was a girlfriend (I won't share her name because the story is very personal) so we were/are very very close. And I remember, after the quiz, the day after the questionnaire, she was pulled from class and when she came

back I [asked her] 'What was that about'? And she went like 'Oh, it was because one of my answers to the questionnaire was about self-harm and if [I've] self-harmed and I said I had'. And I was like 'Oh, right', and she was like 'Yeah, it was a bit pointless, I wish I hadn't said it because they just started [asking] if I was okay, and I said I was'. And I was like, immediately, that was red flags! And this is all in hindsight to be able to think [about]. But then I remember it was right at the start of Year 10 and it was Sunday night, I remember specifically we had an Indian take-away that Sunday, and that evening my mum's friend had rung my mum to tell us she tried to kill herself and that she's in hospital. And that was really sad, all the complicated emotions that come with that. And then the Monday morning [it] was when it sort of hit [me] about school. It was [about] a) being in school without her, she was still in hospital at this point, and b) it gave me this opportunity to feel how school felt for her every day for the first time. I felt really angry because obviously she had reached out for help before and school had not really done it. So it brought this anger. But also, I felt really down, I felt really sad, I felt really alone in school, [school] suddenly felt really big. And then I had this moment of like this effort and energy it's taking me today is how she feels every day at school. And this loneliness as well, this is what [my friend has] been dealing with for a long time. After that she was put in therapy and all this stuff, but shortly after that the school opened their version of a nurture room, they were trying. And I specifically remember they had a kettle and a toaster [in it] and I used to go in there, to support her, and be with her, and all that stuff. And they used to toast loads of toasts in the morning and butter [them] all at once. And I don't know if it's because of this room or because of this taste but cold toast with cold butter on makes me feel sick, the thought of it [makes me feel sick], the memories of this room, the smell of cold toast and cold butter makes me feel ill. But I think this has stuck with me, that sort of thing of experiencing school just for that one day through the perspective of someone who [has struggled through it]. The [school] system supported me, I [personally] thrived in the school environment. But to experience it from [the perspective of] someone who it didn't, was really really powerful. And I think if everyone had the opportunity to have that experience of 'this is school through somebody else's eyes', it would bring a need for change and a compassion that I think we're missing when we talk about education." (Adele's school memory)

Adele's memory poignantly illustrates another example in which 'difference' is converted into failure within mainstream schooling, in that schools are places that work well for some bodies and not others (see also Chapter 5). Her memory is educative of the realities faced by thousands of young people across the UK who get little or no mental health support in school[46]. It is often the case that their needs remain 'unnoticed' by the system, resulting in a range of consequences for the young people's lives that include

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[46] See https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/almost-two-thirds-of-young-people-receive-no-support-from-school-for-their-mental-health/.

mental ill-health, permanent and temporary exclusions, repercussions for exam performances and well-being concerns more broadly. Adele's school memory is evocative of the ways in which empathy can develop through personal remembering (Keightley, 2010, p. 60); her discomfort is not felt as a directly consequence of her own experiences within the school system but rather through the negative impact that school has on her friend's body—in turn, Adele 'feels' this in her friend's absence from the everyday spaces of the school. Being in school without her best friend, she says, gives her the opportunity to feel, for the first time, how school has felt for her friend, describing how the school "suddenly felt really big", a "massive place". Her friend's absence creates a fissure in which feelings of discomfort emerge for the first time, entangled with feelings of anger, sadness, and loneliness. These 'novel' feelings, engendered by a newfound understanding of how her closest friend felt within the school environment—and a subsequent recognition of the discrepancies between these feelings and her own—'stick' to Adele. Emotions such as anger, sadness, and loneliness are often deemed 'bad' or negative affects, and are often stigmatised as 'undesirable' in neoliberal positivity discourses, yet they maintain immense disruptive potential (cf. (Burford, 2017). There is scope in these novel feelings for Adele to become what Ahmed (2010) terms an "affect alien", wherein the "experience of being alienated from the affective promise of happy objects" opens one up to "an alternative set of imaginings of what might count as a good or better life" (Franklin-Phipps, 2020). Adele acknowledges that the school system supports her, creating opportunities for her to thrive within it. But this "pleasure of belonging" she feels inside the system— the pleasure of "mov[ing] in what that are always already validating" (Franklin-Phipps, 2020, p. 130)— is shattered, broken apart and disrupted by these newfound 'bad' feelings as Adele comes to terms with the faults of the school system, designed in ways that as 'cater for some children's needs but not for others'. This, in turn, Franklin-Phipps continues, gives rise to a different, "unanticipated possibility for a different kind of pleasure—one that is moving towards justice" (ibid.). Adele describes feeling alienated from the "affective promise" (Ahmed, 2010) of school as a unanimously 'happy place', irrespective of the fact that it has, for the most part, worked for her. By refusing to "put her bad feelings to one side in the hope that [she] can 'just get along'" (Franklin-Phipps, 2020, p. 130), and in choosing this school memory to be remembered, alternative school imaginaries are opened up. As the smell of cold buttered toasts becomes reminiscent of her own discomfort in school, the exposure of her 'unhappy feelings' through her school memory carries an "affirmative" value, providing us with "an alternative set of imaginings of what might count as a good or better life" (ibid.), and thus how school might be imagined otherwise.

7.6 School as 'home' and as 'family'

The same smells that trigger 'unhappy emotions' in Adele's memory evoke a very different feeling in me. The smell of toasted bread and butter that makes Adele 'feel sick' is transporting me back to the first school setting I visited during my fieldwork, one that many of my young interlocutors have likened

to 'home'. The 'home' metaphor is symbolic of comfort, safety, and belonging, and the 'desire' to make school a place where one feels 'comfortable' was echoed in the conversations I had with young people about the education they dream about. Whilst 'home' had different connotations for the different pupils I spoke to, feelings of 'familiarity' resonated across conversations. In order to examine these feelings more closely, I discuss below the school memory of "The Desk", submitted by Oscar, engaging this to both approach how future imaginings of school as 'home' may be translated and reveal the affects that make them possible.

Oscar's educational journey was somewhat different to that of the other young people with whom I worked. He was home-schooled for much of his childhood and had briefly attended a Steiner school[47] as a primary school student. Although he described himself as 'eager to learn', school was not somewhere he could see himself attending or existing comfortably. At 16, his parents encouraged him to take an apprenticeship with a renowned craftsman in the South West of England. During his apprenticeship, Oscar was also encouraged by a relative to attend the alternative school located in a nearby town for a trial week, a school he then continued attending until college. Attending this school, however, meant that Oscar would have to spend most of the school year away from his hometown, living with other relatives. In this light, 'home' and 'family' take a particular significance when one finds themselves 'away from home' and close family, making memories of home 'stick out':

> "'The Desk'": One memory I have that for me sticks out from the rest of my time at [name of school] would be the moment that I got to have a desk in the art space, because it was a significant moment for me due to the fact that it was a turning point where I fully committed to taking the art course. And it felt like quite a big step for me because it was a change from working in the lower part of the building with my stuff spread out everywhere and feeling rather chaotic, to having my own space that felt very centred and grounded and really a personal space that I could have everything in one place and feel safe about leaving it there, and also a place that could become a representation of me as a student. So it made me feel very accepted as part of the school, having a desk there, because it was a way of, like I said before, showing commitment and having my own space was me owning a part in the school for myself, and it made me feel very happy to be included in that way and very joyous too, it was a really enjoyable moment having that desk there.
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> […] I look back on this memory with a very warm sense in my heart because it makes me realise how much of a community [my school] has. And at any other school I'd never have been given, or as far as I'm aware, it would have been very difficult to have my own space in this way and have all of my personal belongings and pens and pencils and all my artistic materials and everything there, and a space that I can just deep in and out of and feel very [at] home and

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[47] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldorf_education.

comfortable. So yeah, when I look back at it I think 'wow', that was really momentous moment where I became a part of the school rather than just a student. I became part of the [name of the school] family.

I'd say that this experience of gaining my own space at a school has really influenced me to realise that school isn't just a place for learning but it's a space for actually learning how to become part of a wider family, how to develop connections and how to make things happen for yourself. And yeah, it's been really, it's been a beautiful journey to stay at [name of school] for the short time that I've been there, and I wish I'd had longer. But yeah, earning respect, earning a part of a school for myself was just very significant and it made me feel like I had a home at that school rather than just it being a collective learning space where we go to school, do our work and then go back home and then everything is fine. It was a place that I actually wanted to go to. I felt safe, I felt happy, I felt included, I felt surprise and excitement every day.

It's the small things about that room and about the desk and about where everybody is positioned that I can picture in my head, and I think looking back on that I think, 'ah it would have been really nice to be just there right now'. And I don't have much recollection about how the actual space felt as the art space, but I just remember this overwhelming sense of joy to be part of the school, I think that's really significant, the joining of the school, I felt like, well, if you take getting married for an example, putting a ring on a finger, I felt like the desk moving, having my own space in the art room, that felt like a commitment and the solidarity that I needed to really connect me to the whole school. So that is what I recall and my best way of storytelling it.

Figure 5: 'The Desk' school memory in an image captured by Oscar.

Space is not a static entity. The production of and ascription of meaning to space is a dynamic outcome of spatial historicities, entangled as they are with spatial transformations—that is, space retains a sense of fluidity, shaped by "the activities, circumstances and relationships which work through it" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 611). Oscar's memory is a clear evocation of the dynamism of space, its potentiality to become a site of belonging, inciting "symbolic space[s] of familiarity, comfort and security, and emotional attachment" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 645). Such spatial tenets are desirable for inclusive education future,s too. Metaphors of "feeling at home" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 197) are expressions of belonging in space, indicating "becoming intimate with where one is and becoming part of space" (Aruldoss et al., 2021, p. 7). As Yuval-Davis (2011, p. 10) explains, "belonging involves an emotional or ontological attachment of feeling 'at home' and in a 'safe space' (see also Halse, 2018). The materiality of belonging and the intimacy it evokes has been echoed in my conversations with other students from Oscar's school, too. Among these, Elinor's memory of the 'Tag Wall' holds particular resonance, wherein the ritual of hanging her name tag (which she had crafted herself) on the school's 'tag wall' effectuated a sense of belonging to the school. A similar intimacy is reflected in the 'comfort' experienced by Oscar when he is given his own desk in the art room. This feeling is further facilitated by the fact he is allowed permission to 'deep in and out' of one space, feeling safe to leave his belongings

there. The desk not only mediates Oscar's sense of belonging but also 'represents' him inside the school, cultivating, in turn, a sense of 'acceptance' and 'inclusion', as well as 'happiness' and 'joy'. Feeling safe and purposeful (Walmsley et al., 2018) emanates from his familiarity with this space; this is reflected by the desk representing a 'turning point' in Oscar's decision to become fully committed to his art course and is "tied to the quality of interaction and acceptance by others" (Renwick et al., 2019, p. 9). Oscar's memory can thus be understood as drawing a picture of school made otherwise, sketched in the language of desire lines—a "beloved community" in which "loving ties of care and knowing bind us together in our differences" (hooks, 1995, pp. 263–264), an embrace of difference that comforts, creating a 'warm sense' in the heart. But a sense of belonging is also "more than simple perceived linking or warmth"; "it also involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the students as an individual" (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25; Howard & Nguyen, 2018). Oscar's commitment to his art and dedication to his art exams are marked and facilitated by the allocation of *his* desk in the art space. In that context, Oscar's sense of belonging in his school can be understood as a form of emotional attachment that allows him to feel "accepted, valued, and meaningful part of [his] community", whilst forming a particular "self-understanding" (Howard & Nguyen, 2018). This speaks to what Ahmed (2014) evokes when she explains that our sense of 'being' is constructed through 'feeling' (Aruldoss et al., 2021). It is in this context that school can be understood not just as 'home' but also as 'community' or 'family', and young people's individuality can thus be valorised in itself; the personhood of young people here becomes no longer contingent on perceptions of their identity as 'just students'. Indeed, many of the young interlocutors with whom I worked felt their student identity largely obscured their individuality and individual needs, eclipsing what differentiates them from others. Oscar's memory offers insight into how school is commonly perceived as a place 'detached' from the rest of a young person's life, and this detachment works both ways: school is framed as a place where one goes, does their work, and then goes back home, the limits between school and home here being clearly demarcated and distinct. Moreover, schools offer limited capacity for young people to discuss matters of concern regarding their everyday lives, whether related to in-school or out of school issues. For many students, their minimal involvement in the management of school time, spaces, and curriculum intensifies this school-home binary further. Typically in mainstream education spaces, it is the adults' job to undertake the spatiotemporal ordering of schools, an arrangement that has implications for how the project of schooling is felt by children (see Christensen & Prout, 2002, p. 79) and how engaged or alienated students feel from it (I discuss this in greater depth later in this chapter). Oscar's strong ties to his school are poignantly registered in the analogy he draws with the ritual of marriage, the allocation of his desk resembling the symbolism of 'putting a [marriage] ring on a finger'—having his art desk relocated, dedicated to him in his own space, marked the 'commitment' and 'solidarity' he needed to feel connected to his whole school, he explains. The affordances of space to enhance respect for "personal autonomy" and students' "individuality" (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25) reflect strongly in the memory submitted by Jacob, another student at the same school.

7.7 School spaces where time gets lost

When I first listened to Jacob's school memory, "I lost the time"—he first submitted his school memory in an audio message format—'institutional time' (Rosen, 2017) struck me as the core theme emerging from his narration. Revisiting my notes from my follow-up conversations with him, I noticed how he always discussed time in conjunction with his school spaces, with his perception of the uses of school time changing following his immersion in this alternative school space. This observation is aligned with conversations in broader literature that encourage the understanding of the interrelatedness of space and time in children and young people's lives and, in particular, in their everyday school lives. In this context, I chose to discuss Jacob's memory in this chapter, aligning his narration with the capacities of school spaces for imagining education futures otherwise. At the same time, I acknowledge the centrality of notions of time and temporality not only in Jacob's memory but also in the preceding chapters. Time and temporality are integral to the process of memory work, and past, present, and future temporalities have surfaced as deeply intertwined within school memory work in particular. Additionally, 'age' is a basis of differentiation upon which the very notion of 'childhood' is constructed, embedded into the shaping and enacting of adult-child relationships (see Chapter 6), elucidating the significance of 'time' once more. Here, Jacob's memory is also one of a 'first time', in which time is expressed through everyday school objects such as clocks, school bells, and timetables. In this way, his school memory foregrounds how time can serve as a "political tool", used to "regulate, control, and differentiate" (Rosen, 2017, p. 375). Jacob's memory invites us to imagine the notions of education and schooling in a space where 'time gets lost'.

> "'I lost the time': I came into school [on my first day] and basically, you know, I talked to teachers, they told me you know about the school and everything, and then I was kind of just left alone … And then I just go, 'right, so now what [do] I do [now]?' I looked at the timetable and I couldn't work out the time table 'cuz it was very confusing. So I tried to work that out. And then as soon as I work that out, I was 'Right, so I [have] this lesson at this time and this [lesson] at that time'. And then I was like 'Right, yeah, [but] what's the time? I don't know what the time is!'. And then I was just stuck in the hall and was just in silence, 'So what do I do now?' 'Cuz I've never had to like, keep the time in my old school so [this] was a *veeery* strange experience. Big experience though as well, 'cuz I've actually got to start controlling and keeping my time and no one else is gonna do this for me. So I didn't have a watch, I didn't have anything to keep the time. So, I was basically just stuck. I didn't go to any of my lessons, I think, 'cuz I didn't know what the time is, so I lost the time and so basically that was where I was like 'actually, I need to start controlling what I'm doing and know what's going on!' 'Cuz you know, normally in my old school you know, [the teachers would go] 'Well guys you got maths now, it's ten [o'clock], it's twelve [o'clock], go to maths, let's go to maths now!', and the next person would be 'All right you got this [lesson] now' and they'd just send us all away. So that was the big moment when I came to [this school] where I knew I had to keep the time! [It felt] weird. I

just I didn't know what I was doing, that's the thing, I had no clue what I was doing. I was kind of just standing in awe for quite a while. I didn't even look at my time (laughs). So I was just sitting there and doing like 'What do I do now?' and no one was around to tell me what to do as well! 'Cuz the teachers were either in a lesson or they don't even do that because you know, in this school you know, you do it yourself. So, I was very kind of like, I was like 'Oh, shit, now what?' [I felt] 'nothing'. [Like] someone dropped me in a pool and I was just floating around, I was a mollusc just floating around with the tide..."

Jacob vividly describes the experience of being 'stuck' alone in his new school's hall, feeling lost without knowing what to do. He spends his whole first day wandering around without attending any classes ; he finds himself for the first time in a space where time is not regulated 'from the outside', now having to learn to keep track of time himself. His 'first time' at this new school is marked by the realisation that no one is going to keep time for him, with the concurrent realisation that he doesn't have a way to keep time himself—he doesn't have a watch, and there is no clock hanging on the walls in the school's main rooms. This experience is novel and, at first, feels 'paralysing'. What he had previously considered the 'norm' ("normally in my old school") is challenged by the arrangements of this new school environment, including the absence of direction from his teachers indicating which class is next. Spaces are relational, and school spaces "can be seen as a materialised expression of a hierarchical relation of pupil/teacher, which is produced in everyday action and at the same time" (Nind et al., 2022, p. 9). Time devices such as bells and timetables are mediums through which such relationships are materialised in space; in the absence of these mediums, relationships can be thought anew. Jacob clearly elucidates an experience of "becoming lost" through the losing of time; he is confronted with what Snaza (2013) terms "bewildering education", describing an educational situation that can "unstick us from our present ways of thinking and being, leading us to become lost" (Snaza, 2020). This feeling of estrangement, or "becoming lost", is best captured in Jacob's metaphor likening himself to a 'mollusc floating around with the tide' without knowing in advance "what the end will be" (Snaza, 2013). In this loss of institutional time, Jacob's memory here becomes an illustrative example of bewilderment, one that "may create conditions for the emergence of unanticipated confluences of thoughts, affects, and collectivities".

7.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the importance of attuning to how school spaces 'feel' in the project of imagining education otherwise. Boler (1999) highlights that it is common to use metaphors to describe emotional experiences for emotions oftentimes "exceed" language and exist beyond possible verbal descriptions" (ibid.: xvi). Across the pages of this chapter, the young interlocutors' metaphorical elucidations work to capture the diverse ways in which spaces impact bodies and vice versa. The students foreground the unspoken capacities of school spaces, their entanglements with time, and their differential impacts on bodies: school spaces can expand or shrink, feel familiar or estranging, chaotic

or freeing, unsafe and isolating, affirming and pleasurable. Far from suggesting there is a singular way of conceiving of school spaces, the memories open up dialogical terrain wherein the normative structures that underpin the very idea of schooling are exposed and can be negotiated anew. Indeed, it is to a more extensive discussion of this that the next chapter turns.

Chapter 8. Foregrounding Children and Young people's Educational Affects in the Imagining of Just Education Futures

In this chapter, I revisit and discuss in more depth the central findings of this thesis and their relation to my research aims, objectives, and questions—namely, i) How can we use memory as a method to explore education futures with children and young people? and ii) What futures of education can be/are imagined through school memory work and how? Each research question is approached through a series of emergent sub-questions. Overall, the answers to the first research question and its sub-questions discuss the methodological contribution of this research through the *school memory work(shop)* methodology—the foundations for which have been laid out in Chapter 4—to explore children and young people's visions of education futures through affect; the answers to the second research question and its sub-questions draw on the school memories analysed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 to discuss possible scenarios of education futures which foreground children's matters of concern therein. In the case of the second research question, issues of epistemic justice about the more 'meaningful' involvement of children in the production of knowledge/scenarios about futures are explored.

As I have discussed extensively in the previous chapters, this thesis coincided, for the most part, with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and two years of strict public health policies aiming to prevent the spreading of the virus. This included extended national lockdowns and school closures. In Chapter 3, I have extensively discussed the challenges that COVID-19 created for my research. However, focusing only on the pandemic-induced inhibitions would mean overlooking the complexity of COVID-19's myriad impacts on the lives of those involved in this research, including my own, as well as the larger imprint it has left on education more broadly. For this reason, I begin this chapter by situating this research in the landscape of discourses and scenarios around educational otherwise which proliferated during the first two years of the pandemic—what has been framed by some as educational 'what ifs'— and how these shaped the direction and evolution of the thesis. I continue to the second part of the discussion, where I discuss *school memory work(shop)* as an "affective methodology" (Knudsen & Stage, 2015) (see Chapter 4) and its relevance for envisioning educational futures *with* young people through affect; I also discuss the methodology in light of its potential to facilitate "temporary student publics" (Nolas, 2015, 2020), whereby the things that matter to children in their educational experience become public in the context of repurposing education (Unesco, 2021). For the third part of the discussion, I look back at the research insights captured in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, discussing these as "forms of scenarios, projections and visions of the future of education", doing so under the prism of the question of "what might education be like in the future" (Facer, 2021), not as a prescriptive invocation of how education should look.

8.1 COVID-19 as an 'affective scratching' in the experience of education

"The COVID pandemic brutally revealed what we all already knew: we need a different education and a different school". During the pandemic, the "social contract for education" underwent radical questioning (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021)

Emotions are central in the process of remembering and in memory work. This centrality of emotions became evident from the initial experimental workshop during the research pilot phase and the object stories recounted by the young interlocutors, leading, in turn, to a more explicit integration of the question 'how does this memory make you feel' when designing the *school memory work(shop)* (see Chapter 4). Despite emotions' omnipresence and relevance for the school memories discussed by the youth, I was not attentive to their analytical importance until much later in the process. Whilst revisiting my research material after the end of fieldwork, I was struck by the student testimonies in which students missed being asked about their feelings by their teachers in their day-to-day school life. This desire to express emotions and forge space for them to be voiced and valued gave me a new lens to revisit the young people's school memories, subsequently directing me to literature on education and emotion and, later on, the most recent developments centring the affective turn in education.

The affective impact of the pandemic on our bodies, including my own as a researcher, cannot be overlooked, and indeed it held a capacious role in framing my understanding of what matters in my data and in shaping the direction of my research. In line with the multimodal ethnographic approach I followed (Chapter 3), I understood my sense-making before, during, and after the field as "a multi-sensory practice that is at once an intellectual and visceral process", one in which "body and mind, field and desk, past and present" are "enmeshed" (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019, p. 368).

COVID-19 has impacted bodies disproportionately, with higher death rates recorded amongst people and communities of colour, disabled people, and those with low incomes[48]. As I have explicated in Chapter 3, the repercussions of COVID-19 on young people's education were disproportionate, too, intensifying systemic inequalities that ranged from access to material resources (for instance, laptops and online learning) to the meeting of very basic needs such as nutrition and feeling safe at home.

The COVID crisis has undeniably ruptured our social fabric and everyday lives. Alongside a health crisis, COVID-19 designated a crisis of daily practices, disrupting the flow of everyday life. In the context of this disruption, for this part of the discussion I want to consider whether and how COVID-19 might have also provided opportunities for "glimpses into public formations and demand[s] that we articulate to each other what matters to us and why" (Nolas, 2015, p. 163). In this, I attend to the emergent opportunities for seeing this crisis "as an opening, a new way of proceeding" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 187), recognising that to some extent this is contingent "on how we do or do not resolve the crisis;

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[48] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/16/bame-people-more-likely-to-die-from-covid-than-white-people-study. For more extended readings on that matter, see Abrams & Abbott, 2020; Kukla, 2020; Laville, 2020.

depending on whether we think of a crisis as something that needs to be resolved" (ibid.). Amidst a global climate of uncertainty, the disruption to education's *modus operandi* by way of COVID-19 gave birth to space wherein educational 'what ifs' could bloom: arenas for education to be reimagined by teachers and students alike. In a climate of uncertainty looming large, together with seven teachers from different schools, we convened in the first months of the national UK lockdown to organise a series of online conversations, working to facilitate the formation of such imaginings and generate conversations around them. Whilst acknowledging the importance of bringing young people's visions to the forefront of such imaginings, it remained equally necessary for these spaces and processes of future-making to be intergenerational (Tesar, 2021; Unesco, 2021), attended by teachers and students alike.

The online COVID conversations evolved from a series of weekly online calls; these were first set up with seven teachers from different UK schools in the Ashoka Changemakers Schools network, attending to our shared need to create a safe space to share insecurities, support one another, and remain connected amidst social isolation (see Chapter 3). The extension and opening up of these spaces to students from these schools was further encouraged by what some young people already involved in the research defined as a "need [for] an online space to share": "People may be at a mentally fragile state [at] our age and they need to be able to share", said Jacob at the beginning of the pandemic, during the first online group call with other young interlocutors from the pilot research phase (fieldnotes, Zoom call with Green Hill research interlocutors, April 2020). As the pandemic endured, the need for such a space intensified. Dylan—my main teacher gatekeeper who had assisted me in several stages of this research— accentuated the importance of "the beginning always model[ling] the end". That is, if we were to host a conversation space for the young interlocutors, we should have young people in the position co-host, equipping them with necessary resources, such as facilitation skills, but ultimately allowing them to take the lead in shaping and moderating the conversation, ensuring all interlocutors were afforded space to express how they feel (fieldnotes, Zoom call with Green Hill research interlocutors, May 2020). Following a series of planning calls, we (myself and the seven school teachers) reached out to a group of young people from across the schools, inviting them to co-design two online COVID conversations, intending to facilitate the unfolding of 'student publics' (Nolas, 2015) around the common concern of reimagining education. Both online conversations took the form of large group calls on Zoom, attended by approximately 35 children and young people aged between 7 and 18-years-old. A few weeks after the second online conversation, I facilitated an online focus group with seven young participants, three teachers and an illustrator, who translated the key insights from the online conversations into a visual form. I then turned these illustrations into postcards, which I sent by post to the students participating in the online conversations, using the teacher-gatekeepers I was in touch with at each of their schools to facilitate this[49]. I elaborate further on this facilitation of student publics by way of creative methods and towards envisioning educational futures later in this chapter, but for now, what I wish to illustrate here

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[49] The postcards can be found on this website https://schoolmemoriesthatmatter.com/covid-19/.

is how the first months of the pandemic were constitutive of the re-orientation of the research aims and priorities of this thesis.

I use the concept of "affective scratching", as termed by Dernikos et al. (2020), to frame the influence of COVID-19 and its subsequent impacts on my noticing and foregrounding of young people's affective experiences of schooling in the project of imagining educational futures. Here, I use affective scratching as a figure of thought to facilitate attention to how education *feels* and what affect *does* in young people's education when the latter is understood as an "affective encounter" (Snaza, 2020), tending to its implications for education futures imaginings. Dernikos et al. (2020) contemplate affective scratchings multiply: in their figuration, affective scratchings are "sonorous flickers" that act on and across our individual and collective bodies at the sound of "some-'thing'" that triggers an "uncontrollable visceral response"; affective scratchings are also the "crevices and fissures" formed by these flickers as they "open us up to multiple possibilities" (Weheliye, 2005). In their edited volume *Mapping the affective turn in education*, they use the *scratch* "to help us remember affect's promising possibilities—its capacity to tear open new worlds in stuck moments—but also to remind us of its threats, mobilities, and fizzles" (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020, p. 10).

Under the prism of the affective scratching, COVID-19 can be thought as a collective *scratch*, one that was felt differently by students, teachers, and parents across the globe; in the micro-scale context of this current research, this *scratch* can also be felt as a 'contact point' between myself and the school communities with whom I engaged, with this undoubtedly pushing this thesis in the direction of valuing young people's affective experiences in the envisioning of an educational otherwise. The pandemic felt like 'pressing pause' on our lives[50]. In a similar vein, the pandemic can be understood as a significant collective 'pause' in education's history. In one of his first reflections about the pandemic's impact on education, my main teacher interlocutor Dylan commented: "COVID-19 closed the factories, the machines were silenced and in the quiet that followed, we were able to hear the voices of the children…". Seen more critically, this claim could be seen as idealistic. Yet his words also embody an aspiration to pause and listen, to attune to what Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim (2019) writes in reference to music's negative spaces as "moments of not-sound", "those spaces that listening really listens to itself and to the wider world". Returning to the context of educational research, in *Decolonizing Educational Research,* Leigh Patel (2015) speaks to the value certain pauses might have in "disentangl[ing] education research from these capitalist and colonial impulses" (Patel, 2015). Put differently, pausing can be understood, following Eve Tuck's conversation with Patel, as "an insertion of *space* in time" (Richmond et al., 2020, p. 375). The 'spaces' in time created during or by COVID-19 transformed our perception of time: they brought educational futures into sight, making them feel, albeit momentarily, more 'tangible', relevant, and real. It was in this 'space' that the online COVID conversations I co-designed

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[50] See https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/20/generation-z-on-covid-i-was-living-in-a-family-but-feeling-really-alone-pandemic.

and facilitated made imaginings around futures more accessible to teachers and students; it was also in this space that the approach of imagining desired educational futures through school memories that matter gained new resonance, both for the young interlocutors involved in that project and for myself—it allowed me to 'pause', to "stay with the trouble" (Haraway, 2016) and listen more attentively to what was 'heating up' in that moment. As I have commented earlier in this thesis (Chapter 3), during the pandemic, my position as a researcher "shifted from 'collecting data' or 'writing up findings' to facilitator, troubleshooter, platform builder, towards the end goal of greater awareness for the participants" (Markham, 2020). It is through this process, Markham continues, research might translate to some sort of social change: "It happens by taking seriously the ethics of care" *vis-à-vis* one's research interlocutors, "but not in a prosaic or patronising way" (ibid.). The *scratch* of COVID-19 on my research on educational futures engendered slowing down and paying attention, enabling matters of common concern to come into view. For all of these reasons, it is imperative that this thesis be situated in this affective landscape, negotiating the potentialities it both shut down and tore open.

8.2 How can we use 'memory as a method' to explore education futures with children and young people?

For this part of the discussion, I am engaging with my first research question—namely, how can we use memory as a method to explore education futures with children and young people? I see this question as primarily methodological, also encompassing a series of sub-questions addressed below. These include methodological questions pertaining to research on memory and childhood (J. Aldridge & Dearden, 2013; Pells, 2018), emotion in education (Zembylas & Schutz, 2016), and educational futures (Facer, 2016, 2021; Sobe, 2023; Tesar, 2021). The theoretical grounding of these concepts and their interconnections has been laid in Chapter 2. I conclude the first part of my discussion with a clearer articulation of the *school memory work(shop)* as a methodology through which the educational futures of children and young people can be explored.

8.2.1 Doing research with children, young people and memory/ies

In a landmark publication, the first of its kind to map the emerging field of memory and childhood and give an overview of selected literature, Kirrilly Pells (forthcoming) raises a vibrant question: "How to research memory/memories [in childhood], especially given the affective, embodied, and often intangible nature of memories?". This timely invocation can be understood primarily as a methodological one, and indeed one to which my research hopes to contribute.

After the official commencement of my PhD research in October 2018, I dedicated several months to finding literature at the intersections of memory and childhood in order to develop my own understanding of this research area, the issues it raised, and the key theories and debates it entailed; I

would later find out that, at least historically, there was little comprehensive writing on memory and childhood and the plethoric research approaches one can take to this field of study. At the beginning of my second year, I entered the field for the research pilot phase. By the end of this period, I had decided to use memory as a 'tool' through which to do research with young people on matters that concerned them. Considering the (school) context(s) in which my research took place and accounting for the educational journeys of the young interlocutors participating in the pilot phase (Chapter 4), but also recognising the broader ideas behind the Changemaker Schools (see Chapter 1), we decided the common theme should be education and, in particular, educational change. I then turned this theme into a research topic, reformulated over the course of the research for methodological purposes—that of 'educational futures' (see also Chapter 4).

In Chapter 4, I emphasised that research with children and young people and memory/ies requires, as a starting point, the establishment of a shared understanding about what memory is (Keightley, 2010). This does not mean a closed definition but rather a shared meaning-making framework in which research interlocutors can align and which resonates with them. This required me to engage in a playful experimentation, creating an open space wherein different ideas could be shared amongst participants. It also required the use of prompts and elicitation material to ground abstract terms and notions, 'memory' being the first of these. Our entry point into the exploration of memory took the shape of personal, narrative-rich objects, an idea sparked by Jacob's memory box (Chapter 4) and nourished through my exchanges with Anne Chahine, a fellow researcher from POEM who was already working with object stories and young people in Kalaallit Nunaat and Denmark[51]. It was through the object-elicited stories and memory accounts shared in the group that we began to trace and collectively map the different components that made up our personal memory accounts. These included people, places, spaces, the senses, feelings associated with the past, and 'new' feelings evoked in the moment of retelling a memory. This collective and experimental process framed my use of memory as a 'heuristic tool', grounded in a phenomenological and anthropological perspective; it shifted my focus from validating memory as a source of 'authentic' knowledge towards the workings of memory (Keightley, 2010; Pells, 2018; Varvantakis & Nolas, 2018), its socio-material entanglements and relational and affective relationships.

My experimentations with memory as a method during the pilot research phase also made evident the need for creative methods when using memory both as an 'object' of study and as a method. This is echoed in Pells' (forthcoming) compilation on "Memory, Methodology, and Methods" in research on memory and childhood. Creative and arts-based research methods figure as prominent in research that involves children and young people more broadly, and creative methods hold potential to support the role of research mediation as "a way of seeing the unstable relations among dynamically related things" (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & Niccolini, 2020a, p. 248), promising to illuminate further the

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[51] You can read more about Anne's research here: https://futurememorystories.org/.

workings of memory in childhood. In my research, I adopted a multimodal approach in developing memory as a method to do research with children. Here, multimodality is firstly expressed in the use of different mediums both for the elicitation (e.g., experimenting with personal objects of sentimental value or with school objects that need to be remembered in education futures) and the inscription (e.g., images, written texts, voice recordings, poems) of memories. A creative approach to the study of memory allows for the "affective, embodied and sensual textures of memory" (Pells, 2018) to be evoked and captured in the research process. "Individual, collective and cultural remembering inhabit ongoing, dynamic and connected sets of relationships, realized through relationships to material artefacts, places and technologies" (Hoskins, 2011; Paulson et al., 2020). This applies to children, too, making the use of creative methods that engage with different materialities, imaginations, and atmospheres relevant in researching memory in childhood. After all, if we are to understand memory work as work that occupies liminal spaces, as Radstone suggests, then liminal practices are needed; these often blur silos across different disciplines and employ "hybridized methods" (Radstone, 2020: 13). In my research, this was reflected in the young interlocutors' recalling of smells, their feelings of space, the states of their bodies, their desires. What is of equal importance, though, in the context of using memory as a method, is an understanding of multimodality that extends sense-making to encapsulate all "forms of entanglement"— "of body and mind, field and desk, past and present" (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019)—eventually weaving in these "enmeshments" (ibid.) and affirming them as integral to the process of knowledge production (see Chapter 3; see also earlier in this chapter for reference to how the collective experience of the pandemic shaped this research). This approach allows an exploration of another core issue raised in the research of memory and childhood—namely, how the adult-researcher's own childhood memories "inform the topics we research, the ways in which we construct childhood and ways in which we engage with children" (Pells, forthcoming). One of the possible reasons that memory work with children and memory in childhood remain underresearched to date is that memory is a phenomenon largely attributed to adulthood rather than childhood. Radstone (2000) discusses Treacher's work on childhood memory, emphasising how the latter poignantly challenges the common juxtaposition of childhood as the era in which memories are laid down versus adulthood as the time for their remembrance. But childhood, she continues, does more than merely providing the raw material for adult memory—believing otherwise risks growing the division between childhood and adulthood (ibid.), a division that draws on our culture's schismatic thinking of how different children are from adults. Through my research, I contribute to challenging this assumption by making methodological, epistemological, and ontological choices about memory and childhood that pay closer attention to the workings of memory in childhood and youth. Whilst remaining attentive to my positionally (Chapter 3) and critical about the place of my (adult) memories in the study of youth, I join Biklen in affirming the value that these memories can have when shared with youth: "because personal, cultural, and social memories are all interconnected" (Biklen, 2007, p. 726; see also Keightley, 2010), by sharing stories of my life and educational experience in the context of memory work with young people, I understood how these stories should not be

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negated—they, too, "can be important for social change because they add in what is often left out" (Biklen, 2004, p. 726), therefore speaking to the expansive value of doing intergenerational memory work.

8.2.2 Framing *school memory work(shop)* as an affective methodology to explore education futures with children and young people

"I think young people don't often get asked about their memories through education, on our level of 'What did you genuinely love and what did you hate?', like what were just [doing here]: [what's] one memory that sticks out? […] Young people don't often get that opportunity."

(Interview with Dave, 19, education activist; April 2021)

UNESCO's 2021 report on *Education Futures* has undoubtedly popularised research on futures and education, attracting the attention of educational policymakers and introducing notions of 'futures' more centrally in educational debates across stakeholders. All the while, the need for methodologies that explore education futures *with* children and young people remains relevant (Facer, 2016; Tesar, 2021). As I have discussed in Chapter 2, considering both education and childhood's intense relationships with the future, research on and with affect demands more attention (Coleman, 2017, p. 534), particularly in the context of futures of education. As Coleman suggests, "both sensory methodologies and work on affect are particularly productive for grasping and engaging the intangibility of the future" (ibid.), and this applies to research on and about education futures, too. The advent of the 'affective turn' in the educational literature has been accompanied by an increase in innovative methodologies that research educational affect(s) in recent years (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020; Zembylas & Schutz, 2016). As I have outlined in Chapter 2, future(s) are "sought through with affect and emotion" (Sobe, 2020). Earlier in this chapter, I discussed my approach to conducting memory work with children about the school experiences that matter to them. For this part of the discussion, I discuss the findings that substantiate *school memory work(shops)* as both an "affective methodology" (Knudsen & Stage, 2015) and a promising approach to the study of educational futures with children and young people.

Using memory as a tool to imagine futures helped stage feelings as central in the process of educational future-making. This included the experiencing of 'new' feelings experienced through the process of recalling of the school memory. This is echoed strongly in Annabelle's words when she said that "[the *school memory work* prompts] definitely sparked some [emotions] and a lot of thoughts where I was like, 'How was that okay? How was I allow[ed], how did I allow these things to happen?'". There were also many cases where young people could still not put words to their feelings, a phenomenon that speaks to the fleeting nature of affect which often evades capture in language (Froerer et al., 2022; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Lutz, 2017). The 'space' created in the *school memory work(shops)* highlighted the importance of remembering feelings that cannot always be verbalised ("I don't even have words for that emotion", Chapter 5), returning our attention to affect's fugacious nature and that the necessity of

'noticing' those affects that escape us. To this end, some students used metaphors to capture embodied affects (e.g., Alex's "I poured my heart out" or Jacob's "I lost the time", both discussed in Chapter 7). Many young interlocutors reached points while narrating their school memories where they struggled to find words to capture their feelings in full. To this end, the metaphors used in some of their school memories are integral to the exploration of embodied feelings, reflecting emotional experiences and often capturing fleeting sensations that would otherwise exceed words. As Varvantakis and Nolas (2019, p. 368) put it, metaphors are "a way of understanding language and experience", "helping us to achieve reciprocity between inner and outer worlds" (Ricoeur, 1975; Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019). Metaphors are also particularly relevant in capturing feelings of power experienced in educational settings (cf. Boler, 1999) and unpacking their sociomaterial entanglements in everyday school objects, such as the super-powered T-shirt and schoolbags discussed, by Adele and Sophia, respectively, in Chapter 6. Metaphors coined during the *school memory work(shops)* helped to elicit, retrieve, discuss, and analyse educational affects that were not always easily accessible for some young interlocutors. Following the axes laid out by Knudsen and Stage (2015), *school memory workshop* can thus be framed as an "affective methodology" for: (1) it reformulated my research aims and questions in ways that meant affective processes became central (see Chapter 4); (2) it captured embodied data (see Chapters 4–7); (3) it made this data the central source of meaning-making and knowledge production for this thesis. The school memories shared in Chapters 5 through 7, and the object memories presented in Chapter 4, illustrate how the processes of remembering and reimagining, in this case introduced in the context of *school memory work(shop)*, "make affect, sensation and embodied experience available for exploration" (Millei et al., 2022).

Another key finding, emerging primarily from Chapter 4 and the pilot research phase, is that the exploration of educational affects through school memories requires practicing *school memory work(shop)* as a 'slow method'. Memory methods retain the qualities of what John Law alludes to as 'quiet methods', 'slow methods', or 'modest methods', capturing "something of the fleeting character of the ephemeral and the interplay of the subjective and objective dimensions of time" (Law, 2004, p. 4). Arguments for the need of 'slow research' have been put forth by researchers particularly within the field of early childhood (MacRae, 2019) but also in education (Kirby & Webb, 2021). More recently, Jenny Wüstenberg, pioneering scholar in the field of Memory Studies, has coined the term "slow memory" to call for the need to understand not only the 'big' and 'traumatic' events that have marked our collective histories but also the slow-moving transformations and our cultural responses to these[52]. Understanding and practicing *school memory work(shop)* as primarily an affective methodology, I argue, requires a stance of 'slowing down', not least because, as Berlant (2008, p. 229) points out, "the affective event is an effect in a process"—by slowing down our apprehension of processes, we may better sense what's heating up, shattering, or colliding (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini,

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[52] https://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/researchers-revealed/jenny-wustenberg.

2020, p. 8). *School memory work(shop)* can be understood as "a zone allowing us to generate new types of empirical material and perhaps to collect material that has previously been perceived as banal or unsophisticated" (Knudsen & Stage, 2015, p. 3). This might include the 'smell of butter' in the nurture room that makes one feel sick as it links exclusion and discomfort to the absence of caring educational spaces (Adele's memory in Chapter 7), or the 'jolt' of excitement felt as a result of being seen by the teacher's gaze and the need to be attentively looked at for one to feel confident, authentic, and recognised. Contemporary philosopher and feminist theoretician Rosi Braidotti's (2019) reminder that the political starts with de-acceleration resonates in the context of imagining education futures and bringing them into fruition. We need to consider "slow time […] to attend to [the] urgency" (Kirby & Webb, 2021) of what is at stake and the changes we imagine. *School memory work(shop)* can be understood and practiced as a 'slow method' that allows us to notice the mundane—in this case, the range of embodied emotions that are devalued in the everyday fabric of school life, including, amongst others, discomfort, anger, joy, and hope. This, then, has the potential to extend imaginings of education futures as a bottom-up process, emergent from the micro-politics of everyday schooling and explicitly valuing students' experiences when planning for educational change.

In relation to feminism's futures, Ahmed (2004, p. 183) asserts that "the question of the future is an affective one", one we need to ask about with the carefulness that it demands. *School memory work(shop)* methodology suggests the use of memory as "a tool with which to think" (Bowker, 2005, p. 15) about educational pasts, presents, and futures by foregrounding in our attention the affects that matter to be remembered. The use of the 'future' as a temporal orientation in the *school memory work(shops)* was intentional, with the primary aim of helping to distance oneself from the present and facilitate the elicitation of memories, a process particularly relevant when working with young people who are still attending school at the time the research is conducted (Chapter 4). More specifically, the use of the notion of 'better education futures' encapsulates desires and hopes as well as visions of how 'better' education futures could look. The futural orientation of *school memory work(shop)* methodology is encapsulated in the question, 'what needs to be remembered' by future generations for 'better' education futures to be possible? This question is essentially an invitation for participants to frame 'what matters' (Aruldoss et al., 2021; Froerer et al., 2022; Lutz, 2017; Nolas et al., 2019; Sayer, 2011) to them in their educational experience, thus, by extension, foregrounding the educational affects that need to be remembered in the imagining of educational otherwise. Inviting an intentional use of the 'future' as part of memory work has several important methodological and research values (cf. (Chahine, 2022; Keightley, 2010; Levitas, 2013; McLeod & Thomson, 2009; Reading, 2023). In the case of my research, it helped tease out the affective elements of school experience, of what counts as a 'better' education future for the young interlocutors, and the affects that need to be remembered for these alternative futures to be possible (I discuss these in the form of scenarios later in this chapter). This approach to memory elicitation, directed towards 'better' education futures, I argue, allows for what Keightley frames as a "relative autonomy of the interviewee to direct research encounters, enabling their own

personal experiences and frameworks of meaning to be prioritised" (Keightley, 2010, p. 62). As well as problematising traditional power imbalances between adult-researchers and young-participants, this approach to the process of knowledge production speaks to issues of epistemic justice in the imagining of education futures—namely, whose educational affects are taken on board, and whose are silenced in the project of reimagining? Later in this chapter, I discuss in more detail the affects deriving from the school memories analysed in this thesis and the educational possibilities they tear open. Foregrounding educational affects in memory work with young people is a question of epistemic justice, and I elaborate on this further below.

As a method, memory has been deemed as "appropriate and useful in exploratory research and open-ended processes of investigation with largely unpredicted outcomes" for it can allow for more a "circuitous, indirect, nonlinear path towards the uncovering of knowledge" (Marschall, 2019). Memory work can, then, be understood as a "liminal" (Radstone, 2000), "counter-intuitive and surprising" (Urry, 2002, p. 2) methodology which "open[s] up the workings of the social world" (ibid.) by avoiding pre-defined categories of inquiry and foregrounding matters often negated or considered 'mundane'. Memories are also essential parts of imagining futures—as Keightley (2010, p. 62) asserts, "remembering is the activity which enables us to navigate and mediate these temporal arenas and forge links between them"; "the narratives elicited are not solely concerned with past accounts, but with present perspectives on experience and the role of the past in orienting participants to particular futures". This is strongly evoked in Dave's school memory when he declares his hope that, in 20 years, "there should never be a Dave who has to spend seven years fighting for educational change because the education system will be good enough". *School memory work(shop)* methodology suggests the use of memory as "a tool with which to think" (Bowker, 2005, p. 15) about educational pasts, presents, and futures through affects that matter to be remembered. Most importantly, though, as McLeod and Thomson (2009, p. 49) assert in their book *Researching Social Change*, "the idea of memory as connected to a sense of future possibility speaks to [a] concern with social change, and with methods that both research and effect change". This concern with and intention to research and effect change has been central in my decision to situate memory at the core of my methodology. Foregrounding (school) memories and the process of "re-membering" (Barad, 2015, p. 407) them is methodologically significant in "understanding how stories matter *in the present* and in the future that is to come" (Wolfe & Rasmussen, 2020, p. 181). In other words, in our recollection and retelling of memories of the past, we are also "creating affective relations anew" (ibid.), determining their potential to generate meaningful relationships with the past, present and future (Keightley, 2010).

An essential part of *school memory work(shop)* as a methodological approach is, as I elaborate further later in this chapter, to re-inscribe school memories in multimodal formats that can 'travel in time'. The young interlocutors participating in the *school memory work(shops)* were invited to (re-)inscribe their memories in multimodal formats of their preference. In the absence of adequate time and space to explore other formats, these primarily included written texts. However, as Pells (2018) comments in

relation to the *Earliest Political Memories* project[53], the medium of text also "open[s] up analytical possibilities of exploring the affective, embodied and sensual textures of memory […] how these memories of the past might be entangled with present preoccupations and future imaginings". Fewer young people accompanied their text with images (e.g., Oscar's desk) and illustrations (e.g., Alex's illustration). Some memories were submitted in written format; others were submitted as audio files that I later transcribed. Where possible, I returned the transcripts to the young interlocutors to make additional edits should they wish. The (re)inscription of school memories that matter to young people is important, not least because there is a dearth of child/youth-authored school memory records (Yanes-Cabrera et al., 2017; see also Chapter 2). The cultural conventions surrounding the inscription of everyday school memories are limiting, impacting which school memories are recorded—if any (for instance, phone-photography is often banned in school settings). These cultural conventions also include disparities in terms of which moments are ascribed 'value' and are therefore flagged as worth highlighting (cf. van dijck, 2004, p. 263); the social norms of remembrance thus direct, whether in explicit or more subtle ways, what should be remembered and what can or should be forgotten (Coullie, 2018; Zerubavel, 2004, p. 5). Inviting young people to (re)inscribe the school memories they deem important restages the textuality of school memory, reinscribing them with value. School memories can, then, be understood as "affective textualities" (Knudsen & Stage, 2015), forged while remembering and recollecting affective school experiences via 'textual' production. School memories as affective textualities can help us 'remember the feeling' and acknowledge the affects that must be remembered for otherwise education imaginaries to be made possible. As Adele puts it, memories can remind us how things used to be, orienting us through emotion to the change we wish to see and why. Moreover, as I elaborate later in this chapter, affective textualities can also spark 'new' affects for the young people narrating them. New affective responses can also be sparked for audiences beyond the student groups participating in the process, for instance by sending messages of affects that need to be remembered, including those of hope and wonder. In the following section, I synthesise and present the steps and core elements of *school memory work(shop)* as the central methodological contribution of this thesis.

8.2.3 School memory works(shop) in a nutshell

At the heart of this research sits the development of an experimental methodology, practicing memory work with children and young people to explore the educational affects they deem worth remembering in order to bring better educational futures into fruition. The *school memory work(shop)*—the 'shop' in the parenthesis indicating that this methodology can be applied both individually and in a workshop format with groups—is essentially an invitation to a conversation about educational otherwise, aiming at creating a space wherein such conversations can take place. It invites participants to think of one (or more) of their school memories which they wish future generations to remember in order for them to be

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able to imagine and practice 'better' education futures. Participants are free to choose whichever memory they want. As I have discussed throughout my findings chapters (5–7), this might be a memory of a single event or something that has happened recurrently in their school routine; it might be a memory that evokes 'good' or 'bad' feelings. The school memory work brief is intentionally framed in an open manner. In this way, notions of what is worth remembering from young people's education are not enclosed in predefined categories, and the scenarios of what 'better' education futures could look like are framed by the young people themselves. This approach is in line with critiques of research with children that focuses on specific research interests that communicate more about researchers' preoccupations than about children's lived experiences (Aitken, 2001; Varvantakis et al., 2019), an issue particularly pertinent in research in educational settings, too. This deliberately open approach resulted in the collection of a substantial volume of qualitative material spanning a breadth of topics and themes to be explored in my analysis (see also Chapter 3 for the challenges of analysing such diverse material). Put differently, this process can be understood as a submission of memories to a 'time capsule' (Moraitopoulou, 2023), one that will travel in time and be opened by educational communities that inhabit the future (here, I have used the year 2050 indicatively to specify the notion of 'future', in alignment with the futural timeframe of UNESCO's *Education Futures* initiative). *School memory work(shop)* as method uses additional prompts, such as school artefacts, as well as a series of questions that invite participants to frame a shared understanding of the notion of (school) 'memory' and why it matters, inviting them to place emphasis on the *time* and *place* in which their memories are situated, the *people* involved, and the *sensory* elements of their memories[54]. Emphasis is added to the *affective* elements of the memories, and in particular the feelings and emotions they triggered in the past as well as those evoked in the moment of remembering. The memories can be inscribed in different modalities, from texts and drawings to oral testimonies, which will then be transcribed by the researcher/facilitator. At the final stage, participants are invited to (re)inscribe their school memories in a modality of their choice, ranging from written texts to voice notes, poems, illustrations, and images, with the aim of turning their school memories into "affective textualities".

School memory work highlights the importance of 'remembering the feeling' and points to the 'affects that need to be remembered' in the imagining of education otherwise. It draws inspiration from previous works that have used memory as a method, including Mitchell and Webber's school memory work with teachers (1999), the Earliest Political Memory Archive[55], the Protest Memory Network[56], and Future Memory Stories[57]. *School memory work(shop)* is a relational approach that requires the building of a safe environment and trusting relationship between the researcher/facilitator and the participants, wherein practicing listening as an "ethical practice" (Bath, 2013) (see Chapter 4) is central. It also has

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[54] For instance the smells, images, sounds; a more detailed list of prompts can be found here https://www.poem-horizon.eu/school-memory-work/.
[55] https://childhoodpublics.org/archives/earliest-political-memories/.
[56] https://protestmemory.wordpress.com/getinvolved/.
[57] https://futurememorystories.org/.

the potential to create what Nolas (2021, p. 5) discusses, in quoting Askins and Pain (2011), as "'contact zones' for dialogue, for speaking and listening amongst children and young people", in my case from different educational communities.

Furthermore, central to the methodological process is the "recognition of relationships – ontologically (the child's being is relational) and epistemologically (knowledge is inaugurated and shaped by the family and memory worker)" (Coullie, 2018, p. 184) alongside an ethical approach to the shared building of knowledge, underlined by informed and voluntary involvement, and mutual respect and care (ibid). If the process takes place in a school environment (instead of an extracurricular or an online activity), it is desirable that the space used for *school memory work(shops)* be arranged in a way that does not resemble the daily school environment. Where possible, it is valuable to create "a space of commensality, of exchange and of memory creation" (Nolas & Varvantakis, 2019, p. 141; Seremetakis, 1994), through, for example, providing good food, music, and other joint activities that support the formation of a group identity. While *school memory work(shop)* can be practiced individually, embedded in an online or offline interview, when discussed in groups, individual school memories enter into "a group register where listening, dialogue, […] and negotiation of meanings take place" (Riano-Alcala, 2008). This can, in turn, further inform the interpretation of the material and the analysis (see also Keightley, 2010). As Jansson et al. (2008) assert:

> "When a number of stories are interpreted by a whole group of participants, the individual story becomes less connected to a certain person, less specific, and thereby it becomes easier to compare the stories in order to discern patterns of similarity and difference."
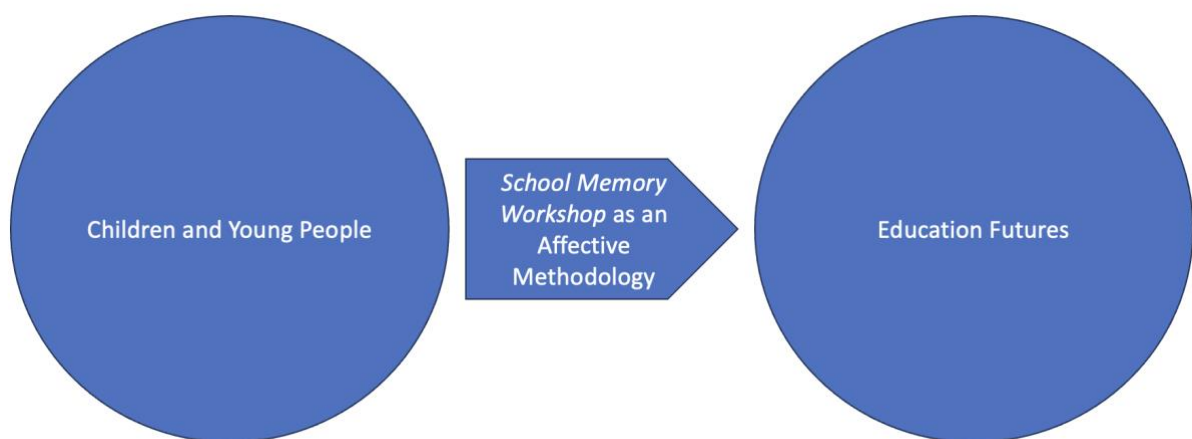

Figure 6: School memory workshop as an affective methodology.

8.2.3.1 Facilitating the formation of "temporary student publics"

Before transitioning to the second part of the discussion where I detail education futures scenarios imagined by the young interlocutors' affects that need to be remembered, it is resonant to highlight the

role of research mediation in making children and young people's future education imaginings public and in forging connections between them. These imaginings have the potential to redefine what a coherent sense of purpose in education might be. As is stated in UNESCO's preliminary report on the *Futures of Education,* "A coherent sense of purpose in education only comes when something common arises in a public space" (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021, p. 12). In this light, research can play a necessary role in "making connections"[58] between children and young people's imaginings of educational futures and movements to make them public. In a seminal article foregrounding political agency in children's participation in public life, Nolas (2015) asserts the role of research mediation in "childhood/youth publics" formation, citing projects in which "temporary publics have been facilitated into existence with the aid of creative and visual methods" (ibid., p. 162). Although COVID-19 and school closures limited the scope of my research, the methodology of *school memory work(shop)* did serve (albeit on a smaller scale) as a mediative practice, forging connection between young people from different educational contexts around their common concerns regarding educational change and better education futures. One of the outputs of the *school memory work(shops)* was the development of an online platform for publishing the multimodal (re)inscriptions of the youth's school memories, bringing them into dialogue with one another and bridging them with outside audiences[59]. Making young people's memory texts public might contribute to extant efforts to invite children and young people as co-creators of different education narratives and common senses of purpose within education. In the public sphere, familiar stories about education are becoming daily "public feelings" (Cvetkovich, 2012), "stutter[ing] repetitively across media, policies, and "texts" of all kinds", becoming "central in our understanding of public life", "mov[ing] bodies […] in particular ways" (B. P. Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & & Niccolini, 2020, p. 12). Applying *school memory work(shop)* as a "student publics creating methodology" has the potential to coalesce and create fissures and spaces in public feelings around education and schooling, foregrounding children and young people's affective memories that matter and require remembering.

8.3 What futures of education can be/are imagined through school memory work and how?

8.3.1 Using school memories/*school memory work(shop)* as feminist pedagogical tool(s) for education futures imagining

Earlier in this chapter, I framed the intentional attentiveness to children's educational affects as an integral part of crafting otherwise education imaginings and futures; by referring to this intentionality as a matter of epistemic justice, I emphasised the central argument I draw in my thesis—namely, the centrality of emotions in the creation of possible education futures scenarios and the need to foreground children and young people's affective experiences of schooling when imagining and planning futures of education. This requires a reparation of the 'othering' of children and young people who have been

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[58] https://childhoodpublics.org/events/making-connections-an-introduction-to-multimodal-ethnography/.
[59] https://schoolmemoriesthatmatter.com/school-memories-that-matter/?paged1290=4.

historically "dismiss[ed] and "trivialize[d]" (Boler & Zembylas, 2016; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 316) on the basis of being deemed as 'emotional' (Lesko 2012, 178). My thesis aims for a methodological contribution in that direction, developing an affective methodology that values emotions in education. *School memory work(shop)* is a methodology of "re-membering" (Barad, 2015) and (re)inscribing, in multimodal formats, those school memories deemed important by young people and thus necessary to be saved so that future generations can imagine and plan education otherwise. Integral to this methodology is an analytical focus on affect and, in particular, the political significance of emotions in education.

Our encounters with school memories, in the form(at) of "affective textualities" (Knudsen & Stage, 2015), have the potential to 'move' our bodies, 'reorienting' us to the world, showing us "why transformations are so difficult […] but also how they are possible" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 71). I argue that school memories as affective textualities can be used as feminist pedagogical resources that open us up to otherwise education imaginaries. Here, I frame feminist pedagogy as one that embraces key principles, which include: i) attending to power relations (including those permeating teacher-student relationships) and ii) valuing personal experience and emotion as sources of knowledge-creation and learning while, at the same time, recognising their potential to iii) transform injustice through reflexive praxis (Boler & Zembylas, 2016, p. 2). If pedagogy's role and "reparative possibilities" lie in its capacity to "open up new relations, understandings, and moral orientations" (Sriprakash, 2022, p. 9), then the *school memory work(shop)* as a feminist pedagogical tool has the potential to create "affective opening ups of the world" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 181). One way this can be achieved is through what Ahmed frames, in reference to feminist pedagogies, as the "act of wonder". According to Ahmed (2004, p. 179), wonder can be understood as an "affective relation to the world", one that "see[s] the world *as if* for the first time". Such an "affective opening up of the world" through the act of wonder, Ahmed continues, is not a private act but something that is only possible through collaboration (Ahmed, 2004, p. 181). I thus argue that the process of *school memory work(shop)* and the school memories it engenders have the potential to open us up through the act of wonder.

One way school memories can 'move' us through wonder is reflected in the school memories of 'first times', analysed in Chapter 7. In these memories, "first-time-ness" is experienced in the jolt in a student's body when addressed by their teacher for the first time; it is experienced when a student is asked by their teacher to call them by their first name; it is felt in a learning space that feels like home and like family; it is sensed when the 'ordinary' experience of crossing a school corridor feels suddenly unbearable in the absence of a best friend. For the students to whom these memories belong—and for all of us who might potentially engage with them and allow them to leave their affective imprint on us— these memories act through wonder to open us up to how education could feel in the absence of practices that maintain adult-child power relations or if attention and care was prioritised over 'one size fits all' approaches. They make us attentive to the fact that "not everyone is in the same place even when they're in the same space" (Snaza, 2020, p. 113) and subsequently amplify demands for an inclusive education

that makes everyone feel safe. Our engagement with these school memories in a feminist pedagogical context can trigger a "departure from the ordinary", opening us up to the questioning of normalised norms that exclude some bodies more than others from education, making them feel they don't belong. Quoting Philip Fisher (1998, p. 21), Ahmed (Ahmed, 2004, p. 180) highlights the clear link between wonder and learning. As pedagogical tools, school memories can open up learning about education futures. Nevertheless, these should not be confronted with tools that lay out prescriptive scenarios of how futures *should* look, or what Facer (2021, p. 74) warns against as a "pedagogy of colonisation aim[ing] to shape the future according to a specific ideal through investment in particular educational strategies". After all, as Ahmed (2004, p. 182) asserts, "emotions might matter in teaching insofar as they cannot be translated into an outcome, which would be knowable in advance of the pedagogic encounter"; this, she suggests, "makes 'wonder' a key affective possibility". Used in this way, school memories can open us up to the possibility of the transformation of the futures of education in ways that "exceed and resist colonisation by the constraints of the present" (Facer, 2016, p. 69). After all, the role of education itself is to "explore how to create the spaces and practices that will continually enable the dynamic disclosure, imagination and creation of radically new possibilities in the present" (Facer, 2016, p. 70). School memories as feminist pedagogies can be understood as contributing in that direction.

Alongside 'wonder', the educational affects I discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 also included the discomfort experienced in the immediate or indirect experience of injustice, such as the imposition of standardised grading and how this system caters for the few, does not 'care' for everyone's learning needs, and is integrally designed in ways that make the success of some students contingent on the failure of others; they also included resistance to 'superpowered' everyday school objects, such as bags and T-shirts—resistance expressed with anger, sadness, and disappointment, made visible through the sociomaterial entanglements that impair our listening to young people in formal education institutions. Alongside the value of remembering these school memories that matter to young people (yet which are often silenced under canonical institutional norms), the exposure of other audiences to their 'affects that need to be remembered' has value in the future educational possibilities we can imagine. Anger, and in particular anger against injustice, is recognised in feminist literature as a political emotion that can "move subjects into a different relation to the world" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 201). At the same time, Ahmed emphasises, it is not the emotion in itself that makes a futural scenario—in this case, that of education—possible, but rather its use as "the grounds for a critique" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 171) of education as such, the critique opening us up to 'new' educational possibilities. This statement draws on an understanding of critique that foregrounds its capacity "to disclose possibilities that make certain actions 'necessary even though they have not taken place and, maybe, never will take place'":

> "Once disclosed those possibilities make demands on us, demands that we may or may not wish to meet. Nonetheless, that we can experience them as demands, even if they are only "possibilities," tells us something about the specific normativity of critique: what we expect of critique, and what critique demands of us, is to initiate some kind of change, in the world, in our

relations with one another, in ourselves, the possibility of which, critique first discloses or rediscloses in some new way" (Kompridis, 2011, p. 169; see also Facer, 2016)

The educational affects shared by many young interlocutors, albeit primarily shared through the lens of personal memory, are also leaning on affects that are collective and shared across broader experiences of Western schooling. A school memory shared by a 16-year-old student in England might resonate, as it did, with one of my own school memories from 15 years ago in the corridors of a Greek state school; similar resonances and connections were drawn across school memories collected in the context of my research, both during the analysis and in the context of the *school memory work(shops)*. Of course, those affects do not always resonate: for some, they might feel upsetting, alienating, entirely estranging or irrelevant, leaving us completely indifferent or 'untouched'. Another pedagogical value of school memories lies in the extent to which those memories can become points of connection for educational affects that matter across generations, geographies, and socio-economic backgrounds. They can cultivate mutual intergenerational understanding, addressing 'educational traumas' that are perpetuated until they reach the point of resolution (Chapter 6); they can shed light on the emotional stagnations that reproduce educational traumas through systemic injustices, including those that stem from 'age' as an exclusionary category, facilitating a "letting go of the colonising imperatives of the intergenerational encounter in education" (Facer, 2016, p. 76). In this vein, Amelia's school memory presented in Chapter 7 opens up to a different form of adult expertise, one that is "confident in its capacity to create conditions of possibility" by attending with care to their students' needs in the present, "without seeking desperately to secure their outcomes" (ibid.). This, in turn, opens up imaginaries where, as Facer (ibid.) asserts, "adult expertise is no longer fragile, susceptible to the charge that it becomes out of date with the times".

'Good' or 'positive' memories of schooling, as young interlocutors asserted, hold potential to show how change is possible by creating images of how things can be done differently (Chapter 7). Questions of how to trust and create safe spaces to share feelings and be vulnerable can exist in the authority differential often dwelling between educators and students; the liberating feeling, the relief, or the 'sigh' (discussed in more detail in Chapter 7) experienced through acts of caring and 'gratefulness' for a teacher that cared, that listened and that 'saw' 'sticking' as one of the most memorable feelings from school. Here, 'feeling equal' in the absence of differential power relations between educators and students creates possibilities for the formation of 'community' that are otherwise prohibited by the the strength of typical hierarchies (see Boler, 1999). It is school memories like those shared by Henry and Amelia (Chapter 6) that open us up to imaginaries of "beloved communit[ies]" in schooling, where 'difference' is not converted into failure (Chapter 7) but "where loving ties of care and knowing bind us together in our differences" (hooks, 1995, pp. 263–264)

School memories as pedagogical tools also carry a potential to serve as sources of individual and collective action, their past-present-future relationships enabling self and public action in the present, whether practical or imaginative (see Keightley, 2010 and Sobe, 2020). This is echoed in Adele's school

memory (Chapter 7), whereby experiencing school through somebody else's eyes, as she put it, can make the need for change and compassion more 'felt', evoking her awareness that the classroom is not an environment in which everyone feels comfortable (Chapters 5 and 7): her personal remembering is characterised by an empathy that recognises the experiences of those who are excluded from formal education's processes and spaces, prompting an understanding of education's potential to do this for others, too. Similarly, Annabelle's memory from Chapter 5 can also be read in a way that cultivates understanding of teachers' positions when they are themselves judged by numbers in their teaching. In the case of Dave's school memory (Chapter 7), remembering creates a sense of responsibility and commitment to the mission of 'rebuilding' education in ways that allow everyone to feel like they belong.

In an invitation to repurpose education UNESCO's International Commission on the Futures of Education states that: "Education systems have wrongly instilled a belief that short-term prerogatives and comforts are more important than longer-term sustainability. They have emphasized values of individual success, national competition and economic development, to the detriment of solidarity, understanding our interdependencies, and caring for each other and the planet." (Unesco, 2021). Such beliefs are founded on emotions framing what 'feels right' or 'wrong'; as Ahmed (2004, p. 170) puts it, "the 'truths' of this world are dependent on emotions, on how they move subjects, and stick them together". Under this prism, emotions of (in)justice, as are evoked by the school memory texts, have the potential to "'show' the effects of injustice […] but also to open up the possibility of restoration, repair, healing and recovery".

8.3.2 School memories as openings to more just futures of education

"We'll see a more hopeful future for education when young people [are] genuinely taken on board and action is made from their voice."

(Dave's interview, April 2021)

If education is an affective encounter, then it is possible that it is also (re)shaped, (re)imagined and (re)enacted through affect. Children and young people's affects are, alongside those of adults, equally important in the opening of future possibilities of education, and indeed must be figured as central in imagining education otherwise. As Glăveanu (2022) asserts, "the possible is political", and therefore excluding children and young people from opportunities to imagine and frame new possibilities is a political act. In this thesis, I offered a deliberate selection of school memories, focusing on educational affects evoked through practices, objects, spaces, and relationships. Remembering the affects that those school memories make accessible is not to prescribe visions of how education *should* look in the future but rather to open up scenarios of what could be done differently, in the present and in the future, in terms of the educational change(s) that are desired for 'better' education futures. Approaching education

futures through school memories also invites the dimension of the 'past', pointing to the need to attend to education's pasts when contemplating and advocating for better futures. Although few interlocutors engaged directly with what a 'better' future of education means to them, the memories discussed across the findings chapters are oriented towards "desired change(s)" (Facer, 2021, p. 5), engaging with notions and feelings of educational justice (be it spatial, temporal, relating to age, class, gender, neurodiversity, or ableism). To this end, the 'better' education futures that these school memories orient us towards can be understood as 'just' futures of education. Here, it is helpful to think of just education futures through what Shriprakash (2022, p. 6) explains as a "reparative lens", accounting for the structural injustices of education in the past and present, recognising "the importance of addressing and repairing intergenerational ethical failure" on a systemic level and allowing for an exploration of educational reparations across the material, symbolic, pedagogic, relational and epistemic levels. A reparative lens, she suggests, "could offer a vital rearticulation of what the very process of education involves" (Sriprakash, 2022, p. 10), as well as a rearticulation of its very purpose. For such "possibilit[ies] of restoration, repair, healing and recovery" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 191) to remain open, we need to 'remember the feeling'—that is, the educational affects that matter to children and young people. These affects are complex, touching simultaneously on multiple arenas of everyday schooling and thus allowing different meanings. They include pleasure and joy, both of which tend to be increasingly overlooked as integral educational priorities in an era of conservatism, standardisation and competitiveness; they also include the 'difficult' affects which can allow for the all the possibilities resident in discomfort and in feelings of "being ungrounded" (Kenway & Youdell, 2011, p. 135). The affects of educational (in)justice should not just be "overcome through detachment", as Ahmed (2004, p. 172) has highlighted it in relation to feminism—indeed, it is these affects that "structure the demand or hope for transformation". Under this light, affects linked to educational (in)justices and the imaginaries that derive from them, are crucial for just education futures to be possible, and their absence deprives those seeking to create different educational futures from a valuable resource.

8.4 Conclusion

Education is, above all, a political and ethical practice—so too are its futures and questions as to gets to participate in their imagining. The main contribution of this thesis is two-fold: i) to argue for the importance of creating spaces where children and young people can, alongside adults, participate in the imagining of educational futures scenarios; ii) to propose such scenarios of just educational futures. The central contribution of this thesis is thus echoed in the development of a methodological tool that uses memory to explore education futures with children and young people, and the concomitant proposal of ways to use and read a selection of school memories in the envisioning of more just education futures. The thesis argues for the centrality of children and young people's emotions in the imagining and planning of education futures, proposing how educational affects can be elicited through memory work

and ultimately suggesting ways in which *school memory work(shops)* might serve as a feminist pedagogy to transform educational injustice through reflexive practice and requisite attention to emotions.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I retrace the steps that shaped my research around education futures, young people, and memory, affirming the value of such research moving forward. I begin this chapter by summarising the key research findings in relation to the exploration of possible education futures imaginings with children and young people through memory, framing these in line with my two main research questions, namely: i) How can we use memory to research educational change and futures with children and young people? and ii) What futures of education are imagined by children and young people and how? I continue by discussing the methodological and theoretical contributions of my study to the surging research at the interstices of 'memory and childhood' and 'education futures', before finally reviewing the limitations of this research and proposing opportunities or direction for future scholarship.

9.1 An overview of the research findings

"When people cannot name alternatives, imagine a better state of things, share with others a project of change, they are likely to remain anchored or submerged, even as they proudly assert their autonomy"

(Greene, 1988, p. 9)

With research interest in 'future(s)' proliferating across the social sciences, memory warrants attention as an indispensable dimension of futures-imagining: memory is not only about the past but is deeply entangled with our present conditions and future imaginings. If memories are integral to our imagining of future possibilities, then it is relevant to ask: whose memories are taken on board and ascribed with value, and whose are silenced, unrecognised, 'seen but not heard' in the shaping of collective futures? This question has been central in my research wherein I have explored imaginings of possible education futures with children and young people through memory. Memory and childhood remain underresearched terrain, and broader attempts to 'map' advancements in this area are indeed very recent (Pells, forthcoming).

During my pilot research phase, I worked with a small group of young people experimenting with different 'faces' of memory until we established a common framework of meaning about what memory means in our particular research context and how we could work *with* and *through* it to further understand a topic of common concern (in Chapter 4, I emphasised that research with children/young people and memory/ies requires, as a starting point, the establishment of a shared understanding about what memory *is*). The *how* of my research, and the orientation of my research aim, took shape through a series of experimentations and open conversations with this group of young interlocutors. Together, we mapped the ways in which personal memories connect with collective ones and how they enmesh with identity formation, personhood, mental health, and coming of age, to name a few of these emergent themes (Chapter 4).

Through experimenting with personal, narrative-rich objects, we decided to use memory as a heuristic tool to tell stories about the things that mattered to us. We collectively mapped the elements that comprised each of the object memories we recounted in our group, drawing on these to compile a list of questions that would form the core of *school memory work(shop)*. The list of prompts/questions included information about the place and time of the memory, the (non-)human actors involved, and the memory's sensory elements and emotional states, amongst others. Taking into consideration the educational journeys of that first group of young interlocutors, as well as upholding the shared commitment to educational change (broadly defined) from other participating schools in the Changemaker Schools Network (see Chapter 1), we opted to orient the aim of this experimental methodology towards the exploration of educational change and futures with children and young people. The methodology resulting from the research pilot phase, and following several refinements along the way, was ultimately termed the *school memory works(shop)*.

The orientation of this research towards education futures gained new resonance in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent prolonged national school closures across the UK. The temporal orientation of the 'future' was more intentionally embedded in the *school memory work(shop)*, proving useful in creating some 'distance' from the present moment and instead facilitating memory elicitation. As the young interlocutors of the pilot research phase reported, using objects as 'entry' points to personal memories was fruitful in that it gave a more tangible dimension to the otherwise 'abstract' notion of memory. This informed our decision to introduce creative and artistic mediums as options for young people to explore and re-inscribe their school memories. Be it textual or otherwise, multimodality facilitated both the elicitation and re-inscription of school memories in formats that could 'travel in time', creating new "affective textualities" (Knudsen & Stage, 2015) accordingly. Importantly, multimodality framed my methodological framework beyond the use and production of multimedia towards thinking about all forms of data artefacts in a more embodied, sensory manner and as integral to the analysis (see Chapter 3). Adopting this epistemological stance whereby my (researcher's) body and the ways in which it might be affected became integral and necessary in the process of knowledge production (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019); this made me conscious of the catalytic effect of COVID-19 in the re-direction of my research (see Chapter 3). COVID-19, experienced as an "affective scratch" (Dernikos et al., 2020; see Chapter 8), affected our individual and collective bodies in multiple ways and, in some ways, it made questions around the futures *of* education more potent. COVID-19 has both exposed and intensified the intersecting layers of inequalities and injustices that debunk illusions to which some discourses remain attached to date— namely, that of the existence of equal access to quality education for all. For many, the pandemic issued a clarion call to redefine educational processes and purpose, to imagine different futures for education. The pandemic has intensified the relevance of attending to—and communicating with each other—the 'things that move and matter' to us (Varvantakis et al., 2019). In this climate, my exchanges with my research interlocutors have been redefined, drawing my attention to 'how education feels' to young people. The iterative references in my data, whereby

young people felt frustrated at not being asked about how they feel in their education, oriented me towards emotion and education, eventually leading me to establish an affective analytical framework for this research. In other words, the shift to affect as an analytical framework through which to study education using school memories that matter is, in some ways, both a finding of this research and, concomitantly, one of the questions it ultimately asks. Affect is a central 'quality' of memory, through which (education) futures can be explored. Ruptures and fissures induced by COVID-19—experienced as an "affective scratch" upon the composition of some sort of collective educational experience— generated space for educational 'what ifs', that is, arenas wherein the purpose of education might be reimagined.

Throughout my research, *school memory work(shop)* evolved into an "affective methodology" (Knudsen and Stage, 2015), facilitating the capture of affect despite its fleeting nature and in the absence of words to 'describe the feeling'. The centrality of affective data as collected by way of this methodology led to a reformulation of my research aim, making embodied data a central source for meaning-making and knowledge production in this thesis. Remembering and reimagining, facilitated through an intentional use of the future (encapsulated in the question of 'what needs to be remembered' by future generations for 'better' education futures to be possible?), made "affect, sensation and embodied experience available for exploration" (Millei et al., 2022). The *school memory work(shop)* methodology allowed for the generation and collection of empirical material that could, under other circumstances, be perceived as "banal or unsophisticated" (Knudsen & Stage, 2015, p. 3). This includes the capturing of data that might otherwise be glossed over, as well as elucidating aspects of school experience (e.g., the sociomaterial entanglements of power relations in education) by way of the mundane and the everyday. The research findings point to the importance of 'slowing down' our comprehension of processes to make better sense of educational affects that matter to young people and to recognise these as integral in the project of imagining other educational possibilities.

The school memories recalled and re-inscribed by young people of this study carry messages of affects that need to be remembered ('remember the feeling') for better education futures to be possible. These affective appeals or attachments, as Dernikos et al. (2020) highlight in quoting Berlant (2011), do not always "*feel* optimistic", but perhaps they reveal the "operation of optimism as an affective form" (B. Dernikos & Thiel, 2019, p. 14), drawing us to "questions and potentialities" around how a 'better' education future might look. In fact, a significant number of school memories to be remembered selected by the young interlocutors and placed inside an imaginary time capsule sent into the future were marked by emotions of anger, frustration, disappointment, and discomfort—what some young people labelled as 'negative' memories. Those affects should not be forgotten, not least because they engrain the hope that by remembering that this 'doesn't feel right', collective alignment and action towards desired change might be pursued. 'Difficult' feelings, as Kenway and Youdell remind us, include the possibilities that lay in discomfort and in "being ungrounded" (2011, p. 135); it is necessary that we do not get "detached" from them for they "structure the demand or hope for transformation" (Ahmed, 2004, p.

172). School memories can be employed as feminist pedagogies that value emotion as a source of knowledge-creation and open us up to the possibility of transformation, remaking the futures of education through the act of wonder (Ahmed, 2004). School memories as pedagogical tools carry potential to serve as sources of individual and collective action, their past-present-future relationships enabling self and public action in the present, whether practical and/or imaginative, mobilised by the use of emotions as grounds for a critique towards what education *could* otherwise be. Emotions of (in)justice, evoked and felt in encounters with the school memory texts, have the potential to "'show' the effects of injustice […] but also to open up the possibility of restoration, repair, healing and recovery" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 191). On that note, some of the young interlocutors deemed remembering 'positive' memories as of equal importance, figuring this as a requisite for 'positive' change to be possible: it is equally necessary to foreground counter-examples to look up to. Drawing on the selected shared by these young people, this includes imaginings whereby, for example, teacher-student relationships are permeated by equality, where power imbalances soften when the value of adult-teachers is no longer dependent on pre-defined teacher identities that are "fragile, susceptible to the charge that it becomes out of date with the times" (Facer, 2021, p. 76). Although my research does not allow for generalisations (see the limitations section later in this chapter)—and whilst prescriptive scenarios of how 'better' education futures should look are, in any case, non-desirable, something my research intentionally aims to counter—the school memories analysed in this thesis (Chapters 5–7) can be read collectively as hopes and desires towards more just education futures, whereby past injustices that, by design, exclude some young people, making them feel that 'education is not for them', are approached through a "reparative lens" (Sriprakash, 2022). The memories discussed across the findings chapters are oriented towards "desired change(s)" (Facer, 2021, p. 5), engaging with notions and feelings of educational justice, be it spatial, temporal, or relating to age, class, gender, neurodiversity, and ableism.

9.2 Contributions to the studies of memory and childhood & education futures

9.2.1 Researching memory in childhood

Through my research, I emphasise the importance of paying closer attention to the memories of childhood, echoing a call that is being increasingly highlighted in recent literature at the intersection of childhood and memory studies (Aydarova et al., 2016; Moss, 2010; Pells, 2018, forthcoming). Through the prism of exploring children/young people's memories of schooling, I argue for the value of adopting a multimodal approach in the study of memory in childhood and subsequently conducting memory work with children and young people as a means to foreground the educational affects that are important to them in the process of imagining education futures. Using creative and arts-based methods when working with memory and children/young people is essential, not least because it "open[s] up analytical possibilities of exploring the affective, embodied and sensual textures of memory" and "how these memories of the past might be entangled with present preoccupations and future imaginings" (Pells,

2018). Multimodality as a methodological framework, as explained earlier, also extends to the ways in which the researcher becomes conscious of her own memories and how they play out in her processes of sense-making and making connections across data artefacts (Varvantakis et al., 2019). My research highlights the importance of creating 'conditions' to do memory work with children and young people, whilst paying close attention to the ethics of working with memory and children more broadly. Memory work is a relational process that requires establishing relationships of trust between the researcher/facilitator and the youth group (being conscious of the adult-child power imbalances intensified in formal educational contexts) but also amongst the young people themselves; trust does not only allow for a deeper exploration of memories but creates a safety net to address any issues likely to emerge in the research process. The arrangement of physical space—in a way that feels comfortable and more informal than school classrooms—is also necessary in the case of offline *school memory work(shops)*, and food, music, and games play an vital role in creating "a space of commensality, of exchange and of memory creation" (Nolas & Varvantakis, 2019, p. 141; Seremetakis, 1994). Importantly, the engagement with (school) memory texts produced by other children/young people is helpful in facilitating conversations around memory, its importance and preservation, and making connections across ages, geographies, and life experiences (Moraitopoulou, 2023). Researching memory in childhood requires a relative openness in terms of the direction the research is taking, allowing for a "relative autonomy of the interviewee to direct research encounters, enabling their own personal experiences and frameworks of meaning to be prioritised" (Keightley, 2010, p. 62).

9.2.2 Imagining education futures with children and young people

Facer (2021) offers a series of questions to those seeking to work with the idea of the future in education, including: "What and whose knowledges are being used to create these ideas of the future and where are the absences? What processes were used to make these ideas of the future, and why?". Children and young people's absence from official histories of schooling and education is striking and loud. Likewise, public memories of schooling are disproportionately constructed on the basis of adult memories[60] recalling their childhoods and official narratives such as media and policy discourses. *School memory work(shop)* proposes a methodological reconceptualisation, seeking to engage with all educational stakeholders—and in particular children and young people—in the imagining of scenarios upon which and from where future-thinking conceptualisations of education can be built, creating "possible, potential, imagined, probable and real scenarios" of education's futures (Tesar, 2021, p. 4). In other

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[60] Depending on how 'memory' is defined in each context, there have been some notable attempts to preserve and archive children's memories of schooling, usually in the form of material objects (see for example the Exercise Book Archive https://www.exercisebookarchive.org/). However, the way I frame and study school memory in my work is not in reference to the collection and preservation of children's cultural heritage related to their school days, but rather a deliberate recording of the children and young people's school memories that they deem important to be remembered towards desired educational futures.

words, *school memory work(shop)* offers a participatory memory practice for envisioning education futures *with* children and young people. It proposes to do so by using memory as a heuristic tool to elicit, critically engage with, and imagine, working through the educational affects that young people consider important to be remembered, thus inciting possibilities of otherwise education imaginaries. After all, as I have discussed earlier in this thesis, the question of the future is an affective one. Inviting young people to (re)member and (re)inscribe the school memories that they deem important to be remembered restages the textuality of school memories, reinscribing them with value. It is through the capacities of memory as a method that connections can be forged: the public with the private, the past with the present and future, the personal with the political; in this, the political significance of children's educational affects is brought to our attention, inviting us to notice the affective entanglements that reside in everyday memories of schooling where these are otherwise glossed over as 'mundane' or unimportant. For this to be achieved, school memories must be read through an affective lens that reinstates and foregrounds the political significance of emotion in education, as has been long advocated by feminist scholars working in this area. *School memory work(shop)* is about researching social change as much as effecting it (McLeod and Thomson, 2009: 49), and both of these facets are engendered by creating a space where otherwise possibilities can be envisioned through affect. Futures are laden with affect and emotion, and imagining them through the prism of memory, from a methodological perspective, invites the personal and the affective more explicitly into the process, thus highlighting their political significance. Importantly, it is about opening up imagination to "multiple possible and desirable" (UNESCO's Educational Futures) futures of education, for the question of possibilities is a political question itself (Kompridis, 2011: 255, in Facer, 2016: 71); creating such mechanisms and processes through which we can facilitate school memory work, remember these school memories that matter to young people, and pay close attention should be central in the imagining of education futures, not least because this is, ultimately, a question of epistemic justice.

9.3 Reflections on the study's limitations

The value and contribution of this research must be considered in light of its limitations, which unfold on different levels. On the level of research design, it is important to acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on my fieldwork, as this affected both its feasibility and the heterogeneity of the research sample. The initial aspiration to collaborate with student groups (5–8 students per group) from across eight schools within the UK Ashoka Changemaker Schools network (primary and secondary), with heterogenous profiles in terms of their socioeconomic, cultural and educational backgrounds, was no longer possible in a regime of national school closures. Moreover, the strict policies surrounding online exchanges with students while in lockdown restricted my access to young people, in some cases rendering it impossible to reach out to them. As such, having access to a significantly smaller sample of students came with limited analytical possibilities, leading me to shift my sampling from random

sampling to a combination of purposive (i.e., young people who were overtly and explicitly concerned by and/or engaged with educational change—what, in some cases, they identified as 'educational activism') and convenience sampling (i.e., young people with whom I could have online exchanges, minimising safeguarding and/or accessibility issues). I also intentionally aimed to work with young people who were consciously oriented towards educational change in order to narrow down the research focus after the pilot research phase. Even though I managed to collect some supplementary data from other students in between national lockdowns, these were not focused enough to use them in the analysis—as such, these were primarily used to inform the development of the *school memory work(shop)*.

In terms of data analysis, I need to acknowledge the choices I made, and how these disclosed some possibilities while precluding others. Given the open-ended nature of *school memory work(shop)*, and in the absence of prolonged contact with my young interlocutors as I had initially desired, I made choices in my analysis that highlighted only some of the thematic strands emerging from the school memories (namely, power, relationships, assessment, and self-value, as explored across Chapters 5, 6 and 7). As such, it is necessary to stress that the memories I discuss in Chapters 5–7 could have been taken in other analytical directions. Additionally, there were other school memories submitted by the young interlocutors that negotiated themes beyond those discussed in my findings chapters. Nonetheless, the thematic selections in my analysis remained in line with key themes identified with the young people during school memory work(shops) and during the conversations in which these were embedded. At this point, it is also important to acknowledge that the relational nature of memories makes drawing clear thematic limits more challenging. The limitation I discuss here also raises questions of accountability to the research participants; this is particularly resonant in terms of offering participants the opportunity to evaluate and respond to the researcher's interpretations of their memories and accounts of remembering, as Keightley (2010, p. 66) highlights in the context of using memory as a method. Of course, as Keightley continues, failing to do so does not necessarily mean that a researcher's interpretation is invalid, but this practice would have been desirable in the context of my research. In any case, school memory work and its 'products' cannot indeed be viewed as truths frozen in time; although the co-creation of meaning is, to some extent, inherent in the school memory work process, the analysis, interpretation, and connections I present in this research are explained by me, shaped my own sense-making of the experiences they shared. In a similar vein, it would have been desirable to embed the individual memory data in thicker ethnographic data around each young interlocutor's educational journeys and backgrounds, having the possibility to follow the same group of young interlocutors over an extended period of time and conduct a number of interviews with them, instead of just one or two, as I did in my work.

9.4 Recommendations for future research

In addition to addressing the limitations of my research, future scholarship could investigate how and if *school memory work(shop)* can be embedded in an action research framework in educational contexts, whereby teachers and students could take up the role of co-researchers to investigate, imagine and try out the changes they wish to see in their education. Educational communities could benefit from reflexive engagement with the process and the school memories themselves whilst also extending this process to other stakeholders (e.g., educators) to cultivate intergenerational understandings around educational experiences, hopefully forging synergies across the age spectrum towards more just educational futures. Bilken (2004, p. 726) speaks to the value of adults sharing their memories with children, namely, the idea that personal, cultural, and social memories are interconnected. As such, adults telling young people their stories (in this case, about education) can be integral to social change, for they can 'add' what is often left out—indeed, I argue that these potential synergies across the age spectrum, facilitated by an enactment or cultivation of intergenerational understanding may well work to put this into practice. While the emphasis on children remains central, it is equally important for the project of future-making to become an intergenerational endeavour. The *school memory work(shop)* could be further enriched by working as a space to cultivate the sociological imagination around education and its future possibilities. This could involve, for example, engaging with school memories of the past (for instance, through archival material, books, films, or other ephemera) to both ascertain alternative approaches to and uses of 'education' and 'schooling' and to substantiate children's active participation in striving for justice in/about education. Another compelling direction for future research would be to create an open online repository wherein children and young people could submit their school memories, label them thematically, and engage dialogically with memories shared by others.

The futures of education must remain open and contested sites of radical possibility. The contribution of this research is thus in its call to move away from dominant neoliberal orientations to educational futures, arguing fundamentally for the need to include children and young people's affective educational experiences in our conversations, aspirations and movements towards desired change, towards just educational futures made otherwise.

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Appendix A: Summary of Research Results

A1. Kurzfassung der Ergebnisse

Diese Dissertation untersucht die Beteiligung von Kindern und Jugendlichen an der Schaffung von Szenarien, Projektionen und Visionen für die Zukunft des Bildungswesen. Es untersucht Beziehungen zwischen Kindern, Jugendlichen und der Zukunft und diskutiert die oft nicht berücksichtigte Beteiligung der Jugend an der Entwicklung pädagogischer Vorstellungen. Die Dissertation schlägt einen neuen methodischen Ansatz vor, der Erinnerung als Methode zur Arbeit mit Kindern und Jugendlichen in den Vordergrund stellt, um ihre Hoffnungen bzgl. Veränderungen des Bildungssystems und dessen Zukunft zu untersuchen.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie verdeutlichen, wie wichtig es ist, bei der Planung von Veränderungen im Bildungswesen die pädagogischen Auswirkungen auf die Schüler zu berücksichtigen. Die Forschungsergebnisse zeigen, dass die Emotionen junger Menschen eine wichtige Rolle in der Bildung spielen und dass öffentliche Diskurse zögern, die Frage zu stellen, wie sich Bildung für junge Menschen anfühlt. Dieses Zögern hängt möglicherweise mit einer allgemeinen Vernachlässigung der politischen Bedeutung von Emotionen im Kontext der Bildungszukunftsplanung zusammen, sowie mit der Dominanz neoliberaler und kolonialer Vorstellungen darüber wie die Zukunft des Bildungswesen aussehen sollte, von dem Kinder und Jugendliche überproportional ausgeschlossen sind. Die Studie zeigt, dass sich Gespräche über die Zukunft darauf stützen sollten, wie sich die Schüler in ihren alltäglichen Schulerfahrungen fühlen, und dass die pädagogischen Auswirkungen berücksichtigt werden sollten, die für sie von Bedeutung sind. Durch meine Forschung wurde deutlich, dass soziale, kulturelle und politische Ungleichheiten in Bezug auf Bildungsräume, -praktiken und -beziehungen in der Schule affektiv vermittelt werden und dass es daher von entscheidender Bedeutung ist, diesen Affekten mehr Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken, wenn wir diese Dimensionen bei der Gestaltung des zukünftigen Bildungswesens berücksichtigen wollen. Meine Forschung verdeutlicht, wie Erinnerung eine nützliche Methode und ein Werkzeug sein kann, um die für Jugendliche wichtigen Bildungsaffekte zu erforschen, nicht zuletzt, weil es eine Untersuchung persönlicher Erfahrungen ermöglicht, die Licht auf die Beziehungen zwischen öffentlichem und privatem Leben, Entscheidungsfreiheit und Macht, sowie Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft werfen.

Die Forschungsergebnisse machen deutlich, dass Erinnerungsarbeit ein effizienter Ansatz sein kann, um Kinder und Jugendliche in Gespräche über die Zukunft des Bildungswesen einzubeziehen, und die Aufmerksamkeit auf die alltäglichen und „alltäglichen" persönlichen Erfahrungen der Schulzeit und deren Verflechtung mit gemeinsamen Bildungseffekten und soziomaterielle Praktiken lenkt. Die Ergebnisse in den Kapiteln 5, 6 und 7 verdeutlichen, wie sich die institutionelle Gestaltung von Prüfungen, die alltäglichen Schulobjekte und -praktiken, sowie die schulischen Zeiträume als

entscheidende Dimensionen bei der Planung der Bildungszukunft erweisen. Insbesondere zeigen sie, wie Schulprüfungen und standardisierte Benotungen das Gefühl der (Nicht-)Zugehörigkeit prägen und bestimmte Personen als „erfolgreich" und andere als „versagend" bezeichnen können, indem sie Wert- und Selbstwertgefühle mit externen Bewertungspraktiken verbinden. Die Ergebnisse verdeutlichen außerdem die Rolle alltäglicher Schulgegenstände und altersbedingter Normen bei der Gestaltung der Lehrer-Schüler-Beziehungen. Schließlich zeigen sie, wie Schulräume auch affektiv vermittelt werden und Gefühle der (Nicht-)Zugehörigkeit, der Familie und der Gemeinschaft erzeugen. Zusammengefasst deuten die Ergebnisse darauf hin, wie alltägliche Erinnerungen an die Schulzeit Vorstellungen über den eigentlichen Zweck des Bildungswesens und der Schulbildung widerspiegeln.

Da Bildungszukunft(en) plural und umstritten bleiben und unterschiedliche Formen von Wissen unterstützen, müssen die Ideen, die Vorstellungskraft und das Wissen von Kindern und Jugendlichen bei der Zukunftsvorstellung ernst genommen werden. In diesem Sinne schlage ich eine Methodik vor, die a) unser Wissen über methodische Fragen bei der Arbeit mit jungen Menschen anhand des Gedächtnisses erweitert, b) als feministisches pädagogisches Instrument angewendet werden kann, dass Machtverhältnisse berücksichtigt, Emotionen als Wissensquelle schätzt, und ihr Potenzial zur Transformation von Ungerechtigkeit durch reflexive Praxis erkennt c) es erlaubt Szenarien für eine gerechtere Bildungszukunft zu entwerfen, die sich über materielle und pädagogische Dimensionen der Schulbildung erstrecken.

A.2 Summary of research results

This dissertation investigates the participation of children and young people in the imagining and creation of scenarios, projections and visions of the future of education. It studies the relationship between children, young people, and futures and discusses the overlooked participation of the youth in building otherwise educational imaginaries. The dissertation proposes a new methodological approach that foregrounds memory as a method to work with children and young people to investigate their hopes about educational change and desired educational futures.

The findings of this study foreground the importance of attending to students' educational affects when planning for educational change. The findings of the research reveal the overseen role of young people's emotions in education and a hesitancy of public discourses in raising the question of how education feels to young people. This hesitancy is potentially linked to an overall neglect of the political significance of emotions in the context of educational futures planning and the dominance of neoliberal and colonial framings about how the future of education should look like from which children and young people are disproportionately excluded. The study demonstrates that conversations about futures should be grounded to how students feel in their everyday experiences of schooling and consider the educational affects that matter to them. Through my research it has been evident that social, cultural, and political inequalities pertaining in educational spaces, practices, and relationships are mediated affectively in schooling and therefore paying closer attention to these affects becomes crucial if we are to address

those dimensions in the designing of educational futures. For this reason, my research explicates how memory can be a useful method and a tool to explore youth's educational affects that matter to them, not least because it allows an investigation of personal experience that sheds light to the relations between public and private life, agency and power, and the past, present and future.

The research findings make evident that memory work can be an efficient approach in engaging children and young people in conversations about educational futures, one that allows for attention to the everyday and 'mundane' personal experiences of schooling and how these are entangled with shared educational affects and sociomaterial practices. The findings across chapters 5, 6, and 7 elucidate how the institutional formation of exams, the everyday school objects and practices as well as the school timespaces emerge as crucial dimensions in the planning for educational futures. In particular, they demonstrate how school exams and standardized grading can shape feelings of (non)belonging and label certain bodies as 'succeeded' and others as 'failures', attaching feelings of value and self-worth to external assessment practices; the findings further demonstrate the role of everyday school objects and age-related norms in the shaping of teacher-student relationships; finally they show how school spaces are also affectively mediated, creating feelings of (non)belonging, family, and community. Read collectively, the findings point to how everyday memories of schooling reflect notions about the very purpose of education and schooling.

As educational future(s) need to remain plural and contested and sustain diverse ways of knowing, children and young people's ideas, imagination and knowledge need to be taken seriously in futures-imagining. In that vein, I propose a methodology which can a) advance our knowledge pertaining to methodological issues when working with young people through memory, b) be applied as a feminist pedagogical tool that attends to power relations, values emotion as a source of knowledge-creation, recognizing their potential to transform injustice through reflexive praxis, and c) lay out scenarios about more just educational futures that cut across material and pedagogical dimensions of schooling.

Appendix B: List of earlier publications resulting from this dissertation

Moraitopoulou, E. (2022). Engaging Children and Young People in the Co-Production of Memory and

   Culture through Multimodal Ethnographic Research. *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*,

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Appendix C: Consent Forms and Information Sheets

Student Assent Forms

Information Sheet to Participate in Research

This sheet gives you information about the study "Young People's Engagement in Public Memory Work for Envisionnig Possible Futures[61]" and invites you to participate in it. This study is being conducted by the researcher Elina Moraitopoulou, EU-researcher at the Institute of European Ethnology/Cultural Anthropology at the University of Hamburg and Ashoka UK in London. This study is part of Participatory Memory Practices – POEM, a project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 764859.

The aim of this research study is to understand how young people (aged 7-17 years old) build their memories for the future inside schools. By participating in this study, you will be involved in interviews, group discussions and observations. If you find it interesting, you can also be involved in leading discussions, designing workshops and helping make decisions that bring this project closer to your interest.

Your contribution is valuable throughout the whole study but you can choose whether or not you want to participate in it. For you to start getting involved in this research project, you will be asked to sign the respective assent form. However, for any of the data or information you provided to be part of this research, your parent(s)/legal guardian will also have to give their written consent and signed copies will be handled to both you and them. Also, if you find yourself in a situation where you do not feel comfortable sharing any information and/or participating, you can always stop and cancel your participation. Remember that even if you say "yes", you can always change your mind later and you will not need to explain me the reasons you no longer want to participate in this study if you don't want to.

The information and data I will collect during this research include input from discussions, individual and/or group interviews, observations, pictures and other relevant visual, oral or written material you wish to provide me with during this research project. I will then code all the collected information and data, which means that I will anonymize them and edit them when needed in order to secure your anonymity to the extent possible. To keep the data safe, I will encrypt them before storing them. If you want me to erase any of these data you will have to tell me before the research ends.

In the end, the results of this research will be published in a PhD thesis, maybe academic journals, blogs and/or conferences. But we can also work together to communicate the results of this research with

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[61] This is the working title of the project and is likely to change as the research progresses.

everyone in your school. Although you participate in this study voluntarily, your important contribution in this research can be acknowledged and we can discuss the best way to do it.

Keep in mind that you can contact me and any other person involved in this research to ask any questions you may have during the study.

Certificate of Assent to Participate in Research

I_____, hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the research project "Young People's Engagement in Public Memory Work for Envisioning Possible Futures".

- I confirm that the purpose and process of this study have been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can ask to stop participating at any time without any negative consequences for me.

- I understand that participation involves the collection of personal information through interviews, participation in group discussions and workshops, observation of activities as well as meeting with the researcher.

- I understand that I will not benefit monetarily from participating in this research.

- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded and that video, image and text material I created might become part of this study.

- I understand that images, audios and videos of me might be published, in the researcher's PhD thesis, conference presentations, academic journals and blog/website relevant to the research project "Young people's engagement in public memory work for envisioning possible futures". The researcher will contact me beforehand and I understand that I have the option to anonymize images by pixelating my face or audio files and videos by distorting my voice and pixelating my face. I understand that I can refuse a publication at any time.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially and that any publication of results or distinguished pieces of this research will maintain my identity anonymous.

- I understand that signed assent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a separate encrypted drive owned by the researcher until the end of 2021.

- I understand that complete data sets, i.e. entirely analyzed and coded data, will be made publicly available to Zenodo[62], a general-purpose open-access repository developed under the European OpenAIRE program and operated by CERN which is built to promote research openess.

- I understand that under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation I can access the information I have provided at any time while they are stored as explained above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

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[62] https://zenodo.org/

Signature of research participant

Date

☐ I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

☐ I confirm having received the signed informed consent of the participant's parent or legal guardian for him/her to participate in the study.

Signature of researcher

Date

Certificate of Assent to Publish Audiovisual Material

I_____, hereby voluntarily agree to the publication of image, audio and/or video material of me to be used in relation to the research project "Young people's engagement in public memory work for envisioning possible futures".

I agree that image, audio and/or video materials of me can be used for publication in:

☐ Blog/website relevant to the research project "Young people's engagement in public memory work for envisioning possible futures"

☐ Academic journal article(s)/poster(s)

☐ Conference presentation(s)

☐ The researcher's PhD thesis

☐ Museum/gallery exhibition open to the public

I agree that images, sound and/or video materials portraying my face will be published:

☐ in anonymised form by pixelating my face or distorting my voice

☐ without any anonymisation

I confirm that the purpose of this research has been explained to me and I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher. I understand that I am free to contact the researcher at any point to ask for further clarifications and information and that I am free to withdraw my assent at any point prior to the completion of the research.

Signature of research participant   Signature of researcher

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Date   Date

Parent-Legal Guardian Consent Form

Information Sheet to Participate in Research

This sheet gives you information about the study "Young People's Engagement in Public Memory Work for Envisionnig Possible Futures[63]" in which your child has been invited to participate. This study is being conducted by the researcher Elina Moraitopoulou, EU-researcher at the Institute of European Ethnology/Cultural Anthropology at the University of Hamburg and Ashoka UK in London. This study is part of Participatory Memory Practices – POEM, a project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 764859.

The aim of this research study is to understand how young people (aged 7-17 years old) build their memories for the future inside schools. By participating in this study, your child will be invited to get involved in interviews, group discussions and observations. This study can also be an opportunity for your child to actively participate in shaping the research objectives in a way that is meaningful for him/her and their fellow students, while gaining the experience of working as a researcher. In this case, and only if this is of interest to your child, he/she can also get involved by leading discussions and designing workshops throughout the study.

Your child's contribution is valuable throughout the whole study but they can choose whether or not they want to participate. Any information provided by your child can only be part of this research once you have given your signed consent. Your child will also be asked to sign the respective assent form and signed copies will be handled to both of you. Should there be any situation in which your child does not feel comfortable sharing any information and/or participating, he/she can always opt-out from the study without necessarily explaining the reasons why and without any implications.

The data collected during this research will include input from discussions, individual and/or group interviews, observations, pictures and other relevant visual, oral or written material your child wishes to provide me with during this research project. I will then code all the collected information and data, which means that I will anonymize them and edit them when needed in order to secure your child's anonymity to the extent possible. All data will be stored in an encrypted form and will only be accessible by myself and my research supervisors. Your child's name and other information that may identify him/her will be removed and the identity of your child will remain anonymous. If you want any of this data to be removed from the research, you have to tell the researcher before the research ends.

In the end, the results of this research will be published in a PhD thesis and potentially academic journals, blogs and/or conferences. The results will also be communicated actively to the students and other

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[63] This is the working title of the project and is likely to change as the research progresses.

members of the school community. Your child's participation in the study is entirely voluntarily but their contribution can be acknowledged in the publication and communication of results in ways that can be agreed together with the researcher.

Certificate of Consent to Participate in Research

I_____, hereby give my informed consent for my child _____ to participate in the research project "Young People's Engagement in Public Memory Work for Envisioning Possible Futures".

- I understand that my child's participation is entirely voluntarily and no monetary compensation will be involved.

- I understand that my child can choose to withdraw its participation at any point and without any implications for him/her.

- I understand that participation involves the collection of personal information through interviews, participation in group discussions and workshops, observation of activities as well as meeting with the researcher.

- I understand that images, audios and/or videos of my child might be published, in the researcher's PhD thesis, conference presentations, academic journals and blog/website relevant to the research project "Young people's engagement in public memory work for envisioning possible futures". The researcher will contact my child beforehand and I understand that my child has the option to anonymise images by pixelating the face or audio files and videos by distorting the voice and pixelating the face. I understand that my child can refuse a publication at any time.

- I understand that interviews will be audio-recorded and that video, image and text material created by my child might become part of this study.

- I understand that all information provided by my child for this study will be treated confidentially and that any publication of results or distinguished pieces of this research will maintain his/her identity anonymous.

- I understand that my child will also be asked for signed assent prior to its participation in this study.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a separate encrypted drive owned by the researcher until the end of 2021.

- I understand that complete data sets, i.e. entirely analyzed and coded data, will be made publicly available to Zenodo[64], a general-purpose open-access repository developed under the European OpenAIRE program and operated by CERN which is built to promote research openess.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

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[64] https://zenodo.org/

Signature of parent or legal guardian   Signature of researcher

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Date   Date

Certificate of Consent to Publish Audiovisual Material

I_____, hereby voluntarily agree to the publication of image, audio and/or video material of my child to be used in relation to the research project **"Young people's engagement in public memory work for envisioning possible futures"**.

I agree that image, audio and/or video materials of -and/or produced by- my child can be used for publication in:

☐ Blog/website relevant to the research project "Young people's engagement in public memory work for envisioning possible futures"

☐ Academic journal article(s)/poster(s)

☐ Conference presentation(s)

☐ The researcher's PhD thesis

☐ Museum/gallery exhibition open to the public

I agree that images, audio and/or video materials portraying my child's face will be published:

☐ in anonymised form by pixelating the face or distorting the voice

☐ without any anonymisation

I confirm that the purpose of this research has been explained to me and I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher. I understand that I am free to contact the researcher at any point to ask for further clarifications and information and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any point prior to the completion of the research.

Signature of parent(s)/legal guardian   Signature of researcher

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Date   Date

Adult Participant Consent Form

Information Sheet to Participate in Research

This sheet gives you information about the study "Young People's Engagement in Public Memory Work for Envisionnig Possible Futures[65]" in which you are invited to participate. This study is being conducted by the researcher Elina Moraitopoulou, EU-researcher at the Institute of European Ethnology/Cultural Anthropology at the University of Hamburg and Ashoka UK in London. This study is part of Participatory Memory Practices – POEM, a project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 764859.

The aim of this research study is to understand how young people (aged 7-17 years old) build their memories for the future inside schools. By participating in this study, you are invited to participate in one or more of the following processes: interviews, group discussions, observations, workshops, meetings with the researcher.

School stakeholders, meaning every actor relevant to school life, play a very important role in shaping youg people's school experiences and how they imagine their future. This is why teachers, headteachers and members of school staff, as well as parents, alumni and other actors collaborating with the school are all being invited to get involved to make this research beneficial for everyone. Your participation is highly valued and remains entirely voluntarily with no monetary or other kind of compensation involved. You can choose to withdraw your participation at any point without necessarily explaining the reasons why and without any implications.

The data collected during this research will include input from discussions, individual and/or group interviews, observations, pictures and other relevant visual, oral or written material your wish to provide me with during this research project. I will then code all the collected information and data, which means that I will anonymize them and edit them when needed in order to secure your anonymity to the extent possible. All data will be stored in an encrypted form and will only be accessible by myself and my research supervisors. Your name and other information that may identify you will be removed and your identity will remain anonymous. If you want your data to be removed from the research, you have to tell the researcher before the research ends.

In the end, the results of this research will be published in a PhD thesis, maybe academic journals, blogs and/or conferences.

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[65] This is the working title of the project and is likely to change as the research progresses.

Certificate of Consent to Participate in Research

I_____, hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the research project "Young People's Engagement in Public Memory Work for Envisioning Possible Futures".

- I confirm that I understand the purpose and process of this study in which I am invited to participate.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw my participation at any time without any implications.

- I understand that participation in this study involves the collection of personal information through interviews, participation in group discussions and workshops, observation of activities as well as meeting with the researcher.

- I understand that I will not benefit monetarily from participating in this research.

- I understand that images, audios and videos of me might be published in the researcher's PhD thesis, conference presentations, academic journals and blog/website relevant to the research project "Young people's engagement in public memory work for envisioning possible futures". The researcher will contact me beforehand and I understand that I have the option to anonymize images by pixelating my face or audio files and videos by distorting my voice and pixelating my face. I understand that I can refuse a publication at any time.

- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded and that video, image and text material I created might become part of this study.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially and that any publication of results or distinguished pieces of this research will maintain my identity anonymous.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a separate encrypted drive owned by the researcher until the end of 2021.

- I understand that complete data sets, i.e. entirely analyzed and coded data, will be made publicly available to Zenodo[66], a general-purpose open-access repository developed under the European OpenAIRE program and operated by CERN which is built to promote research openess.

- I understand that under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation I can access the information I have provided at any time while they are stored as explained above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

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[66] https://zenodo.org/

Signature of research participant

Signature of researcher

Date

Date

Certificate of Consent to Publish Audiovisual Material

I_____, hereby voluntarily agree to the publication of image, audio and/or video material of me to be used in relation to the research project **"Young people's engagement in public memory work for envisioning possible futures"**.

I agree that image, audio and/or video materials of me can be used for publication in:

☐ Blog/website relevant to the research project "Young people's engagement in public memory work for envisioning possible futures"

☐ Academic journal article(s)/poster(s)

☐ Conference presentation(s)

☐ The researcher's PhD thesis

☐ Museum/gallery exhibition open to the public

I agree that images, sound and/or video materials portraying my face will be published:

☐ in anonymised form by pixelating my face or distorting my voice

☐ without any anonymisation

I confirm that the purpose of this research has been explained to me and I had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher. I understand that I am free to contact the researcher at any point to ask for further clarifications and information and that I am free to withdraw my assent at any point prior to the completion of the research.

Signature of research participant   Signature of researcher

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Date   Date