<u>Where would you be in the picture': using reader response with children in the primary school</u>

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Introduction

This article contributes to debates on how children from minority backgrounds- both ethnic, linguistic, and cultural- construct their ''selves-as-readers'' (Rogers and Elias, 2012: 315). Its contribution to new knowledge is part methodological, part substantive. A core methodological contribution is that visual methods, and reader response methods engage and enthuse ''poor readers'' about literacy in some unexpected ways. Harnessing such methods taps into the breadth and depth of ''poor readers'' 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti, 2006:1) in their lives outside school. Another core methodological contribution is that reader response works particularly to engage the *most* disengaged pupils about their lives outside the classroom. Much like the children in Gregory et al's research (2012) on faith literacy, a rich culture of religious knowledge, but also of affective connections, where joining in prayer with, as well as caring for, others within the wider family networks, was part of these children's lives made evident by using reader-response methods.

I position one of the core substantive findings in relation to what I argue was a ''critical incident,'' (Allen, 2017: 111) that is, a moment in the field which required a pause for reflection. This was central because, up to this point, the children resisted drawing as a way of eliciting their opinions about reading and learning to read, when they had *not* been entwined with a reader-response based approach, as I discuss in Scherer, (2016). This activity was seen differently through the lens of one particularly disengaged boy's response, who I refer to as ''Asaf''. There are, however, other examples which enrich and develop this initial moment of realisation. The main substantive contributions are that through the data, children, like Asaf, articulate their lives, discussing their identities beyond the classroom. Other responses tell us how the children play with intertextuality, and indicate the role stories they read at school hold in their imagined and imaginary worlds.

This research was part of a year-long classroom ethnography about children learning to read. The data presented here offer a snap shot which exemplifies how social and cultural aspects of the children's subjectivities can influence the ways in which they respond to picture books. The data, in the form of a set of drawings composed by the children offer narratives about self, and about reading as a skill and a practice. The paper explores how children responded to one illustration in a children's picture book, and the ways in which this was differentiated by outcome through children

positioned in teacher discourses as either ''good at '' or ''failing '' as readers. If a reader response approach creates ''better'' reading from children who otherwise might not respond literacy as a taught skill, then the findings of this paper about using such an approach might also be of relevance to those concerned with such metrics- schools and policy makers.

The task- to respond to an illustration- did not require decoding text correctly, like most school 'work' with text and image. The text used was *To Heal a Broken Wing*, by Bob Graham, which is discussed further in the section on methodology. The core research questions underpinning this study are:

- To explore ethnic minority children's perspectives on picturebooks, and how picturebooks are employed in their social worlds
- To consider how minority children construct their ethnic and racial identities and subjectivities as readers
- To look at the taken-for-granted processes of children learning to read
- To put children's voices and concerns at the centre of these debates

The next section explores theoretical frameworks around the central concept of reader-response, in order to clarify what it is, and to position it in relation to other research on reading and children's voices about learning to read, followed by considering methodological aspects such as the rationale for how data analysis was completed. Further to this, the data itself is discussed, starting with the ''critical incident'' (Allen, 2017: 111) with Asaf's response to this task.

Reader response: theoretical frameworks for learning to read and children's voices on interpreting text and image.

The theoretical foundations of this project are twofold. The first aspect stems from research which aims to promote children's voices, the second is concerned with reader-response, which will be considered as part of this. My research is situated with traditions from the Sociology of Childhood that see children as both socially competent (Prout, Jenks and James, 1998) and agentic (Corsaro, 2011). I take for granted children's social competence and agency, and seek to start from, and keep central their voices. Such a theoretical approach acknowledges that in the process of learning to read, children are held in a ''web'' of adult-created policy, teacher and adult-centred narratives about schooling and reading, as well as pedagogies and school practice. Such practices are different from adults' reading, which is primarily a matter of choice and leisure, for example the reading of novels in a book group or reading club,(Long, 2003) though of course adult reading might be linked to paid work, or faith (reading a religious text, see Boyarin's work, 1989, on the ethnography of reading, for example). The *choice* to read a text, and importantly spaces for hearing, and valuing, the reader's response to it- like in an adult book club then, is something which is not always part of the process of learning to read at school, with a focus on decoding text, phonics, and ''understanding'' of vocabulary or plot. This project acknowledges the webs of policy and practice children learning to read in

school are held within, but at the same time seeks to move away from them in order to see what children make of the books they learn to read with in school; this paper specifically looks at a way of hearing their voices through focusing on how children feel about texts.

Asking children to respond to visual aspects and in visual ways to books is not a new idea in qualitative research; used by Styles and Arizpe, (2002) to explore their understandings of picturebooks. They theorised children's interactions with picture book illustrations, arguing children make sophisticated readings of pictures. Arizpe et al, (2009) as part of an interdisciplinary, multi-site project in Australia, Scotland and Chile, with migrant children, used the idea of children responding to picturebooks as a way to talk about the migrant experience, using books such as Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2006), to hear these children's voices about their experiences of migration and being a refugee. While this paper does not look at books particularly concerned with the migrant experience, it does seek to address a gap in the literature on the responses of young minority children about their experiences of learning to read in the English primary school, and argues that a reader-response based approach can offer a way in to this.

The second aspect of the theoretical foundations stems from the field of literary theory, from Louise Rosenblatt's work (1994), concerned with how readers interact with texts. Rosenblatt (1994) argues that when we read there is a transaction between reader and text; it is not a passive activity. Instead, a dynamic, and indeed *dialogic* process occurs. Here, the reader brings their social, political, emotional, geographical, and personal context to the text. The text has no meaning until the inert blotches on the page are read, and indeed, the transaction means the reader brings something to the text, rather than the text just imparting narrative to the reader. Such transactions, Rosenblatt suggests, are not all of the same quality, however. Reading transactions can either be *efferent*, that is surface level, or *aesthetic* (where the reader responds in a more deep and 'felt' way with their emotions and bringing their own context and life experiences to the book). This notion of efferent reading is highly salient to how literacy is taught in English schools today; with a focus on the mechanics of texts such as phonics and precision teaching (Lindsley, 1990) where texts are explored in depth for word-meaning to upskill children, rather than through a whole-book approach that advocates for developing the pleasure of reading and personal taste in books (Holdaway, 1982).

Rosenblatt's work has been applied by those who seek to enable literature and literacy to contribute to more equitable relations in the classroom. Reader-response offers method and theory for working with children on their reading: it is particularly pertinent in a culturally diverse context, as it can-and has been- harnessed for projects concerned with social justice. In Karolides' edited volume (1997), practitioners and academics used reader-response in action research with children

from marginalised backgrounds to explore literature and their literacy with them. While this work draws upon research in America, where the histories and heritages of communities are differently demarcated from those in the UK (for example through historical trajectories of slavery for Black American ancestors) issues around the marginalisation, and underachievement of certain ethnic groups in British schools holds strong parallels (Gillborn, 2016, and Ogbu, 1992).Within Karolides work (1997), see for example chapters by Cox, on the application of reader response in the classroom to allow space for students in urban classrooms to wonder and be puzzled about literature they are reading; Boyd-Batstone, on reader response in a bilingual classroom, Pappas and Barry, on urban students' interactions and responses to text, Poe and Hicks, on ancestry and cultural heritage in multicultural classrooms. The application of this theory to the transactions in reading taking place between young minority children, and the texts they are presented to read in school, remain an understudied area. Applying reader response theory, and the importance of the context the reader brings *with* them, to school texts, harnesses children's voice and agency, especially in wider contexts of poor family literacy and poor socio-economic status, outlined in similar studies such as Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti's (2006).

There has been plenty of research concerned with ''poor readers'', both in the UK and the rest of the world (Spear-Swerling, 2018, Gangl et al, 2018, Buckingham and Wheldall, 2013, Rose, 2006, Anderson,1985) which mostly concerns large quantitative studies which do not consult the children involved about their perceptions on reading. Some exceptions to this do incorporate reader-response as part of their approach, with an aim to support children's reading through finding pleasure in it. See for example Enciso, (1996), whose work is with Hispanic children from Mexico who were doing poorly in school, and Franzak, (2006), on marginalised older child readers. Others consider reading amid wider social and cultural issues, such as previous generations' experiences of learning to read (Lareau, 2011) and in a British context, following reading back into the homes of the children to explore white working class failure in the education system (Evans, 2016). None of these authors directly explore the children's relationship with text and image used in the classroom, through sharing books with them and asking them to respond to them, however. This paper takes Rosenblatt's ideas (1994) on the transactional quality of reading and applies it to sociological research with children, exploring the taken for granted process and practice of children learning to read from children's own perspectives, and thinks about how this forms their subjectivities as readers.

Reader-response, as theory and method, however, is not without criticism. Schieble (2010), for example, used reader response in online research with American High School pupils. She argues aesthetic reading worked to support teens positioning themselves as different from the LGBTQ community, and outside of it. Schieble (2010) suggests that the use of aesthetic response in fact invoked students to reproduce dominant discourses; in particular heteronormative ones in her work. It is,

of course, however, possible, if disappointing, that these were the values the young people already held and this activity just acted as a mouthpiece for them, rather than that the method itself reproduced dominant discourses from teachers, by pupils. Thinking about how reader-response can reproduce dominant discourses is particularly pertinent in a context such as the current one, where a white, adult researcher was looking at identity and a sense of belonging with minority children. It is useful to hold up for inspection research tools we use since they are never neutral- and I want to come back to reflect on the ways the children made meaning of the text and images I shared with them later in this paper.

Lewis (2000) discusses other limitations with reader-response pertinent to this paper, arguing that social and political aspects of reading cannot- and indeed should not- be decoupled from the reader's feelings and own context. The point is that perhaps there is not such a clear dichotomy between aesthetic and efferent reading after all. As such, she suggests we as readers can take pleasure in being 'both personal and critical' (136) at the same time .Indeed a disruption of identifying with a text can be a way to learn new things about different people and places and as such heighten self-consciousness and political consciousness. This is broader than simply thinking about the individual reader's feelings, while not invalidating those, or the enjoyment experienced in engaging in texts. Critique of reader-response can be found from within the field of critical race theory, too, as hooks, (1991) questions the extent to which reading is *ever* individual or personal, since is it is refracted through social constructs, such as our classed, raced, and gendered positions. She inverts the notion that this is personal, to suggest that instead, our responses are structured by the structures (such as for example schooling) that we are both shaped and entrapped by.

Likewise Komulainen (2007) critiques the notion of children's voice. She argues there are many voices, cut across intersecting factors such as race, location, age and gender. Also, the limits to the voices of any children being included in research projects is pointed to by Kellett (2010) who argues we rarely if ever consult children on the whole of research projects, from bid to research design to data analysis, from data analysis to writing up and dissemination of data; this reveals some of the limitations to developing theory on children's voices when we only selectively, or partially include and listen to them in research about their reading and learning to read. This is not to devalue the idea that it is still worth trying to consult them using reader-response. The next section explores the methods used in the research as well as the research site.

Methods and setting for the study

The project in the main was concerned with children's reading at school. I discuss the data generated from this wider project in Scherer (2016). The research process first involved getting to know the class, as well as participant observation, listening to

them read, and running a reading club after school to which I brought a range of multicultural books to share. I subsequently conducted interviews with pairs of children who were friends, in order to gain their views about the books they were given to learn to read with at school. I also sought to find out their views on the processes and practices of learning to read at school, for example whether they liked the books they were given in class for guided reading, and what made some readers stronger in the skill than others.

The school, given the pseudonym 'Three Chimneys,' was an average sized, one form entry, community primary school based in inner London, with around two hundred pupils. The school was ethnically diverse, with no one majority group, with three quarters from Muslim backgrounds. There was a very high proportion of Ethnic Minority children, with one white British child in a class of 30. The children's ethnicities are indicated in the data; these are self-described. The data explored here were gathered with 6-7 year olds. Speaking a language other than English at home was also very common in the sample, with over ninety per cent of the children having English as an Additional Language (EAL). The children were given pseudonyms intended to be consistent with their own names and ethnic origins. Because of the high percentage of EAL children in the sample, one of the intentions of using visual methods was to provide a way for children to respond to the research which was non-verbal, aiming to access meaning that might have been limited by language barriers. The sample was roughly composed of an equal number of girls and boys.

The book chosen tells a story of a pigeon which becomes injured and then is nursed back to health by a little boy and his mother, and then released back into the wild. I selected this book as I wanted to focus on one particular illustration, it was a double page spread of a scene where a lot of people are in the street. What was particularly salient was that it was an illustration that contained a range of different representations of those who are differently able, and from a range of ethnicities. This specific book was picked as the children had been learning about the Greenaway award for illustration in picturebooks (an annual award for the 'best' picturebook published in the UK) and were participating in the voting process in order to cast their vote on which book should win the award for that year, so this was part of promoting their voices at school more broadly.

After reading the book, all children were given a piece of A4 plain paper, and I borrowed a question from Enciso (1996) in her work on reader-response: 'if you were in this picture, where would you be?' I also asked the children to include how they would be feeling were they to be in this picture, in their response. The fact the chosen illustration included such a wide set of visual representations (old, young, male, female, a character in a wheelchair, Black, white, women wearing hijab) aimed to act as a springboard for discussion about the children's own cultural and social assets and subjectivities. Naturally, the data presented here are particularistic; they

give us insight into one class in one school on a specific day, in relation to one book chosen by the researcher. The intention is to provide a rich description of a particular literacy event (Street, 2003) and to look at causality in the sense that we can learn about individual children's lived experiences and readings of text and image, and how they respond to an illustration which depicts different people from different places. The drawings were made with the children's choice from a selection of coloured pens, and pencils. The drawings for the purposes of this article were simply photocopied.

Methodology and data analysis

While all children in the class responded to the book *To Heal a Broken Wing*, the data shared here are necessarily selective, in the sense that I have not included responses from all 30 children, due to limits of space. Rather, the selection of drawings here are, in essence, either indicative of responses that were made frequently, and as such indicate a ''theme'' emerging. Data selected offer multidimensionality, for example, something not included was a drawing of a girl, with the writing: 'I am in the city'. This is not to negate such responses, but rather to offer up the richest data which most strongly affords contributions to new knowledge as indicated at the start of the paper. The rationale for the inclusion of the particular drawings is made clear in the section discussing the data, below. The practice of using visual methods in research with children is underpinned by Fargas-Malet and McSherry's, (2010) notion that using a concrete task, such as making a drawing about a book, can be more effective when working with young children than talking around abstract concepts, in relation to this project, such as ''inclusion'', ''equity'' or social justice''.

Steps for data analysis involved starting from the ''critical incident'' (Allen, 2017:111), and then seeing if any other children had responded similarly to the text. Once this was established, I looked to see whether the notion of bringing in home life experiences was replicated across the data set, or if not, how this cross-referenced with gender, academic ability, age within the class, or any other factors. In doing this, it became clear that some children (and they were all composed of the 'top' ability group for reading- 3 in total) had used intertextual references either from other books in class, or other school experiences. This is discussed in the section on intertextuality. The final theme, around space and mapping, was something that cut across the data independent of any other factors, and this is the final theme included, as it was very frequent, in almost all of the sample (more than 25 of the drawings); this, however, is not surprising, as it links to the question I asked, which was about space: *where would you be if you are in this picture*? These responses are what would be anticipated from the research question; it is the drawing of the other themes which are unexpected, that are of more interest to us as researchers in terms of what they tell us about children's lives, and their literacy.

Thematic analysis was used as a first step in order to develop ideas from the data gathered, using an approach based loosely around grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Ideas were noted from the data rather than coming with a hypothesis, with the intention of letting the data speak for itself, taking an inductive approach. Fieldnotes were cross referenced with visual data, and the ways in which what happened in this one literacy event- that is, the making of drawings, (Street, 2003) as part of the wider year-long school ethnography accorded with, or stood out as different from, interview and participant observation data from the classroom. As already indicated, the 'critical incident' (Allen, 2017:111) which drew my attention to this activity, lay in how one child responded to the task, which went '*against the grain*' (Thomas, 2019:3) of what had been seen in the setting so far from this one child. Popper (1959) discusses the need to prove yourself wrong- the importance, that is, here, of showing that this method did not evoke a deeper response from *all* children. It was, in particular those who were positioned through teacher narratives as more able at reading, who did not do this, which is useful as part of the analysis.

Characteristics of the larger data set are, for example: around half of the children drew a road and some characters with labels of the names of characters from the book. Some of the text (around 6 or so drawings) have labels that are illegible, because they are handwritten, and there was not time to ask each child about their meaning beyond the session. Also, not all children were forthcoming or able to tell exactly what the label *meant to them,* for it is what meanings participants attach to their worlds, rather than what we as researchers map on to them that I was aiming to explore. In general, however, other examples echo and reiterate the core themes mentioned here, for example children drawing themselves and their friends, indicating they felt 'bad' or 'horrible' because the bird had been hurt, and many chose to simply copy the illustration (10).

The nature of qualitative research, especially using the drawings and writings of 6-7 year olds, is necessarily subjective. Of course a simple alternative interpretation to what I propose is that the children did not engage with this activity depending on their experiences of schooling, and reading, but rather drew *what they thought I wanted to see.* Indeed social desirability (Edwards, 1957) is always an element of the research process, and my presence in the school is something which needs to be accounted for, though I argue this does not mitigate against the interpretation of the data made. Of course the wider context in which data are gathered is always salient. The fact the study was in a culturally diverse context is significant in light of the kinds of things the children drew and wrote about: a different cohort, with different experiences and homes, would have created a set of different ideas, themes and images to draw on, and would have different home literacy frameworks too. Therefore I argue that the significance of the context is really that this activity made it visible, like the children in Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti's (2006) study, who may not have been asked before, within the confines of the school, about their knowledge from outside it.

The insight offered by the data discussed in this paper relates to the larger study as it further promotes children's voice, and reflects the ways the children construct their subjectivities as readers, both linked to classroom hierarchies, and to other aspects of their identities outside school, such as faith and family. I have argued elsewhere that important data when researching the lives of young children can and should be gathered through non-verbal aspects of data (Scherer, 2016) and this is drawn upon in the analysis here too, in the response by Asaf to the task, discussed below.

Home, family and faith: a critical incident

The first drawing I want to consider is by a child who had been identified by school teachers as having 'learning difficulties' and was placed in the bottom group for reading. He was also taken out of class for extra remedial support on a daily basis. There was nothing unusual to note in his response to the task initially, only that there was a general hum of conversation on his table before all the children started to draw. I observed, on an ordinary basis, that Asaf did not have much to say in class, gazing out of the window, chatting with peers and so being reprimanded often, and frequently floating off task- which meant he missed playtimes outdoors, with other children in order to finish his work instead. His response offered a 'critical incident' (Allen, 2017:111) already mentioned in this paper as it was a departure from his ordinary classroom behaviour, and gave me insight into answering the research questions about children's meaning making of reading and learning to read discussed here.

 Insert Figure 1 here (Asaf, Somali, 6 years old)

Asaf draws himself at the centre of the image, and then positions family members further down the drawing, spread equally in a radius to him. There are plenty of labels to tell us who is in the drawing, what they are doing, and how he is feeling. Indeed Asaf, who rarely wrote much, wrote more than most of the other children in the class for this activity. His body language, hunched over the paper, hand protectively over the page, eyes on what he was drawing, not looking up, head down, were key too. We can also learn something about this boy's reading identity, particularly outside school; perhaps in the same way he would like to pray quietly, or position himself in the illustration of the book so too would he like to read quietly.

Postman (1985) flags up the 'solitary, sedentary' (288) nature of reading; something which is only at best ever simulated in a busy classroom of 30 or so young children, or achieved momentarily. I think, given that the place depicted in the illustration of the book is unlikely to be 'quiet' (a busy and bustling street scene) that this is doubly important for this child. Rose (2016) and Mitchell (2006) both argue that it is key to look at the social conditions in which images are produced. It is, in this line of thinking, key that these data were gathered in a school classroom, with a book chosen by a white, adult researcher, and produced by a young ethnic minority child positioned by teacher discourses as a 'poor reader'. If we explore Asaf's written notes on his drawing, some key themes emerge which situate this child's interest in

the place he has drawn, and crucially, this is not a school space. The fact Asaf feels 'excited' is connected to the fact the space he has drawn is 'quiet.' We certainly gain a sense of what Asaf felt; pleased about the opportunity to be with other family members, involved in prayer. Significantly, he went 'off piste' from the illustration in the book to a large extent, since actually it would be unlikely that you could find a quiet space in such a busy outdoor place filled with people in the original illustration. The representations of extended family are also key, and were crucial in Asaf's narration of his drawing: 'this is my mum and my sister Hamdi and Ekaam also Mousa' he said as he wrote.

We can draw from this exercise that what was important to this boy was his extended family, being with them, and his place in it, and practicing his religion. Asaf brings himself and his world into the book, responding with ideas from his home life, and evidence of his faith, and perhaps what Gregory et al (2013) call 'faith literacy', that is to say being able to 'read' and explore that faith in his talk and writing. Also, such an approach did go beyond a surface-level ''reading'' of the picture. Rosenblatt (1994) argues such aspects are core to efferent reading in her reader-response theory. To suggest this response is both personal and critical, as Lewis (2000) argues, I think would be to stretch what we see in the drawing beyond what is actually depicted in the image. Nonetheless, the act of talking about religious identity outside the classroom could perhaps be read as a critical engagement- in the sense that it is not about reproducing dominant discourses where picturebooks are predominantly about white families and white lives (Wilkins, 2009) but rather tells us about a Muslim family one child belongs to.

Insert figure 2 here (Nawal, Bangladeshi, 6 years old)

Nawal produced a perhaps less elaborate drawing (see figure 2 above), but we see the theme of people outside the classroom- from wider family circles- here too. It was as much the accompanying commentary that went with the picture which makes it relevant to the theme of home and family identity. The drawing shows 'me and my brother Shakib'. When I asked Nawal to tell me about his picture:

> L: Can you tell me about your picture?

> Nawal: That's me (pointing to the bigger person the middle of the picture), that's Shakib (pointing to the little stick character next to him). Last night my baby brother Shakib waked up and my mum and my dad was asleep and he was crying. I make the bottle and I went to Shakib. So I am tired.

L: How come, was it late?

Nawal: 4 o clock, 5 o clock. But I don't mind. I like to play with him, it's funny when he smiles and my mum lets me help, after school. And there is my mum and my dad, and then auntie and my cousins (*he points to the figures at the top of the picture then those at the bottom).* And stars cos its night. That's where I am.

Nawal situated himself in his drawing in a caring and nurturing space, away from school where he was helping look after his baby brother. He largely ignored the setting of the book in order to position himself with his family elsewhere. Nawal, like Asaf, was a child who was positioned in teacher's classroom discourse as having poor literacy, and poor family literacy. The similarity between the choice of family members, and Asaf's drawing is evident- but there was no case of 'copying' or sharing ideas as the two boys were seated on opposite sides of the room whilst completing this task. Nawal's feelings about, and success in, classroom learning and reading in particular, may be impacted through what he has chosen to represent. For both boys their families were central to their images. On a practical level, he is not sleeping well because he is being woken in the night by his baby brother, a window perhaps into his perceived poor concentration/poor reading in school on a day to day basis. His drawing provides insight into the complex nexus of responsibilities, family ties and concerns in this boys' ordinary life, part of his 'funds of knowledge' from outside school (Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti, 2006).

Intertextuality

This section explores children's involvement of other texts and aspects of classroom learning in the task. These drawings have been included because of the strong connection with teacher-perceived academic ability: of the 3 children in the 'higher ability' group, all drew characters from other stories they had read in school, or that reflected school experiences such as school trips they had been involved in. The class at the time had been reading and learning about a book called *Willy the Wizard* by Anthony Browne, a story about a monkey character with magical football boots. It might suggest that these ''more able'' pupils were seeking to demonstrate their 'classroom competency' (Hammersley, 1980: 89) through showing that they were aware of other literacy activities taking place in the classroom. It might also tell us that the context of the classroom and its learning and teaching breathes into this research activity, such that the children wish to display themselves as competent learners as part of their social identities in the classroom. If these children are reproducing school discourses in order to try to show what they ''know'' and that this matches what they have been taught, it may suggest they perceive this task as a ''test''. Or, at the very least, an opportunity to show what they remember from the books shared with them recently at school:

Insert figure 3 here

Akoji calls directly on *Willy the Wizard* as she draws a wizard (indicated by his starry cloak and speech bubble saying 'oh no, I am late for the wizard show!') she includes herself and me (the researcher) as well as a best friend from school. In short, the illustration is clearly situated in school space, and not that of home. She tells us she 'feels horrible' because the pigeon has been run over; perhaps there is some hope the wizard can make things better? The illustration she has made is well populated with characters from books and people from school, with an intertextual license taken where characters are borrowed from different sources. It seems she has entered comfortably into the world of school, school books and characters, and makes use of them in the drawing she creates here.

Insert figure 4 here

Tamvia, in contrast, includes the queen in her picture (above), who was not in the story of *To Heal a Broken Wing* or *Willy the Wizard*, though the royal wedding had taken place recently, and with it, a school trip to St James' park Tamvia had been part of. Given Tamvia writes that 'I am next to the queen and she is going to the park' and when asked about this she explained, 'St James' park where we went and saw Buckingham palace' it confirms the reference to the royal wedding/school trip. I would still argue this is evidence of Tamvia showing her classroom competency and 'knowing' about what she has done at school rather than putting herself personally in the picture, or revealing much about her identity outside school. The embodiment of her drawing is that of school experiences and school books.

We know from other research that children who are 'poor readers' (Rogers and Elias, 2012: 315) articulate their experiences with reading in a more negative way, and employ symbolic self-protection in order to distance themselves from the identity of 'poor reader'. As such, then, I might argue that the 'lower ability' children sought to protect their identities as readers away from the activity, and from school, in order to encompass and explore different parts of their identities where they felt more successful, such as helping with a baby, or spending time praying with family, where they *did* have 'funds of knowledge' Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti, (2006). How children felt about reading in general has bled into this activity. For Asaf, the activity becomes a wish fulfilment exercise- he would rather be somewhere else, where things can be felt or imagined to be 'better than' they are at school. For the ''better'' readers it was a way to showcase what they had read, and what they had been doing at school. The next section explores the last and most frequently found theme: that of mapping.

Mapping identity

Insert figure 5 here

Lastly, Rahim's drawing is shown above. He is positioned by teachers as strong at reading and also draws- intertextually again- on the character of ''Willy'' who is 'seeing what the pigeon is doing'. He makes more of a 'map' than the other drawings shown so far, though this was key in the wider sample, as already indicated. Rahim graphically interprets and creates the space in the story and makes it his own on the page. Creating a long road or path up the left hand side of the page, with traffic lights, himself (indicated with an arrow to 'this is me',) and other characters from the book, he maps space.

By asking 'where' you would be denotes space and spaciality, as I have already pointed outs. Space and spatiality are important in the written narrative Rahim creates, as well: 'I am behind Willy seeing what he is doing to the pigeon' he writes. Rahim, like Akoji, also uses the name of the character from 'Willy the Wizard'. He could, however, just have misheard the name of the character in *To Heal a Broken Wing,* Will as 'Willy' from the other story. Rahim's map allows him to both show and describe his location 'in the park' and 'not seeing Willy' presumably because he is too far away from him and is positioned behind him on the road. 'Willy' is positioned near the top of the drawing, to indicate that this figure is important; perhaps more important than the illustrator himself (Rahim) who is represented as a stick person nearer the bottom of the picture. We do learn what he is feeling, as he writes that in spite of 'Willy' 'fixin (sic) the pigeon' he, Rahim, is 'feeling sad about the pigeon'.

Ability, engagement and affect

It would seem that the engagement at an affective level in this activity from the participants was in part linked to academic, or particularly reading ability. Asaf was not interested in classroom literacy since it did not engage with his wider concerns: family, religion and prayer. The opportunity- for one of the first times in the school year- for him to articulate those concerns, offered him space to express himself and his Muslim identity. We know from planning in the Early Years, through schemes like plan-do-review (Greenwood and Kelly, 2017) that work that starts with children's interests offers them opportunities for success and enjoyment in the task at hand. The extent to which this reflects on the effectiveness of using reader-response in this context is less clear. Inviting children to draw upon how they felt seems to have appealed to , and have been taken up by, some but not others; the absorption of Asaf in this activity, which I have already noted was unusual for him, nonetheless suggests that asking him to think about his feelings was an invitation he wished to take up. At the same time, ''more able'' children, rather than engaging with creating a visual representation of their feelings, or of their home lives, sought to include story language, and characters, from other books they read at school, or activities during

school time. Asaf and Nawal were more interested in reading and talking about things ''from home''. Akoji and Tamvia, both positioned in the top academic group for reading, were seen as 'good' at school and reading, and did what was expected of them in terms of comportment, work and behaviour. These girls produced a much more conventional drawing, which used imagery, vocabulary and story elements (characters and their costumes) from other books they had been read in class. The next section offers some concluding remarks about this paper. What we learn about children's reading is, like so much which happens in school, fundamentally social. What we learn about children's identity is that it is partly formed through their opportunities to have agency in what they read. The kinds of literacy related activities (teacher led, or activities which use reader-response, as well as other approaches) they are offered at school matter too.

Conclusion

This paper has considered children's drawings made as part of an activity where I read with them in class, as part of a research project on their reading, learning to read, and what they felt about it. This paper explored the use of reader-response as a way in to accessing children's meaning making about books. It was the accessing of children's responses through drawing which provided a productive spring board for discussions around the children's meaning making of this book, but also in their subject formation of their-selves as readers (Rogers and Elias, 2012:315). Having queried the notion that such methods are straightforwardly positive, I would assert, as Mitchell (2006) does the need to consider the social conditions in which drawings are made, in this case that of the classroom, and to remember that 'art' or drawing production is fundamentally 'social' and never happens in a vacuum- and is structured by and structured through the space of the school. Mitchell (2006) advises us to think about the implications of asking marginalised groups- in this case minority children labelled as 'failing' to learn to read, to draw. As such, my 'critical incident' (Allen, 2017:111), drawing attention to a disengaged boys' reading, and response to this task, might need to be problematized, as he is doubly marginalised, as a 'poor reader', from a minority group, then singled out for this research as an *example* of disengagement. Here, the interchange was productive in the sense it allowed the children space to display their social competence, through indicating they were 'knowers' about their lives outside school, but being mindful and reflecting on such power relations is useful and helps contribute to new knowledge about the adaptation of strategies for use with children, and about their experiences of reading picture books.

 A reader-response based approach does seem to offer opportunities for developing dialogue between a child and a book in the process of reading and learning to read. We have seen this in action in this paper, in the case of one class of children around the time they reach the stage of being emergent readers, in ways which Rosenblatt (1994) identified as ''aesthetic''- or at a deeper level- rather than efferent, or at a more surface level. The limits of reader-response, and the critique which has been

levelled at it to suggest reading is not, as such, ''individual'' are to some extent borne out in the way that the children who were positioned as having higher ability in the class responded, as they drew on what they had been reading in school more generally. Equally, it is worth reflecting on the extent to which I reproduced dominant discourses, in how I set up the activity, and in the responses made to the book, as Schieble (2010) has indicated this is a very real concern when working with reader-response. Also, perhaps it is always hard to escape this idea that children feel they need to ''get it right'', even if there is no ''correct'' way to respond to an activity. Does this mean they were reproducing dominant raced, classed and gendered values? The opportunity to go *'against the grain'* (Thomas, 2019:3) of the book, or its messages, was perhaps not put forward in most of the children's responses to it; nor did I invite them to do so. They did, though, display a range of responses to the task which indicates the tool of reader response could be developed further, as Lewis argues (2000), to read both for pleasure and with criticality.

A note on the table of data below

Table of participants

Below is a table of data which indicates information about the children in the study. Ethnicity is self-described by the children. Levels are from end of year assessments. Such levels have now been abolished, (Quinn, 2018). For those not familiar with these levels, according to the National Curriculum, a child should be ''working at'' a level 2C/3 to be meeting age related expectations by the end of Year 2. P scales are for children working towards, but not yet meeting the lowest National Curriculum level (1C); a level progresses from C-A. The expectation is that each child would ''move up'' one increment, for example from a 1C- 1B over a term (12 weeks). Of course, progress is not always that linear, and, as can be seen, many of the children, by these markers, are ''underachieving'' in their reading- level 1 is actually aimed at children a year younger, aged 5-6, broadly speaking. These expectations, it should be pointed out, relate to schools in England, but not Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Only 3 children were working at or ahead of age related expectations: