

Cultural Value

Assessing the intrinsic value, and health and well-being benefits, for individual and community, of The Reader Organisation's Volunteer Reader Scheme

Philip Davis, Josie Billington, Rhiannon Corcoran, Victorina Gonzalez-Diaz, Sofia Lampropoulou, Grace Farrington, Fiona Magee, Erin Walsh



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Executive Summary

In a cross-over design, volunteers spent six weeks in a shared reading group on the Get into Reading read-aloud model (GiR) developed by The Reader Organisation (TRO); followed by six weeks in a built-environment study group (BE) at Calderstones Mansion, TRO's newly-acquired Centre for Reading and Wellbeing. A second set of volunteers attended both activity-groups in reverse order.

Self-report measures of health and wellbeing were used before and after each six-week period.

Group-sessions were audio and video recorded: the language was transcribed and innovatively analysed by the interdisciplinary team of linguists, psychologists and literary specialists.

Video-assisted interviews with individual participants were then audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed.

Concurrently, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a wide range of TRO volunteers who had begun their involvement through participating in GiR groups, in order to ascertain how the intrinsic value of shared reading may be translated into life value in the longer term.

Both activities, in differentiated ways, intrinsically contributed to the humanising of the mental and physical environment.

The intrinsic value of GiR to human well-being is established within:

- (1) *Places created*: the multi-layered humanising presence of literature helping to effect
 - (i) personal contemplation triggered in resonant *areas of experience* otherwise difficult to locate, recover or talk about without reductiveness of meaning
 - (ii) the formation of *small-group communities* in which the relation between private and public was closer than conventionally allowed, creating for the while a small alternative human society out of the

interaction of text, group, individual and group leader

(2) *Persons innerly stimulated*: the related multi-layered impact on feeling and thought is evident in

- (i) *live thinking*, involving surprise, uncertainty and even disadvantage
- (ii) a shift from reductive norms to an emotional awakening of *ontological realization*
- (iii) the enhancement of *mental processes* such as reappraisal, recovery meta-cognition, emotional identification and imagination

Researchers and Project Partners

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Key words

Shared Reading, Literature, Civic Design, Mental Health/Wellbeing, Place

‘Assessing the intrinsic value, and health and well-being benefits, for individual and community, of The Reader Organisation’s Volunteer Reader Scheme’

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background		4-7
Report 1	Quantitative GiR and BE (RC)	8-11
Report 2	Qualitative and Quantitative GiR (PD/JB/VG-D,SL)	12-52
Report 3	Qualitative and Quantitative BE (RC/EW)	53-65
Report 4	Interviews TRO (EW, RC/PD/EW)	66-77
Appendix 1	Methodology (PD/JB/RC)	78-79
Appendix 2	Statistical detail from Report 1 (RC)	80-84
Appendix 3	Linguistic detail analysis Report 2 (VG-D/ SL)	85-91
Appendix 4	Bibliography (PD/JB/RC)	92-93

BACKGROUND

The Reader Organisation (TRO)and Get into Reading (GiR)

The Reader Organisation’s mission is to create environments where personal responses to books are freely shared in reading communities in every area of life. Beginning life as a small outreach unit at the University of Liverpool in 1997, TRO was established as a national charity in 2008 and has pioneered the weekly ‘read aloud’ model at the heart of its Get into Reading Project (GiR), now also known as Shared Reading. The GiR model is based on small groups (2-12 people), formed to read aloud together short stories, novels and poetry. GiR currently has 70 full-time employees and delivers over 360 groups, in a range of health and social care settings (community centres, libraries, homeless shelters, schools, hospitals, offices, doctors’ surgeries, prisons, drug rehab units and care homes) across the UK, with an annual turnover of £2.1 million, 70% of which is generated by commissions from health authorities etc.

Calderstones Park Mansion

The acquisition of this grade 2 listed building, built in 1828, is central to TRO’s Organisation’s effort to create a demonstrably new environment for social community. Previously not open to the public for forty years, Calderstones Mansion is set in 94 acres of public parkland, including sports facilities and a set of Neolithic (calder) stones of very significant archaeological interest. Supported by the City Council, TRO has taken over the building and outhouses, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, to establish an International Centre for Reading and Well-Being. The project which commenced in August

2013 seeks to provide an exemplary practical model of new social provision (including gardening, café, health care, sport, drama and music facilities, carers' residential weekends etc.) uniquely centred around reading activity. Its aim is to serve as a future Merseyside hub to create a substantial body of volunteers engaged in a wide range of reader and other-related activities, serving both the local and the wider Liverpool community, and with relation also to its long-standing partner, Mersey Care NHS Trust.

TRO's Volunteer Reader Scheme

The Big Lottery-funded Volunteer Reader Scheme engages 70 people at risk of, or suffering from, mental health difficulties, isolation or unemployment in a range of volunteering opportunities across The Reader Organisation. Volunteer roles operate at the heart of TRO's reading mission and whilst often still being members of reading groups, volunteers are further involved as: *Office Assistants*, preparing reading resources for reading groups; *Reading Group Assistants*, working alongside reading group facilitators; *Reading Friends*, reading weekly, one-to-one, with isolated older people; *Reading Group Facilitators*, running weekly reading groups in Residential Care Homes or with the elderly.

Volunteers are fully trained and supported by TRO staff, receiving regular feedback and recognition of their achievements and are offered potential for role development: reading-group members may become volunteers; volunteers may become interns or apprentices; apprentices may become employees.

The Big Lottery project is here investigated against the background of other volunteering initiatives within TRO, including interviews with student volunteers gaining credit towards their degrees on a module dedicated to outreach praxis and reflection; a group of apprentices who have developed their lives in TRO from being children in care; volunteers from new initiatives on Wirral, in Barnet and in North Wales which serve as useful comparators offering differing client-groups and diverse populations; and, most recently, volunteers from the local community around Calderstones Park.

Aims of the Research Project

- To study the role of Volunteering, including the BIG Lottery funded Volunteer Reader Scheme, in relation to The Reader Organisation's pioneering outreach project, Get into Reading.
- To identify the intrinsic value components of the reading-aloud shared-reading model as a specific participatory and voluntary experience, in creation of both individual meaningfulness and a strongly interactive small community.
- To examine the relationship of this intrinsic value to (arguably) collateral and secondary (health, economic, social) benefits.
- In these ways to extend the use, and further test the value, of existing processes for investigating the phenomenology of shared reading and to devise innovative, interdisciplinary literary and social scientific methodologies for capturing multi-dimensional value components of the experience.

The Experiment

We ran a 12 week cross-over design to compare and contrast the 'intrinsic' experience associated with Get into Reading groups with groups exploring the design of the park area around the new International Centre for Reading and Wellbeing, at Calderstones Mansion. Measures of mental health and wellbeing benefits were included, ahead of whether they were to be deemed 'instrumental' or not. Though the Built Environment Workshop was offered for purposes of potential contrast, it was also chosen for offering its own intrinsic value in the same site and area of activity.

Each group, comprising a mix of Big Lottery funded volunteers and local Calderstones volunteers, experienced 6 weeks of Get into Reading (GiR) and 6 weeks of Built Environment design workshop (BE). Group A experienced GiR for the first 6 weeks followed by BE for the 2nd 6 weeks. Group B experienced BE during the first 6 weeks followed by GiR during the 2nd 6 weeks. All sessions lasted for 1.5 hours and took place on consecutive Friday mornings from 13 September until 29 November 2013. The GiR groups were led by the founder of The Reader Organisation, Dr Jane Davis, save for one week when TRO staff member then in charge of Calderstones development Sophie Povey deputized; the BE workshops were conducted by Graham Marshall, a landscape architect and urban designer who directs the social enterprise Prosocial Place, aligned to a research programme directed from the University exploring the relationships between mental health and wellbeing, physical and social places. The sessions were videoed by RAs Grace Farrington (GiR) and Erin Walsh (BE) who interviewed the Group Leaders immediately after each session to elicit first-impression feedback. Additional input on interviews was provided by Fiona Magee, an experienced interviewer working as RA on a CRILS project centred in London. The sessions were also recorded just before the commencement of the group work in order that the linguists, Dr Gonzalez-Diaz and Dr Lampropoulou might have some control data concerning participants' conversational norms and practices before engagement in the group activity. Texts for the GiR sessions were taken from The Reader Organisation's resource-bank of tried and tested texts from serious literature of different ages (usually a short story or excerpt from a novel followed by a related short poem, though in the first session starting with a John Clare lyric instead), anthologized in *A Little Aloud*, edited by Angela Macmillan (Chatto and Windus 2010). GiR is a read-aloud model but, as is its practice, printed copies of the text were simultaneously held by each group-member.

At the start of the study each of the two groups comprised 3 Big Lottery TRO volunteers and 5 local Calderstones volunteers. We had anticipated that a larger number of TRO's Big Lottery volunteers, whose vulnerable backgrounds make them representative of some of the communities GiR is targeted to reach, might want to be involved in this study, making the groups more diverse in terms of baseline levels of the wellbeing, mental health symptoms and demographic features. However, the practical demand involved in signing up to a 12 week

study and the need to travel to the venue somewhat limited the involvement of this group of volunteers. 5 out of the 16 volunteers were male and were distributed across the 2 groups.

Attendance ranged from 1-12 sessions with the average number of sessions missed between 3 and 4 (the mean was 3.75). One TRO Big Lottery volunteer attended just the initial session (BE) and another attended only 3 sessions (GiR). One Calderstones volunteer was away for the first 3 weeks and then attended a single GiR group and did not return again, explaining that she did not feel it was for her.

The study was approved by University of Liverpool Research Ethics Committee.

REPORT 1: Professor Rhiannon Corcoran

ON THE FINDINGS FROM SELF-REPORT QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

collected as part of the comparative cross-over study exploring the benefits and intrinsic value of Shared Reading Groups and Built Environment Workshops.

Summary of the Study

We employed the following measures to explore health and wellbeing benefit and experience of the sessions:

1. The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) was used to explore the endorsement of positive and negative feelings following each session.
2. We asked participants to write down 2 words or phrases that expressed their experience of each session. This data can be explored in association with quantitative and qualitative linguistic analyses of the participant contributions during these group sessions (see Report 3 for detail).
3. From the comprehensive Ryff scales of Psychological Wellbeing, we took the Purpose in Life and Personal Growth subscales to measure change over time from baseline to 6 weeks following 1 of the activities and from 6 weeks to 12 weeks following the other activity.
4. We used also the short WEMWBS as a measure of change in general sense of wellbeing because this brief measure is widely used in the context of population level public health evaluation.
5. A brief scale developed by Dalgard allowed us to explore changes to general sense of mastery resulting from involvement in the activities.
6. To explore changes to symptoms associated with common mental health difficulties following involvement in the activities, we used the Depression and Anxiety Scale (DASS)

See Appendix 2 for detailed statistical findings

Overall summary of the findings – what evidence is there to suggest change in self-reported wellbeing as a result of involvement in the activities and how do the activities differ?

1. By using the PANAS to collect data on current affective states immediately following each session, we could demonstrate a consistent and statistically significant tendency for involvement in *both* activities to be associated with the self-report of more positive than negative affect, without significant difference between GiR and BE. We can conclude that involvement in both activities was consistently, across all participants, associated with substantially more positive feelings than negative feelings. This may simply reflect the feature of organised social engagement that is shared by the activities. It may also be that the distinct aspects of both activities are

- enjoyed to an equal extent. It is also possible that this, in part, reflects the dispositional nature of our participants.
2. There is some evidence in our data to suggest that GiR involvement prompts the experience of negative affect to a greater extent than BE does. This would be consistent with some of the intrinsic value of the shared reading of literature lying in its capacity to open individuals up to experience a broader range of emotional states. It is possible that these states may be experienced vicariously in response to character in the texts. They may also be associated with personal episodes or re-appraised situations from the past that are brought to mind, possibly as analogous situations or events, in response to the texts. It is also consistent with the idea that the description of emotions in polar terms (negative/positive) is questionable or unhelpful in relation to the value of this intervention.
 3. Evidence from the '2 words' data demonstrates the different nature of the responses generated within our participants following involvement in the sessions. GiR activates more emotional response descriptors than does BE which, in the great majority, activates cognitive descriptors. From these words, we were able to generate tentative contrasting activity themes which, taken together, stress the internal and reminiscent nature of participants' responses to GiR compared to the external anticipatory response to BE. (See Report 3 for analysis of word/phrases used by participants to describe GiR and BE sessions.)
 4. There is some evidence in our data to suggest the 2 activities promote different aspects of specific psychological wellbeing.
 - a) The strongest findings in this regard are in relation to GiR shared reading where *purpose in life* improved for both groups after 6 weeks of GiR. Furthermore, the data indicates that for Group A who experienced GiR followed by BE, the rise in purpose in life from baseline to week 6 was eradicated by week 12 following involvement in BE. The statistically significant and trend level findings were associated with medium to very strong effect sizes. These findings demonstrate that GiR can have beneficial outcomes in terms of improving an individual's sense of purpose in life by increasing the belief that participants have meaningful goals in their lives and that both their past and present life have increased meaning.
 - b) The other finding that suggests that the 2 activities dissociate in terms of how they may benefit psychological wellbeing exists less robustly in the data. Nevertheless there is sufficient evidence (albeit associated with smaller effect sizes) to argue that BE involvement may have impact upon psychological wellbeing by improving sense of *personal growth through increased self-development as a result of knowledge acquisition*.
While GiR was associated with a small (non-significant) fall in personal growth scores in both groups, BE was associated with modest (also non-significant) increases in this score for both groups. Consistent with the suggestion that BE might affect

psychological wellbeing via self development and knowledge acquisition, there is some (very limited) evidence in the data to suggest that feelings of mastery can decline following involvement in the BE when experienced as an initial activity over 6 weeks. This result might be explained by the fact that this type of design process is demanding of relatively under-used skills (compared to reading) and was unfamiliar to all of the volunteers. It therefore required the development of a whole new set of skills focussed on delivering solutions within an unfamiliar context.

c) Given that even short involvement in GiR can improve the sense of purpose in life and that this specific change to psychological wellbeing is an important aspect of the intrinsic value of this activity, we can draw a specific methodological conclusion about measuring wellbeing in relation to this activity when it is used as an intervention for people suffering low mood. The specific benefit seen to purpose in life does not translate into improved general wellbeing as measured by the commonly used short but over-simplified WEMWBS. It is therefore important that when the GiR model is evaluated in the future, specific features of psychological wellbeing are measured using sensitive and appropriate tools such as the Ryff scales.

Conclusion

These differentiated benefits seem *intrinsic* to the differing nature of the two kinds of group activity and not limited to medicalized problems or cases. This is supported by connections with qualitative evidence in reports 2 and 3 below.

It is a little difficult to summarise the findings from this small study on the self-report of symptoms of common mental health difficulties. This is in part due to the effects that a few individuals had on the range of experiences reported. Most of the participants in this study reported few symptoms and did so consistently across baseline to follow-up. However, a few individuals reported much higher levels of symptoms, a fact that is not surprising given that our groups included some people with confirmed mental health difficulties. What we can say is that changes to scores on the DASS arise in weeks 7-12 and that any beneficial effect is associated with GiR involvement during weeks 7-12. This, in turn, tells us that the organised social engagement that is the shared feature of both groups has little effect on these symptoms because in the first 6 weeks, neither activity was associated with change to the self-report of these symptoms.

Because of the requirement that interventions should 'do no harm', it is important to emphasise that no evidence points to GiR having any deleterious effects, even in expanding the experience of supposed 'negative' emotions. Associated with its unfamiliarity, there may be a tendency for involvement in the BE workshops to lead to a decrease in felt mastery in the short term. However, this is mitigated by its potential to increase 'personal growth'.

Limitations of the study

The small numbers of participants who completed the self-report measures has limited the statistical analyses that can be confidently conducted as well as making it extremely unlikely that statistically significant effects will be seen. For this reason effect sizes are reported in the above group comparisons. Although we attempted to 'control' for the familiarity of the activities, some of our volunteers did have limited experience of shared reading groups. As a result of some lack of heterogeneity within the groups (itself a result of the somewhat disappointing recruitment into the study of TRO's Big Lottery volunteers), there were generally high levels of wellbeing and sense of mastery and low levels of symptoms of common mental health difficulties reported. These relative ceiling effects limit the opportunity for positive change to arise as a result of involvement in the activities studied. According to TRO the minimum duration of shared reading associated with changes to wellbeing is 24 weeks with a preferred delivery model of 48 weeks. Due to time and funding constraint, we could only study groups that ran over 6 weeks. Therefore we were aware at the outset that we would be unlikely to find significant positive changes in wellbeing. This, along with consideration of the other limiting factors, adds to the credibility of our main finding of increased self-reported 'purpose in life' resulting from GiR.

These findings are tentative. We advise that they are used judiciously alongside the findings from subsequent reports below to guide the further evaluation of the 2 types of activity.

**REPORT 2: PROFESSOR PHILIP DAVIS, DR JOSIE BILLINGTON, GRACE FARRINGTON
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF GET INTO READING GROUPS**

Methods

1. All sessions were video-recorded and then reviewed weekly by Billington, Corcoran, Davis, Farrington and Walsh (with input from Magee, Gonzalez-Diaz and Lampropoulou), to highlight what seemed to be qualitatively significant moments in terms of: increased group interaction, heightened individual involvement, powerful or problematic specific readings, the role of the Group Leader.

In previous research, sessions had been audio recorded and transcribed but not video recorded, and that change was a development of methodology, adding a crucial live dimension. Video evidence and exemplification will be available for dissemination and debate alongside this report.

2. Pre-selected sessions were transcribed, though without sophisticated stylistic markers (limitation through cost); episodes deemed significant from other sessions were also later transcribed. The transcriptions were made available for selective analysis by both literary and linguistic experts in the research group, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The Group Leaders were interviewed after each session, offering impressions that might guide and/or be tested by the research team.

3. After the completion of the 12 weeks, selected highlights were shown to participants who were interviewed individually (on average for an hour) and audio-recorded, to elicit their response and test some of the hypotheses already suggested by the research team, though the questioning (carried out by Billington, Davis and Farrington) was designed to be open. Selected highlights were chosen by the core research team (1 above) in terms of apparently meaningful moments (itself the subject of query with the participants) marking individual breakthroughs or difficulties in relation to both selected text and group dynamics.

4. To complete the circle, excerpts were shown not only to the Group Leaders and to other project workers in TRO but finally to one of the authors whose writing was included within the group work, Joanne Harris, to get the views of the writer herself on the performance and behaviour of the group in relation to her short story.

In what follows quotations from the interviews and the transcripts stand as indicative examples or representative evidence of the group-reading phenomena and our analysis thereof. That said, much of the intrinsic quality of the reading-group activity exists in terms of specific moments and individual realizations which spill over fixed categories of explanation, and this report must register something of that texture. Cross-references are provided and the narrative seeks to link the different sections. This empirical research is in

contrast to theoretical constructs of ‘the reader’ since it involves a variety of real-life readers observable in real time. Many of the terms and headings used in what follows derive collaboratively from reflections of the participants and feedback from focus group sessions undertaken with other project workers in The Reader Organisation. It should also be noted with regard to dissemination, that the video evidence and findings are, in turn, proving a valuable training tool for TRO project workers, enabling reflection in relation to practice in ways that are not merely instrumental but renew project workers’ practical ideals and indeed contributed thoughtfully to some of the analysis that follows.¹

INTRINSIC ELEMENTS OF THE EXPERIENCE

1. LIVENESS

In contrast to the custom in traditional reading groups, literary texts are read aloud (several times) within the reading groups rather than known or read in advance. Future research might usefully compare the two different forms of reading-group experience: GiR is designed on the live read-aloud model partly to reach those who might be unable or unwilling to read a literary text and partly to establish the presence of the text in the room. The Group Leader often reads the text but invites others to do so on a voluntary basis. Joanne Harris reported that what she saw from the readers was a ‘talking out of their experience’ which seemed ‘completely spontaneous’.

Key characteristics are as follows:

(i) As participant S indicated at interview, and as was often clear in the video-recordings, the vocally embodied text made **Literature a Centre** for the group:

¹ Feedback comments included: ‘Helped me think about my own practice but also the amazing small things that happen in a session that perhaps I take for granted. It’s made me very aware that a lot happens that we don’t perhaps record as we take it for granted.’ ‘I really valued taking time to consider those moments of “breakthrough”, and raising my awareness of how I could be more aware of them during a session, and considering with others what they might be indicating. It was also great to see that we were all noticing the same sorts of things, but that the session heightened our awareness and gave me other things to look for. ‘An appreciation of what I am doing in the group. An idea of things to look for which show what is happening in the group, and things to tune in to rather than just an overall impression of what might be happening. The chance to watch a group happening as an observer. ‘A chance to consider the fine detail which is very difficult in a live group. A chance to slow it all down – again difficult in a live session and in the daily work of a project worker.’

I was interested in our body language. At the time I did feel engaged in it, but I hadn't realised how much, till I saw us leaning in to it if you like. It was as though there was a power in the middle of the table, or around [the Group Leader] maybe as she was facilitating, and it was pulling us in. (Participant S interview)

The effect is a form of absorption in the atmosphere of the group reading. Participants reported feelings of enjoyment, pleasure, immersion, emotional engagement, safety, and ease even whilst making efforts. This did not preclude moments of tension when specific group-members felt they had not spoken or read and ought to make a contribution, or when painful thoughts arose out of works such as John Clare's 'I Am', causing participant L, for example, to have to leave the room, (though she returned, and later wanted to discuss the experience at interview).

(ii) **Absorption/immersion.** Participant An spoke in interview of how, at its best, 'each moment became totally a world in itself for appreciation'. This involves not so much talking together 'about' an issue but talking together 'within' an area.

CIs in Linguistics, Gonzalez-Diaz and Lampropoulou, whose interim report is printed separately below as Appendix 3 have made preliminary investigations into linguistic features that show traces of this sense of the group working internally to itself in live relation to the text. The data for further statistical work on these elements is available.

***Deictic elements:** deixis refers to cues and phrases that require contextual information to convey any meaning (e.g. personal pronouns). Identification of person, time and space deictics show the degree of involvement between participants of the reading group and the text (i.e. the protagonists in the text). It seems that when readers talk about the text and maintain the original deixis rather than shifting it to signal the perspective of the reading group, an apparent interaction with the text is created. As a result, the text does not appear as a detached feature but as transferred to the here and now of the reading group interaction. This is also related to the use of the present tense in discussion as though issues were not past or distant.²*

***Generic/ impersonal 'you':** impersonal you can give a sense of structural knowledge so that the listener or anyone is inside the described experience. At the same time, it can also mark a transition from specific to general, namely to present an event in*

² Example – Great Expectations (GL= Group Leader from TRO)

An: *but I wondered reading that is how... how long that feeling will stay with him, because erm... whether he will get over that feeling as a momentary feeling or whether it would stick I didn't... I don't...*

GL: *He is going to go round for quite a while thinking where shall I put them.*

G: *So when he is in the blacksmith's he is not having these negative feelings about himself, but in another setting, he is seeing himself in a completely different way.*

In terms of both Time ('will' stay instead of e.g. 'would', 'is seeing', instead of e.g. 'saw') and Person ('shall I' instead of e.g. 'he', put 'them' instead of e.g. 'those'), deixis is maintained in example 1.

more general terms, not as happening once to one person but as happening generally to a category of people. To this end, shifts from 'you' to 'I' are particularly useful as they signal a mobile change of perspective and potentially of categorisation of the participants as members of a group/ culture. In this data, generic 'you' often marks a transition from the protagonists' mental state to the speakers' own mental state.³

***Interruptions and overlaps:** interruptions and overlaps, apart from violations to the rules of interaction, are also seen as serving a collaborative function. In this case, they give rise to a high involvement conversational style which signals a supportive and rapport-based relationship between participants in an interaction.*

(iii) **Not knowing in advance.** A further consequence of this performative method of delivery was described by participant An in subsequent interview:

I went in there, not knowing; I didn't know I was going to come across that. When you read a text, your own experience comes into reading that text, and you identify different parts, and that is what a lot of literature is. . . . I was totally taken aback and it felt so important both on emotional level and also intellectual level . . . and I felt it mattered and should be pursued, by myself because my own response was so great.

This experience is much corroborated by other participants, including A ('I mean I clearly felt quite . . . quite emotional there – and wasn't expecting to. This was the first reading group we did, and it just touched something in me... I saw the title of that and I started to read it and I had no idea where that was going to go ') and L ('I think I wasn't expecting – maybe I wasn't expecting to read that poem on that day, I don't know. But thing is, I'd never read it before').

The felt *awareness* of not knowing in advance - or having to know - creates the ground for the surprise of sudden affective responses which are made live and in the moment. This means that reading here is a form of immediate *doing*, rather than solitary interpretation in measured retrospect. It involves not only tolerating but also excitedly employing what is not wholly then felt as *uncertainty*. *Unpredictability* – and again an awareness of unpredictability

³ Example - Jane Eyre

An: *I like that part where it says in my secret soul I knew that his great kindness to me was balanced by unjust severity to many others. Because when you sort of erm . . . when you are in sort of a relationship it's different, their relationship with you and you with them is different from theirs with everybody else and I think that put it very succinctly that sort of...*

Here 'you' marks a change of perspective: from the character's mental state to the speaker's emotional state; but it is presented as a general truth to add validity to her claims. It also shows the speaker's direct involvement with the text: something specific from the text world is transferred to the real world in the form of a generic claim.

– may be the best formulation here. CI Corcoran summarizes from the perspective of a psychologist this alternative to simple norms or easy defaults:

'In general it is thought that the human brain is set up as a prediction/ Bayesian system to reduce uncertainty. This helps us improve how we manage and govern our lives easily, conveniently and with least effort – hence we like to reason by analogy and live by routines. The live reading of unknown texts with (unknown) others removes the facility to rely on this evolved 'safe system' so readily. In these circumstances we cannot predict and so cannot control our responses – instead we react in emotional ways where the function of emotions is to prepare an organism to act in response to environmental challenges, potentially dangerous or novel situations.'

It should be noted, in general, that this exchange between the literary and the psychological disciplines, manifest in many places throughout Report 2 as a movement towards assembling final interrelated conclusions, is a feature of the project, and of its methodology, in terms of transferable or translatable value and its realization within the wider world.

(iv) There is a **triggered aliveness of response** correspondent to not knowing in advance, which, as often, is modelled in the work being read. For example in a poem on memory by Elizabeth Farjeon:

Group Leader: What do you think about the repetition of 'I remember' - which I just am noticing comes in every single first line of every stanza? There is something about the rhythm of the poem, doesn't make it seem as regular as that. So it's interesting to look back and see it is utterly regular.

Participant J: Yes it gives a sense of the effort I think for me, the effort of remembering and the need to . . . actually mention the action itself as a, as . . . an act of memory. 'I remember that, I remember that': it's quiet though isn't it as you say, it doesn't actually call attention to itself. It just constantly works through the poem as a repeated action that has to be made in order to recover these things.

Group Leader: That is interesting, isn't it that we have to use that verb in that way.

*Participant H: I think it's like she is saying things as they come to mind, so like she says . . . 'and that is almost **all** I can remember', but then she says a load **more** things after that, so . . . it's like new things are coming to her memory as she says it.*

This is the model of thoughts 'coming to mind' in the act of speaking, of new thoughts opened up out of old material which is not exhausted or repetitively familiar but seen and felt anew from a different perspective. These thoughts, as experiences, include an accompanying affect and other related sensations felt in a new context. The sudden *triggering* takes the recollection out of its original context in the reader and lands it somewhere else (within the

poem or story), requiring him or her to re-think the meaning and significance of it. This experience is true of some of the best moments in the reading group.

(v) There is a considerable **sense of achievement in reading aloud** felt by participants when, not having read previously, they do decide to volunteer to read a section of a passage. In his fourth session, participant D read Robert Herrick's seventeenth-century lyric 'To Anthea, Who May Command Him Anything' haltingly but with quiet care. Participant J described D's reading later in the session itself:

That's right, it's got so much strength in the claims that it doesn't want too much emphasis in the speaking it just wants a quiet erm . . . delivery because the words do all the work . . .

Participant C: And that's why I closed my eyes for the last verse because it's profound in a way you let it . . .

Participant J: I think that works extremely well it's almost as if, I mean you read it extremely well so you get that sense of like, it's like a deadpan... no that is not quite the right word like the deadpan nature of the statement is you know offset by the incredible commitments being made in every verse.

The Group Leader stressed that the reading and the feeling were 'beautiful': often in our transcript analyses we have found that word then associated with 'lovely' and 'love' in terms of the intrinsic human value felt in this form of aesthetics. E said of the shop assistant's kindness to the old ladies in a Joanne Harris story, 'It's like an art type of experience in a sense that even a service can be . . . beautiful'. Conclusively, D reports at interview that the effect of being able to read aloud on him has lasted:

I've always been so used to my opinion not counting. I feel as if I'm not being noticed. And that's why when I started the group I thought, because a lot of the people read normally, I don't feel as educated as them, being honest.

I do remember that I felt really good after I read it, because of the positive feedback. And I've gone home since and I've read it again and again and again. There's certain things that people said that stick in my head now, confident things.

Interviewer: How did it feel to read the Herrick poem? Can you say anything about that?

A struggle. A real, real struggle. I was shaking inside. There was a thing [that Participant C] said when I read the end of the last verse, about 'I'll always think of it, when I read it', which really . . . [tears]

See 'despair'? [pointing to poem on page, 'Bid me despair, and I'll despair,/Upon that cypress tree;/Or bid me die, and I will die']

There's a lot of despair that I've got. See when I was reading it, I wasn't really conscious of what I was saying. I wasn't really conscious of the words of what I was saying. Since I've gone home and I've read more of them, as I say there's certain words . . . But there's certain words as I say that touch nerves with me, and that's what I find.

Participant M in the other group likewise spoke of his own reading aloud which finally took place towards the end of the very last session: 'I felt more at home with people by this stage. . . . Probably just thought: it's my time. . . . I'm the most quiet in the group. . . . I do want to do more. I would have felt it as a moment of release, sort of thing.'

We believe that in support of qualitative judgments, further investigation of existing data will be able to show statistically the increased contribution of participants who have read aloud for the first time both immediately after reading and in subsequent sessions. (Both M and D have continued with the reading group after the end of the research project, extended as it was at the request of six participants.) Selected transcripts of individual participant contribution *across* sessions are also available for further quantitative and qualitative analysis.

2. CREATIVE INARTICULACY: unpredictability and emergent thinking

This characteristic is particularly connected with both the uncertainty/unpredictability of not-knowing-in-advance and the challenging linguistic depth of the literature. It occurs in contrast to the norms of pre-programming: i.e. the speech patterns associated with the untroubled register of information and opinion. The discussion process in GiR is not about simple names or categories but dynamic areas and phrases located within the text, triggering unpremeditated response. A key moment here, to which for example participant E significantly refers back in one session, is Pip's 'I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry – I cannot hit upon the right word for the smart' (*Great Expectations*). The consequence, as a result of blocking simple facility and literalistic opinion, was actually an increase in what Joanne Harris (viewing excerpts from the reading of her own story) described as 'emotional articulacy'.

This is in marked contrast to the procedures of self-help books, for example, where the subject-matter is named and the procedure is *explicitly top-down*, in terms of useful information, explanation, programme, stages of treatment etc. The literary experience is in contrast intrinsic or, as we shall also say, *implicit*: the meaning is not readily offered in advance in terms of titles, cases or cures but, invariably *more* than any paraphrase or categorization can hold, is emergent from below upwards, and is internally generated within the group through clues, triggers and the working at meaning. A comparison of the sheer content used in reading groups (literature compared to self-help books or newspapers) is a matter for further research.

Thus in sessions on *Silas Marner* the meaning is crystallized at sudden moments of realization. In one group participant L offers the formulation '*real gold*' to describe the

replacement of the miser's hoard with a yellow-haired child ('real gold' also being the title in the anthology for this excerpt and a poem linked to it, though at interview L insisted she had not registered that). In the other group, participant A similarly locked onto the word 'treasure' in a sentence which for her suddenly disclosed the meaning of the whole excerpt: 'He was unable to reach out his hand and grasp the restored treasure'. A reported at interview, 'Yes, I log things somewhere. If it's important it will come up again. It will either pass or it's important and it will . . . form'. That is the experience of *emergence* and then *decisiveness* which seems part of the recovery of thought and memory involved in this process.

In interview participant E who suffers from a neurological disability talks of her extended sense of the difficulty of 'putting thoughts into words which you haven't been able to put into words, or to explain'

*I mean that's one of the things that I find that when I'm trying to put thoughts into words to then explain to doctors, it's an **impossible**, unless I've . . . sometimes I find something written down and think, that's what I'm trying to explain! Sometimes I don't, you know . . . Because unless you find the right words, they don't understand what you're talking about. And sometimes when you read a poem or a story or whatever, you read it and you're thinking that writer has just hit the nail on the head, and you know, I know exactly what he's talking about.*

E, like others with different disadvantages be they psychological medical or educational, has to work with and from what she *hasn't* got. But this also brings her closer to the heuristic processes of the writers themselves wherein sentences can be achievements.

The relative raw and live inarticulacy in the videoed sessions, resembling a rediscovery of language in place of familiarised automaticity, enables researchers to see what is happening as it is happening whilst the inarticulate beginnings give the participants themselves something to work at and get out. As a London project worker put it in interview: 'You can see it, you can feel it as a facilitator, so, you know, you can see the *birth* of it as you're reading.' On these shoots or seedlings of thoughts/ideas/reconceptualizations, CI Corcoran adds in relation to points of new knowledge: 'If these are "salient" to us (and we might not consciously know why) we will 'log' them (as A says, above) and file them somewhere within or between existing networks of experiences or knowledge. They might provide bridges between old and new ideas or enable reconceptualisation into something fuller – more representative of "self" as opposed to a single experience of yourself.'

Evidence for creative inarticulacy may be categorised as follows

(i) **Linguistic traces** (See also Appendix 3 for Wordsmith analysis)

For example, in the transcripts a much-repeated locution unconsciously adopted by participants of different social background and educational experience is the phrase 'it is as

though' or 'it's almost as if' or 'it is almost like' or 'I feel as though'. It is commonly the prelude or bridge to a bold and interesting breakthrough in thought (as opposed to the tonal opinionatedness of, say, 'I just/still think'). Arising out of an uncertainty or hesitation that is nonetheless far from disabling, it is a tool that allows time, space and permission for tentative or provisional thinking, in the form of imaginative interpretation and inference close to the intrinsic spirit of literary thinking itself.

Thus on the final stanza of John Clare's poem of mental turmoil, 'I am'

I long for scenes where man has never trod,
A place where woman never smiled or wept,
There to abide, with my creator, God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie,
The grass below – above the vaulted sky.

A: It feels, there's something about peace isn't there, because it's not even talking about being happy. It's just: doesn't smile or wept; it's about peacefulness and to be untroubled.

H: Yes, it's almost like he wants like freedom from mental turmoil or something like that, you know just to not kind of cause anyone any trouble or feel anything horrible or anything like that.

J: Escaping the world, in a sense isn't it. With a sense of obviously in this case a religious space, heaven.

Group Leader: It's funny though that it doesn't say heaven . . .

C: It's almost as if the everyday life, almost he's thinking that is what he may interpret as paradise.

Group Leader: Yes, yes

C: You know the people everyday, or it's almost as if people are untouched by illness, grief, happiness. It's . . .

At such moments, the group (suddenly less dependent on the Group Leader) seems to be passing the baton, as it were, from member to member, in what we call a *relay*. There the group begins to act like a single mind, with diverse thoughts in its different inter-relating people collaborating around the poem. A closes the search for the felt meaning here by saying 'I long: . . . Is it almost like daring to hope? Because I was thinking that, I was thinking is there hope in longing but sometimes there is.'

Participant H speaks of the 'almost like' process, more broadly in interview:

Interviewer: You're looking down at the page. Were you re-reading that line on untroubled and untroubling as you say that? ('like freedom from mental turmoil, not cause any trouble')

H: I'm not sure to be honest. I think I probably had some sort of idea in my head of what I wanted to say, but hadn't actually put it into words in my head before I said it.

Interviewer: Do you think that's how you do a lot of the thinking in the group?

H: Yes I think so. I think I have ideas and I don't necessarily put them into words into my head before I've said it. . . . I think most often the idea comes before I say it. I might not necessarily know how I'm going to say it, but the idea will come before I say it. . . .

Interviewer: Do you notice how, when you're going to say something profound, you begin 'it's almost as if'. Is this related to what you were saying about not formulating before you speak?

H: Yes, that's what it is – a way of giving myself time to come up with what I'm going to say next. . . .

There is here a strong sense of the creative effort to translate an inner experience to an outer world. It makes explicit what is deeply *personal* and not easy or even necessary to communicate. Yet the communication is part of what it means to be of a *social* species, identifying matches, friends, confidantes.

Later H speaks of the process of 'brewing' in her head, as also connected with thinking 'on the spot'. Further analysis is needed of those moments when people pause or even stop without quite finishing their sentence, where the effect is more of a full silence than an empty one; or where an emergent live thought seems not so much blocked as continuing to exist suggestively and unspoken in the resonant atmosphere of the group without a ready-made category or framework heading for continuance. The full silence is where implicit meaning still seems present: D.H. Lawrence (in 'The Study of Thomas Hardy' in *Phoenix*) calls the process of such pausing on the brink of articulation one of 'heaving into uncreated space'. An empty silence often makes more demands on the Group Leader to break it.

We made statistical comparison between the two different groups working on the same passage from *Great Expectations*: the Group Leader's sense of there being more empty silence in group 2 was reflected in her taking up 42% of the total word count in group 1 but 57% in group 2. Such matching of methods to reflect different but potentially correlated levels of operation is an important way forward in this research: as indicated, we retain substantial amounts of data for further computer analysis and a corpus-based, quantitative investigation of word clusters using Wordsmith concordance will be especially relevant.

(ii) Emotional atmosphere: surrounding and underlying

Where the Built Environment has clear implicit criteria of *relevance* to the practical design-task in hand, the reading group worked more within what might be called a field of *resonance* radiating from the poem or story: i.e. the circle of feeling within which the work remained

live. As is shown in report 3 below, the BE group works inwards together towards achieving a final table-based product, a mapped design, where GiR works from an already existent but reanimated central product, the literature, diffusing itself into different minds to take away and work up implicitly. A characteristically useful discussion in Built Environment might revolve around discussion of concepts and definition of terms such as the meaning or appropriateness of 'international' and 'well-being' in the description of Calderstones Mansion as 'an international centre for reading and well-being'. The challenging aim was how then to use those definitions and meanings to inform a new way of thinking that would produce a *genius loci*, translating a mission into a physical home. In GiR, in contrast, the literature itself provided the supportive atmosphere just as soon as it began to become realized in the room.

In GiR, the vocabulary and syntax of discussion is itself inflected by the resonant model of the literature, in the emotionally demanding situations it creates. For example, participant An offered an unusual formulation on the reclusiveness of Miss Havisham: 'she herself fell in on herself', and then a little later, contrastingly on her own problems in relation to her Miss Havisham-like mother, she speaks of the struggle to try to 'develop *into* myself'. Participant H on a moment in Hawthorne's short story when the sight of a dog looking at them prevents two would-be assailants going through with murdering their sleeping victim: 'It's like it's kind of made them *realise themselves*'. Participant C speaks of young Pip's humiliation by Estella: 'And often, with Pip, people can be so angry that they are tearful and they are cross at themselves, thinking I am so angry but why am I crying . . .': the swift transition of one pronoun ('they') to another ('I') is another indicator of the imaginative mobility of the experience and will be the subject for future investigation by the CIs in Linguistics.

In the reading groups the creative inarticulacy and uncertainty involved in not being clear about where a thought was going summons a vocabulary other than labelling, has impact upon syntax, and affects the imagined understanding of time itself. Thus, for example, E talking in the group on *Silas Marner*:

I think sometimes if you've lost something, be it for example this character losing his money, or even like it might be a drastic change, for example you're retiring and suddenly your life's different, it's wondering what – it's a future that you don't know. In the past the future's always been – there.

'Wondering what . . .' is a properly uncompleted and non-naming locution. It reflects the way in which the existence of self across time may demonstrate the limitations of the predictive brain, and thus creating the need for reformulation. In terms of her own traumatic experience of loss and a changed future, E suffers neurological impairment resulting from accidental contact with an electric fence during a stay in South Africa: she has difficulty in

concentrating and occasionally with fluent speech, and suffers extensive memory gaps and loss, headaches, and problems with seeing in bright light. It is during a discussion of Robert Frost's 'The Road Not Taken' that E's intermittent speech disability comes under more emotional strain when she stutters five or more times over 'If I ever had' - before poignantly managing to complete the sentence - 'children'.

Such experience (of 'If . . .') has to do with unanswered questions, possibilities and wonderings, things left hanging which nonetheless become here visibly if momentarily part of thought. The conditional or counter-factual 'If' seems to be linked to the need to prepare ourselves for the unpredicted road. At interview participant S, looking at herself thinking about the end of the Hawthorne story on 'the strange things that almost happen', commented subtly: 'I don't think I was stating what I thought, what I believed, more what the possibility of that was.'

This felt inward sense of imaginatively new or unclear possibilities struggling for articulation is part of the *intrinsic* nature of a *literary* reading group in the way that the psychologist/philosopher Eugene Gendlin suggests in his own sense of 'implicit' meaning involved in the literary 'coming of words':

'Say you are writing a poem. You have six or eight lines but the poem is not finished. It wants to go on. In an implicit way you feel what should be said next, but you do not know what to say. The phrases that do come do not precisely say it. You reject one phrase after another. How are you able to do this? . . . Something implicit is functioning in your rejection of them.'⁴

(iii) **Group interaction**

When asked about *the group* interaction at moments such as that above from 'I am', H offered a more collective version of this modified rejection or refinement:

I think sometimes when you hear what someone else says, you either think, yes, that's what I mean or you think that's kind of what I mean but you see what the difference is between what they're saying and what you mean. So then you can put that into words easier than you can put your own big idea into words.

⁴ 'The New Phenomenology of Carrying Forward' (p. 131)
http://www.focusing.org/gendlin/docs/gol_2228.html

This last sentence is a good description of the value of group and of liveness within group: i.e. the mix of independence with membership when the individual hones his or her own thoughts while at the same time demonstrating resonance with the thoughts of others.

The dialectical balance between individual and group, personal and social, private and public, sameness and difference is subtly alternating in this context of intense conversation: the to-and-fro of collaboration is also related to the processes of resistant modification. There are a number of instances when distinctively corrective contributions come out of an uncombative internal 'no', rather than saying 'kind of' or 'yes'. In a reading of the Joanne Harris short story, 'Faith and Hope Go Shopping', about two old ladies breaking out of their care home to go to the shoe department in Fortnum and Mason's, the Group Leader suggested that the shop assistant was being kind to his aged customers who after all bought nothing. Participant An was emphatic in disagreeing with other participants (especially L who disliked the story's sentimentality):

I felt this man, this shop assistant was at his ordinary day or whatever, come in whatever, and suddenly he was having an experience you know and he realised it and he... he... it was an experience for him as well.

Group Leader: These two old ladies come in and he treats them kindly.

A: *Well it was . . . it was . . . it was . . . I mean for him . . . I don't think it's just the word kindly, I think he realised, he . . . and he didn't, you know he absolutely was unfaltering you know it was . . . it was . . .*

Though the Group Leader was seeking to mediate between An and L, the normalising word 'kindly' produced an inner rejection in An expressed by her audible emphasis on 'he *realised* it', 'an *experience* for him as well'. Viewing the recording, An later connected this moment of sudden imaginative conviction on her part to the assistant's own 'unfaltering' behaviour:

*It was **more** than that, it wasn't knowing and doing and plotting and planning, he just did. And those moments can come and can come unexpectedly. . . . And what I didn't like was the word kindness because kindnesses are what you do, very nice and kind, this was deeper. . . .*

Interviewer: Group work isn't just about agreeing or being surprised about sharing?

*I felt there that it needed to be **heard**, it wasn't a case of us, or our feelings or interpretation, it needed to be heard what was being written, what was happening needed to be heard. I don't know if you are going to run it on a bit but the fact that he gave her a rose – in the end she didn't need the shoes. Sometimes you think this is what you need and it can be something unexpectedly different. And again –background – for many years I couldn't go into a shop . . . and therefore for them to have that experience . . .*

'More than' may be a motto for literary meaning: An stresses here something she considers intrinsically deeper and more vitally necessary for humans than the casual normalization

'kindness'. The unexpected but decisive realizing involved here, and the imaginative hearing, are related to the experience of liveness and the process of reading aloud, respectively.

3. THE EMOTIONAL AND THE PERSONAL – their place in the reading of meaning

(i) The Emotional

In the group-experience

The sense of embodied immediacy in the moment (discussed under 1 above and as resonance in 2 ii) is witnessed by participant E in interview:

When you're reading a well-written, powerful poem, it sort of hits you in the face even though it physically can't.

Speaking of Miss Havisham, for example, participant An spoke of how or how not a person could be 'reached' and how vital that was for a life. Participant A is representative in emphasising the emotional connection to the work as a primary part of the experience and often the first point of entry:

The Clare kind of went in and struck something directly. . . . I think when I read anything – I didn't want to come to these groups for it to be about critique, or the style of writing. That's how I process anything – it's about how it makes me feel and whether it moves me or it resonates with something. That's how I choose what I enjoy. Sometimes I can't even remember what the poem or book was about, I just know whether it meant something to me. . . . So I think poetry can get to feelings very quickly – it's almost condensed [...] It just happened quite – suddenly.

Certain kinds of knowledge and articulate education ('critique', 'style') were seen as secondary. M at interview compared the Built Environment group from his own point of view:

It does let you off the hook in a sense: learning doesn't engage you on an emotional level that much, like literature. If you go and learn a language for instance, and take language classes, then it more like an escape.

Interviewer: So what is learning in the reading groups?

It is sharing things about life, it is not a theoretical discussion.

L said at interview:

When I was in London I spent years and years and years going to see this therapist to try and sort of you know work it all out. And she always used to say, 'That's the sociological defence' whenever she thought I wasn't speaking from me – I'm obsessed with context - trying to place people's personal experience in the context in which they experience them.

The starting-point for what we have called ‘*doing reading*’, actively and dynamically in the moment, was a felt inner experience, implicitly registered in response to the text. This was not necessarily a single nameable emotion (as in ‘the poem is *about sadness*’) but more a felt and often adjectival sense of the poem (signalled initially by shorthand deictic phrases such as ‘It’s sad’, ‘This is tender’) out of which more complex explicit thoughts would later emerge and open. As indicated in 2 above, the movement from implicit to explicit meaning was characteristically experienced less as explanation than decisive realization. But without that initial resonance of felt sense, the group was hard to set going, and the silences felt empty or awkward with the space between group members feeling large (as the Group Leader often confirmed). Feeling, as a form of incipient thinking struggling for articulation, was the primary experience without which in the first place, nothing to felt purpose followed in the second.

Nonetheless, the opposition, as expressed through participants A, M and L, to what is perceived as secondary, dry, aesthetic or defensive in formal study does not mean that readerly responses here are uneducated, unsubtle or lacking in nuance. Commenting on the final stanza of the Clare poem, A noted the poet’s desire for an end to turbulent emotion: ‘And yet it is full of emotion’. Or A said on the conflicted and uncertain courtship between Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester, ‘Sometimes the language doesn’t match, does it.’ The emotional effect in a session was not simply sentimental or indulgent: fear and pain and insecurity were major concerns, as were mixed or conflicting emotions, and participants were also much engaged with the converse dangers of emotional ‘infection’ in Pip’s experience at the house of Miss Havisham and the need for ‘innoculation’ against it at key moments of survival in a life.

It is to be noted therefore that this emotional impact need not be, and characteristically was not, separable from subsequently precise and close imaginative *attention* to the vocally embodied work as also seen on the page. In relation to the Herrick poem, E (with no formal experience of studying literature since school) saw how important sonically was the poem’s repeated use of the comma (‘Bid me to live, and I will live’, ‘Bid me to weep, and I will weep’) in making the lover’s pledge more freely rather than automatically given. As a result of her accident, E is particularly sensitive to matters of brain functioning:

Well you’ve only got the words on the page haven’t you, with any story or poem, which is why you need to be careful if you write a letter or a text or something. You don’t have all the hand gestures, you know there’s a lot more in person. . . . At Neuro Support I’ve gone on – well it’s an assertiveness, motivation type of course . . . And at one part they were talking about how much percentage is in each different part of communication, be it the body language, the words, the tone, etc. . . . When something’s well-written, your head understands all the stuff which is being, you know all the extra stuff which it looks for, in communication, it reads from it. When you’re reading something badly-written, that’s what’s missing is that your brain’s unable to fill in the blanks, in that sense. And even if it’s the right place for a

comma, the correct length of the sentence, even saying the same thing in two different ways can totally change things.

The capacity to pay attention to the ‘little things’ which others might not have time for was important to participant L in relation to a R.S. Thomas’s poem ‘Rich’ on the re-scaling of values, when emotion burstingly says the matter is not so little. ‘I thought their interpretation was spot on,’ said Joanne Harris on the group’s attention to the word ‘gilded’ at one moment in her own story: ‘And it was very interesting that they hit upon that word because the word has a dynamic within the sentence that makes it stand out . . . It is supposed to make you stop and think. I wanted the reader to pause in that place, and personally I am glad they did.’ This attention involves active *reading* as opposed to simply taking meaning on face value: it includes participant An’s stress on the hidden importance of (mere) red shoes in Joanne Harris’s story; or participant Ae noting ‘even the little detail’ of the miser Silas suddenly not even hesitating to use up his previously precious store of sugar on the little child’s porridge; or participant L noting Pip becoming aware and ashamed of his workman’s hands – all processes that work from below upwards to find the thought or idea these details resonantly belong to. ‘It’s massive,’ says S suddenly on realizing the scale of Clare’s loss of all ‘life’s esteems’: hence the *burst* of feeling when much breaks out of little. Participant H began to refer back to Silas Marner in the midst of thinking of the R.S. Thomas poem that followed the account of him:

I mean it could be, like, saying, erm, I will use the little bit of happiness I have, to kind of make a bigger thing, whether it’s himself or the child I don’t know . . . it could be either really.

Watching this moment, with H’s consent, her elder sister commented with reference to the prolonged illness H has suffered in her teens, resulting in long stays in hospital:

Interesting. That is what she had to do, I think, keep hold of the good feelings and use those to build on, build on, build on . . . because when you are in hospital most of it is pretty miserable, keeping hold of that.

As so often, what H is talking about in the character in the text is also what is happening in the room: the use of the text and in the text to get from little to bigger things. Thus, H’s own language – ‘I mean it could be, like, saying, erm, I will use the little bit of happiness I have, to kind of make a bigger thing’ - reveals the mix of apparent uncertainty (‘it could be, like’, ‘kind of’ etc.) next to the emphatic stress on ‘*use*’ and the sense of certainty/growth from that platform. The word ‘*use*’ is important in showing how literature can be useful without being simply instrumental - not least because the word comes just before ‘thing’ – again the mix here: ‘using’ something when you’re not sure what. RA Magee, who examined transcripts and videos after the completion of the groups, comments:

'Is that not what the reading groups are a bit about? Use this to make that – even though the “that” is not exactly worked out yet. . . . It is thinking in action.'

At interview

The feelings experienced by participants in the group were often re-experienced during their viewing of clips at interview. Thus A on Clare:

I feel it now actually, watching it again. . . . For me it wasn't even in the past, it was current. It was something that kind of, was sort of was going on at the time – you know, still is, really. . . . It's just particular words I remember, something about turmoil and being tossed on the sea.

S on Herrick:

That almost made me feel a little bit tearful just then! It's quite moving isn't it. I remembered again when you showed me it, my first thought was oh it's only . . . it's from ages ago . . .

It is important that certain works, from diverse ages, seem to offer holding-places to which people can point and also return later in different circumstances. This initial pointing activity, an act of instinctive dumb location ahead of the ability for further articulation, is what is also signified by deixis, above in 1. These indicated places give material body to experiences otherwise hard to hold and investigate. In a group 'I've been *there*' (the words of participant L for example, explaining her need to leave the room during 'I am' on mental breakdown) was a shorthand way of expressing this, amidst pain.

Participant H speaks in this way of how Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken' brought with it the memory of her experience of regular hospitalization over seven years, with anorexia, whilst her twin sister was taking the more conventional path of university:

I think . . . with the poems and the readings, when it touches on something personal in your life or your experiences or whatever, I think it doesn't necessarily make you think about it in a way that . . . well it . . . it . . . doesn't make you form a new opinion of it but maybe it . . . makes you realize what your opinions are on it. That you hadn't necessarily consciously thought about before. So it's not that I did regret it and then when I read that poem I thought actually no I don't regret it. It's that I hadn't really taken time to sit and think 'Do I regret this?' You know 'Do I regret anything?' And then that made me realize what . . . what I already thought already, even though I hadn't articulated it necessarily.

Again, as with participant An above, this is the language of 'realization', in an amalgam of old, long-felt content and new perspective, where the poem tacitly summons the experience of the reader even whilst simultaneously remaining itself.

It was noticeable that when viewing clips at interview some participants had analogous *reflective* feelings in looking at themselves and the group reading. Participant G spoke of effects registered in her own facial expressions: 'I'd never realized. Because you don't see the expression on your own face when you are listening to somebody else speaking'; whilst participant M was almost talking to Silas Marner himself for nightly leaving his door open, in case his lost gold could somehow return:

It's almost like he's waiting for someone to come and say, 'The money's gone. There is no money, You're not getting it back.' He's in . . . what do you call it . . . in Purgatory

At such moments the literature seems in place of that external god-like voice, which like Purgatory may be non-existent in informal secular life, explicitly pronouncing the state of reality. Like the Frost poem accompanying it, the Hawthorne short story on what does *not* happen in life was the occasion in both groups for this otherwise impossible imagination of what you could not know did not happen (or still might). Thus participant An said in the session itself: 'You know how we, you know we like to feel secure and we go out and we're all, we've got things around us that we're safe in, and yet there you know you just don't know . . .'. So it is when C read aloud the Frost poem, particularly these last lines, on the unknowns in the very midst of choices:

Two roads diverged in a wood and I -
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Group Leader to C: 'I noticed as you read, you put almost like a tiny question mark after the I at the line-end, two roads diverged in a wood and I - as if you put into your intonation there as if the person was thinking about what they had done.' [C nods at this.]

The role of the Group Leader notably involved such almost immediately responsive feedback, including also her own doubts and experiences, which participant D identified at interview as 'feeding you these little snippets' to encourage involvement at all levels.

At interview many participants (in particular D and A) noted, with renewed feeling, the poignancy of the lone individual 'I' at such turning-points in a poem, and felt a continuing shared relation. There are implications here for the predicament of human loneliness.

(ii) **The Personal**

The classic position on the relation of the personal to the text was set out in I.A. Richards's foundational text for what is now often called 'close reading', *Practical Criticism* (1929):

Everything depends upon how essential the bond of thought or feeling may be that links it with the poem. We have to ask whether it really springs from the meaning or whether it is an accidental by-product of a reading which does not realise the meaning; whether the train of association has at least started right and is rooted in something essential, and whether or not accidents of the individual reader's mind or history or temperament have twisted it.

(Part 2 chapter 5)

A personal response that was an accidental by-product would be in the terms of the Cultural Value Project a response that was arguably *instrumental*, in taking the text and applying it to the reader's own life by default, at the expense of what the text really stands for. Nonetheless autobiographical responses seem intrinsic to the reading-group experience in these sessions, and what is at stake is what might be the legitimate use of personal experience in fulfilling the meaning of the work being read, in the face of what could be called academic purism. Any requirement for simple fixed boundaries in this complex area seems unreasonable.

CIs Gonzalez-Diaz and Lampropoulou comment on autobiographical stories told by group members from their perspective in linguistics:

***Narratives and reported speech:** narrative is a social action through which we make sense of ourselves as individuals and as members of (social) groups. Research on conversational narrative has shown that the length of a narrative and the form it will take depends on the co-participants' conversational contribution. For example, lengthy narratives which include extensive use of reported speech (a dramatisation device) are fostered in informal and loose interactions among intimates. The analysis of specific narrative features (narrative openings and closings, evaluative devices, the presence of reported speech) can provide information about the dynamics of the interactions in reading groups and explain the role the text plays and how it shapes the participants' contributions.*

Appendix 3 gives indications of how stories of self-disclosure on the part of group-members represent a form of **learning** from the text, of discovery of its meaning within the participants' own perspective.

In instances when group members spoke autobiographically and subsequently were shown the appropriate clip, they claimed at interview (a) that they had not told the story before save perhaps to family and trusted friends or in a medicalized situation, and would not normally speak in this way socially to comparative strangers and (b) that the memory was '*triggered*' or '*tripped off*' by the text.

In contrast after D's reading of the Herrick poem, participant J (who has a degree in Literature and is a retired academic) spoke of ways of 'framing' the text, in terms of genre, underlying motivation, or historical context. The session drifted and went cold and distant for a while thereafter. The starting point in the reading groups was that the texts, though fictional,

felt immediately very 'real', and almost physically, sensuously and emotionally so, for being read aloud. L speaks in interview of the reading as an entrance into a felt world:

You remember when you read very very very good writing, you forget – it's just like a portal, like a portal into another person's consciousness. It's absolutely extraordinary how evocative it is. . . . I've only read that passage once, I haven't read it again since, and I haven't read the whole of Silas Marner. But I've got an absolutely complete picture of that scene and having only read it once, not familiar with George Eliot at all. But that's the wonder of that sort of Victorian literature, it's the almost hallucinatory descriptive powers. And I think that's why we're able to talk about it so precisely, because you know exactly what she's describing. . . . 'The thoughts were strange to him now, like old friendships impossible to revive' – I think that's another one of those things, although it's described in words, it invokes, evokes, a kind of wordless knowledge inside your mind. . . .

Yes, it so so, so real, but also heightened – the memory of a person, you once knew really really well and you can kind of conjure them in your mind, in an almost 3D way, you know, but at the same time you know you're unlikely to see them again - it's that portal into the accumulated experience of an individual – every single human has that accumulated . . . store of experiences and memories and I suppose some people are a bit more . . . aware of it than others – but everybody has the capacity to have that brought back to them – to have their memories brought back to them. . . . I think you need really, really good writing to do that – I think it depends massively on the quality of the writing.

CI Corcoran comments on that second paragraph, from the point of view of an experimental psychologist: 'This is the switch from outward attention to inward attention that is triggered by the salience of a text. In the terms of brain networks, the executive brain (actively attending to stimuli from the outside world, in this case the literary text) switches to the inward focussed default-mode network where our own experiences are re-felt and reviewed in the light of the on-going context. It is more typical in our usual everyday lives that we are aware of switching from default to executive – from mind wandering /remembering/ contemplating to attentive focus on what is actually and currently going on. Some of the value of GiR may lie in this less common *reverse-switching* awareness. The participants can go off into a world of their own in the reading *but*, vitally, the relevance of that world is now prompted by the ongoing activity/engagement. Furthermore, it becomes a shared world with relevance or resonance now in the outside world too, and that is a luxury one usually only gets when in the company of highly familiar people – close family or friends. The hypothesis would be that shared reading of literature speeds up the connections between people.'

Examples of the autobiographical

In the reading group session on *Silas Marner*, L spoke of how the work got 'right inside the consciousness' of the characters and then of the subjectivity of the readers too. Thus F

pointing in relation to Silas: 'I thought: This is Harry [his late grandfather with equivalent obsession]'; or L in relation to *Great Expectations* during the actual group session: 'Because I have never read this and as soon as I started reading Miss Havisham I thought oh my God this is my mum.' During Hawthorne's 'David Swan', E notes the way in which a mother-figure suddenly wants to help the sleeping young man because of 'our departed Henry' (her own late son), and speaks of 'the gap in her own life' through which the motherly feelings of that old woman are rushing in at that moment. E at interview spoke further in relation to such needs and openings, and what she called the 'awakenings' that result from them:

'... who could have been her son.' ... I think it's probably re-awakened, that she's stored, you know because the brain stores info, you know stores experiences and stuff, hopefully to make you stronger in the long-run but [laughs] you know. But things re-surface, with certain events ... like events which could be positive or negative which you've sort of got over in your own way that's been squirrelled away in the back of your head as it were, and all you need is something to trigger that to come back forward.

Where a reader's response seems called for as if to fill a gap, there is often for the respondent a sense of a matched relation to the world envisioned by the text - as though the thought was not gratuitous but called for and fitting. One interviewee amongst the apprentices at TRO said it was like 'coming *out*' from inside, and finding 'a place' for a thought.

CI Lampropoulou commented from the point of view of a linguist, in terms of initial basic findings: 'In the reading groups, there is *involvement* with the text that has been read out and this results in *self-disclosing* talk. ... In the built environment transcripts, there is still involvement between the co-participants and some sort of in-groupness, in the sense that they are sharing and exchanging opinions with regards to terminological issues, but the talk seems less interpersonal and more detached from the topic under discussion.'⁵

⁵ Thus participant F tells one story from forty years ago about his grandfather Harry, redundant and retired and every morning going to the bus stop but never taking the bus - like Silas with his post-traumatic syndrome. His family have told F that this was all in the past and he should have moved on. F tells another story, in relation to Pip, about the humiliating cruelty he suffered from a particular teacher at special school, and in relation to R.S. Thomas's poem 'Rich' ('when night/comes, offer the moon/unhindered entry through trust's/windows) tells yet another about the aunt who raised him asking in her final days 'Am I dying?' Such things said F at interview are to his mind in 'a parallel line' with the text. Participant G spontaneously recalled F's anecdote about the special school in a subsequent session at which F was absent, saying she had known the school when she was growing up but at the time would never have imagined it as F described it. The group experience often seems to involve a keen awareness of different lives going on at the same time.

The author Joanne Harris commented separately and confirmingly as follows on these questions, without prior knowledge of the terms we were using or investigating – thus of emotional involvement:

Interviewer: it seems more emotional than reading on a course?

JH: I think it is, on a visceral level of interpretation instead of looking at style or trying to work out what the author was trying to say. What they [in the reading group] were talking about which in my view was absolutely right was how the character felt.

Interviewer: As an author, that pleases you that they didn't talk about authorial intention?

JH: Very much, yes. Because it shows a level of engagement which I find creative writing students don't have because they have learnt to disassociate themselves from the piece of writing in a sort of . . . well, they are looking at the artifice and not the heart of it. I think that is the problem with how creative writing is taught. . . .

and again of autobiographical involvement and the two-way relation between text and reader:

Interviewer: What did you feel about the aspects of autobiography – did you feel they were being thrust upon the story?

JH: Not at all. I thought it was a very good reflection of the way people bring their own personal feelings and experience to the story. I have always felt that story is a two-way process, that the reader brings at least as much to the process as the writer if it is to be a rewarding symbiosis. The more experience you have to connect with, the more rewarding the reading experience is going to be. It is very nice as a writer to find a story you have written resonating with so many different people of different ages.

It was, she concluded, a process of 'translation'.

The further use of the personal.

It is often *identification* with a character that is the initial way-in to both text and response, but at times involvement was generated by the reader *not* having something he or she was glad to see realized in the text. Participant D said of loyal love in a Herrick poem that he was moved by this - which he had *not* had (see section 5 below). What was of further interest was when a participant identified with *two* characters at the same time or occupied the space between them. Participant An is at once a daughter who had to leave her mother for the sake of her own life but also a person who, like that mother, has found it hard to go out of the house. Speaking of the shop assistant who in Joanne Harris's story 'Faith and Hope Go Shopping' was kind to the old woman who had dared to get out of the care home, she said, 'I am *both* at that moment, both [trapped old woman escaping and the caring one] . . .' At its most insightful, the use of the reader's own experience in relation to the text is dual in being both a giving to and a learning from it, in imagination as well as memory.

The ability to think of *two* people or two situations or two thoughts at almost the same time is a significant development in the work. This is registered in the transcripts through syntactic locutions, suitable for further linguistic analysis, such as ‘at the same time’ or ‘and yet’ or ‘as well’. This can be found in relation to text such as the love ambivalence in *Jane Eyre* or specifically in *Silas Marner* in the protagonist’s blank wonderment at the mysterious arrival of a child, triggering ‘the double presence of an inexplicable surprise and a hurrying influx of memories’. Participant H, relating her experience of being an identical twin taking a different path from that of her sister in the discussion of Frost’s poem, becomes in her terms ‘an alternative version of the poem’ in which her sister actually shows the ‘more conventional’ road not taken: ‘It’s almost like I could see what I *could* have done.’ In the final session on the Joanne Harris story, even across the sheer age difference H finds the break-out of the two old women acts as a spontaneous analogy for the first time she and a friend were allowed out of hospital to go for a trip to the cinema. There she voluntarily ate ice-cream for the first time for a long time; a small matter, she says in interview, which was actually, hiddenly, a big thing:

Well I think I have thought about how ridiculous it is on a on a kind of . . . objective level that nineteen year olds find it a big adventure to go to the cinema. But I know that it wasn’t ridiculous at the time. But I also know that to people who haven’t experienced that kind of thing it would seem kind of ridiculous . . .

if they hadn’t just read that story . . . I think the story kind of . . . erm . . . gives a long detailed description of the experience of being institutionalized, and getting out, and the kind of feelings and process of that and because they’ve [the group members] already had that whole description, they probably find it easier to understand the story that I’m telling.

When she learnt of this account, after viewing the relevant clip, Joanne Harris described this connection between the fictional old ladies and the actual young girls, across the generations, as ‘rather marvellous’.

Conclusion: on appropriateness of the personal

The above are offered as examples of occasions when what has been set up via text and Group Leader is sufficiently strong emotionally not only to allow but to fuel and benefit from the personal movements in process. Naturally, not all such personal anecdotes or comments are so intrinsically triggered or valuable, though participants at interview often anticipated or confirmed the research team’s own choices as to which did work. But rather than seek to establish abstract distinctions or clear borderlines, we concluded that the cross-over from proper to improper use of personal experience was not a problem, and worth the risk, *so long as* the movement does not break the resonant environment around the poem. The problem is not abstract but is itself a practical area or borderline that the Group Leader occupies. The role of the Group Leader, itself worthy of separate further study, was clearly seen in monitoring, aligning, and adjusting the subtle balances by having the text read and re-read

and by regularly pointing the group back to specifics in it. Participant J commented on seeing the videos that the role of the Group Leader is 'to let the text generate the primary momentum for the group'. Further research might require a control comparison with a shared reading-group that did not have a trained and dedicated Group Leader.

Conclusion: on the two-(or- three)-way process: reader, text and group

In the emotional setting which the literature helps to create within the group, the autobiographical material often spontaneously re-creates out of human experience some of the raw subject-matter of feeling that the text itself seemed to have been written out of: in that way, the personal is not just generated by the work but the work itself is brought to further life through the resonance it triggers.

At interview, in response to specific questioning on this issue, the participants thought that the private stories and often vulnerable identifications offered by an individual other than themselves in the group usually had a genuine and educative place in the discussion, whereas in the Built Environment Workshop they would not be relevant but self-indulgent. In terms of resonant environment, many interviewees spoke of the GiR group as offering a 'safe', 'intimate', 'respectful', 'free', 'open' and 'confidential' space for serious reading and talking. But participant H, reviewing the videoed excerpts, identified more specifically the discretionary place she believed the reading-group helped to create in the world, as readers worked *between* themselves and the texts:

It was kind of halfway between – you know - telling them everything and telling them nothing. It allowed me to say something, but I didn't feel awkward about it 'cos I wasn't going into loads of detail.

It is in this arena *between* text and readers that the interaction takes place, markedly changing the normal relation of personal to social, private to public, as summarized in the next section.

4. THE GROUP

The group did not really exist save as a static or notional unit *until*, through the text and the Group Leader serving it, live connections were made between one individual and another. Then its movements, connections and reconfigurations between different individuals at different moments in relation to different texts were unpredictable. Thus, sudden shifts from one participant to another made for a dynamic process of grouping and re-grouping in the course of any session. Video-recording offers evidence here: the videos allow a strong visual sense of these shifts, centres and relations. It was not simply that the groups were notionally democratic and respectful: there was a genuine and unpredictable mobility across age and class whereby at a key moment of realization one group-member rather than another changed role – became a version of the Group Leader or the novelist, or the temporary spokesperson

for the poem, or the sudden realizer of the personal meaning. This un-fixedness of roles within the group, the experience of never knowing on whom the experience will 'land', is part of the phenomena of emergence and democracy intrinsic to the nature of the sessions. Joanne Harris remarked, 'I liked the way the group was relatively fluid and they could interject' and contrasted this with formally imposed educational practices.

Appendix 3 give detailed initial exemplification of various forms of group interaction resulting from qualitative and conversation analysis conducted by the linguistic team; these include:

- involvement with character in the text
- mental movement from characters to group participants
- the participants' use of personal autobiography
- alignment between participants, with scope for further research on collaborative interruptions.

Certain other interrelated characteristics in that process have already been identified above:

- Relays: 2.i
- Collaborative modifications: 2.iii
- Porous/shifting boundaries between personal/private and social/public creating through the resonant human presence of the text a different feel and sense of what is human community: 2.i, 2.iii, 3.ii. This means that 'the reflective individual' and 'the engaged citizen' (in the AHRC's fine formulation) are likewise not separate categories in this activity but modes of being that work together in reciprocity.

In further exemplification of the last bullet-point, participant S, looking back on the excerpt on Miss Havisham, noted how she and L and An came together in thinking severally of their own mothers, stuck in habits that troubled their daughters in their relationships to them:

At first I think my attitude was oh but you didn't know my mother, thinking that nobody could have been like my mother. And then it gradually dawns on you that there are others the same, so it's a shared experience then isn't it.

Though conventionally it is diversity and difference that is to be respected and valued in groups, at times it was the *surprising* sameness, across the apparent differences, that was more prized. Joanne Harris herself remarked: 'The similarities between people are much greater than the differences, and people concentrate on the differences whereas they aren't the things that bring people together.' Similarly a TRO project worker interviewed in London spoke of 'seeing your own experience in that of a group member'. Such recognitions are like those excited bursts of familiarization expressed by group-members when a text/language not immediately familiar suddenly takes effect (the out-burst effect of S on Clare's mental wreck, 'It's massive'; or An on Joanne Harris, 'It's *not* kindness, it's deeper'). L reported on the shared experience, 'It was actually really therapeutic, talking about all that.' 'Community'

here is not just about relations across the group but the depth of those relations as a result of deep matter, often unrealised or unlibertated within the individual, being creatively released into shared external expression.

Appendix 3 offers further comment on shifting alignments within the interaction between members and with text. This could involve spontaneous informal changes of purpose at the very bounds of group-purpose (e.g. participant L talking of her relation to her mother, '[laughs] See this is turning into a therapy session!'). Joanne Harris again provides a summary of the density of the simultaneously multi-dimensional experience from her own point of view: 'It is happening at *various levels*. You have people communicating within a group. And people accessing memories and aspects of themselves they may not always be conscious of. And also you've got a level of communication with the writer of the story and what they're expressing. And *all* this is happening *at once*. This is why reading groups have become popular: because they are not just about reading, but about what you bring to the table.'

Comparison with other forms of group-experience

There was no prior identification of histories or subsequent sharing of information with Group Leaders. Of the 14 participants, at interview 3 reported that they worked or had worked as a counsellor, and 6 others disclosed that they had undergone or were undergoing some course of therapy. Of the 6 all reported that they preferred the reading-group sessions to therapy sessions, as well as saying that the GiR groups offered more personal and emotional content as compared with the Built Environment Workshop. M saw therapy as a kind of policing, even self-policing; H spoke of negative themes and the focus on 'all sitting here because we were ill'; An noted that GiR groups were not there to talk about 'issues'. Interviews regularly involved contrasting the reading experience with experience in previous programmatically therapeutic group-experience. H's response, though more articulate than most, was representative:

Interviewer: And one thing I wish to ask is how does talking about emotion in the reading group feel different – or connecting emotionally in the reading group feel different to the kinds of groups you've been in before. Unusually for someone your age, you've been in a lot of situations like that.

Yes, it's less . . . miserable, I suppose. You know, you're not sitting around talking about how you feel terrible, everything's going wrong, you know, you're sitting round talking about [long pause] not always good things but things . . . in a better context. Does that make sense? . . . You're kind of looking at them, you're not feeling them yourself necessarily, or not on the same level as I would have been in hospital.... I can look at the poem and think about what it means to feel that.

Wordsworth (*The Prelude*, 1850version, 13. 246-8) speaks of 'sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;/ And miserable love, that is not pain/To hear of'. The reading group is not all about

the discussion of 'problems'. But where (as so often in literature) there is in the text a felt sense of human trouble, what had seemed to the participant a problem in his or her self becomes a subject-matter in another as depicted within a poem or story, to be engaged in from a different level. That different level offers active, transmuted use of what previously may have seemed passive, painful or shameful material. Literature offers such a perspective a widened and deeper spectrum of human norms. The perspective change is a development upon which this research team would wish to carry out further analysis in future comparative work.

Interviews

It is clear from the more normative interviews with volunteers *outside* the reading-group research project that a repeated vocabulary for describing the effect of the group was in terms of effect on 'self-confidence' and 'self-esteem' (Report 4: RA Walsh interviews). The sense of the experience behind such terms was deepened in the interviews because video-recording allowed reading-group members to see themselves in action. With participants such as D, An and M, lack of self-confidence, though still a term employed, clearly did not cover all that was involved. What was registered was a sense of diminishment, of lesserness in relation to comparable others, and of inner resources belittled and vulnerable in the face of the strength or indifference of the external world.

Interviewer: When you look at that clip what is your feeling?

Participant An (on 'Faith and Hope Go Shopping'): *I feel my smallness . . . I have spent my life not doing . . . I think it was because of what was being described they were in a similar position to me and they had to be heard against all the people who can, and the people who can have such loud voices. People who can't, at that moment they needed to be heard.*

Participant M (on John Clare's line: 'My friends desert me like a memory lost):

I am quite pessimistic generally . . . I have been struggling with depression for a long time now, 12-13 years I have been on medication, so I know it inside out, so I am bound to . . . And that's one thing, you fear: Do my friends hate me? . . . I think it probably just struck a chord for me . . . I know how it feels to feel like your friends desert you when actually, possibly, they may not have done. So maybe it's in his head. . . .

Participant M (interviewed on Hawthorne and the life not lived)

I say something about regrets. I heard someone say while I was on holiday, shout out loud you know: Got no regrets! And I was thinking, I have got a huge amount of regrets. You're likelier to be happier without a great load of regrets, you know, following you around all the time.

Yeah, I have said quite a lot there about myself in passing, quite happy to do that . . . It was probably trying (longish pause) to come across as more of a person, than half a person.

When asked by the interviewer why she did not feel proud of her contribution in the session on Faith and Hope, An referred back to the sources of her remarks rather than quality of the remarks themselves:

Interviewer: I'd be rather proud [of that contribution]. Why don't you?

Participant An: Because of my own lack of feeling about myself. Because when I wanted to write earlier my dad said I never would because I only wrote about myself. It's like I said about wanting to rub out my trail, and who I am and I am ashamed about . . . because at that time all I could write about was myself and my own and therefore it's not something to be proud of. . . . It was either music or writing. I was forced with the music (by my parents – though David is a musician) and I rejected it. For me it is absolute failure to write about myself, though I have been published on non-fiction things. . . . In the real world the people who live more successfully, I just mean manage better in a living way and a coping way, I don't so how can I possibly have any pride in that? It's a revelation that you should say that.

This is what may be called ontological (rather than necessarily ethical) *shame*. An had said previously during the interview, speaking out of her negative default-position: 'The other thing – you won't want to know this – I have this feeling which is my own feeling: I want to wipe out any trace of myself because having a trace of yourself people are going to judge you...and [the end of the Clare poem] reminded me that I just want to wipe any physical trace of myself so no one will judge me'.

But there was also this, in relation to 'Faith and Hope Go Shopping': ' . . . and yet there are times when the need is like them with the red shoes, the motivation is so strong that despite everything you will go into that situation...'

This is an ambivalence characterized by many in these groups, torn as they are between a habitual or now normative reluctance to show themselves, and a converse need to do the opposite in a suddenly triggered emotional environment. As An put it most starkly, 'I very much believe in my own thoughts but I also doubt my own thoughts as well and yet I won't be deflected from my thoughts.'

We conclude that

- though the interviews that include clips of the reading groups reach depths below the norm that more conventional interviews could not, these video-based interviews still involved a struggle with some of the participants' habitually repeated sense of shame or inadequacy. It may be that such interviews could themselves become a necessary part at the culmination of specific interventions, by which on a one-to-one basis the participants could reflect more fully on their own performance in minute action and on their (as it were) macro-level attitude before and afterwards, and the potential legacy.

- the reading group, and the literature within it, offers a small humane alternative (and partial antidote) to the experience of being judged or ignored by the world, or exposed in front of others.
- there is a need for literary language or language arising out of deep human engagement to inform, deepen, replace or modify set and clichéd terms on the public agenda such as ‘lack of self-confidence’.

5. IS GiR ‘THERAPEUTIC’?

At interview A commented on the interrelation of private thinking and group involvement, especially when she was (often secretly, head down) most moved by a poem:

For me in that situation it was more helpful than one to one. We spoke in the group today just incidentally about how the groups become therapeutic although it's not – therapy. I didn't want the attention to be on me. I didn't want anybody to see that, so the group continued. And you know it was a safe place to feel like that – even if somebody had noticed, I wouldn't have felt this is terrible or it's disastrous. But I was glad to still feel part of it while I kind of adjusted.

The research question in regard to therapeutic usefulness is similar to the question as to the place of the personal. It is the problem of instrumentalism: is the effect at the expense of the literature which ostensibly prompts it? Is therapeutic too medicalized a term for the intrinsic value of the shared reading project?

Our initial task here is to indicate again the ‘intrinsic’ experience; but the term ‘implicit’ may be preferable, we repeat, because its relation to the ‘explicit’ may offer subtler relations than the intrinsic/instrumental division. That is to say: the explicit usefulness may be implicit within the experience, able to be drawn out rather than merely added on or employed instead. GiR may put participants in a place from which later they can draw out further developmental potential.

What is initially under study here is the experience of changed mental processes. Identifying these processes and changes by qualitative means (transcript analysis and interview in particular) is the prelude in this project to the coding and quantitative analysis proposed by the linguists for future research as indicated in Appendix 3.

This identification of cognitive processes includes, for example, the recognition that thinking is not always straightforwardly or logically progressive in the effort to go programmatically fast-forward, but often works powerfully when members of the group refer *back* to a previous session or to a previous part of the text in the same session.⁶ Thinking backwards (or

⁶ In thinking about Silas Marner, participant G thought of Miss Havisham from the week *previous* in terms of the experience of becoming ‘stuck’ through a sense of injustice. Or

backwards and forwards) rather than straightforwardly re-enacts something of the density of the literature's meaning, in a fluidity of response that re-collects different time-stages in the work and re-creates meaning across the mental time-lines of a self's life. It is the process here – again worthy of further research - that seems to have intrinsic value to fundamental 'mental health' in the broadest sense of that term, whatever the (painful, difficult) content of what is being thought about.

(i) Meta-levels

H in speaking of 'realization' went on to discuss how personal reflection in these sessions involved a change in the level of thinking:

It just makes you think about things on a more . . . on a level that you can actually see, you know in your head you can see what you're thinking rather than it just being part of your general feeling on life, you know, you kind of pinpoint things more.

What is at stake here is genuine thinking instead of lazy short-cuts that get by with name-based jargon. 'There is again this tension between the overall drive towards cognitive efficiency – the "best guess" or the "good enough" description,' comments CI Corcoran, 'and the need really to get to the heart of things where deep appreciation/realisation lies. Live reading of literature may over-ride the drive towards cognitive efficiency – efficiency only in terms of apparent or short-term cost-benefit.'

In that change of positioning or level, the participant's own experience, instead of being registered lineally for example, became compressed in a release of realization. In such self-reflection, it was notable how the person doing the thinking and the person being thought about were neither wholly identical nor utterly separate. In relation to the Frost poem, on life journeys and often unwitting choices, D could talk in the group about his own 'lack of confidence' at a level that momentarily did *not* seem inhibited by it. F could tell the painful story of his own Dickensian childhood. E (with her own handicaps) spoke of how the disability of one of the old women in the Joanne Harris excursion was actually a benefit:

I was going to say I wonder whether Hope's blindness is actually working in their favour in that sense because she can't see how posh it is when Faith can, and she can see and she is thinking oh gosh, but Hope can't see that.

In relation to the Frost poem again, H could speak of her past distress with a manifestly excited and pleasurable vivacity that belonged to a released capacity to think the thoughts of

participant D suddenly sees that the child, not the gold, was at another level what Silas had really been looking for, unconsciously, long *before* this. Participant A sees how in Binyon's poem 'The Little Dancers' the phrase 'all alone and no one by', about the children dancing in the backstreet, links *back* to the opening word 'Lonely' from the large perspective of the sky - but with a now happier little meaning.

one's life whatever their content. A London-based TRO project worker had commented, 'You don't necessarily hear it from the group members but you hear it from the family member that this is the most important thing in the person's week. . . . That things are transforming for them and for the people they are in relationship to.' It was in that light that, as previously shown, we interviewed (not the twin but) the elder sister of H:

(On H seeing through her twin 'What I *could* have done')

She is very excited when she says that . . . that's interesting . . .

Interviewer: Because? (plays excerpt again)

She emphasizes the 'could' – not 'would' . . . I wonder if it is partly the excitement of she hasn't done that but now she has her own life, and who knows what that is going to be? . . . Just the way she is when bright-eyed, smiling, animated.

Interviewer: In terms of defining what she is like when she is really into it, you use the word excitement, regardless of the content?

Yeah. Thinking again, and being able to think again in a way that's like challenging but in a good way, get her teeth into, and likes the way she can do this, and think and have the thoughts.

At this *level* the binary distinction between so-called 'negative' and 'positive' experiences also becomes transformed. Experiences that were painful, denied, seen as useless or suffered as shameful are now used, are usefully triggered in relation to the text, in the way that a writer might use his own her own experience, regardless, to create the poem or story. The excitement and visibly increased aliveness in face and tone as well as mind are literally vital to this experience. H's older sister was asked how it felt to watch the video:

Sad . . . and proud, both. . . . Sad because she has been through a really, really awful time and a lot going on in there. Sad that it happened, full stop, and very upsetting. But seeing her and her thoughts and the way she is thinking about things and how well she is doing and the possibilities how they are opening up as she's talking is great.

It is precisely that mixture (sad *and* proud, both – the phenomena of thinking two things at once as indicated 3(ii)) that reflects the creative and transformative amalgam of negative and positive in a literary setting. An old often painful content may be seen from a new level or dimension, as from a third eye, or related to looking at oneself as a character just as the author of that character might. In terms of such complex positioning, M (who has been taking anti-depressant and anti-psychotic medication for more than twelve years) could speak of his own 'Purgatory' via Silas Marner, whilst offering the non-existent narrative voice that would tell Silas to give up on the pain of the lost gold (3.1 above). As An says in relation to the old lady who gets to London and sees herself and her friend as though 'gilded' in the great mirror in a Fortnum and Mason's toilet:

because she can do it doesn't mean to say you can do everything. But you can just be there at that time . . . and although your life is still the same, nothing is fundamentally changed, all the same problems are still there. For that short time, and it is gilded because it's only temporary, it's only a covering but you still have it.

This at least temporary achievement of a meta-level is re-created, in a different way, at the interviews when the participant is more literally able to see him- or herself: it is this dimension that also helps make these interviews richer than the norm.

(ii) **The use/transmutation of the negative and of the small**

Section 2 above details ways in which participants work with what they *haven't* got. Often, in these groups, those who have less give more, at another level. Thus D speaks of the Herrick poem at interview

*See it's that commitment thing. [Pause: commenting on his own tears at this] It must be emotional! I just find loyalty, commitment, really good things, which I've **not** had. That's one thing now, I've not thought that in the past ... If you said words to me like 'heart as soft', 'heart as kind', kindness, I like those traits.*

D comments on his upbringing in a 'stereotypical' masculine culture in which soft things such as dance or theatre would not stand comparison with sport. He was unemployed at the time of participating in the groups, doing voluntary work with children, but subsequently has gained employment partly, he suggests, through being able to talk spontaneously about his reading group at job interview.

See whatever's, 'who may command him anything', he's going to do for her, he's going to look after her. And even though I'm not that type of person, I'm usually a cold person.

Interviewer: You're usually a cold person?

No, not so much: that's what I try and be, that's what I act, I act as that, that I don't care, when I do care.

We note here the phenomenon of 'reversal' – a term we have taken from participant J's analysis of the Clare poem: 'a sense of reversal there, that those who were dearest, are now strangest'. It is also perhaps related to CI Corcoran's idea of reverse-switching in 3 ii above, in terms of a different way of thinking. In evidence of such turnarounds, we may cite how D's own professed coldness is the other side of a denied warmth. Or again, both H herself and her elder sister recognised that H's interest in 'Untroubling, and *untroubled*' (in that

order) in the Clare poem, subliminally derived from the problems her continual hospitalization has inevitably caused in troubling the family.

Extended example 1

Participant An spoke of her sense of deficiency and need as itself fuelling the live immediacy of her *imagination*, where more is made out of less. In particular she concentrated on the service offered by the shop assistant kneeling to put on the shoe for Faith and to see if it fits, beyond the Cinderella story - commenting that it was a religious kind of feeling though she would not call herself 'religious':

Interviewer: Do you think the shop assistant knew it [the full meaning of what An felt he was doing]?

Not on . . . I think he entered not on a "Oh I will do this", it was more than that, it wasn't knowing and doing and plotting and planning, he just did. And those moments can come and can come unexpectedly.

She felt, equally, she was doing some service herself in bringing the text alive and testifying to its life in her:

Interviewer: This was special?

*Again it was a religious kind of feeling . . . Probably because it is **not me**, it is the text that is speaking, it is coming from the page, it isn't me, I am almost taking a backseat and the text is speaking.*

Interviewer: Wow. But there is lot of your experience coming through – the daughter, the person who has not gone out of the house, who won't go on the journey?

I suppose so. Probably because it was an actual moment happening. It wasn't something that was being narrated, it was unfolding at that moment, and you had to just watch it and see. It wasn't me thinking 'I have this sorted', it was something that was happening.

The interviewer asked her about her continued emphasis on the shop assistant, and the implicit relation to her own (conflicted) care for her mother. 'Suppose if and when I show this clip to Joanne Harris, she says [An] re-wrote this is her imagination better than I did?' to which An replied, 'No, she did it, I didn't do it.'

Interviewer: You make more of the character. You say it is an experience for him too.

I suppose, what is the word when in English Literature you look at the other side, I like to see the other side of things . . . and I saw him clearly. The other side. When you listen to a piece of music you can often hear the violins or whatever but if you listen really clearly you can also hear the base parts going on, the underneath things as well, and they can – it's amazing what you can hear if you listen underneath the main noise.

Interviewer: So this is like in counterpoint, the minor that became a major? Seeing the other side, the mind as it were flips round, an almost physical sensation?

Yes, yes. And I suppose also that's I've been brought up to ensure that the other person is physically comfortable, to notice their needs . . . and therefore I felt he in a way had the same feeling I was putting on him; that he was taking into account that it wasn't bodily comfort but the emotional comfort, to ensure the absolute care for that person. I am not talking about old people care or children care, but just human.

'The other side' is her improvised phrase for the work of reversal and imagination. It is also the phrase she used in the group itself for getting near the end of life and looking back: 'You get to other side of your life, the other end and suddenly none of what you have worked at, occupied . . .'

This was, as is clear from the above, an unusual and unusually long interview in which certain ideas emergent from the research were spontaneously tried out.

Thus, An was slightly critical of another group-member's contribution: S talking of her own experience in a shoe-shop which An thought not unhelpful but 'prosaic' or normalizing. On the other hand, she felt somewhat diminished by L's recalling in the session L's own purchase of an extraordinarily pair of shoes specially for her wedding-day:

I felt my smallness in comparison with everyone else because they were describing things that had happened to them and I realized (crying now) for me it was inside me and they had actually practically done these things and I hadn't

Interviewer: But when you look at it, what you are talking about seems more, seems bigger. *But compared with other people who have actually lived lives and done it, mine isn't bigger at all.*

Interviewer: I think at that moment you are doing something that no one else in that room can do at that moment. That is why it isn't passive reading but re-making the work, like a minor version of the poet, because it has to be heard as truth.

But this is because I haven't experienced it and they have.

Interviewer: But this is what writers do, take advantage of their disadvantages. The other side of all the things that don't happen or go wrong. The feelings and imagination as real as the experience you might not have.

That is good to know. But I think sometimes to feel it, I do feel a lot, a lot of the time, but compared to other people . . . that's my lack of self-confidence.

'Feeling a lot' was nonetheless related to (in her view) An's not being or doing as much as other people. In the face of such difficulties, slow in-depth reading often involved a reappraisal of the true 'size' of an experience in the face of conventionality's scale of values. An insisted on 'the enormity of what was happening', in the nature of the benefit for the old

woman in the Joanne Harris session: 'What she got... wasn't the shoes, what she wanted of the shoes was to be a woman again, an attractive, sexy woman and she got that, with the rose.' Related to this revaluation was her insistence that the experience was not over and done with in simply not buying the shoes, and that it was not reducible to its apparent temporal end and linear outcome. Literature's insistence on the significance of what might typically pass unnoticed is what CI Corcoran calls within the field of psychology 'a salience uplifter'.

As part of the checking and testing process, we did indeed ask the novelist Joanne Harris to look closely at An's reading of the role of the shop assistant, without any knowledge on her part of An's interview:

I: A's identification with the shop assistant?

JH: it was quite true. Everywhere these two [old ladies] went, they touched another person, something unusual happened there and he too was part of the experience and he felt changed which was why he behaved in the way he did.

I: It is quite understated in the story: An really collaborates to bring that out?

JH: She did yes, I appreciated it.

I: You didn't feel that she was reading too much into it?

JH: No . . . When you have a story which is character-driven like this, it is in the nature of the readers . . . to imagine what they might have been thinking at that time, and if it is not said, then sometimes you do fill in the gaps. And depending on who the reader is, that person may or may not feel like a more central character than they really are . . . People have identified strongly with a relatively minor character and have felt that there was more story to that person that they wanted to know about, and of course writers of fiction do that all the time

This view also somewhat confirms the intuitive usefulness of the language of 'filling in gaps' discussed above in relation to participant E (on creative inarticulacy 2 and the personal 3.ii). It is significant that a writer should describe this reading as analogously writerly.

Extended example 2

In another version of checking and testing, H's sister helped to bring together a number of related moments in H's participation across sessions, a process that can be further developed in future research, in relation to the other participants, their concerns as connected and developed *across* different sessions, and their changes in vocabulary:

Interviewer (on the Joanne Harris story and H's own escape from an institution): She says it was just a little adventure but it was huge.

It was huge.

Interviewer: And she is very aware of the difference of these sizes. The things that seem little you can build on.

Yes, it seems like a little thing, going out at night, but it was enormous.

Interviewer: Earlier on if we made a sequence [of H's key moments across the sessions}, I think she says [on Clare and the loss of the innocent sleep of childhood} the world outside is big?

Yes, the big bad world.

Interviewer: Very aware of these different sizes?

She led a very very restricted life for a lot of the time.

Interviewer: Literature makes a lot out of what is ostensibly a little. We are not very good at getting the right size in the world.

In further evidence, Laurence Binyon's 'The Little Dancers' was an important little poem in offering what participant J called in the group-work 'a little secret moment of happiness', where again H spoke of the contrast between looking 'on the large scale' where 'the world can seem quite a lonely place' and looking 'closer, in front of you' where there may be happiness.

On H and An in particular, and the noting of small details, Joanne Harris concluded thus:

Interviewer : Big things concealed within small things . . . shoes and the rose?

JH: I think really that is the way people's minds work. I think people look at detail because they are often overwhelmed by the bigger reality, so details becoming meaningful in a way that sometimes the chaotic nature of what is going on around you is too much to take in.

The interviewer then asked if readers usually notice or mention these details:

JH: No they don't. This group was particularly good, because either they were well led or gelled together.

By the act of looking closely, the reading group, particularly as experienced through the felt responsibilities of the Group Leader, works *against* tendencies to diminishment and normalization in terms of over-literalism, reductive paraphrase or loose anecdote. (From week 3 onwards we decided to note the thoughts of the Group Leader in process, as reflected in interview at the end of each session: these often centred on the tension between maximum personal involvement of all members and quality of response beyond standard commentary.)

Interviewers also noted an equivalent tendency on the part of participants at the end of the process to fall back upon a default attitude in particular to self ('that's my lack of self-confidence'). As previously indicated, the difference from interviews conducted with volunteers who were not part of the research reading groups was that in the case of the latter there was no video evidence to engage, modify, or even confront those habitual attitudes or positions. But in the reading groups the texts themselves (without premeditated design on the part of the Group Leader) were often such as to test habitual defaults and disrupt overly safe normalizations precisely by depicting those challenges.

Extended example(s) 3

Participants seem aware of this literary modelling of the reappraisal of norms and possibilities. E said in the Joanne Harris session on an outing to the shops: 'If that was like a normal experience for you, you wouldn't think anything of it.' When D speaks of his not having the confidence to take the road not usually taken, he reports at interview, 'That's what I am. My normal reaction to things'. But equally his willingness to admit a lack of self-confidence in this context is itself a change:

See I would never ever say that to someone before, in a group situation I'd never tell anyone that. Because I even go on groups now, to do with helping me find work. As soon as I go in if they say anything and go 'You've got to stand there and say something', I go 'No, don't even bother asking me. I'm not doing it.'

In the less structured and targeted reading-group environment, D says, what is 'negative' feels 'completely different'. We would propose that the literature widens and enriches the human norm, accepting and allowing for traumas, troubles, inadequacies, and other experiences usually classed as negative or even pathological. It is a process of *recovery* – in the deeper sense of spontaneously retrieving for use experiences and qualities that were lost, regretted, or made redundant. Often, as indicated in 3 i and 5 ii, this seems to begin when what is normally dismissed as small contains something larger contained and hidden within it. The explosion of meaning from within distinguished those *emergently decisive breakthrough* moments that have been, beneath much else, a major focus in this report – when participants find meaning, transcend norms or habits, reach higher meta-levels of awareness, or are awakened in recovery of former experiences in new forms. *Recovery* or *restoration* may be more apt terms here than 'therapy'. In this light, here is a final example of a decisive 'breakthrough' in realization.

Participant C notes the abrupt change in Silas Marner, for which he has no framework of explanation, at a moment of sheer transition, 'But he doesn't think about the gold *at all*. It had been central to his being until then':

Group Leader (re-reading): 'and bent his head low to examine the marvel: it was a sleeping child - a round, fair thing, with soft yellow rings all over its head.' It is lovely that to his blurry eyesight those rings are a bit like the coins: they are round, and golden erm . . . and straight no pause, 'Could this be his little sister come back to him in a dream.' It's funny about the dream . . .

C: Well he just cannot . . . imagine . . . this is reality.

GL: Yes

C: It's too wonderful.

GL: Yes, yes.

C: and the joy. It's . . . he just cannot comprehend.

'Cannot' is stressed twice here (accompanied by a shaking of the head), making this an ultimate back-to-front reversal of the conventional negative, arising out a sudden shift from the norm and a breaking of the default framework of understanding. Rather than being cynically dismissed as 'too good to be true', the Real in C's formulation – 'too wonderful', too new and wholly unexpected - is become almost paradoxically what defies imagination. This dramatic example of the breaking down of expected norms and barriers as to what reality is and can be is a culmination of the reawakening and reappraisal process involved in the reading-group experience. It is the result of the process of unpredictability or not knowing in advance which ends here in a transcendence of reductive, habitual or depressed frameworks of understanding. Participant An spoke of this phenomenon as one of finding what one cares about by a process more heuristic than any straightforward opinionatedness: 'I realized this, from my response, was something important to me.'

Like a rocket-booster, the literature itself challenges through its language reductive norms. On such occasions we conclude with Joanne Harris: 'It is very, very rare that you actually get to witness that moment of discovery. . . . That what you were hoping for (as a writer) actually happened for readers.'

6. CONCLUSION:

Therapeutic for not being therapy? Useful by not being instrumental?

None of the participants, for all the general preference for reading groups over forms of formal group therapy, believes reading literature is simply, magically able to solve problems or that literature exists solely for that (instrumental) purpose. Participant L said at interview:

There's always the sort of thing as well about [erm] if I read something – I've done this my whole life – if I read something will it give me the key to sort out this really big issue in my life. As you get older and a bit more wise, you realize that probably not.

Nonetheless the strong residual sense of a personal purpose in the act of reading may be what is reflected in the higher Purpose in Life rating in Report 1. This is related to what CI Corcoran calls the idea of the salience-uplifter (in contrast to psychological depression or epistemological neglect), itself instantiated within the 'big-in-small' examples given above. The activation of processes of high-level mentalization (discussed in 5 above) in relation to deepened emotional involvement in human areas created by the text indicates such purposiveness in seeking meaning, however short of achieving merely literal answers or comfortable solutions. That is to say: the activation itself has intrinsic value in terms of increased mental involvement and vitality in areas of human seriousness.

Joanne Harris commented finally:

I am not a great believer in the difference between readers and writers. I think we are all participants in the same process. And I bring the story and everyone who reads it brings a story of their own and an interpretation of their own. Which is why reading is more creative than, say, watching TV where what you see is already given and your contribution is marginal because you have already been given everything that there is to imagine and to hear and to see and you take it. Whereas in a book you naturally visualize and empathize at a different level.

Interviewer: Do you think this particular way of doing it, reading aloud, gives more opportunity for creative reading or that it is going on all the time and you just happen to be able to see it in this instance?

JH: Well to some extent it is going on all the time but reading aloud gives it a different experience . . . in a sense it is a process of translation, of reclaiming the oral tradition. But also when you do it in a group like that it is a different dynamic again because you are not alone, you are sharing the story . . . everybody interjecting and expressing feelings and surprise. I think there is something cathartic in the idea of spontaneously expressing feelings as the story develops.

This last sentence amplifies the issue of immersed attention discussed in 1 ii above: the meaning is not located at one set end-point but is found in the way the text is read aloud slowly, with pauses, in sections, creating a process of stopping, looking, suddenly seeing ('as the story develops'). Joanne Harris added how rare and pleasing it was for an author actually to be able to witness 'spontaneous and real reader responses' and wished her appreciation to be passed on to the group. This final set of remarks from this author, together with her earlier emphasis on building from detail (5 ii), summarizes issues of: creative reading, active rather than passive response, the experiences of immersion and sharing and liveness, the articulate expression of feeling from a real rather than theoretical reader-response, and the idea of catharsis. Community here means: *inner* lives come *out*, and come out *together*.

A case for the cultural value of GiR and for the value of culture in terms of the human development involved in shared live reading may be made on the basis of

1. the multi-layered humanising presence of literature in relation to both
 - (i) personal contemplation triggered in areas of experience and meaning otherwise difficult to locate, recover or talk about without reductiveness of meaning: correlated with 'purpose in life' findings Report 1
 - (ii) the formation of small-group communities in which the relation between private and public was closer than conventionally allowed, creating for the while a small alternative human society out of the complex and mobile interaction of individual, group, text and group leader: correlated with individual/social interaction Report 4

2. the related multi-layered impact on processes of feeling and thought characteristically (correlated in this report with discipline-specific comments from CI Corcoran) involving
 - (i) live thinking, able to use surprise, uncertainties and even disadvantages
 - (ii) a shift from reductive norms to a sense of ontological awakening
 - (iii) the enhancement of mental processes such as reappraisal and reversal, meta-cognition, identification and imagination

3. GiR's literary challenge to set/superficial/over-literal terms on the public agenda: e.g. negative versus positive experience; supposedly small compared to ostensibly big; self-confidence; problems, cures, answers and solutions, therapy itself.

These phenomena are not taking place in defined or separate stages but in dense, often simultaneous inter-relation and sudden surges of realisation.

Further research

(i) Mental processes and language: mental processes and changes experienced in shared reading are often identifiably expressed through the participants's own symptomatic use of language, itself affected by the language of the literary work. This language analysis, supported by the added dimension offered by video recording, is, we believe, a new emphasis in the deep understanding of inherent value within the group and the individual. The close interrelation of literary, linguistic and psychological approaches to these processes offers powerful, innovative insights that may be further developed in both qualitative and quantitative analyses involved, for example, in language coding.

In addition to such possibilities as (i) already outlined in respect of the remaining rich data, and (ii) future comparisons with other group-reading activities, feedback to this report provided by psychologists and medical practitioners, including David Fearnley psychiatrist at Ashworth hospital and Andrew Jones consultant in pain medicine at the Royal Liverpool, has indicated (iii) the need to consider in further research the relation to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), as an alternative or as complementary. Richard Bentall, Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Liverpool speaks of GiR as 'implicit psychotherapy' precisely by remaining literary.

In light of future comparative study, certain procedural distinctions already deducible in potential comparison with CBT indicate how the phenomena inherent within the experience of GiR may offer implicit value which is not instrumental but is humanly useful and a source for further explicit development.

- GiR works from below upwards, characteristically from a text previously not seen, without knowing-in-advance and often either implicitly challenging habitual emotions or recovering/transmuting them in a new form. CBT works

from top down in terms of executive instruction, in particular in relation to preventing certain ruminative and repetitive compulsions. The contrast is between organic and imposed processes.

- GiR is an open, wide ranging, evolving process, achieving its effects through triggering active happenings or unpredictable events which involve breakthroughs into meaning from within an experience. CBT is not a process but a programme that works instrumentally through disciplined planned stages designed to function outside the experience and divorced from the person. It aims to facilitate self-management often through benign inhibition: what a client is eventually taught not or no longer to do/think.
- GiR works by induction, re-creating within the live environment the experience of different ages, languages, individuals and times. CBT is more concerned with a limited focal present characterised by concentrated mindfulness and does not endorse inductive thinking. Re-reading the poem several times for instance is markedly different from the rumination mindfulness is designed to combat. GiR does not ban but seeks to transform negative experience, and indeed challenge the positive/negative binary.
- CBT targets particular conditions and cases, and seeks predicted cures. GiR does not distinguish or categorize the individuals who come together in its groups. It offers no one aim in itself, but the Group Leader has a vital role in giving the literature a voice and a place in which to reach or find people who allow it. It uses cultural resources to widen and deepen the sense of the human norm and the thinking that goes into it, which includes significant shifts in level and perspective.

CI Corcoran offers, with particular relation to the first bullet point above, by the following hypothesis: ‘The imposed “top-down” regulatory basis of CBT may be likely to produce only short-lived, “unowned” benefits, precisely because in times of stress executive control of our emotions tends to falter. If “bottom-up” approaches are used, the executive brain gets to work with genuine, spontaneous and “owned” gut or heart neuronal responses. Instead of trying to regulate or change these owned responses, the function of the anterior cortex becomes involved in integrating them into the schemata or models of the world. The benefits of bottom-up “therapies” may thus be more likely to be sustained because they are self-driven and integrated, rather than (as in top-down approaches originally suggested/imposed by another and then attempted to be taken on by the self) potentially authoritarian, exclusionary or even repressive.’

REPORT 3: PROFESSOR RHIANNON CORCORAN, ERIN WALSH ESTABLISHING THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT WORKSHOPS

The Aims

As part of the Cultural Value project aiming to establish the intrinsic value of The Reader Organisation's (TRO) Get into Reading (GiR) initiative, a comparison activity was developed and facilitated by the local Built Environment Social Enterprise 'Prosocial Place'. This activity sought to engage volunteers in the development of the Calderstones Mansion House, grounds and immediate parkland setting as the new home of The Reader Organisation. In this brief report, we explore the evidence relating to the intrinsic value of these Built Environment (BE) workshops.

The Activity

A 12 week cross over design was used to compare and contrast the wellbeing benefits associated with GiR groups compared to the BE groups. Each group, comprising a mix of Big Lottery funded volunteers and local Calderstones volunteers, experienced 6 weeks of GiR and 6 weeks of BE workshops. All sessions lasted for 1.5 hours and took place on consecutive Friday mornings from 9.30 until 11.00 between September and November 2013, culminating in early December with a joint final presentation where the integrated ideas and visions were showcased in the concept plan.

The BE comprised an appraisal and design process that was both challenging and supportive. The format, based loosely on De Bono's 'Six Thinking Hats' approach, broke the creative process into components with the aim of removing barriers to and inhibitors of idea formation

and discussion. The sessions worked sequentially, adding new information each week, reflecting on past discussions and building levels of active engagement in the participants. The first workshop began with an 'icebreaker' where participants illustrated their journey to the Mansion House that morning on a large sheet of paper. The exercise was designed to demonstrate that every participant could effectively communicate salient information through drawings and symbols and that pre-conceived level of drawing skill was immaterial in the context of the BE. This was an important first hurdle to overcome as none of the participants regarded themselves as skilled in the medium of 2D visual communication while probably assuming this would be a core skill.

The first workshop took the form of a tour around the buildings and immediate landscape to gather 'facts' about the place. The tour was repeated the following week with volunteers this time recording only 'feelings' elicited by the place. Taken together these two sessions provided an appraisal of place. The volunteers were encouraged to use 'Post-it notes' to record their individual responses. Between sessions the completed Post-it notes were rationalised under a number of themes on a large canvas that developed to completion through the 6 weeks. In addition, diagrams and drawings were also prepared and added to the canvas.

In workshops 3 and 4, participants considered the questions "What could this place become?" and 'What could be done here?' The first session considered the general concepts and aspirations that would enable the embodiment of the TRO ethos in the Mansion House. The second session looked at the practicalities of delivering and translating these concepts and aspirations on the ground.

The final two workshops concentrated on the preparation of a Concept Plan in the fifth session followed by, in session six, Vision and Objectives to support the Concept Plan. By using Post-it notes exhaustively throughout the six sessions, we were able to record the thoughts of the participants ensuring that ALL voices, not just those of the most persuasive or active, could be represented in the work.

The measures used to explore potential health and wellbeing benefits and subjective experience within the cross-over study are summarised in Report 1. Here we will use the data derived from the 2 words or phrases that volunteers offered to best describe their experiences of each of the sessions. This data can also be explored in association with quantitative and qualitative linguistic analyses of the participant contributions during these group sessions (in Report 2).

Subjective Experience of the BE and GiR Sessions: Words / Phrases Analyses

From the 2-words/ phrases data contrasting themes specific to the GiR or BE experience can be elicited. In all 99 words/ phrases were generated by the participants in response to GiR sessions compared to 95 words / phrases generated in response to the BE sessions. These can

be broadly categorised into emotional words (i.e. those reflecting the feelings generated out of, during or in response to the sessions) or cognitive words (i.e. those reflecting the thinking, ideas or approach generated out of, during or in response to the sessions).

The affective/cognitive profiles shown in Table 1 below demonstrate that the BE sessions were dominated by ‘cognitive’ as opposed to affective responses. This contrasts with GiR that elicits a more equal distribution of affective and cognitive responses.

Table 1: Proportion of emotional and cognitive words associated with the 2 activities.

	Emotional words	Cognitive words
GiR	53.5%	46.5%
BE	21%	79%

Certain generic descriptive words were offered across both activities e.g. ‘interesting’, ‘enjoyable’, ‘debate’, ‘dialogue’. However, other words were only ever offered in response to 1 of the activities. These informative words are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Specific words elicited by the 2 activities

GiR	BE
Reflective/ reflection	Developing / development
Resolution/ resolved	Progress/ progressing
Memory	Anticipating
Moved	Positive
Engaged	Involved
Open	Focussed
Nostalgic	Optimistic

Warmth	knotty
imaginative	involvement
animated	co-operation
	creativitylive environment
	choice
	possibilities

Using these activity-specific words as a starting point, contrasting polar themes that reflect the experience of being involved in either GiR or BE were derived. These are shown below

GiR	BE
Recollection	Prospection
Nostalgic	Optimistic
Resolution	Evolution
Internal focus	External focus
Personal	Community/Co-op
Imaginative	Creative
Open	Contained
Engaged	Involved
Introspective	Extrospective
Simulated	Applied

In summary the subjective responses to the BE experience indicated that it provided the opportunity to look forwards in a positive manner outside of 'the self' and into the community. There was a sense of co-operative, solution-focused thinking directed towards the 'greater good' alongside an increased sense of accessibility and responsibility for the neighbourhood. Coupled with this experience was a tendency for volunteers to report an increase in sense of 'personal growth' and, perhaps less intuitively, a decrease in explicit sense of mastery shown for one group (see Report 1 quantitative analysis).⁷

Themes Reflecting the Professed Intrinsic Value of the Built Environment Workshops

The distinct types of evidence and data collected as part of the BE (Post-it notes and diagrams on the working canvases, words and phrases and a limited set of post-study interview transcripts) were scrutinised by the research team (Corcoran: CI and director of the Prosocial Place Research Programme; Marshall: BE facilitator and director of the Prosocial Place Social Enterprise; Walsh: research fellow and urban planner). Subsequent discussion identified five definitive themes that together reflect the intrinsic value of engagement in the built environment workshops. These are described below.

1. Realising Responsibility for Place

Initially the volunteers in both groups were hesitant to provide their knowledge, feelings and ideas in relation to the built environment of the Mansion House. This seemed equally to be the case for volunteers who were long-term local residents as for those who had very limited or no knowledge of the Mansion House, the park or neighbourhood. It appeared that there was an inherent assumption that 'place-making' and consideration of the built environment was an exclusive area of expertise reserved for relevant professional groups. This assumption was exemplified by volunteers' questions directed at the facilitator such as: *'Can we also think about the lake?'* *'Are you going to keep the enclosed garden?'*

These questions, tending to emerge during weeks 1-4, powerfully epitomise the assumption that somebody else is responsible for designing the places where our lives unfold. However, as the BE sessions developed, a greater sense of responsibility for place emerged as momentum and courage grew. The volunteers became more decisive in developing their collective ideas: *'I see it as a place where dreams can come true, things happen here'*.

⁷ The sense of increasing *implicit* mastery may not have been consciously experienced by the participants but was nevertheless observed and documented by the team for both groups (ability to engage conceptually; 'movement' around the table etc seen in session 5). The *explicit* mastery measure was a quick look at the sense of control a person feels over the context of his/her life – 5 items with a total score of 20: this is a measure of real as opposed to simulated mastery, whereas the design was an entirely imaginary experience with both groups aware that nothing that they suggested might come to fruition.

Volunteers in the second group went on to develop place names for the Mansion House, reflecting the built environment and the role of TRO in this new context. They confidently placed the Calder Stones in a secluded, less frequented area of the garden, giving it the name 'Wondrous Place'.

The developing thinking of each BE session was communicated in the group canvases that displayed the on-going work across sessions (see image 1). As the workshops progressed, and unprompted by the facilitator, the volunteers began to review the canvas on arrival and before leaving. They would also often linger to discuss the ideas generated in the session. At these times, some group members mentioned that in the intervening weeks between BE sessions they had reflected on the ideas and discussions in relation to other places:

I was just saying to X before the session that I went to Speke Hall on the weekend and it was set up really well with the arrival area...thinking on that . . .

Image 1: The Developing Group Canvases



Group 1



Group 2

2. Increasing Agency and Implicit Mastery

The increase in participants' sense of agency, control or choice is, in part, attributable to their grasping of responsibility for the built environment. However, it was their collective ownership, a gradually-realised capacity in the area of concept design and a willingness to contribute valued thoughts and ideas to the group, that was the fundamental vehicle for increased sense of agency.

Sense of ownership was reaffirmed in the canvas. It provided a tangible output of the cooperative work and a visual demonstration of the group's collective mastery of the task. The constant reaffirmation by the facilitator of collective group ownership of the design process by the facilitator scaffolded this process.

During session 5, the volunteers were asked to 'pick up pens' and design the Home for TRO based on the thoughts, feelings, considerations and ideas formulated in sessions 1-4. The level of 'implicit mastery' was tangible; it could be felt, seen and measured spatially by the movement and flow around the central table where the design output came together. There was also movement further afield, beyond the room, to check out possibilities; looking out the window. One volunteer encapsulated this creative group design dynamic as 'motive power'.

The following words recorded in the 2 words/ phrases were chosen by the volunteers exclusively in relation to BE : 'choice'; 'involvement'; 'creativity' and 'possibilities'. The sense of involvement and choice are key to the increasing sense of agency amongst the volunteers. In the selective interviews following the study, two group members described their expectations and experience of the BE thus:

We were asked to look at things and say what we thought, and how we felt about them as well. So . . . you were engaging your emotions again, which before we did it, I didn't really think we'd do that. I thought the reading part of it would bring out emotions, but I thought the second part, if you like I was thinking oh it's the architecture side of it, would have been all from the head, and not really engage your feelings. So that was surprising.

It was challenging for me because it was like a kind of visionary thing – if anything what would we do. Part of me was, well that won't be allowed because its' a listed building there's no money. Give me the parameters 'cos that' what life is like. Bit of me wanting to say 'Ah yes but'

3. Developing an Allocentric Consideration of Place via Culture and Time

As the workshops progressed, the volunteers began to demonstrate the facility to consider the place in a less egocentric way. They began to identify with the ever-changing and evolving nature of place that persisted beyond their own involvement with it. At interview, one volunteer noted:

It became a complete experience. Because I would walk across the park and see it change in that time. It extended beyond those two groups into a whole experience. And a difference between how I felt when I walked here and how I felt when I walked back and had time to look around, and wanted to. More reflective, more peaceful, more mindful. I want to look at the trees. I've watched the seasons change.

This 'sense of place across time' seemed to emerge during weeks 4-6 where volunteers might draw on some past experiences of the Mansion House, the park and elsewhere to develop new purposes, that could involve, engage and affect a wide range of 'others'.

Unprompted, members of both groups developed a dialogue around the 'sense and spirit of place'. Interestingly this extended beyond the Mansion House and the Park to include a wider sense of culture - TRO, the Calder Stones, the location of the park within a south Liverpool suburb, the famous 'daughters' and 'sons' of Liverpool who played a special role in the culture associated with the City and the neighbourhood.

This spirit of place was represented by regular references to this as ‘a special place’. The Calder Stones were regarded as a symbol of this specialness and as a demonstration that the promulgation of culture by TRO in the Mansion House fitted with the ‘genius loci’. As mentioned previously, one group named their proposed new site for the stones as the ‘Wondrous Place’. Also in line with the cultural spirit of the place, a ‘George Harrison Memorial Garden’ was considered and proposed by both groups.

4. Optimism

In the analyses of the 2 words/phrases data the word ‘optimism’ was recorded specifically in relation to the BE. The developing and evolving nature of the design process was naturally prospective and enduringly positive (see the analysis of the PANAS data in Report 1). The ‘forward thinking’ of the groups was always optimistic as demonstrated by the frequent use of descriptor words ‘positive’ and ‘possibilities’ within the 2 words/phrases data. This optimism was evident particularly in sessions two and five where participants were asked about the feelings elicited by the place and to address the question ‘What can this place become?’. There was a sense in both groups of an opportunity (and later a responsibility) to create something worthwhile and special. Indeed, the sense of optimism was so clear from session 2 that it became an organising theme for the post-it notes on the canvas (image 2).

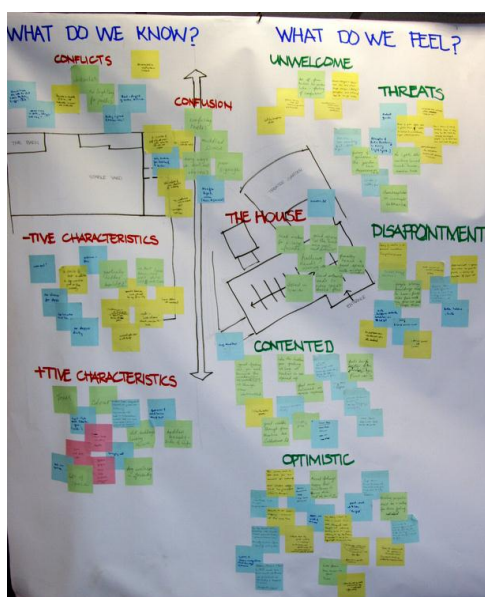


Image 2, Group 2: Strong sense of felt optimism

5. Co-operative, Solution-focussed Decision Making

The word, 'co-operation' was offered exclusively in association with the BE (see Table 2 above). These sessions enabled the development of a supportive sharing and open critique of ideas within a realm of relative 'unease' created by a perceived lack of skill. Indeed the volunteers' shared concern regarding lack of knowledge or skill in this field seemed to be an important component that amplified co-operative decision-making.

This is related to the creative use of the negative in GiR – perceived disadvantages, felt uncertainties, inexpertise: the group forms precisely to compensate for what becomes a shared sense of individual deficiencies. Group co-operation, thus created, seems to make a kind, sympathetic and strong virtue out of felt shortcomings and un-sureness. Uncertainty becomes involved in a transformative way.

Co-operation was facilitated further, and grounded in, a shared will, established in the early sessions, to develop a future 'community asset'. This single-minded 'asset-based' exploration encouraged optimism as well as a solution-focussed rather than problem-solving approach to the task. The co-operative decision-making process that emerged nevertheless securely accommodated and valued individual's ideas. This is aptly summarised by one of our volunteers at interview:

It brought us together in a different – it didn't bring us together quite so much in mutual . . . in mutuality. I mean it did because you get cooperation in discussing what's the best thing. But it's more sharply individualistic – . . . you write your notes about what would be the best way to have the café or whatever and then come together and discuss it.

The final composite design of the Home for The Reader Organisation is presented below in image 3. The amalgamation was produced by the facilitator and presented to the 2 groups together who endorsed it as a coherent collective vision. It is only through co-operation and group ownership that such an envisioned 'community asset' can become the new heart of a neighbourhood.

Image 3: The Visions, Objectives and Final Concept Plan

VISION – Group 1

The reader organisation will create a new heart for Calderstones: building a cultural community for the benefit of the city.

OBJECTIVES

- Create an accessible cultural hub for the local community
- Realise the heritage and landscape assets of the park
- Develop an attractive metropolitan destination within the city
- Establish a sustainable and identifiable home for the reader organisation
- Provide inclusive and equitable wellbeing outcomes

VISION – Group 2

The reader organisation will create a relaxing, inclusive and sustainable home for a cluster of cultural pursuits with reading as its foundation.

OBJECTIVES

- Facilitate a range of accessible and inclusive cultural activities
- Provide inclusive and equitable wellbeing outcomes
- Provide an exemplar 21st century suburban neighbourhood
- Realise the attractions of the park
- Develop an attractive metropolitan destination within the city
- Establish a sustainable and identifiable home for the reader organisation



The Two Groups and the Two Activities (BE to GiR; GiR to BE):

Some Hypotheses for Future Research

Conclusions about the nature of the groups, particularly in relation to crossing over from one activity to another, can only be tentative, given the small sample involved here.

Nonetheless some working distinctions between the activities seem manifest, though both are practices and both involve forms of active 'doing' that help create more humane communities. One was not merely the foil for the other in this project: the two activities mutually illuminate one another's intrinsic benefits, while sharing the virtues of a group mind-set. The following seeks to bring together significant comparative issues across the reports.

Connections and contrasts

- The different uses of the personal and the emotional in GiR and BE are noted above: in BE these qualities go into the (imagined) creation of a place (or home) through external and applied focus; in GiR the resonant place, in a sense, already exists in the poem or story when emotionally activated by the group in ways that are more internally personal.
- The distinction between resonance and relevance, offered in Report 2, maps onto the distinction between purpose of life and personal growth as a result of knowledge acquisition in Report 1, and likewise the distinction between emotional and cognitive emphases disclosed in the 2-words analysis provided here. Nonetheless it would be a serious mistake to characterise BE as merely practical when for most participants it involved vision and intuition, just as it would be an error to dismiss GiR as non-practical when it is clearly a form of active and collaborative praxis with real-life psychological significance.
- Similarly where the emphasis in BE is on the external and on the future, with a vision of time in space, the focus in GiR is more characteristically on the past and the inward, albeit triggered in the present and felt within both text and group.
- In BE videos the sense of a group mind, or a group working together through individual contributions, was most tangible in non-verbal ways – in the doing. For all the importance of embodiment in the reading groups, made visible in the videos, the flow and movement across group members is more often than not verifiable in what is actually *said* in GiR – and the vitally 'full' group silences are created out of the resonance of the language of the poem or that of the people in response to it. This difference in how 'motive power' expresses itself has to do with BE's focus being more contained and defined as well as outcome-directed, where GiR is more open, individuated, and undirected towards a specific joint result. The non-verbal events in BE are often where language is redundant and can help no more; in GiR the verbal and non-verbal events are always in pursuit of 'the more than that' (the excess and perhaps inexhaustible meaning) that language leaves behind.

Movements across activities

- In the case of at least one participant, it was clear at interview that the less obviously personal route into 'feelings' in BE was helpful before encountering the more 'raw'

personal contact with feelings in GiR. In BE 'feelings' seem to be responses to self in an external as compared to internal context: they are contrasted with so-called 'facts' about the place, allowing for a more intuitive approach to 'sense of place' sometimes neglected by the technological style of design professionals.

- The research team had a clear overall sense that the 2 groups approached BE quite differently in spite of its guiding structure. In group 1 most of the talk was analytical - focussing on what it was that the place could provide; in group 2 from the start discussion was more intuitive, as though a route had already been developed through the reading group.

Hypotheses

- This perceived difference between the two groups indicated in the last bullet point above may be a matter of chance, background and temperament, though (as indicated in Report 2) the Group Leader in GiR found group 1, crossing over from BE, to be more reserved from the start. But it may be the case that GiR helps promote a collective creativity and humanizing, in advance of any specific group-task.
- The attempt in this short project to break down the barriers to the design process for the workshop volunteers meets with the [increasing demand for public involvement in public design](#). But if that public involvement is also to be properly both personal and social, there needs to be a means of aligning communities with designers. Collaborative workshops may be one such means.

**REPORT 4: PROFESSOR RHIANNON CORCORAN, PROFESSOR PHILIP DAVIS,
ERIN WALSH
INTERVIEWS WITH VOUNTEERS AT TRO**

1.Design

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Big Lottery Volunteers within TRO, and others in the Organisation who had previously begun their work there through volunteering. The aim was to examine what followed from these subjects taking part in reading groups in terms of their subsequent voluntary engagement with TRO in different functions. In this sense it represents a stage after the experience of reading groups themselves (represented in Report 2): none of those interviewed here participated in reading groups involved in the research project. Of particular interest, within the transition from reading groups to other ways of participating in the work of TRO, was the transition also from one such role to another, in terms of potential self-progression.

2.Participants

Currently there are 100 Big Lottery Volunteers working with TRO. The research team drafted a list of categories and TRO team drafted a list of potential participants: these participants were selected on the basis of their volunteering role, length of time as a volunteer and their transition within the organisation. Within the time constraints, a total of 22 Big Lottery Volunteers were interviewed out of a total of 32.

Of the participants interviewed 21 were female and 11 were male. The age category of the 32 participants ranged from 19 years to 74 years. There are four volunteering categories in TRO Big Lottery Volunteer Programme, these are:

- (a) Admin Assistant (office help, building maintenance)
- (b) Reading Group Assistant (helping a group leader in GiR)
- (c) Reading Friend (reading 1:1 with a client) and
- (d) Care Home Reader (helping to lead reading groups in care settings).

Of the 21 Big Lottery participants the division of volunteering roles were as follows:

- (a) 7 x Admin Assistant
- (b) 3 x Reading Group Assistant
- (c) 3 x Reading Group Friend and
- (d) 8 x Care Home Reader. At the time of the interviews all participants were engaged in voluntary work with TRO.

There was a fifth category of participants interviewed consisting of current TRO staff who had commenced as volunteers with TRO and have progressed to a full time member of TRO staff team, this category accounting for 6 participants.

A sixth category of volunteers comprised 2 x TRO Interns who applied and were appointed to work with TRO staff Team.

A seventh category consisted of 2 x TRO Apprentices who applied via the Apprentice programme to work with TRO, and came from difficult childhood backgrounds.

Of the 32 participants interviewed, in total 14 participants indicated that they had a mental health condition - this included: depression, low mood, bipolar disorder, Asperger Syndrome, paranoia and anxiety. 3 participants reported that they are recovering from substance abuse and that TRO is part of their pathway of recovery. 2 participants reported that they had learning difficulties.

3. Procedure

TRO Volunteer Manager initially contacted prospective participants, since many of the participants have vulnerable backgrounds and may have been intimidated by a member of the research team contacting them in the first instance. TRO Volunteer Manager outlined the purpose of the study, along with the proposed interview method. Following the agreement of each participant the research interviewer then contacted each person via email and/or telephone to make an initial introduction, to share the Participant Information Sheet, and to establish a meeting time, date and location while answering any questions about the process. Semi-structured qualitative interviewing was used to seek to provide as rich and deep an understanding of the volunteers' experience of working with TRO as possible. This is registered in the selection of some powerful individual comments below, as well as quantitative coding measures.

4. Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to provide a structure in terms of the main themes: reason for volunteering, wellbeing pre-volunteering at TRO, life post-volunteering with TRO. The guide was flexible to allow the interviewer to explore the experience of the volunteer and to develop further questions and prompts depending on the volunteer's narrative. The guide was tested with a member of the research team who had 4 years experience capturing qualitative data from volunteers within TRO. Slight amendments were made to the guide, which included more real examples and references to help draw out personal experiences (e.g. as opposed to 'Have you volunteered before?' the following questions were added; 'Are you active in any community groups?' 'Do you attend or help out at your local church?')

As TRO is a formal organisation and the volunteering is a programme within it, it was necessary to understand the macro and micro processes that enable and/or inhibit the volunteering experience. The semi-structured interview method allowed the interviewer to develop her own understanding of the programme and the process of the volunteering experience through a '*conceptual refinement process*' as described above (Pawson & Tilley 2013). A structured interview would have been limiting and would not have provided for the sense of '*realness*' that the interview guide and realist interview structure provided (Pawson & Tilley 2013).

5. Interview Procedure:

The interviews were conducted at two of TRO offices and resource facilities based in Liverpool and Birkenhead. The office and resource facilities were familiar to all participants and made for a safe known environment. Each interview began with the researcher explaining the purpose and rationale behind the study, assurances of confidentiality, and an explanation of the interview process. Each interview lasted between 19 and 140 minutes and was audio recorded to provide an accurate record. Each interview commenced with the interviewer again outlining the Participant Information Sheet, and asking the participants if they had any questions or concerns arising; following which a Participant Consent Form was signed. Prior to commencing, the interviewer informed each participant that there were no right or wrong answers, but the purpose of the study was to understand their experience and that they were at liberty to terminate the interview at any time, and to tell the interviewer if they could not remember or did not understand the question. This was a practice also adopted in the interviews conducted for Report 2.

6. Data Analysis

A selection of early interviews was transcribed in detail and reviewed to distil key themes and subject matter that related to the research study. These reviewed transcriptions were the basis of all selective transcription notes (see figure 6.1), from which all interviews were selectively transcribed based around the emerging key themes (see 7 x Ideas). From the outset, the aim of the research methodology was to be open in terms of research findings with an active avoidance of developing any early hypotheses (Silverman, D. 2011: 3.1.3).

General Content Analysis methodologies were used to examine the interview data, wherein the communication content was categorized and classified into 'key words' and 'dominate themes' (see figure 6.2). No pre-coding of the questions or themes was carried out prior to the interviews; rather it was the collective output of the interview data, and the emerging dominate themes, key words and the frequencies that were categorised and analysed. To ensure consistency and reliability of the coding of the interview data, inter-coding of the research data was carried out by Professors Davis and Corcoran, wherein they examined the interview scripts, and independently developed the apparent dominate theme and key words for subsequent cross-checking.

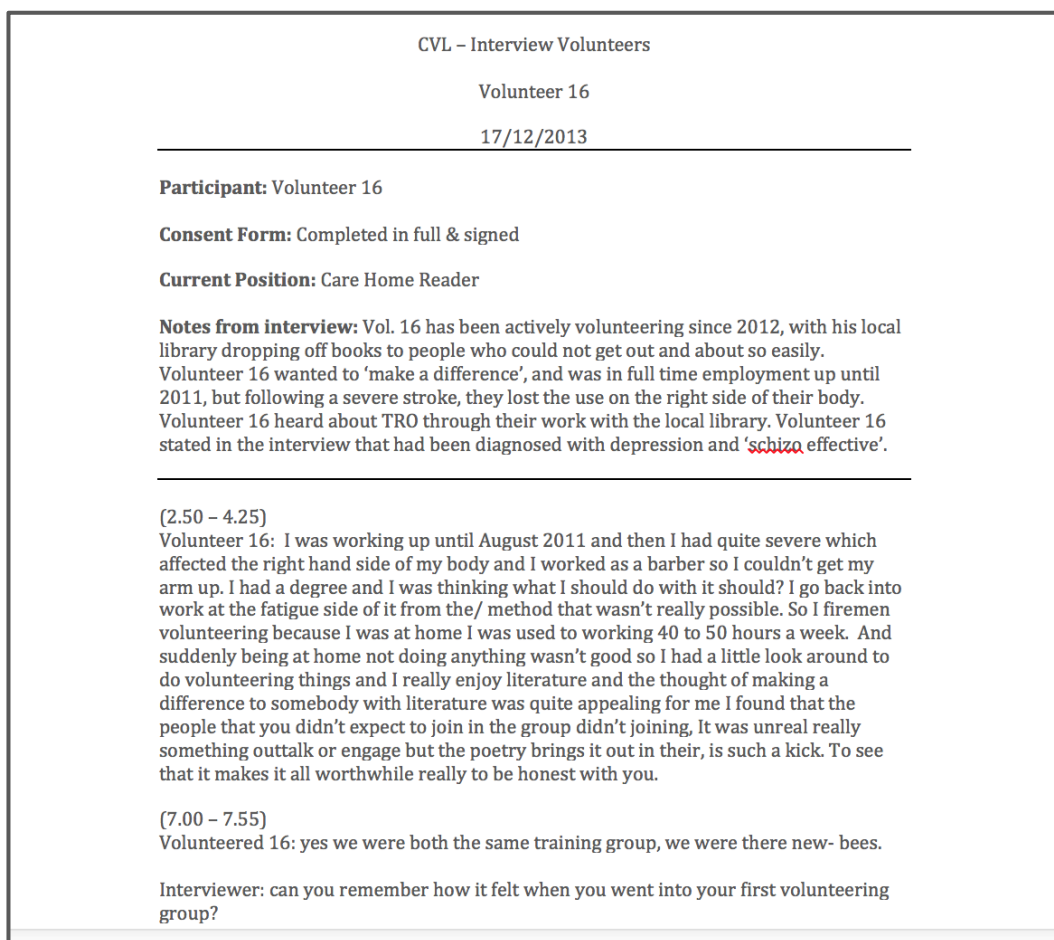


Figure 6.1: Selective Interview Transcription of Care Home Reader Volunteer.

CVL Interview Note –TRO Intern Volunteers						
Vol. No:	Interview Rating:	Interviewer's Own Thoughts:	Dominate Themes:	Words/ Concepts:	Procedural Feedback:	Ideas Arising:
Volunteer 26	okay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vol. 26 was currently undertaking an internship at TRO at the time of the interview, which commenced in September 2013 and will run until January 2014. Volunteer 26 appeared very happy and proud of their intern work with TRO and noted that it was one of the most positive experiences they have had in terms of a work environment. The interviewee was inspiring in that they worked at two volunteer jobs between TRO and News From Nowhere and they had a paying retail job also to make money. They appeared so eager, keen and dedicated to being the best that they could be and pursuing the best experiences that they could. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difference in working environments – TRO as a happy, inspiring environment to be as opposed to Vol. 26's other part time paying job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Confidence' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Volunteer 27	good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vol. 27 moved from Essex to undertake an internship with TRO and progressed to a full time member of the TRO team. Volunteer 27 noted that thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vol. 27 refers to 'we' as in the collective organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Welcoming' 'Supportive' 'They saw something in me' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A

Figure 6.2 is an example of the interview notes that were drafted for each volunteering category, the 'dominant themes' and 'words/concepts' are direct quotes taken from the interview transcriptions.

7. Results

Dominate Themes & Key Words

A total of 197 dominant themes and key words were identified from the 32 interview transcriptions. All of 197 themes and words were examined and coded by the research team and were then grouped into 5 overarching categories; these are: 1. Individual 2. Social 3. Transitional 4. Text and 5. TRO.

The pie chart below in figure 7.1 illustrates the 5 categories and the percentages related to each theme and key word frequencies. Of the 197 themes and key words 43% related to the Individual experience, with words like 'increased confidence', 'personal development', and 'proud' cited. 15% of the 197 themes and key words were routed in a social aspect, in that they were dependent on social interaction, and were categorised as Social, i.e. 'belonging', 'we', and 'acceptance'. 11% of the 197 themes and key words were categorised as Transitional, in that they were a result of the inter relationship between the 'Individual' and 'Social' experiences giving rise to 'trust', 'communication', and 'mood improvement'. The Text in the context of the 5 categories refers to the reading material of the volunteering experience, and accounted for only 4% of the 197 key words. This may be due to the fact that Admin Volunteer accounts for the largest volunteer group members of which only commenced reading as part of the volunteer experience several months into this research project. The Reader Organisation (TRO) accounted for 25% of the frequency references of

dominant themes and keywords, with direct references to ‘genuinely care’, ‘structure’ and ‘safe environment’ being noted.

Compared to the interviews in Report 2 (showing video footage of reading-group work to the participants) where the emphasis was often on ‘the moment’ of events occurring in a session, the interviews here in Report 4 centred on a ‘now’ of longer duration (‘I will go for jobs in Liverpool now’, ‘I have that behind me now’, ‘Now I am starting to get out more’), marking tangible and almost measurable shifts often described as if from somewhere outside or above the previous self (‘I can see the improvements in me’, ‘It makes you persevere’).

There was a strong patient sense of incremental increase, not set or closed and thus often marked by the continuous present tense: ‘We are building a thing in the world’, ‘Every week she opens up a bit more’, ‘Building a personal relationship with someone else’, ‘It gets people thinking’.

We note

- 1) That what is offered here is what Report 2 would call a more ‘explicit’ version of the value implicit in that section of the research, that is to say: herein exploring more general and after effects, though still individually (and often movingly) reported
- 2) Large amounts of rich data are available for further linguistic analysis in future research, potentially in comparison also with the material and findings in Report 2.

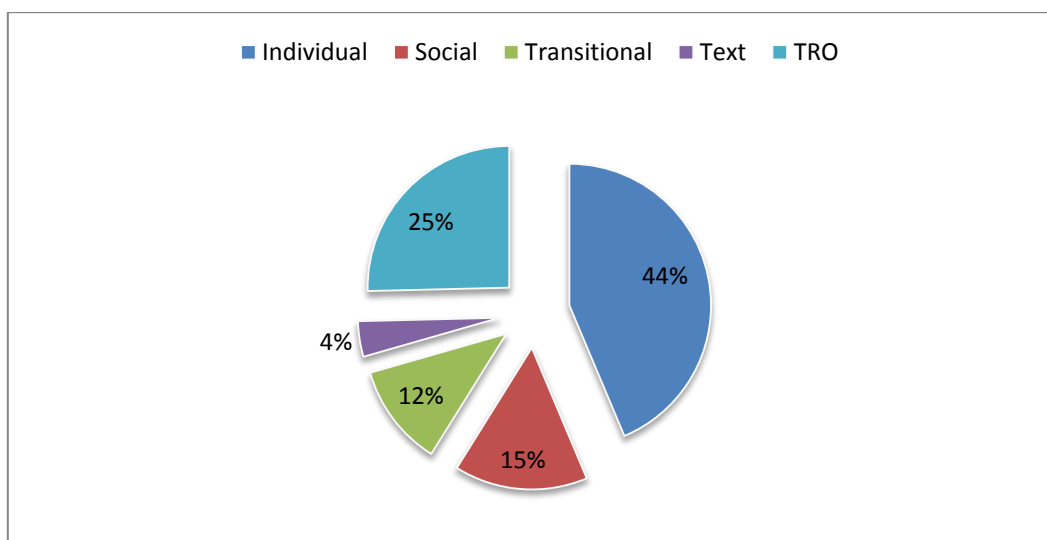


Figure 7.1: 5 Over Arching Categories. The pie chart illustrates the 5 over arching categories, which emerged from the 197 dominant themes and key words of the 32 participants.

The 5 Overarching Categories/Elements:

The 5 elements of volunteering experience - Individual, Social, Transitional, Text and TRO and their inter-relationship - are described below in the schematic representation in figure 7.2. TRO as a voluntary organisation provides the structure within which the individual, social and transitional elements are experienced. The text plays a part in the experience but it would appear from the interview analysis that it is a relatively small part in comparison to the other four elements, though this may be a result of the interview process being conducted at a distance from the group experience (cf Report 2). Some individual testimonies in this area were nonetheless qualitatively strong: *'I think I'd lose part of me life if I left, 'cause at one point I thought I was going to go through my life and not really read books'* (volunteer 7).

The positive attributes of the individual experience is the largest element cited by the volunteer participants, as represented in the left hand circle: core personal development and progression were noted, along with a new found sense of purpose, self worth, and their ability to make a difference. The key words can be further categorised in terms of the individual experience as a sense of developing agency and mastery. This last was registered, for example, in a series of definite expressions of ownership: *'I can', 'I want', 'I have found', 'I will do', 'I've got', 'I've legitimized myself', 'It's like a badge to say like yeah I can do it', 'I can't read it but if it is read out loud I have it', 'I will trail ideas . . . I've learnt to think on my feet'*.

The right hand circle represents the social element of the volunteering experience; this is based on human interaction and interchange, both as a volunteer team member and as a reading group member. All 32 participants referenced the social aspect of their volunteering experience as a key element and positive component of the volunteering experience. Evidence included statements such as *'I am part of that', 'One of the things that really gave me faith in the Organisation was you know the amount of responsibility given'*.

From the analyses of the interview data it was evident that there is an area of overlap between the individual and social aspect of the volunteering experience, which has been titled 'Transitional', in that it is not a fixed state but one that appears to develop and change over time through the experience of TRO, involving an extended social mix. The transitional arrow is bi-directional indicating that it is both an effect and affect of the individual and social experience.

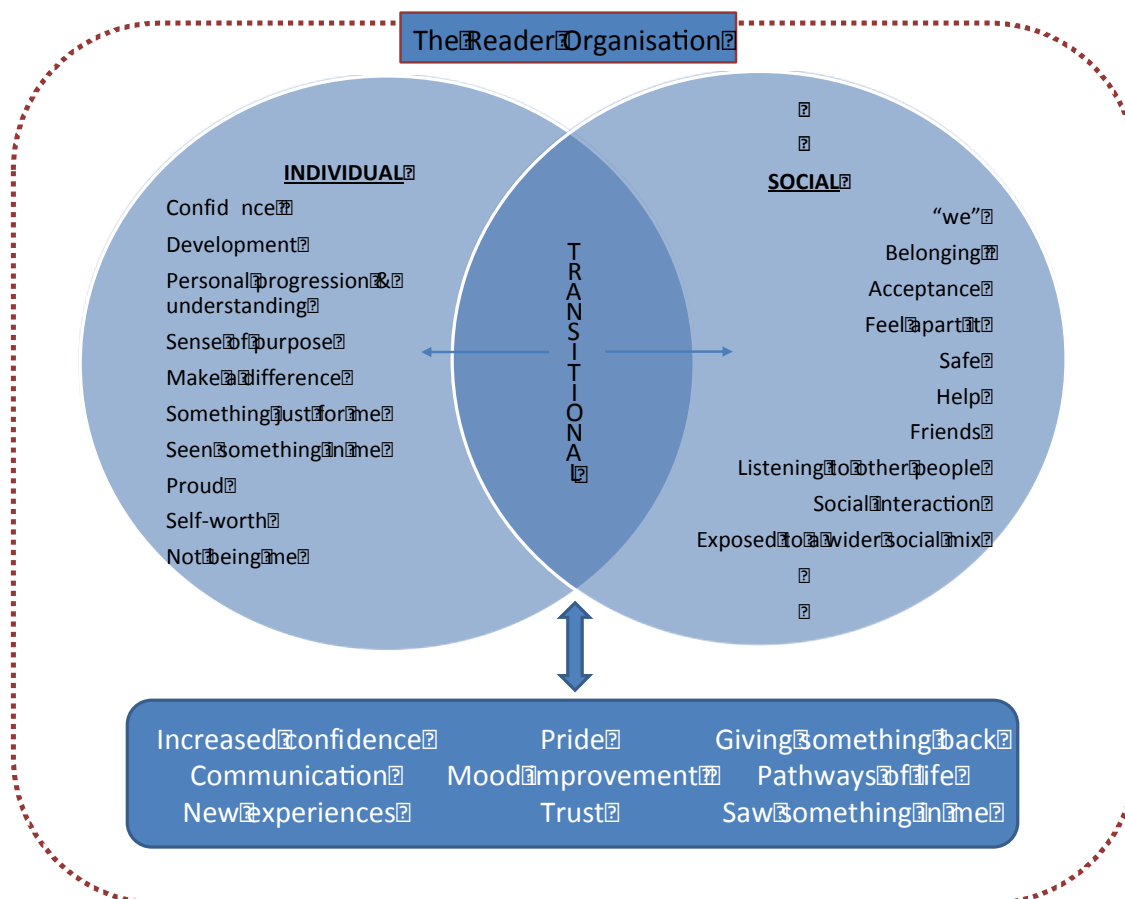


Figure 7.2: Displays a schematic representation of The Reader Organisation (indicated by the dotted line) and the core themes to emerge from interviews with volunteers. The core themes are Individual (left-hand circle) and Social (right-hand circle). From the interview data it was evident that overlap (indicated by the horizontal arrows) occurred between these two themes that provided a transition between the two factors. In addition, and represented by the lower rectangle, there seemed to be modulatory factors that operated bi-directionally with the core themes.

Individual:

44% of the total 5 categories is grounded in the individual experience, with a frequency count highlighting that ‘confidence’ was cited by 17 of the participants as a key experience of their volunteering role. Notably structure was a strong and recurring theme amongst participants with the collection of terms like, ‘structure’, ‘structural’, ‘regular’, and ‘routine’ being cited by 44% of the interview participants. Altruism was a dominant theme with key words and phrases like, ‘giving something back’ and ‘make a difference’ being a motivator for volunteering in the first instance and accounted for 10% of the individual experience. The term ‘Sense of Purpose’ accounted for 8% of the individual experience and was a key word particularly important to those participants who noted that prior to their volunteering role

they had experienced a sense of ‘void’, ‘isolation’ and low mood. It was noticeable that the word ‘never’ was often used in relation to a perceived newness now: ‘I never would have done that before’, ‘I thought oh God I am never going to do this’. Or again in relation to past negatives: ‘I thought no, all of a sudden I’d have a go’. There was a sense of relief in it ‘not [just] being me’ by concentrating instead on a character in the story.

‘I had set ways . . .’ says one volunteer, now a senior full-time figure on TRO, ‘I got to learn about life in a much more whole way’. Perhaps a culmination summary-phrase is from volunteer 19 (a care home reader): ‘This is me finding out.’

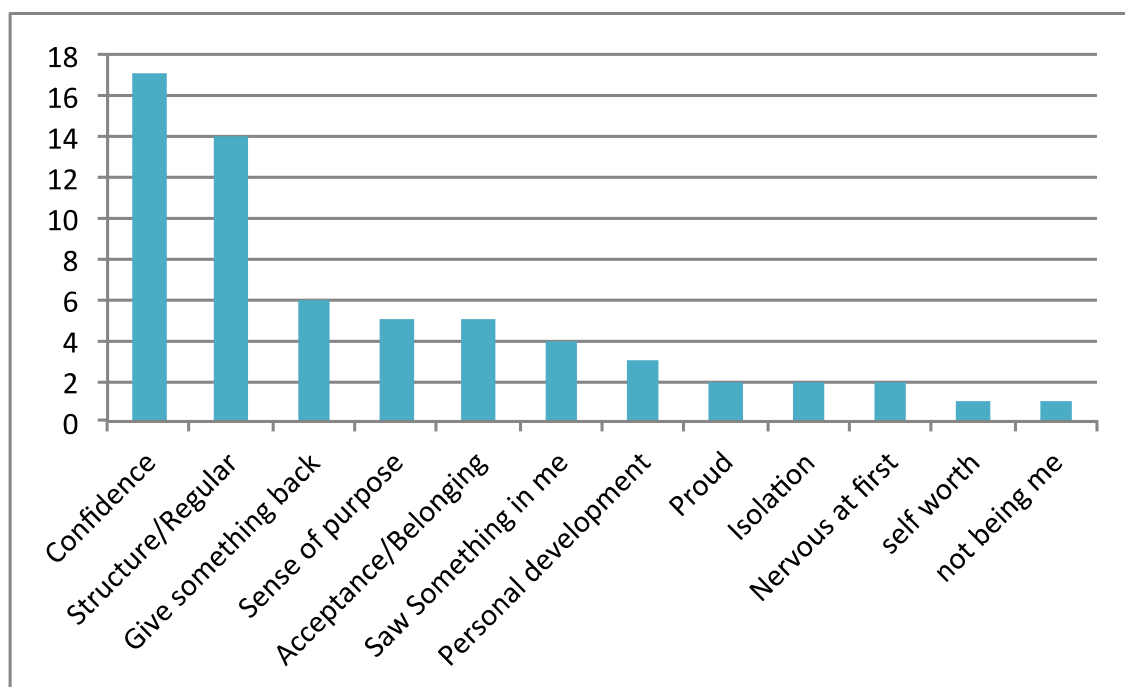


Figure 7.3: Individual Word Frequency Count – vertical column represents the number participants who cited a particular word noted on the horizontal axis.

Social

The sense of community of TRO came across as a strong theme in the analyses of the interview data and operates as a solid framework/scaffold from which a sense of structure and security were fostered by the participants, who were then able through the social mix and diversity of the volunteering groups to meet new people. ‘I am part of that’, ‘I am with them’. The words ‘friend’ and ‘friendly’ were a dominant theme and were cited by 19 (59%) of the 32 participants as a positive attribute of the volunteering experience with TRO. ‘You meet people *properly*,’ said volunteer 2. Several volunteers noted that the ‘solid’ and ‘regular’

team ‘structure’ within TRO created the environment where ‘real’ friends could be met and friendships built upon. The term ‘help’ in the context of the social category refers to several aspects, one being that TRO and other volunteers are willing to help each other and have been a help to individual members. Help is also used in relationship to the group and social context helping to overcome feelings of isolation and social exclusion. The term ‘help’ was referenced by 12 of the 32 participants (38%). A holistic perception of the social aspect of the volunteering experience with TRO was apparent in the use of the term ‘we’ when volunteers were referring to the organisation and themselves in the collective sense. This sense of ‘we-ness’ is further supported by participants’ sense of both ‘belonging’ and ‘acceptance’ in the groups and TRO. Collectively the ‘we’, ‘belonging’ and ‘acceptance’ account for 25% of the terms categorised in the content analyses as a social element of the volunteering experience. The social context here was often described as markedly different from previous experiences of groups or society itself: ‘It gave me greater appreciation of challenges people face. It challenged a lot of structures I’ve built up’.

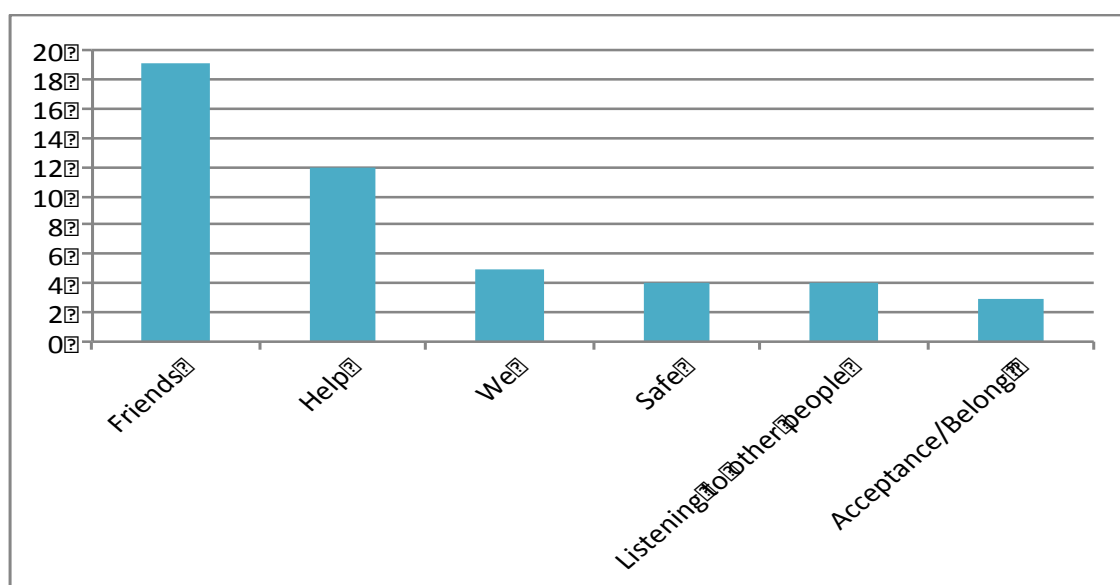


Figure 7.4: Social Word Frequency Count – vertical column represents the number participants who cited a particular word noted on the horizontal axis.

Transitional

From the interview data it was evident that there is overlap occurring between the ‘Individual’ and ‘Social’ elements of the volunteering experience. The medium – be it reading or work – was itself important: ‘If you have something to focus on it’s easier to like okay have a bond with someone’ (volunteer 8) In addition, and represented by the key word

frequency count in figure 7.5, there seemed to be modulatory factors that operated bi-directionally with the core themes, including an increase in confidence (53% of 32 participants), mood improvement (6% of 32 participants), 'saw something in me' (19% of 32 participants), and improved forms of communication (3% of 32 participants). It was not apparent from the interview analyses what was the cause and what was the effect, but rather the data presented a series of keywords, which were identified and were attributed to the interactive relationship of the core 'individual' and 'social' themes. 'Building' was a significant phrase in terms of 'working together', with the emphasis on 'more' in various directions of travel for the future and in transfer between roles or activities: 'I am much more likely to talk in the reading group now that I am talking to someone one-to-one', 'I think: where do you go with that?' 'I was quite nervous when I started the reading group but when I started the office work alongside it that gave me more confidence around people, it was a bit more of a secure place and that transferred over to the group'.

Another volunteer (21) who went on to full-time employment in TRO concluded, 'I think one thing we are particularly good at and a lot of Organisations seem to bugger up in those sorts of transitions is keeping it, you know, human being, doing things together, supporting each other, constantly looking at each other and saying is this right, is this right . . . It is being close to the thing that you're making.' This signifies a process and a creative one.

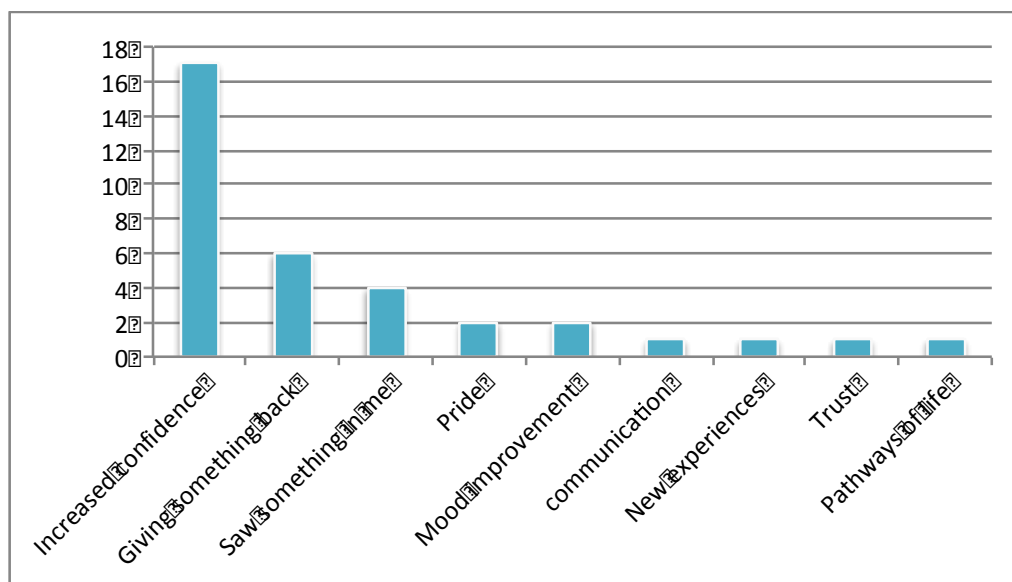


Figure 7.5: Transitional Frequency Word Count – vertical column represents the number participants who cited a particular word noted on the horizontal axis.

Conclusion

This is a limited, preliminary and (as we term it) 'explicit' report which requires further analysis of data, and may involve comparison with other Organisations' volunteering programmes, but offers interesting correlation of findings and methods with other parts of the study as indicated below.

- We-ness: a sense of acceptance (the feeling of being accepted within TRO) was closely related to a later more active sense of belonging within a distinctive practical structure combined with an emotionally registered ethos
- The humane recognition of individuals by TRO staff initially encouraging them to become volunteers was based on variations of the characteristic formulation 'he/she saw *something* in me': it is consonant with a more informal, implicit and (arguably) literary feel as to potential that qualities were not named or categorized as in a job application/description.
- Participants felt they were in a place, psychological as much as physical, from which further development could ensue, with increased flexibility and confidence.
- The environment was personalized and had its own distinctly warm ethos. The sense of reassurance and safety within it allowed volunteers to take risks and accept challenges, pursue changes or become more open, across transitions, in ways they might otherwise feel, and had previously felt, too vulnerable to undergo. (This was also reflected in the openness of many of the interviews.)
- Involvement in what was experienced as work, social contact, or developing an Organisation in the making, was an experience welcomed by many who felt themselves in various ways redundant and now felt involved in a present and a future.
- A sense of the social was further re-enforced by a characteristic wish of reading group-members to 'give something back' to TRO as a result of their experience in GiR. This was giving back from people who frequently had very little to start with, but it came out of an inherent sense of value that should be shared more widely.
- The sense of a humane ethos re-enforced the value of voluntary tasks making even what was ostensibly menial valued (by both Organisation and volunteer) as a meaningful part of TRO
- The sense of purpose reflects findings in Report 1
- A re-ordering of conventional boundaries between individual and social re-enforces the findings concerning the nature of GiR group work in Report 2 in forging a different, closer sense of human community in the social world
- This last confirms the relevance of the whole of this project to the AHRC's interest in 'the reflective individual' and 'the engaged citizen' not least by stressing their mutual inter-relation in the shared reading groups and in The Reader Organisation itself

Appendix 1: Research Methods

- The study combined diverse qualitative and quantitative methods, across disciplines (literature, linguistics, psychology, civic design), at every stage and level of the project in order to investigate the subject multi-dimensionally or ‘in the round’, with a particular emphasis on changed mental processes.
Inter-related conclusions were sought both in and between the 4 reports above, in the effort both to test the various methods and their findings in relation to each other and to seek to translate phenomena as variously described and registered into the context of the wider world.
Reciprocity of disciplines was itself a means to seek new epistemologies.
- Cross-over design: volunteers spent six weeks in a *built-environment* study group (BE), followed by six weeks in a reading group involved *shared reading aloud* of literature (GiR); a second set of volunteers similarly attended both activity-groups but in reverse order.
A cross-over design was considered essential for control and intrinsic contrast, including future research: e.g. comparing with reading groups reading non-literary material (newspapers; self-help books) or book-clubs where books are read in advance.
- Self-report measures of health and wellbeing were used before and after each six week period (Ryff scales of psychological wellbeing, WEMWBS, Dalgard mastery scale, Depression and Anxiety Scale) as well as before and after each group session (Positive and Negative Affect Scale): Report 1 on both GiR and BE
Quantification is important in the public domain, especially in both testing of and being tested by qualitative evidence, in a genuine alignment of science and culture. The aim here was not only to assess the activities by these methods but to assess the measures against each other for effectiveness in relation to these specific activities, in search of future measures and questionnaires that might best serve the phenomena.
- Group-sessions in both cases were audio and video recorded, transcribed and analysed by the interdisciplinary team of linguists, psychologists and literary specialists: Report 2 To our knowledge this is the first set of video recordings of shared reading groups, adding further real-life dimension to the study.
- The Linguists employed the methods of (quantitative) corpus study, conversation analysis and qualitative analysis in close relation to team expertise in literary analysis. Language analysis of the reading groups is vital to an in-depth understanding of what actually happens and what changes: the interaction of literary with linguistic analysis has, we believe, an innovative depth here. Much data remains for further research.
- At the close of the 12 week period, video-assisted interviews with individual participants were likewise recorded, transcribed and analysed. This method was extended to include interviews (based on the same video extracts viewed by participants) with other TRO staff and one of the writers whose work was included in the reading group, based on the same video extracts: Report 2

Together with extended narrative examples from individual and sessional case studies, these interviews bring out the depth of first-person experience (especially important in arts-based activity) with particular relation to 'live doing' rather than default attitudes.

- Concurrently, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a wide range of TRO volunteers, and of employees who had previously been volunteers, who had begun their involvement with TRO by taking part in a Get into Reading group, in order to ascertain how the intrinsic value of shared reading at the point of delivery is translated into life value in the longer term.

These interviews were subject to linguistic analysis and coding, comparable to the linguistic work carried out in relation to the group sessions, and there was also preliminary consideration of comparison with the video-assisted interviews: Report 4

- BE workshops were recorded and analysed; participants were interviewed as with GiR. Data derived 2 words or phrases that participants offered to best describe their experiences of each of the sessions, was analysed, offering intrinsic distinctions between BE and GiR.
- We have also held informal discussions with philosophers, psychologists, medical practitioners and policy makers in considering issues of public vocabulary and public agendas, and the use of a literary language as a human model in deepening or contesting such terms and categories. These are ongoing in the dissemination of our findings – the depth of which has been increased by the ability to show and analyse video excerpts from the experience of shared reading.

In terms of our emphasis on the reading groups as psychology in action or real-life research seeking to transform the wider world, we both used and adapted: Pawson and Tilley, *Realistic Evaluation*; John Dupre, 'Promiscuous Realism' in *The Disorder of Things*; Douglas Oliver, *Poetry and Narrative in Performance*; Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*; Deidre Wilson and Dan Sperber, *Meaning and Relevance*; and the work of the philosopher/psychologist Eugene Gendlin with particular relation to both Don Kuiken on 'expressive reading' and to interview methodology devised by Claire Petitmengin for describing subjective experience in the second-person. See bibliography.

APPENDIX 2 – Professor Rhiannon Corcoran

Descriptive findings associated with Get into Reading/ Shared reading

Summarised below are the findings from the 2 groups over the course of attending the GiR groups (Grp A weeks 1-6 and Group B weeks 7-12)

(i) POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT (PANAS)

GRP A: On average Grp A endorsed significantly more positive affect compared to negative affect following the 6 GiR sessions

Mean PANAS +ve score=39.93 (sd= 8.17)

Mean PANAS –ve score= 14.97 (sd= 6.53)

GRP B: On average Grp B endorsed significantly more positive affect compared to negative affect following the 6 GiR sessions.

Mean PANAS +ve score=36.05 (sd= 9.49)

Mean PANAS –ve score= 11.17 (sd= 1.67)

Conclusion:

The evidence demonstrates that involvement in 6 weeks of Shared Reading sessions (GiR) is associated with higher levels of positive compared to negative feelings as measures by the PANAS. This strong tendency to endorse higher levels of positive than negative affect existed across all sessions (all paired t tests $p < 0.001$)

(ii) PERSONAL GROWTH (PG)

GRP A: At baseline the mean PG score for this group was 72.14 (sd= 10.37; N=7)

After 6 weeks of GiR the mean PG score for this group was 72.00 (sd=7.4; N=7)

GRP B: At 6 weeks the mean PG score for this group was 69.5 (sd= 10.85, N=6)

At 6 weeks the mean PG score for this group was 69.5 (sd=10.63)

(iii) PURPOSE IN LIFE (PL)

GRP A: At baseline the mean PL score for this group was 62.28 (sd= 17.14, N=7)

After 6 weeks of GiR the mean PL score for this group was 65.28 (sd= 12.65, N=7)

GRP B: At 6 weeks the mean PL score for this group was 59.33 (sd= 13.15, N=6)

After 6 weeks of GiR the mean PL score for this group was 63.5 (sd= 12.96, N=6).

(iv) MASTERY (M; lower scores= higher sense of mastery)

GRP A: At baseline the mean M score for this group was 14.00 (sd= 5.3, n=7)

After 6 weeks of GiR the mean M score for this group was 14.14 (sd=5.67, N=7)

GRP B: At week 6 the mean M score for this group was 13.8 (sd= 3.9, N=5)

After 6 weeks of GiR the mean M score for this group was 13.2 (sd= 3.35, N=5)

(v) WEMWBS

GRP A: At baseline the mean WEMWBS score for this group was 25.71 (sd= 53.81 n=7)

After 6 weeks of GiR the mean WEMWBS score for this group was 27.0 (sd=6.7, N=7)

GRP B: At week 6 the mean WEMWBS score for this group was 22.6 (sd= 4.39, N=5)

After 6 weeks of GiR the mean WEMWBS score for this group was 23.4 (sd= 6.73, N=5)

(vi)DASS (low scores = few symptoms of depression or anxiety)

GRP A: At baseline the mean DASS score for this group was 7.67 (sd= 7.2, n=6)

After 6 weeks of GiR the mean DASS score for this group was 9.17 (sd=8.2, N=6)

GRP B: At week 6 the mean DASS score for this group was 16.8 (sd= 12.11, N=5)

After 6 weeks of GiR the mean DASS score for this group was 12.8 (sd= 8.26, N=5)

Descriptive findings associated with built environment design workshops

Summarised below are the findings from the 2 groups over the course of attending the Built Environment Workshops (BE: Grp B weeks 1-6 and Group A weeks 7-12)

(i)POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT (PANAS)

GRP B: On average Grp B endorsed significantly more positive affect compared to negative affect following the 6 BE sessions

Mean PANAS +ve score=35.12 (sd= 7.49)

Mean PANAS -ve score= 10.63 (sd= 0.76)

GRP A: On average Grp A endorsed significantly more positive affect compared to negative affect following the 6 BE sessions.

Mean PANAS +ve score=36.95 (sd= 10.38)

Mean PANAS -ve score= 11.93 (sd= 3.19)

Conclusion:

The evidence demonstrates that involvement in 6 weeks of BE is associated with higher levels of positive compared to negative feelings as measures by the PANAS. This strong tendency to endorse higher levels of positive than negative affect existed across all sessions (all paired t tests $p < 0.001$).

(ii)PERSONAL GROWTH (PG)

GRP B: At baseline the mean PG score for this group was 69.00 (sd= 10.51; N=6)

After 6 weeks of BE the mean PG score for this group was 69.50 (sd=10.85; N=6)

GRP A: At 6 weeks the mean PG score for this group was 73.17 (sd= 7.39, N=6)

After 6 weeks the mean PG score for this group was 75.0 (sd=6.0. N=6)

(iii)PURPOSE IN LIFE (PL)

GRP B: At baseline the mean PL score for this group was 62.34 (sd= 14.04, N=6)

After 6 weeks of BE the mean PL score for this group was 59.33 (sd= 13.15, N=6)

GRP A: At 6 weeks crossover the mean PL score for this group was 69.2 (sd= 10.33, N=5)

After 6 weeks of BE the mean PL score for this group was 64.8 (sd= 8.76, N=5).

(iv)MASTERY (M; lower scores= higher sense of mastery)

GRP B: At baseline the mean M score for this group was 12.00 (sd= 3.24, n=5)

After 6 weeks of BE the mean M score for this group was 13.80 (sd=3.9, N=5)

GRP A: At week 6 the mean M score for this group was 14.33 (sd= 6.17, N=6)

After 6 weeks of BE the mean M score for this group was 13.83 (sd= 36.11, N=6)

(v)WEMWBS

GRP B: At baseline the mean WEMWBS score for this group was 21.8 (sd= 3.7 n=5)

After 6 weeks of BE the mean WEMWBS score for this group was 22.6 (sd=4.39, N=5)
 GRP A: At week 6 the mean WEMWBS score for this group was 26.33 (sd= 7.09, N=6)
 After 6 weeks of BE the mean WEMWBS score for this group was 26.67 (sd= 4.68, N=6)

(vi)DASS (low scores = few symptoms of depression or anxiety)
 GRP B: At baseline the mean DASS score for this group was 13.0 (sd= 10.20, n=5)
 After 6 weeks of BE the mean DASS score for this group was 16.8 (sd=12.11, N=5)
 GRP A: At week 6 the mean DASS score for this group was 11.5 (sd= 9.07, N=6)
 After 6 weeks of BE the mean DASS score for this group was 17.0 (sd= 23.6, N=6)

Comparing and Contrasting the activities in relation to outcome

In order to compare the effect of the 2 activities on the various outcome measures, 2 differences scores were calculated for each measure as follows:

A difference score between each outcome measure from baseline to 6 week cross over (diff1: 6 week score – baseline score)

A difference score between each outcome measure from 6 week cross over to 12 weeks following the final session. (diff2: week 12-week 6)

This allows us to explore changes within the groups in relation to the 2 different activities.

(i) PANAS

As summarised above, *both* activities was consistently associated with the endorsement of greater levels of positive compared to negative affect. Comparing the differences from session to session demonstrated that there was no significant difference in terms of the positive affect associated with involvement in GiR compared to BE when they are experienced over the first 6 weeks (independent t test= 1.09, 11df, ns) or when they are experienced over the second 6 weeks (independent t= 0.155, 10 df, ns)

There is a non-significant trend in the data for more negative affect to be endorsed by the group experiencing GiR during the first six weeks compared to the group experiencing BE during the first 6 weeks (t (equal variances not assumed)= 1.75, 6.19df, p=0.13.). The associated effect size of this difference in negative affect is large (Cohen's d= 0.93)

There is no significant difference in terms of the negative affect associated with involvement in GiR compared to BE when they are experienced as the second intervention (weeks 7-12) (independent t= 0.51, 10 df, ns). However, the effect size of the group difference is medium (Cohen's d= 0.51)

(ii) Personal Growth

Diff1: Grp A showed a small decline in PG from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff= -0.14, sd= 5.01)

Grp B showed a small increase in PG from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= 0.5 , sd= 4.97)

An independent samples t test showed that there was no significant difference between the activities in terms of change to PG when delivered in the first 6 weeks (t=-0.23, 11df, ns) with a corresponding negligible associated effect size (Cohen's d= 0.13)

Diff2: Grp A showed a small increase in PG between week 6 to week 12 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= 1.84, sd=4.02)

Grp B showed no change in PG between week 6 and Week 12 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff=0.00, sd= 8.65)

An independent samples t test showed that there was no significant difference between the activities in terms of change to PG when delivered in the second 6 weeks ($t=0.47$, 10df, ns). The associated effect size was small (Cohen's $d=0.28$) suggesting that this difference in change to PG may reach statistical significance given sufficiently large sample sizes.

(iii) Purpose in Life

Diff1: Grp A showed an increase in PL from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff= 3.0, sd= 7.16)

Grp B showed a decrease in PL from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= -3.0 , sd= 8.65)

An independent samples t test showed that this difference in change to PL between the groups approached statistical significance ($P=0.10$ 11df, ns). The associated effect size of this difference is large (Cohen's $d= 0.86$) strongly indicative of a significant finding if a larger sample had been collected.

Diff2: Grp A experienced a decrease in PL between week 6 to week 12 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= -4.4, sd=3.02)

Grp B showed an increase in PL between week 6 and Week 12 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff=4.17, sd= 5.38)

An independent samples t test showed that this difference in change to PL between the groups was statistically significant ($t=-3.09$, 11df, $p=0.01$). The corresponding effect size related to this difference in change to PL was substantial (Cohen's $d=1.92$).

(iv) Mastery

Diff1: Grp A showed a very small decline in M from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff= 0.14, sd= 1.95)

Grp B showed a small decrease in M from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= 1.8 , sd= 2.39)

An independent samples t test showed that there was no significant difference between the activities in terms of change to M when delivered in the first 6 weeks ($t=-1.32$, 10df, ns) . However, the associated effect size was large (Cohen's $d= 0.76$) suggesting that this difference could reach statistical significance with larger sample sizes.

Diff2: Grp A showed a small increase in M between week 6 to week 12 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= -0.5, sd=1.64)

Grp B showed a small change in M between week 6 and Week 12 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff=-0.6, sd= 2.61)

An independent samples t test showed that there was no significant difference between the activities in terms of change to M when delivered in the second 6 weeks ($t=0.08$, 9df, ns) with a corresponding negligible effect size (Cohen's $d=0.05$).

(v) Short WEMWBS

Diff1: Grp A showed an increase in WEM from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff= 1.29, sd= 3.77)

Grp B showed a small increase in WEM from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= 0.8, sd= 3.11)

An independent samples t test showed that there was no significant difference between the activities in terms of change to M when delivered in the first 6 weeks ($t= 0.235$, 10df, ns) with a corresponding negligible effect size (Cohen's $d= 0.14$).

Diff2: Grp A showed a small increase in WEM between week 6 to week 12 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= 0.34, sd=3.01)

Grp B showed a small increase in WEM between week 6 and Week 12 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff=-0.8, sd= 4.82)

An independent samples t test showed that there was no significant difference between the activities in terms of change to WEM when delivered in the second 6 weeks ($t=-0.2$, 9df, ns) with a corresponding negligible effect size (Cohen's $d=0.11$).

(vi) DASS

Diff1: Grp A showed a small increase (more symptoms) in DASS from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff= 1.5, sd= 4.64)

Grp B showed an increase in DASS score (more symptoms) from baseline to week 6 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= 3.8, sd= 11.95)

An independent samples t test showed that there was no significant difference between the activities in terms of change to DASS when delivered in the first 6 weeks ($t=-0.44$, 9df, ns). The finding was associated with a small effect size (Cohen's $d= 0.25$).

Diff2: Grp A showed an increase in DASS between week 6 to week 12 following 6 weeks of BE (mean diff= 5.5, sd=17.6)

Grp B showed a decrease in DASS scores (reduced symptoms) between week 6 and Week 12 following 6 weeks of GiR (mean diff=-4.0, sd= 10.5)

An independent samples t test showed that there was no significant difference between the activities in terms of change to DASS when delivered in the second 6 weeks ($t=1.05$, 9df, ns) but the associated effect size was medium to large (Cohen's $d=0.66$) suggesting that with a larger sample size the difference between the groups in terms of change in DASS would become significant with larger sample sizes.

APPENDIX 3

INTERACTIONAL ANALYSIS – Dr Victorina Gonzalez-Diaz and Dr Sofia Lampropoulou

Methods

This is a preliminary study aiming at further development. Three levels of analysis develop complementary approaches to the linguistic features of the groups: a qualitative analysis of all the features in selected transcripts, an extensive quantitative corpus analysis of some of the features in all of the transcripts, and an intensive conversation analysis.

- 1) The corpus study, in the first instance, helps to identify the overall lexical and grammatical expressions that are statistically significant across speakers and/or environments. On a secondary level, it will complement any qualitative analysis (see below) by (a) providing the relative distribution of the selected lexical/grammatical cues (e.g. the frequency of 'generic *you*' vs. 'second person *you*'; or of the ideational vs. interpersonal meanings of X or Y expression) and (b) determining whether there are further correlations between the variables in to consideration. Two different types of software; i.e. Wordsmith 6 (for the collocations and colligations in the texts see Scott 2007) and W-Matrix (for the statistical analysis of semantic fields; see Rayson 2010) will be used for the analysis.
- 2) The qualitative analysis aim is to relate these devices to their context in the reading group and building environment transcripts (for instance, at what stages they are more frequent), the functions they serve and how these functions relate to the relationship between participants and the text (for instance involvement). The analysis of linguistic features can be processed in Atlas-ti, a software for qualitative research that helps the systematic analysis of complex phenomena in primary material (i.e. transcripts). The programme provides tools for locating, coding and annotating linguistic features in transcripts and evaluating their importance as well as the complex relations between them.
- 3) The conversation analysis study treats at least four transcripts (2 reading group, 2 building environment) intensively. They are to be re-transcribed to show pauses, overlaps, and some prosodic features (stressed syllables) and paralinguistic features (such as laughter). They aim is to show the text shapes participants' conversational contributions.

Involvement with the text

Three observed ways which reflect different degrees of empathy on the part of the participants/readers.

- a) Representation of the characters and their mental state: this is the most typical way of talking about the text. The situation described in the text appears as immediate rather than detached, mainly through the maintenance of time deixis.
- b) Transition from the description of the characters' mental state to evaluative comments and feelings expressed by the speaker. This is often marked through the use of generic 'you'. 'You' includes both speaker and addressee in the activity and displays perceptions as shared rather than merely individual. It often presents statements as truisms or morals.
- c) Personal narratives: narratives of self-disclosure which display an emotional/ vulnerable aspect of the narrator – and exclusively associated here with negative experiences. These are mostly fostered in informal interactions among intimates.

Here are some representative examples - (GL= Group Leader)

a) Representation of the characters and their mental state

Extract 1

270913readingrec 1 p. 25

Anne: but I wondered reading that is how... how long that feeling will stay with him, because erm... whether he will get over that feeling as a momentary feeling or whether it would stick I didn't... I don't...

Sue: I think the word infectious implies that it will stick at least for... You know it's not going to go straight away is it.

GL: He is going to go round for quite a while thinking where shall I put them.

Lynsey: Yes, feeling dirty.

Anne: and the one thing a blacksmith's apprentice will have... will be dirty, hard...

GL: Big, dirty

Frank: [talk over] [01.10.34]

Anne: Working hands.

GL: Workman's hands yes.

G: So when he is in the blacksmiths he is not having these negative feelings about himself, but in another setting, he is seeing himself in a completely different way.

b) Transition from the characters' mental state to their own mental state/ feelings through the use of generic you: change of perspectivisation

Extract 2

270913readingrec 1 p. 24

It's the same thing if you know, he is forced to look again at his hands, and be ashamed of them, I never thought of being ashamed of my hands before. You know that pair of sentences there, it's just incredible about erm... you know how we are sort of forced to take you know, take class inside us, you know internalise the shame, it became infectious and I caught it.

c) Stories of self-disclosure (particularly those including speech representation) – participants' own perspective

Extract 3

270913readingrec 1 p. 14

F: I remember getting a GCSE in English in Grade 4, and it was like I had qualified for Cambridge, it was the talk of the school for months it really was. Do you know Frank has got a GCSE English in grade 4, [38.15]. I went home and said to my sister who was a trainee teacher at the time... nothing at all you lazy little bugger, should have worked more at it and got more qualifications.

Extract 4

270913readingrec 1 p. 19-20

L: [talk over] Because I have never read this and as soon as I started reading Miss Havisham I thought oh my God this is my mom. And the one thing... sorry...

An: No go on.

L: I was just about to say the one thing that has sort of had any sort of potential to sort of change the sort of family dynamic, you know the sort of dynamic in our sort of extended family has been me having my son 2 years ago and the thing is she sort of comes alive for my son you know she comes alive for Peter but with adults she is exactly the same as she always was with adults like to her like adults are like sort of like the bane of her life but she sees Peter as this sort of repository of innocence and like she will relate to Peter, well she will relate to young children because I think she can't stand the fact that I grew up ((laughs)) See this is turning into a therapy session! She wants me to be a baby forever and she can live it out through Peter and I am just hoping because it's a slightly mediated(?) relationship like she is a grandparent and not a parent it's not going to sort of do Peter's head in.

Alignment/ Involvement between participants

- a) Sequential narratives: telling a second story counts as an attempt to signal agreement and understanding, as a strategy for creating in-group identity.

Extract 5

270913readingrec 1 p. 20

L: I was just about to say the one thing that has sort of had any sort of potential to sort of change the sort of family dynamic, you know the sort of dynamic in our sort of extended family has been me having my son 2 years ago and the thing is she sort of comes alive for my son you know she comes alive for Peter but with adults she is exactly the same as she always was with adults like to her like adults are like sort of like the bane of her life but she sees Peter as this sort of repository of innocence and like she will relate to Peter, well she will relate to young children because I think she can't stand the fact that I grew up (laughs). See this is turning into a therapy session! She wants me to be a baby forever and she can live it out through Peter and I am just hoping because it's a slightly mediated(?) relationship like she is a grandparent and not a parent it's not going to sort of do Peter's head in.

GL: It won't.

L: It's different.

[54.21 talk together]

An: I couldn't accept it, I mean it was the same for me and my mom died in March and she... even when I grew up and sort of had my sort of developed late, began to develop into myself, she wouldn't accept it and she rejected me and I had to leave home and she never you know and I couldn't accept the way she was. I felt you know, what is that poem Going up gently in the good night...

GL: The good...

An: and yet afterwards I am thinking you know, you know when you are old and you do accept it maybe, maybe that is the best thing but I couldn't accept it I just couldn't accept the fact that she gave up at 60 before my dad died, when she retired and she never got off that settee again she just didn't get up and it was terrible and I couldn't accept it at all. And I was wrong... I was always...

- b) Another possible way to mark involvement would be through collaborative overlaps/ interruptions but present transcripts are not sufficiently detailed for this, and may be improved in further study.

CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS - Wordsmith analysis

General comments: as far as can be seen in this preliminary analysis, there are no clearly differentiated trends in the linguistic patterns of the two groups of participants (i.e. there's no clear preference for affective/evaluative language in the GIR group as opposed to the BE group). That is nothing abnormal but what would probably be expected. The interesting comparison will be that which considers the linguistic performance of individual participants *across* group types (e.g. An in GIR vs. An in BE). The keywords given below, however, support the idea of 'breakthroughs' in the interventions where some of the words that have been picked out by the statistical analysis by Wordsmith match key points in the interaction that were highlighted during qualitative analyses

Highlighted in red are words that can be seen to convey some form of subjective or intensifying meaning.

GIR GROUP		
	Positive Keywords (words that are statistically significant in the speech of each participant in comparison to his/her group mates)	
<i>S</i>	HER	
<i>An</i>	SHE, IS, WHEN, SORT	
<i>F</i>	SAID, COME, WENT, SCHOOL, EVERY, WAS	
<i>G</i>	X	(He doesn't speak much compared to the others—around 900 words—so it's not surprising that there are no keywords)
<i>L</i>	LIKE, ACTUALLY , GOING, SENSE, SAY, WHICH, TYPE	
<i>Ln</i>	SORT , OH, YES, OF, EXACTLY , JUST	
<i>M</i>	ACCIDENTS	
BE GROUP		
	Positive Keywords	
<i>T</i>	MEANT	
<i>A</i>	ISN'T, THERE, CAN'T	
<i>C</i>	X	As opposed to Gerry above, Catherine's speech is not below the average in terms of word count. It's interesting to note that her speech does not contain any words that are in any way 'salient', i.e. her speech seems to be very much aligned with that of her groupmates.
<i>D</i>	YOU, WHAT, LIKE, GOING	
<i>Gm</i>	KIND, QUITE, SORT, OF, KNOW , FESTIVAL	Interesting to note the 'subjective' import (in linguistic terms) of her keywords: intensifiers (quite) and vague nouns (<i>sort of, kind of</i>). Maybe she's a participant who should be closely watched?
<i>H</i>	X	
<i>J</i>	YES, RIGHT , CENTRE, EMPHASIS, THAT'S, GOOD	
<i>Mr</i>	DOWN	

The following table represents the statistically significant words in the GIR group (in black) and the statistically significant words in the BE group (in red). Again, it may be useful in terms of supporting any 'breakthroughs' identified.

N	Key word	Freq.	%RC	Freq	RC	%keyness	P
1	HE	334	0.97	2	0.01	285.67000000	0
2	SHE	373	1.08	14	0.07	249.55000000	0
3	HER	149	0.43	7	0.04	93.16000000	0
4	HIS	86	0.25	0		78.60000000	0
5	WAS	452	1.31	119	0.60	67.72000000	0
6	HIM	67	0.19	0		61.22000000	0
7	MY	210	0.61	37	0.19	57.60000000	0
8	AND	1,032	2.99	392	1.96	54.67000000	0
9	SCHOOL	49	0.14	1		36.97000000	0
10	SORT	174	0.50	41	0.21	31.78000014	3
11	LOVE	40	0.12	1		29.14000064	3
12	SAYS	30	0.09	0		27.40000162	3
13	MUM	27	0.08	0		24.66000680	0
14	TO	768	2.23	584	2.92	-25.03000562	7
15	WE	156	0.45	159	0.80	-25.11000539	4
16	SOMEWHERE	5	0.01	24	0.12	-26.09000322	3
17	HERE	34	0.10	60	0.30	-28.51000090	2
18	OPEN	4	0.01	24	0.12	-28.88000074	2
19	HOUSE	21	0.06	47	0.24	-29.49000053	3
20	GARDEN	3		28	0.14	-39.25000000	0
21	BE	200	0.58	220	1.10	-43.29000000	0
22	RIGHT	28	0.08	68	0.34	-46.25000000	0
23	THERE	284	0.82	297	1.49	-50.92000000	0
24	PEOPLE	77	0.22	125	0.63	-52.92000000	0
25	THAT'S	59	0.17	115	0.58	-62.06000000	0
26	KIND	37	0.11	96	0.48	-69.40000000	0
27	YES	306	0.89	388	1.94	-107.31000000	0
28	PARK	4	0.01	82	0.41	-136.10000000	0

The following tables give specific information on the distribution of the speech of each participant (e.g. lexical richness, use of complicated –lengthy– words etc). They are here as a record for future research, once a comparison of the behaviour of the participants across groups can be established.

THE READER ORGANISATION'S VOLUNTEER READER SCHEME

N	Overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
text file	Overall	Anne GIR.txt	Frank GIR.txt	Gerry GIR.txt	Liz GIR.txt	nsey GIR.txt	Mike GIR.txt	Sue GIR.txt
file size	180,922	46,448	15,074	11,498	47,179	27,683	5,260	27,780
tokens (running words) in text	34,514	8,789	2,949	2,086	9,034	5,351	962	5,343
tokens used for word list	34,101	8,753	2,895	2,056	8,899	5,293	936	5,269
sum of entries								
types (distinct words)	2,980	1,231	637	580	1,208	918	320	1,018
type/token ratio (TTR)	8.74	14.06	22.00	28.21	13.57	17.34	34.19	19.32
standardised TTR	31.60	30.27	33.00	36.70	30.50	30.40		34.30
standardised TTR std.dev.	65.22	60.35	47.38	44.76	60.61	57.07		54.11
standardised TTR basis	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
mean word length (in characters)	3.87	3.92	3.76	4.09	3.86	3.82	3.96	3.82
word length std.dev.	2.05	2.07	2.03	2.16	2.04	2.04	2.05	2.03
sentences	1,704	334	168	139	373	274	77	339
mean (in words)	20.01	26.21	17.23	14.79	23.86	19.32	12.16	15.54
std.dev.	21.11	25.13	17.40	14.67	21.98	22.82	11.97	17.25
paragraphs	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
mean (in words)	4,871.57	8,753.00	2,895.00	2,056.00	8,899.00	5,293.00	936.00	5,269.00
std.dev.	3,134.33							
headings								
mean (in words)								
std.dev.								
sections	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
mean (in words)	4,871.57	8,753.00	2,895.00	2,056.00	8,899.00	5,293.00	936.00	5,269.00
std.dev.	3,134.33							
numbers removed	413	36	54	30	135	58	26	74
stoplist tokens removed								

N	Overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
text file	Overall	Angela BE.txt	Catherine BE.txt	David BE.txt	Gemma BE.txt	Helen BE.txt	John BE.txt	taureen BE.txt	Terri BE.txt
file size	105,106	18,230	18,721	15,533	14,423	4,973	25,633	7,097	496
tokens (running words) in text	19,970	3,446	3,492	3,079	2,779	965	4,730	1,374	105
tokens used for word list	19,713	3,407	3,449	3,027	2,758	959	4,682	1,327	104
sum of entries									
types (distinct words)	1,909	660	718	497	532	285	861	379	55
type/token ratio (TTR)	9.68	19.37	20.82	16.42	19.29	29.72	18.39	28.56	52.88
standardised TTR	30.14	30.43	33.17	26.27	28.15		31.15	31.80	
standardised TTR std.dev.	63.82	53.21	50.76	56.30	50.81		55.04		
standardised TTR basis	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
mean word length (in characters)	3.94	4.01	4.02	3.72	3.94	3.92	4.06	3.77	3.50
word length std.dev.	2.12	2.03	2.25	1.82	2.18	1.96	2.27	2.05	1.80
sentences	1,212	189	227	229	90	51	292	125	9
mean (in words)	16.26	18.03	15.19	13.22	30.64	18.80	16.03	10.62	11.56
std.dev.	17.12	14.43	15.59	11.43	31.80	16.75	17.73	8.71	5.27
paragraphs	8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
mean (in words)	2,464.13	3,407.00	3,449.00	3,027.00	2,758.00	959.00	4,682.00	1,327.00	104.00
std.dev.	1,526.42								
headings									
mean (in words)									
std.dev.									
sections	8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
mean (in words)	2,464.13	3,407.00	3,449.00	3,027.00	2,758.00	959.00	4,682.00	1,327.00	104.00

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The Cultural Value Project seeks to make a major contribution to how we think about the value of arts and culture to individuals and to society. The project will establish a framework that will advance the way in which we talk about the value of cultural engagement and the methods by which we evaluate it. The framework will, on the one hand, be an examination of the cultural experience itself, its impact on individuals and its benefit to society; and on the other, articulate a set of evaluative approaches and methodologies appropriate to the different ways in which cultural value is manifested. This means that qualitative methodologies and case studies will sit alongside quantitative approaches.