

# Attune, animate and amplify: Creating youth voice assemblages in pARTicipatory sexuality education research

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## Abstract

This paper explores the politics and praxis of ‘youth voice assemblages’ in an exploratory and pARTicipatory research project where 125 young people (aged 11–18) from England, Scotland and Wales shared what and how they are learning about relationships, sex and sexuality. Creative methods enabled us to ‘attune’ to this learning and generate ‘darta’ (arts-based data). We then ‘animated’ these darta as dartaphacts (creative objects) including films, poetry and education cards. Finally, we ‘amplified’ these dartaphacts in a face-to-face launch event. We argue that a creative ontology of ‘youth voice’ is imperative to develop more relevant, responsive and ethical sexuality and relationships education.

## KEYWORDS

assemblage, creative methods, sexuality, voice, young people

## INTRODUCTION: MAKING YOUTH VOICE MATTER DIFFERENTLY IN RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION RESEARCH

Since Article 12 of the UNCRC's (1990, p.5) declaration that children who are ‘capable of forming’ their ‘own views’, have ‘the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them’,

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the concept of ‘youth voice’ has been important across the fields of academic and practitioner research, campaigning, education and policy-making. The concept is indebted to feminist standpoint theories and sociologies of childhood which position children as critical, creative and curious beings and not only becomings and hail their accounts as competent and knowledgeable portrayals of their lived experience.

However, the concept of voice in relation to the transdisciplinary field of relationships and sexuality education (RSE) runs into a risk-saturated and risk-averse world (Bay-Cheng, 2003). The ethical imperative to listen involves, as Kathleen Quinlivan (2018, p.145) has argued, ‘the formidable and destabilising challenge of letting go of what adults have already deemed young people need to know about sexuality and relationships’. As Ollis et al. summarise (2022, p.157), it is difficult to achieve ‘a platform on which to discuss how young people’s ideas align with or diverge from current practice and debates surrounding what sexuality education should, could or ought to be about’. Research focussing on risks and harms to children and young people<sup>i</sup> (e.g., harassment and bullying), sometimes informed by problematically prescriptive colonial and developmental discourses and holding to notions of childhood innocence (Robinson & Davies, 2014) may be seen as more acceptable than genuinely open-ended and diverse explorations that attempt to connect to young people’s own complex lived experiences (Atkinson et al., 2022; Coll et al., 2019; Renold et al., 2015).

Hence, sexuality education research<sup>ii</sup> may provide a starting point for exploring the broader critiques of ‘youth voice’ that have been levelled at the concept in recent years. First, the ethics of extraction. Even in research designed and conducted *with* children and young people as participants and agents (i.e., rather than research on children as objects or subjects of research), concerns remain about the mis/use of voice as an ‘extractable resource’ (Mayes, 2023, p.48). This is most acute in tokenistic policy-focussed consultations and evaluations in which ‘youth voice’ is commodified as a dis-embedded and disembodied feature of the process. A second, and related, question is how far ‘gathering/hearing the voices of children’ automatically feels empowering to those involved (given that of course, some ‘voices’ are louder or more comfortably heard than others), or prompts those with decision-making powers, from policy-makers to parents, to be moved and act in ways that have the ‘best interests’ of the child/children in mind (Bragg, 2021). This is particularly so in a current, troubling, socio-political climate in the UK, which seems to be retreating from and/or refusing to build sexuality education policy, guidance and practice (and the ethical relationalities it demands) that can address the diversity of lived experience (Ashton, 2024; Setty & Dobson, 2022). Finally, a third critique addresses ontology, challenging the assumption that ‘voice’ should or could refer only to the speaking subject, that is, only to verbal or linguistic expression. Scholarship in this field has argued for a more expansive, embodied, material and embedded understanding of ‘voice’, encompassing more diverse modes of expression, including looks or gestures, silence as well as sound, attending to the affective qualities of ‘voice’ that can only be sensed or felt (Berger-Correa & Ringrose, 2023). ‘Voice’ within these framings is more than a singular expression of an individual with interiority and intent (as the ‘child capable of forming their views’ formulation suggests). Rather, as Eve Mayes powerfully argues:

‘Voice, reconceptualised after the ontological turn, emerges from relations among objects, spaces, affects, bodies, discourses, texts and in dynamically shifting arrangements and rearrangements’ (Mayes, 2023, p.47).

In this paper, we explore the discursive, material and affective agency of ‘voice’ through Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) concept of ‘assemblage’ (see also Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). The Deleuzo–Guattarian concept *assemblage* is a generative one for us because it allows for a relational and processual understanding of how multiple actants of different types,

scales and forces (people, objects, spaces, affects, discourses, etc.) entangle and intra-act<sup>iii</sup> under certain conditions to produce a kind of posthuman agency (Buchanan, 2021). What ‘matters’ (Barad, 2007) then is an ongoing and dynamic process of differentiation and meaning-making in which agency is not just something humans possess. As Karen Barad (2007, 394) argues, ‘with each intra-action, the manifold of entangled relations is reconfigured ... there are no singular causes. And there are no individual agents of change’. Rather, there are entangled agencies of matter. The agential matter in a youth voice assemblage then can take many forms and traverse micro and macro assemblages: They can be what is spoken and crafted in an interview, they can be posthuman participants at a launch event (e.g., a visual artefact), and they can materialise in policy (e.g., Article 12, UNCRC) or a protest, or in an exhibition. Indeed, ‘voice’ might be usefully described as a ‘matterphorical’ concept (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021), in so far as it is a concept which continues to make meaning matter across methodological, pedagogical and political terrains. Like Mayes (2023), we find it productive to continue to work critically with the concept of ‘youth voice’ in the field of sexuality education, while seeking to push it in new (materialist) directions and attune to youth voice creatively in how it might come to matter.

## **ATTUNE, ANIMATE AND AMPLIFY: MAKING SEXUALITY EDUCATION RESEARCH MATTER WITH ‘DARTAPHACTS’**

The concept of attunement helps theorise how to ‘listen’ to ‘youth voice’ as a material-discursive-affective assemblage. It offers an explicit counterpoint to simplistic and individualistic notions of seeing, listening and recording of experience drawn from positivist paradigms of research and knowledge production (Snaza et al., 2016). Daniel Stern (2010) conceives attunement in terms of ‘vitality affects’ that enable a sharing of experience, with the arts as one of the most conducive modalities for attuning to embodied multi-sensory experience. Attunements also demand a lively in situ analytic practice for registering the qualitative multiplicity of what comes to matter in creative processes, such as moments of dissonance, un/certainty and ambivalence across multiple registers from the satirical to the serious. As Kathleen Stewart (2014, p.126) writes, an ‘empirical attunement’ is leaning into a moment that is opening up the process of making things matter.

Working in the creative mode is a potentially powerful way of making ethical spaces for attuning to the complexity of *what matters* in sensitive areas such as sexuality with children and young people (Allen & Rasmussen, 2024; Allen & Rasmussen, 2017; Lupton & Leahy, 2021, see also Johnson et al., 2020; Robinson & Davies, 2014). What matters is not assumed or predetermined but co-constructed *with* children and young people. As researchers, we have worked for over a decade with different modalities, techniques and materials to develop an affirmative and creative praxis. Together, we have crafted ethical-political spaces enabling what we call, *pARTicipation* (Renold et al., 2020), where feelings and ideas flow and can be surfaced and transformed through artefacts that can carry and communicate young people's words, feelings and experiences within and beyond the fieldwork encounter. The concepts of *darta* and *dartaphact* have become useful to help us theorise this praxis.

As Renold (2018) has explored in previous writing, the term ‘dartaphact’, which combines the words ‘data,’ ‘art’ and ‘act’, captures how creative methods unfold throughout the life of a research project, from the field to a creative performative output, like a film or a poem. It is intentionally ambiguous. The first part of the concept, ‘darta,’ (a combination of ‘data’ and ‘art’) is a deliberate intervention to value the speculative process of attunement in what might come to matter through arts-based research. Nested within *darta* is ‘dart’, which also captures the lability

and movement of what might be better described as ‘dartaphacting’. The second half of the concept, ‘phact,’ signals the explicit human and more-than-human agency of creative objects and their potential to enact change (‘act’). The ‘ph’ in the term replaces the ‘f’ to signal posthuman agency and challenge assumptions that ‘facts’ in any simple sense exist out in the world. In brief, we theorise *darta* as the process of using creative methods to craft and communicate experience and meanings in the field and *dartaphacts* as the art-ful objects that carry these in digital or physical form, and into new places and spaces (e.g., online and in-person events).

Working with the vitality of what more data can be and become through creative methods has gained momentum in recent years, particularly in queer and feminist new materialist and posthuman approaches to research (e.g., Coleman & Jungnickel, 2023; Ellingson & Sotorin, 2020; Hickey-Moody et al., 2021; Mohandas & Osgood, 2023; Ringrose et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2020), including within the international field of sexuality education (see Allen, 2021; Gunnarsson & Ceder, 2024; Lehtonen et al., 2023; Mamo et al., 2021; Marston, 2024; Pihkala & Huuki, 2019; Renold, 2024; Renold et al., 2025; Ringrose et al., 2019; Stanhope, 2022; Strom et al., 2019; Timperley, 2020; Wolfe, 2018). What unites this scholarship is how academics are crafting and/or coproducing experiential artefacts, or ‘dartaphacts’, which have informed and transformed diverse publics, practices and policies. Examples of making dartaphacts from our own research have included re-animating data and research ‘findings’ through comics and zines, visual art and film and performance art such as dance, poetry and drama. Enlivening research at launches, exhibitions, online resources, websites and social media posts and thus becoming ‘event-ful’ (Renold et al., 2020) with how research can matter, has also included platforming young people’s own dartaphacts: from ‘ruler-skirts’ to call out sexual harassment (Renold, 2018), ‘craft-back’ collages to address body-shaming in advertising (Ringrose et al., 2021) and performing data archives in sexuality research (McGeeney et al., 2018). Such re-animations scramble the conventional linear path of research outputs and blur distinctions between research, engagement, pedagogy and activism (Renold & Ivinson, 2022; Renold & Ringrose, 2017; Renold & Timperley, 2021; Retallack & Millett, 2024). They invite diverse audiences—young people, parents, educators, academics, practitioners and policy-makers and wider community publics—to engage with what might have come to matter in a research project. Dartaphacts can thus surface and re-matter youth voice assemblages in reports, films, poems and digital resources that can be shared online and offline. They have the potential to enable a more embodied attunement with/to the materiality of youth voice that also amplifies that voice.

To explore the making and mattering of youth voice assemblages in relationships and sexuality education research, this paper details the methodological journey of an exploratory youth-focused 12 month research project, ‘Sexuality Education+<sup>iv</sup>’ conducted in 2022 and launched in 2023. It was developed collaboratively with the National Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), one of the UK’s longest-standing children’s charities. The charity’s research tender chimed with our own expertise and interests in many ways. It had an explicit focus on young people’s experiences of relationships, sex and sexuality<sup>v</sup>; it aimed to go beyond formal and informal learning in educational contexts and include what we have conceptualised as a ‘living RSE curriculum’ (Renold & McGeeney, 2017); it called for both arts-based methods and creative outputs and it accepted the value of youth co-production through an online young people’s advisory group (YPAG).

A total of 125 young people<sup>vi</sup> aged 11–18, across six schools and two youth groups<sup>vii</sup> in England, Wales and Scotland, participated in the making of ‘darta’ (arts-based data) mostly in self-selecting friendship groups or friendship pairs and sometimes on their own, sharing what and how they are learning about relationships, sex and sexuality.<sup>viii</sup> These ‘darta’ were re-worked into creative

research outputs: a 90-page report, a 10-min film, educational cards, and a series of data-poems created by the YPAG. In developing the methodology, our concern, and the focus of this paper, is how our multi-layered empirical arts-praxis enabled us to *attune* to, *animate* as resources and *amplify* for diverse audiences, how young people surface and share what matters to them.

We open up the making of darta (arts-based data generated in the interviews) and dartaphacts (the creative outputs), across three sections: *attuning to what matters* provides an overview of the sequence of methods, followed by a more detailed account of the darta generated by two of these methods for capturing the material agency of voice; *re-animating what matters* shares the process of developing the anticipated and unanticipated creative outputs, or dartaphacts, which generate a suite of multi-modal resources for educators and the wider public to interact with; and *amplifying what matters* provides a glimpse into how the darta generated in the field were re-materialised as dartaphacts and then curated for Relationships and Sexuality Education educators and policy-makers to physically interact with at one of our in-person launches.<sup>ix</sup>

## ATTUNING TO WHAT MATTERS: HOW pARTicipatory METHODS CAN MAKE AND HOLD SPACE FOR YOUTH-VOICE ASSEMBLAGES

Our participatory approach places a strong emphasis on creativity, as demonstrated by our use of the term ‘pARTicipatory’, where ‘ART’ is capitalised. In this section, we outline the key creative methods that the team and the young people’s advisory group (YPAG) consolidated and sequenced to form the foundation for our pARTicipatory approach to ‘empirically attune’ to how young people are learning about relationships, sex and sexuality (see [Figure 1](#) from our co-produced young persons’ research project infographic). The research workshops were conceived and crafted as a relational ‘contact zone’ where young people are invited to start from ‘the already-felts’ (Manning, 2009, p. 30)—matters that they are willing to share

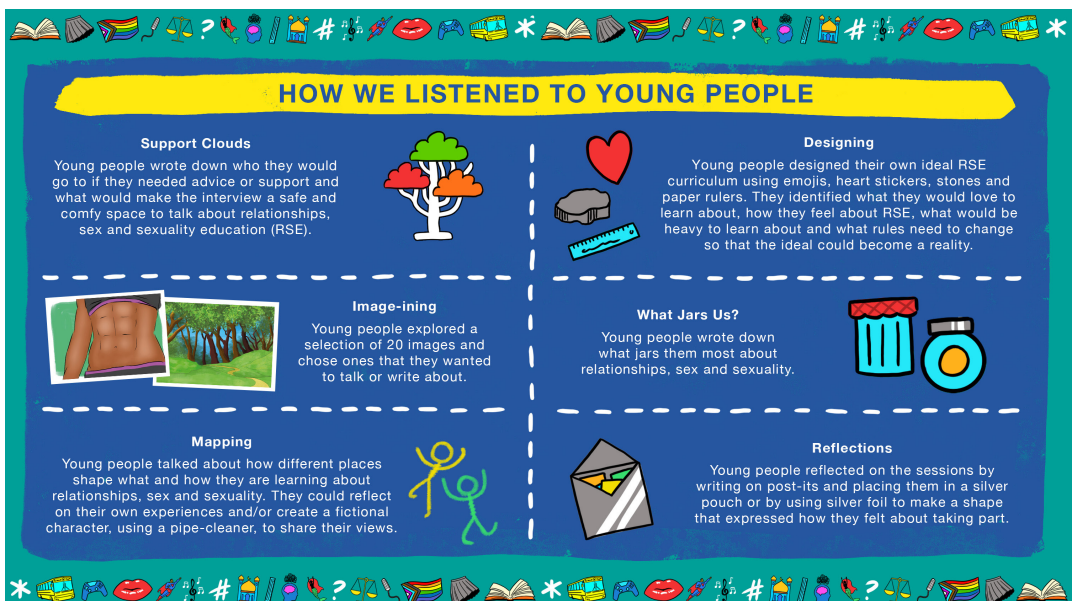


FIGURE 1 How we listened to young people.

with friends but also researchers whom they have met just once (either online or face to face when we introduced the project). Exploring the different feelings and meanings young people themselves attach to particular experiences, and being interested in the full spectrum of their everyday life, also enable us to move away from normative adult understandings and preconceived ideas (Coll et al., 2018). The activities all allow young people to respond at their own pace and in different ways (e.g., talking, writing, drawing and using symbols such as emojis or hearts). While young people can pause, skip, adapt or return to an activity, there is a carefully scaffolded and iterative flow to how we invite young people to participate. Indeed, fundamental to our research design and the unboxing RSE methodology, from which it originated (Renold & Timperley, 2023), is an ethical stance of not assuming that we know what young people might want to share or how they want to share it. In practice, this means that we refrain from asking young people direct questions on topics that they have not already raised or shared with us. In addition, because young people were interviewed in friendship groups, the topics they did raise were often ones, they told us, that they had already discussed with each other. In any cases where we identified discomfort from participants, our pARTicipatory approach was flexible enough to move a discussion on, return to these moments in follow-up interviews, pause or stop the interview and check-in with young people following an interview (see endnote xi).

The following sub-sections are the final suite of methods, refined with the YPAG, that the research team facilitated to generate the voice-assemblage darta:

## Safety and support cloud tree

Making<sup>x</sup> informed consent matter with creative methods has become a central part of our ethical praxis (Renold et al., 2017; Renold & Edwards, 2018). Following a re-introduction to the project (i.e., its aims, methods, ethics and creative outputs), the first activity invites young people to write on coloured paper clouds, first, where they might go if they need advice or support and secondly, how together we might make the interview space a comfortable space to talk about sensitive issues. The clouds are then hung onto a tree which stays in the space throughout the interview, and can be added to during the interview (Figure 2). We draw on the Latin roots of 'safe' as in 'whole' and 'connecting to others' to emphasise how safety and support are a relational endeavour—materialised when individual clouds (darta) become a collective cloud tree (dartaphact).

Despite the majority of young people never having had any experience of being asked their views on what might make a safe space for RSE, the voice-assemblage that surfaces is notably consistent and directive with the majority calling for a mixture of affirmative and prohibitive behaviours and feelings: 'not feeling like I'm being judged', 'not laughed at', 'anonymous', 'honesty', 'as confidential as it can be', 'don't make people feel awkward', 'not too serious', 'respectful', 'casual', 'feel comfortable', 'listening to everyone'. Some young people are quite specific, 'no weird stares', 'feel our problems', 'let us speak in our own time, we don't have to open up all the time', 'personal belongings'. It is thus a process that allows us to share our own institutional ethical protocols<sup>xi</sup> (e.g., safeguarding), attune to what feeling safe, supported, protected and listened to, looks and feels like for diverse groups of young people, and creatively and collaboratively generate a shared understanding of how these protocols might materialise within and beyond the fieldwork encounter.



FIGURE 2 Safety and support cloud tree.

## Image-ining relationships, sex and sexuality

Young people are then invited to explore a selection of 20+ drawn image cards<sup>xii</sup> and choose any that might connect to an area of relationships, sex and sexuality. Some images (an action man, a game console and a tampon) are more representational and less abstract than others (a shark, a wall and woods) and some cards are left blank, to allow other contributions (Figure 3). Young people can interact with the image cards in any way they want to (e.g., talk about them, write on the backs of the cards, draw on the cards or create stories with the cards). Given the diversity of experience within and between age groups, this activity allows the team to attune to group dynamics, interest in, and comfort levels on, various topics and the language being used and became an important element of our pARTicipatory praxis—to open up what counts as RSE, to platform young people's own meaning-making and to continue to co-create an ethical space that can both hold and play with what surfaces (see Renold & Timperley, 2023, for the methodological journey of making these cards).

## Locating the living and learning about relationships, sex and sexuality

Rolling out a large spool of blue paper, this activity invites participants to draw, talk and write about how different places and spaces shape what and how young people are learning about relationships, sex and sexuality. The roll is purposefully blue—a colour that can connote peace, calm and blue sky thinking for exploration. To support an emphasis on how they feel about these experiences (e.g., what might be fun, risky, pleasurable, safe and unsafe, harmful, weird, odd or boring), a range of emojis are available to attach to different topics, areas, interactions and



FIGURE 3 Image-ining relationships and sexuality education.

behaviours. As in all the activities, sharing their personal experiences is optional. This is made explicit by suggesting they make characters out of coloured pipe cleaners.

### Designing your ‘ideal’ RSE curriculum?

Next, a large spool of black paper is rolled out, upon which metallic shiny pens are used to create future visions of what is needed and what could be. The rolls are purposefully black—a bolder, stronger colour that can symbolise both endings and beginnings and positive, protective, mysterious, heavy and negative affects. On this, young people are invited to design their own ideal RSE curriculum, with prompts for what, where, how and why they want to learn and seek support and advice on relationships, sex and sexuality. Love heart stickers are provided to put on ‘something that you would most love to learn about/explore in an ideal world’; stones for anything that might be ‘too difficult/heavy’; paper rulers for writing what rules (social rules, laws) need to change to enable this learning.

### What jars you the most?

This activity plays on the double meaning of the word ‘jar’. It describes the object, but it also connects to the definition of the verb ‘jar’ (to vibrate, irritate, jolt etc., see Renold & Ringrose, 2019). Young people are invited to write on small post-it notes and/or draw with Sharpies on or in a small glass jar what affects them the most about any of the issues discussed throughout the interview. This also allows young people to share their views privately with just the researchers. Many young people decorate their jars with the craft materials available, such as emoji stickers, pipe-cleaners and hearts (Figure 4). These jars can then be used, with permission, as prompts for the follow-up sessions.





FIGURE 4 Relationships and sexuality education jars.

### Reflections pouch

The final activity (also an individual one) invites young people to reflect on the workshop by writing on post-its and placing them in a silver (reflective/iridescent) pouch. Young people who take part in the follow-up session can also use silver foil (reflective/mirroring) to make a shape that expresses how they feel about taking part. This activity not only allows us to assess whether we had co-produced the safe and supportive space that young people had written on their clouds, but their reflections became a central theme in the final section of the report, ‘Listen to us’ on how ‘young people would like to be active participants in building a creative learning environment with each other and their RSE providers’ (Renold et al., 2023, 18).

## UN/EN-ROLLING A LIVING RSE CURRICULUM

Rather than discuss all these methods in detail, some of which we have written about elsewhere, in this section we want to zoom in on the paper rolls, to slow down, and open up some of the processes of making darta and dartaphacts and illustrate the multiple and often unanticipated attunements (between and among participants, researchers and materials) going on at any moment in the fieldwork space.

Creating voice assemblage runways using long rolls of paper was an activity that first started out in the Relationship Matters project (Renold, 2018). It is a method that has been adapted ever since to harness the momentum from a previous activity (like the cards) or gathering views on specific events or experiences and can be added to by multiple participants over time

(see, e.g., Renold & Ivinson, 2019). In previous projects, particularly those on sensitive topics, we have found that depending upon the context and group dynamic, its relational, collective production can potentially forge new ideas and connections or consolidate and intensify already shared experience or affective pathways. As with all arts-based methods, these two activities are engaged with in diverse ways: some groups ask researchers to scribe for them, some write key headlines but very little else to spotlight key issues, others populate the edges or corners of the roll and/or use other craft materials available to doodle or manipulate when they talk, as one young person reflects: 'I loved that we got to fidget with things'. Some young people continue to express themselves beyond the spoken word. For example, working on the blue roll, one young person says 'I can't quite explain how I feel when I listen to music' but when prompted is happy to draw how they feel and sketch a figure with headphones walking through the woods, and another resting in bed with a smiley face. Working on the black roll, perhaps inspired by the support cloud tree in the centre of the table, one young person draws a tree with question marks on sticky fruit post-its and emojis hanging from the branches for 'who' they could be learning from (Figure 5).

The next section further opens up how the un/enrolling activities entangled with the full suite of methods and in ways that consolidated and created a conducive environment or 'contact-zone' for a dynamic voice-assemblage to surface.

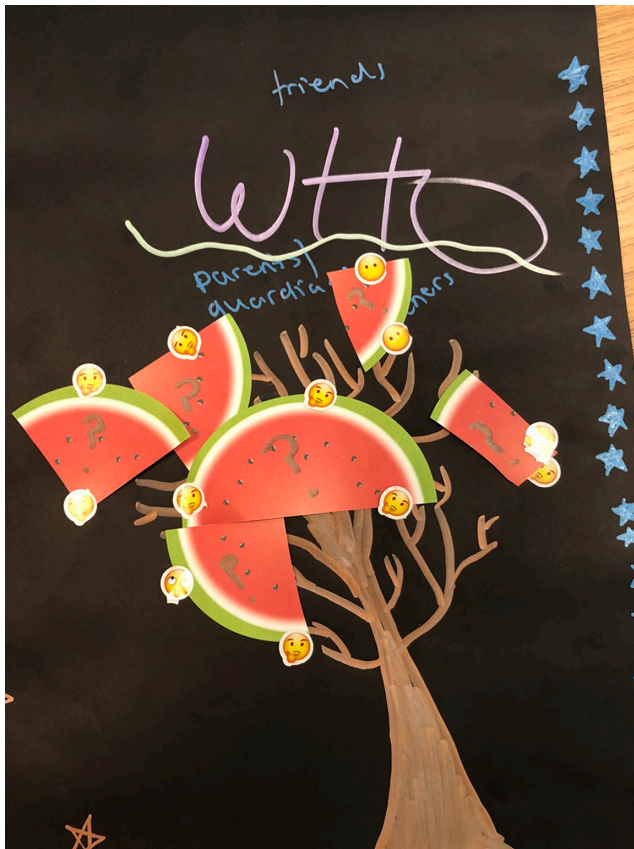


FIGURE 5 Relationships and sexuality education question tree.

## The more-than of a tampon: Friendships, private stories and clear waters

We direct our attention to the blue and black rolls crafted by a group of five young people, aged 16 and 17. They describe their gender as ‘female’, their sexuality as ‘heterosexual’ or ‘straight’, their ethnicity as ‘Pakistani’, ‘Indian’ and ‘Bangladeshi’, and their religion/faith as ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islam’ in their ‘about me’ questionnaire (completed at the end of the first research workshop). We select this group because both researchers (EJ and Betsy) were captivated by the ‘forms of vitality’ (Stern, 2010) in the darta assemblage generated during the first workshop. We hope it provides readers with a glimpse of how a sequence of carefully crafted, yet always speculative, pARTicipatory methods can attune to what is already in motion and becoming. We begin by exploring the group’s engagement with the illustrated cards to contextualise what surfaced on the blue-roll and how the momentum exploded in a rhizomatic burst, on the future-oriented black roll. We then scroll back to speculate on what was rolled out (unrolled) and what discursive-material-affective intensities were registered (en-rol(1)ed) by drawing on the groups’ reflections on the process in follow-up sessions.

The methods’ emphasis on place and space resonates strongly with this group. They spend an hour talking about and writing on the image-cards, sharing story after story that traverses the what, who, where, when, and how of RSE in ways that open up to a full ecology of experience. For example, the woods image sparks stories about their local woods where young people have ‘sex on the logs’ and of ‘boys taking advantage of girls in non-public areas’. The football generates a discussion about ‘same-sex dating in the football team’ and a ‘transphobic coach’. The game-controller image elicits scenarios of the gendered and sexual harassment that girls/women who ‘beat’ boys/men in online games can receive, particularly the normalisation of ‘SMD’ (‘suck my dick’) comments. The school bus image picks up the thread of sexual harassment in the ways ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian porn’ is ‘airdropped’ to mobile phones to shame or hurt, which then opens up a discussion about the gendered double standards of masturbation talk in public settings. The TikTok image ignites a heated discussion of ‘misogynist billionaires... socializing young boys’. The brick-wall image generates talk about the barriers to being able to talk openly about sex, and the six-pack image sets off several stories on how they have to navigate stereotypes of what a ‘Muslim/Asian girl’s body’ should look like and wider racialized gender roles.

Over the hour, a rhizomatic assemblage of experience across multiple places and spaces is shared.<sup>xiii</sup> So, when the next method in the sequence, the blue roll, is unrolled, the transition to further locate ‘where’ young people are learning about relationships, sex and sexuality is already in motion. The group both further consolidate and share more detailed stories on key places and spaces. Most of these focus on digital experiences, including Instagram, Tiktok, Discord, phone calls, text messages, bus journeys, YouTubers, Wattpad, group chats and fandom sites (Figure 6). We focus on the Tampon image card to illustrate further how (in this case) a tampon rolls up, and rolls out a polyvocal assemblage of experience.

The tampon image-card sparks puzzlement, then a spontaneous comment about how ‘people call periods shark week ... because of the pain and stuff ... and the blood’, how ‘some people shame others for not liking tampons and say they’re weak’, and ‘period poverty’. A living RSE curriculum is in full swing. On the blue roll, the tampon is relocated to the internet and the shopping mall – but only “The Internet” is written on the blue roll. Out spills a lengthy, emotionally charged conversation from Asma about ‘going incognito’ and ‘teaching themselves’ on Google, and Wazeera sharing how she was ‘waiting years to talk about it’ despite ‘starting (her period)



FIGURE 6 Locating the living and learning about relationships, sex and sexuality.

in year 7'. The conversation then moves to the shame of buying pads from 'male cashiers' and learning more about consent than 'hygiene' or 'arousal' in school-based sex education:

**Wazeera:** In sixth form, I feel like a lot more people are having sex. There might be a lot of talk about condoms and safe sex and consent, which is brilliant, those talks are really good, but all we ever learn about is consent.

**Malia:** It's not what you do after it.

**Wazeera:** Yeah, or if you get pregnant, what are your options? How to make an informed choice, where to go. Nobody told me you could get free contraception and stuff, ever. And it's like, why does nobody know about that?

**Researcher:** So lots on consent.

**Wazeera:** There's SO much on consent. There's not even stuff like you wash your hands before you finger someone (laughter). 'Make sure you ask'. That is it. (more laughter)

**Khadija:** The boys don't learn anything from it.

**Wazeera:** They don't talk about arousals and how you need to be aroused to have sex. Nobody talks about that because that's apparently weird.

As the girls become increasingly critical of what and how they have been learning, what they are missing out on and what they need, one of the group loudly exclaims that 'there should be a whole handbook of everything!'. The researchers attune to this declaration and swiftly introduce the black roll. In under 9 min (which is all the time we have left), they are more than ready to roll out and enrol(1) the future of what they want and need from RSE, consolidating and expanding upon all that has come to matter and filling almost every inch of the 150×90 cm black roll (Figure 7).

Despite the pronouncement from Wazeera that 'all we ever learn about is consent' and how they 'learn more about periods and sex instead of just consent', we see, what we would conceptualise as a consent assemblage creep across the roll. What surfaces are clear directives ('Saying no isn't being frigid') questions ('What to do if you get abused?', 'How to recognize if you're being

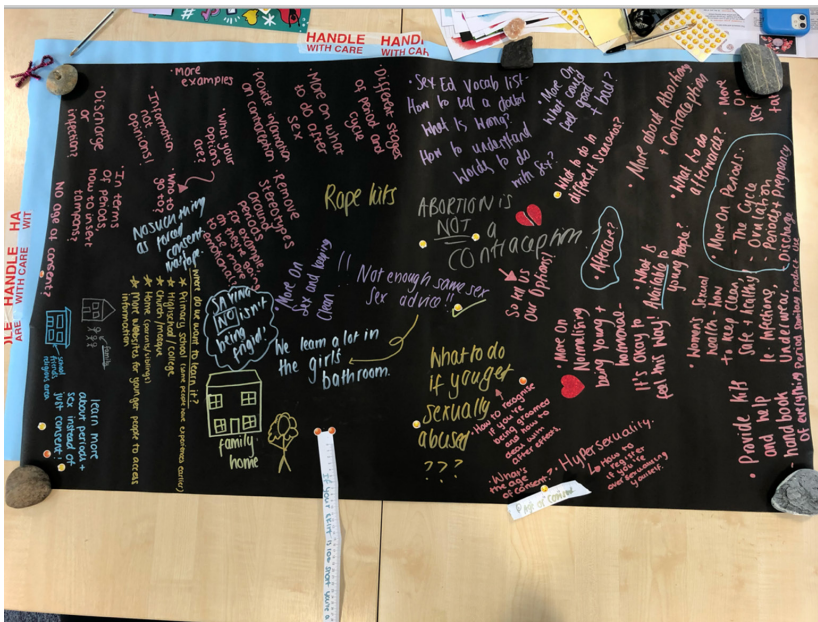


FIGURE 7 Designing our 'ideal' relationships and sexuality education curriculum.

groomed?') rules that need changing ('If your skirt is too short you're a slut, if it's too long you're a prude' written on a paper-ruler) and resources ('Rape kits'). Consent reappears with a polyvocality that perhaps demonstrates how so much more is needed. Unsurprisingly, menstruation and reproduction, along with the lack of adequate education, dominate a significant portion of the discussion, ranging from stigma and menstrual cycles to abortion and contraception. Meanwhile, pleasure in sex, which may be more difficult to articulate, interweaves with less detail: 'sneaky links', 'more on what could feel good and bad', 'more on sex', including 'same-sex experiences', with a line that leads to the statement, 'we learn a lot in the girls' bathroom'.

Methods are peopled and placed, and thus what comes to matter is contingent upon the relational contact zone in which they are created. There are multiple moments shared during the session, as well as in the follow-up paired interviews, that alert us to how many of our creative techniques for clustering experience are meshing with this friendship group's own techniques for voicing what matters within their own friendship group and beyond. Our emphasis on collective voice and our articulated ethics of care, in which participants are not encouraged to do or share anything they are not comfortable with, seem to mirror how they support each other to speak up or stay silent. They are a tight-knit friendship group, as Malia states: 'We're all just really close to each other'. This bond is apparent early on when the group patiently wait 20 min for one of their friends to arrive because they do not want to begin the session without her. Their support and safety clouds are focused and detailed, including an agreement of 'no sympathy' ... '[not] like pity' ... 'you don't want anyone being sorry for you because that just makes you feel bad', and an awareness that 'we all talk over each other'.

During the image card activity, Wazeera discloses to the group how in her previous friendships she 'couldn't really speak up about what I wanted to ... I couldn't talk about it ... I'd get ridiculed. But now that I've joined this group, I feel free and I can speak'. As the session progresses we also discover that as a group, they frequently share 'private stories' on SnapChat to support each other with different experiences. What we are noticing throughout, is how the group are



FIGURE 8 Friend-ship.

attuning to each other and constantly leaning into moment after moment that enables them to ‘speak up’ and make their voices matter. And while their ‘closeness’ is evident throughout the session, their reflections nevertheless acknowledge how the session unfolds and brings them even ‘closer as friends’. We also learn that some of them have never shared their experiences in a full group before, so to ‘say out loud’ what they are thinking and feeling without repercussions of being called ‘argumentative’ and really ‘feel heard’ and ‘talk(ing) about stuff we wouldn’t normally talk about’, is something they ‘would love to do again’.

This affirmative feeling seems particularly acute for Malia, ‘because we’ve not done anything like this before, at all. Not just in school’. After a few minutes of ‘feeling shy’ and ‘a bit awkward’, she explains that ‘it didn’t take that long to feel comfortable. It was really really lovely because everyone was chipping in with their conversation and experiences ... together, as a group’. Using the silver foil to create a figure of how they feel about the group interview, Malia makes a boat (Figure 8):

**Malia:** I’m making a boat (...) because it’s like ... because it ... I feel stupid but this (pointing at the blue roll) reminds me of water, and it’s like clear and like calm and everything (...) and yesterday the table thing was black, and now it’s blue (...) it’s like clear waters.

**Researcher:** Clear waters

**Malia:** Yeah

**Researcher:** Is that how it feels?

**Malia:** Yeah

**Researcher:** After yesterday?

**Malia:** Hmm. Mmm (teary-eyed)

**Muna:** Ah bless

**Malia:** Sorry

**Researcher:** Ah.

**Muna:** You’re so cute Mal

**Malia:** Stop (smiling)

**Muna/Malia:** Yeah yeah!

**Researcher:** There you go. There we are.

**Muna:** That’s really cute.

**Malia:** Ah.

**Researcher:** It is

**Malia:** It's like a friend ship.

**Muna:** Oh

**Researcher:** Oh yeah

**Muna:** You're well clever you.

**Malia:** Stop. She makes me blush all the time.

We (the researcher, Malia and Muna) dwell for a moment on the affirmative affect of the friendship sailing on clear blue waters before opening the jars to talk more about what matters to them most. Our conversation continues and together we navigate what can and cannot be articulated. The still seas become choppy, the affects more stormy, but we stay with the trouble (Haraway, 2016).

## RE-ANIMATING WHAT MATTERS: BECOMING RESOURCE-FUL WITH UN/EXPECTED CREATIVE OUTPUTS

In this section we share the process of developing the creative outputs—the dartaphacts—with which educators and the wider public might intra-act. While the verb animate is commonly used to refer to moving pictures and cartoons (since the 1880s), we engage the 1530's definition (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/animate>) 'to give breath to' (ane) and 'fill with boldness or courage' (animare) because our methods are more than a technique to 'make data' (*darta*): they have the potential to enliven the *darta* to become change-making actants (*dartaphacts*). However, defining/anticipating in advance how the creative outputs might materialise is a risky enterprise. Here the strengths of the collaborative project—between the team, the charity and the Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG)—means that the art in our pARTicipatory praxis is a shared process, that can take shape and form in response to what is coming to matter. Digital creative outputs (report, film and booklet) expand from three to five, and each contains an element of what we theorise as 'becoming resource-ful' about the centrality of platforming the complex youth voice assemblages that surfaced in the fieldwork. We describe these outputs below, highlighting how they change and evolve.

### 'More like this!': Making the process—Of how voice has come to matter—Matter

At the outset, we plan a 10-min film to illustrate the key substantive 'findings'.<sup>xiv</sup> Eventually, this morphs into a more focussed communication of *how* young people are engaging with our pARTicipatory methods. This emphasis emerges in response to the overwhelming message from young people that the pedagogy of 'how' they want to learn about RSE is as important as 'what' they want to learn, coupled with the key finding that they want to learn in school, by trained educators. The title of the film, 'More like this' (Figure 9)—a quote from a participant's reflection on taking part in the project—acts as both a directive and a challenge for educators to consider how creative and participatory methods might be used to 'attune, anonymise, and amplify' what and how young people want to learn about relationships, sex and sexuality.

The film is replete with anonymous footage of young people making what matters. The lability of the *dart/a* are kept in flow, as each section is rolled out on different coloured paper. It thus

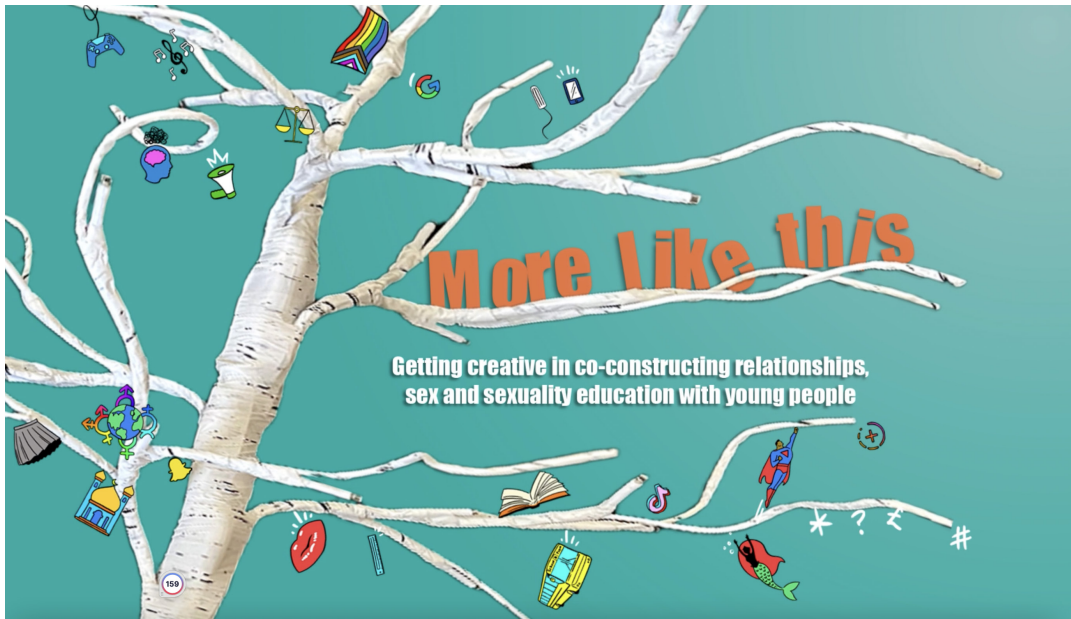


FIGURE 9 More like this.

keeps the methodological and substantive mattering in constant dialogue and movement: what matters and how cannot be disentangled.

### **‘Understand us’: Making the topicality of voice matter**

The original plan, to create an illustrated accessible booklet representing the key messages of the project, bifurcated into two creative outputs. The first, co-created with the YPAG, is an illustrated infographic to be sent to the participating schools and youth groups, and used more widely to convey the project’s methods and key messages to young people. The second output flips the report, and focusses upon the complexity of key RSE topics. This output, titled, ‘Understand Us’ consists of 11 illustrated cards, invites educators to attune to the diversity of learning and experience on key RSE topics and prompts for how the cards can be used to work with/overturn adult assumptions. They emphasise the multiplicity of youth-voice, with the ‘us’ of ‘understand us’ encouraging a shift from in-dividual learning and experience to multi-dividual learning and experience. Staying close to young people’s own expressions, each of the topics are represented through images from the blue or black rolls (see Figure 10 as an example, and go to <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2023/how-young-people-are-learning-about-relationships-sex-sexuality>, to view the detail of this card and all cards in this resource).

### **RSE data-poems: Becoming creative with the more-than of a theme**

During the project, the YPAG experiment with different ways of interacting with the digitised data. Invited by the project lead (Renold) to consider how to share the interim ‘findings’ creatively with the NSPCC, some produce a series of instapoems<sup>xv</sup> from their analysis of the





FIGURE 10 Periods card.

jar comments, image-cards and reflection pouches. These poems are such a success that additional funds are provided by the funder to work more creatively and diffractively with the darta. Once the project report is in its final stages, the YPAG are invited to compose eight short poems for each of the key messages in the project report. They do this by reading the anonymised quotes and darta from each section of the report and selecting words or phrases that resonate with them. These are cut and pasted into a collaborative working document to create an initial 'poem'. The poems are then read aloud, further edited and shaped to give the text rhythm, meaning and flow, and given a title: "What happened?"; 'She tells me everything'; 'They wouldn't understand'; 'Unfiltered Learning'; 'Sorting Yourself'; 'This stuff shouldn't happen'; 'Stand up'; and 'Safe Space'. Each poem is later audio-recorded on their smartphones and reassembled by the project's composer. In this process, each line is spoken by a different YPAG member and accompanied by an evocative soundtrack (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vZW3o0dGA&feature=youtu.be> and <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/0jmmg eoq/rse-and-me-data-poems-english.pdf>).

## 'We have to educate ourselves': Reorienting a research report

Conventionally, third-sector research reports provide key themes or messages, illustrated by an often-decontextualised young person's quote. This approach rarely opens up the wider assemblage of how and why that experience has come to matter in the fieldwork encounter or carries a diversity of experience. By contrast, then, we opt to introduce each theme with a young person's quote, a strapline which captures the key message of the section, and an assemblage of

## 2.2 “The school doesn’t teach you it, but you get it from socialising.”

Young people learn from and support each other across a range of spaces, including in schools.

“

**Ivor:** (...) I remember one time I was in the chicken shop and then some girl called Sandra just walked around, she had her hands like that [puts thumbs and fingers together to make a vulva shape] and was just asking all the boys to point out where the clitoris is.

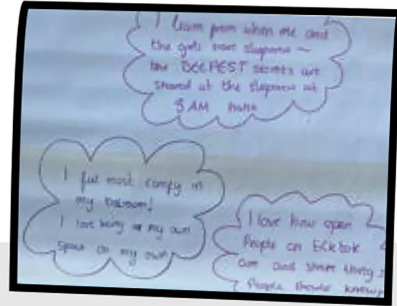
**Researcher:** And how many of them got it right?

**Ivor:** It was only like two of us, yeah, out of like 12, I think.

**Researcher:** So that’s quite a good learning experience for the rest of them.

**Ivor:** I think she just like knew that nobody knew, so then she took it in her own hands, just teach them all.

(age 15)



Caption: I learn from when me and the girls have sleepovers – the DEEPEST secrets are shared at the sleepovers at 3AM haha.

I feel most comfy in my bedroom! I love being in my own space on my own.

I love how open people on TikTok are and share things people should know.  
(age 14)

“

**Researcher:** So, have you not had any sex ed at secondary school?

**Jared:** No.

**Huw:** We’ve done about condoms.

**Jared:** I mean I sit next to someone who’s already had sex five times and she tells me everything.

(age 13-14)

“

**Lana:** I only realised people could be gay because Becky told me.

**Becky:** Did I?

**Lana:** I spent my entire childhood with one friend.

**Becky:** And I opened your mind, “People can be gay, Lana”.

(age 14)

FIGURE 11 Reporting youth voice differently.

youth-voice matterings, that includes interview quotes and images from the darta (and their captions) to engage with *before* the key messages from each section (see Figure 11). The attunement we are inviting here, is for the reader to be alerted to the theme, and then bring their thoughts, feelings and views about the assemblage of youth-voice to the research team’s analytic summary of what matters to young people on this theme. Moreover, the YPAG’s eight data-poems are so warmly received that we eventually place them to bookend each section of the final report.

Hence, we try to make way for new processes of how research reports might come to matter (for the children's charity). Once young people's quotes and darta have been platformed throughout, what was originally conceived as a 30-page report expands into 90+ pages—perhaps instantiating how empirical attunement extends beyond the research team and reaches into the wider communications process. That is, attuning to youth voice seems to reorient an established process and make room for youth voice to take up the space it deserves.

## AMPLIFYING WHAT MATTERS: BECOMING EVENTFUL WITH DARTAPHACTS

In this section, we explore how the darta generated in the field are re-materialised as dartaphacts, with which educators can physically interact.

One face-to-face launch event is held on the UK's RSE day at the Pierhead in Cardiff Bay (Cardiff, Wales) a venue with a multi-cultural heritage and an explicit aim to provide a platform for contemporary political voices 'to inspire a new generation to forge a Wales for the future'. It is a venue which must be sponsored by a member of the Senedd (Welsh Parliament) and all members of the Senedd are invited. We consider how this launch might become *event-ful* (Renold et al., 2020) and allow educators and policy-makers to attune more directly with the youth-voice assemblages that have come to matter, so that 'the activity of the work's potential is opened up by the process itself' (Manning, 2016, p. 53). Our tentative aim is for the educators to experience an embodied encounter with the darta, connecting them directly with the expansiveness and diversity of young people's micro-political gestures of what matters. We are also keen to avoid a common situation in which youth voice becomes a tokenistic, exploitative, wasteful endeavour. We dress the table as a 'consumption' experience, inspired by Judy Chicago's installation 'The Dinner Party', and the 14th century definition of 'consume': 'to engage the full attention and energy of', 'to destroy by separating into parts which cannot be reunited' and 'to use up, eat, waste'. (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/consume>).

In World Café method style (<https://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>), participants (the research team, members of the Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG), teachers, youth workers, RSE educators/providers and policy-makers and others) are seated around eight circular tables. In front of each participant are a set of dartaphacts (Figure 12):



FIGURE 12 Consuming youth-voice.

a placemat crafted from fragments of the black or black roll, the original jars as substitute glasses are placed on a coloured cloud coaster, and instead of cutlery, a selection of metallic pens and pipe-cleaners are available for crafting their own felt responses. At the centre of each table are the original trees, each holding a selection of participants' anonymous clouds of support. The eight poems are raised up on four plinths that populate each corner of the space, and throughout the evening the research team and the YPAG are sharing and reflecting upon all the creative outputs. Youth voice is thus literally 'tabled' as the focus of the event and in all its multi-modal polyvocality. Drawing on Whitehead, Manning argues that attunement starts with the 'lure of feeling' – an appetite that runs through us: 'if we consider appetite as what moves (through) us (not only as that which is moved by us)', then 'the call, in experience (...) has the capacity to reorient the field' (Kuipers, 2019). We pause on the making of the placemats to show the making of these darta-phacts and their potential to re-orient youth voice.

While a placemat is usually an object to protect a table from heat or stains, our placemats drew upon the 1835 definition of mat: 'a tangled mess, anything close-set, dense and thick' and the Latin platea for place: open space, broad way. We carve up our darta into laminated A4 rectangles, some of which framed the thick and dense elaborations in words and images and some were more sparsely populated or blank. All, however, include fragments, not all decipherable, but force-felt in their mattering: an agential cut (literally) for an empirical attunement that might be felt, as Stewart (2014, p.126) suggests, 'whether as a set of threats or possibilities, as a shining little something or the dull contours of what is too well-known brought into cruel relief', to be discursively-affectively consumed. The NSPCC introduce them as fragments of arts-based data to interact with, and EJ re-introduces them before playing the film, *More Like This*: "You will notice that your placemats, jars, cloud coasters and table centrepiece all feature in the film. There will be time for you to take a closer look later in the evening and share what support you need on the clouds and what has mattered most to you in the large glass jar".

While it is impossible to know how an event will unfold, and what affects and effects might surface, we trust that curating an environment with a 'relational architecture' (Massumi, 2013 p. 53 citing Lozano-Hemmer) often 'unsettles and offers the more-than of dissemination with a process that continues to expand and create'. Our creative use of the word, 'amplify' registers this expansion; and each darta-phact, carrying the potential to signal directly the artful ways in which the project has come to matter, explicitly or implicitly communicates that youth voice has been and is and will continue to matter.<sup>xvi</sup> We conclude this section with a poem, created by two members of the YPAG from reading all the reflections the event participants anonymously wrote in their jar. It is perhaps no coincidence that most of the messages in the jars comment on the presence and importance of youth voice, and how the metaphor of critical consumption emerges in one comment and becomes the title of the poem, *Food For thought*.

### **Food For Thought**

A really powerful event  
 Hearing directly from young people  
 Being heard  
 So powerful  
 Comparing experiences  
 Insightful and thought provoking  
 So positive  
 An environment for teachers to come together  
 Loosening my hold on the reigns

Encouraging children to express themselves  
More important than ever  
They know their needs and wants  
Listen to our learners  
Impactful  
Fantastic  
Refreshing  
The poems  
The pictures  
Time to be more creative with young people  
Who can support?  
Food for thought.

## CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A CREATIVE ONTOLOGY OF YOUTH VOICE

This project was conducted during a lively sexuality education policy context, which too often simplifies and silences young people's feelings and views. This paper has attempted to map some of the processes of what becomes possible in a collaborative project with a shared commitment to make an alternative conceptualisation of youth voice the driving centre of a project with creativity and an ethics of care and commitment. As well as the research process of capturing and curating 'experience' for consumption, we argue that a creative ontology of 'youth voice' is an ethical and political imperative for a more relevant and responsive sexuality and relationships education to come. Ours is an entangled praxis that has been cultivated and sustained over many years of learning how creative methods might shake up stale and stagnant representations of how youth experience matters – representations too often marbled with misinformation and disinformation.

We have drawn on the concept of youth voice assemblages to conceptualise the making of *darta* (that is, creative methods to craft and communicate experience in the field), and their animation and application as *dartaphacts* - the art-ful objects that carry this experience in digital or physical form (reports, films, poems), and into new places and spaces (e.g., in-person events). Importantly, for our focus on more-than-human voice assemblages, *dartaphacts* have the potential to generate a quality of 'extra-beingness' (Massumi, 2013, p. 133, citing Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), a multi-dividual, rather than an individual voice to express what matters.

With each method and phase we have offered a glimpse of how a complex process of *attuning*, *animating* and *amplifying* has unfolded, and what can become possible when an artful and speculative collaborative praxis invites 'those it rallies to think, imagine, create' (Stengers, 2019, p. 19). The aim is that what is mattering and has mattered stays lively. *Attune/animate/amplify* are terms that have been useful to carve up and share a praxis of ethical-political affirmative disruptions. They might support the potentialities of how the ethical matterings of our scholar-activisms can make a difference: at least we can say our partner, the NSPCC, has become attuned to new ways of working with and making data matter. We will never know how things might land or take off. Just as this project was not all predicted in advance, *attune/animate/amplify* is not a process where a product (like a report or film) can easily be measured. But what we can perhaps count/count on is an intention to value what comes to matter, in all its difference and diversity. This paper is, therefore, part of a process of making visible what more our research engagements might do, be and become (such as

the more-than of a method, a report, a resource, an event) and how what surfaces can be made to and continue to matter in sexuality and education research, which foregrounds youth voice.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the author(s).

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not available to share.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>i</sup> In this paper, we do not use the UNCRC definition of 'children' (age 0–18) because it creates and perpetuates a generational binary (child/adult) that undermines how the historical, geographical and cultural figure of the child is made to matter across transnational circuits of exchange and exploitation (see Castenada, 2002). Nevertheless, we do locate the participants in this project through the generational category of 'young person' to register and acknowledge their subordinate status within the child/adult hierarchy.
- <sup>ii</sup> As a methodological piece, it is beyond the scope of this paper to outline the key developments in sexuality education research and policy within the UK and internationally. However, see Jones (2011) for a comprehensive global overview of conservative, liberal, critical, and postmodern discursive shifts over time and Ketting et al. (2021) for a critical exploration of the implementation and effectiveness of 'comprehensive' approaches sexuality education in Europe and Central Asia. See Allen (2020), Alldred and Fox (2019) and Gunnarsson and Ceder (2023) for new materialist and posthuman approaches to relationships and sexuality education. See also Allen & Rasmussen, 2024.
- <sup>iii</sup> Karen Barad replaces 'interaction' with the concept of 'intra-action' to rework the idea of causality. As Renold has summarised elsewhere, 'Barad encourages us not to conceive of change as happening to or from something. Rather, they invite us instead to consider a "diffractive" approach where meaning is always in process, always mattering and always unknown' (Renold, 2018, p. 39).
- <sup>iv</sup> The project title was coproduced with our Young People's Advisory Group. The 'plus' sign ('+') was added to signal the project's focus on the more-than of RSE (e.g., learning and experience across diverse places, spaces, modalities and people). However, it was the co-produced information leaflet's bespoke symbols that materialised the more-than – symbols which were then used throughout the project's outputs, from the film to the research report.

- <sup>v</sup> For this research, we refer to Relationships, Sex and Sexuality Education as RSE to reflect the different policy contexts within which our research is situated. Relationships and Sexuality Education aligns with policy discourses in Wales and Northern Ireland. Sex, encompasses sexual health and aligns with the English (Relationships and Sex Education) and Scottish contexts (Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education).
- <sup>vii</sup> We recruited young people from across seven geographic locations in England, Scotland, and Wales. They included inner-city, semi-rural, coastal and suburban locales. To see how participants self-identified in terms of age, gender identity, ethnicity, faith/religion and sexual identity, go to Appendix A of the report (Renold et al., 2021, p.77). This information was sourced from an 'About me' questionnaire that was completed by participants after their first interview.
- <sup>viii</sup> A youth group refers to a structured and organised gathering of young people who come together for various social, educational, recreational, community-oriented or political activities. They are usually facilitated by youth workers and there is a strong culture of youth participation and anti-oppressive practice (see Batsleer, 2021). We accessed two youth groups, one of which supported LGBTQ+ young people.
- <sup>viii</sup> Following an in-person or online introduction to the project, each young person that signalled an interest in taking part then received a project leaflet and consent form. Parents/carers of young people who wanted to take part in the project were also provided with information and a link to an online opt-out consent form on the same day. Young people (under 16) took these forms home to parents/carers, and parents also received information about the project via email and text message from the school/youth group. While each young person signed a consent form before taking part in the research, the process of informed consent was ongoing throughout the fieldwork sessions, as our participatory approach outlines (Renold et al., 2008). In practice this meant, for example, checking in with young people each time we took photographs or anonymised film clips of them writing or drawing, and checking in at the end of interviews to ensure that young people still consented for their words and images to become research data and drawn upon anonymously in reports, films, future publications, etc. Please note that pseudonyms are used throughout the report and this paper.
- <sup>ix</sup> All our creative outputs from the project are available to view and download here: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2023/how-young-people-are-learning-about-relationships-sex-sexuality>.
- <sup>x</sup> Making support and safety clouds was first piloted in the making of the co-produced resource AGENDA: A Young People's Guide to Making Positive Relationships Matter, and then became a core safeguarding section in the resource (see Renold, 2019, p.230, [www.agendaonline.co.uk/keeping\\_safe](http://www.agendaonline.co.uk/keeping_safe)) orienting young people to know and exercise their rights and identify sources of support for exploring difficult issues and experiences.
- <sup>xi</sup> The project gained university ethical approval and ethical approval from the NSPCC's own research ethics committee. This process included coproducing a suite of safeguarding procedures (which included additional support for schools following a reported safeguarding concern, after the research team had left the fieldwork site) and additional support cards for young people with a list of organisations and helplines, and how to access more immediate support 'with anything we've talked about today or something else you're worried about'.
- <sup>xii</sup> This method has evolved over the last 5 years, starting out as a pedagogic resource for working with teachers in an RSE professional learning programme (see Renold et al., 2021). The original cards, were called 'crush cards' and contained a bold image on one side and a research vignette or quote featuring the image on the other side. Crucially the images are mostly objects, not people. So immediately, you enter the field of RSE via the non-human. The data-image pairings are chosen explicitly to register and 'crush' or over-turn assumptions of how the image might (and has) materialised in a young life. The crush card methodology has since evolved, in response to teachers' request to use just the images with their students to prompt RSE focused discussions. We have also used this methodology (just the images) in the Unboxing RSE project (see Renold & Timperley, 2023). We subsequently worked as a team and with the YPAG to adapt this activity for the Sexuality Education Plus project, resulting in selecting just over 20 images. The 10 most popular (in terms of how much talk they generated) included the following images: 'Baby', 'Shark', 'Action Man', 'Barbie', 'Toilet', 'School Bus', 'Wedding Dress', 'Red lips', 'Woods', 'Tampon'.
- <sup>xiii</sup> While experiences of misogynistic and sexual harassment online and in public spaces all too frequently surface in research with young women, and have been the subject of multiple government inquiries (see Estyn, 2021; Ofsted, 2021) our approach to not only listen to what young people are experiencing, but to invite them to share with us what more they need to know and what needs to change is a vital part of our affirmative

ethical-political praxis. In terms of supporting this group, there were multiple comfort / well-being check-ins throughout the session, including who and how they were accessing support on some of the issues they were raising and some of the questions that had that surfaced on their black roll. We also spent some time after the interview ended to share and discuss the support card (see endnote xi) which provided them with helplines and websites to support them on some of the topics and experiences that they had questions and/or concerns about.

- xiv To read the findings from the research report, go to: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/3138/sexuality-education-plus.pdf>.
- xv Instapoems are short, catchy and often characterised by their emotional intensity to engage the reader. Famous instapoets include, Rupi Kaur, Nikita Gill, Amanda Lovelace and Atticus.
- xvi The film, the RSE cards and the report have already been informing English and Welsh government education policy and practice via online briefings, presentations, case-study examples and wider online professional learning (e.g., <https://www.governmentevents.co.uk/event/the-relationships-sex-and-health-education-in-schools-conference-2023/#overview>).

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